HM Courts & Tribunals Service is responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales – and non-devolved tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We are an agency of the Ministry of Justice and operate on the basis of a partnership between the Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals.

We handle about four million cases a year, operate from 32 offices and 36 business centres, more than 300 courts and hearing centres and currently have the equivalent of around 16,000 full time roles, most of which are frontline, operational roles. We exist to:

- provide the supporting administration for a fair, efficient and accessible courts and tribunal system
- support an independent judiciary in the administration of justice
- drive continuous improvement of performance and efficiency across all aspects of the administration of courts and tribunals
- collaborate effectively with other justice organisations and agencies, including the legal professions, to improve access to justice
- work with government departments and agencies, as appropriate, to improve the quality and timeliness of their decision-making in order to reduce the number of cases coming before courts and tribunals.
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Introduction

A warm welcome to this edition of the Reform Update.

Our reform programme continues to make good progress, and new online services covering divorce, probate, civil claims and social security appeals have been used by over 100,000 people, with excellent feedback. We’ve also opened our first new Courts and Tribunals Service Centres.

All these services have been tested and refined over time, with the things we have learnt fed back in to make changes. They’ve also benefited from the active support and practical help of judges, lawyers and many others, to whom we are very grateful.

We have adapted our plans, and listened to feedback. The reform programme is rightly the subject of much scrutiny and examination – and, following the report of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee last year, and our own review of our future plans, learning from what has gone well, and what has taken longer than we expected, we have recently decided to extend the programme’s timetable to 2023.

This is the sensible and pragmatic thing to do to ensure that the changes we are making are delivered effectively.

We have also announced what we will be doing to make sure that the programme is properly evaluated, with independent and academic input, to ensure it delivers better access to justice.

Last December, we co-hosted the first International Forum on Online Courts with the Society of Computers and Law. It brought together judges, court administrators, lawyers and academics from across the world.

It demonstrated that our reform programme is part of a wider global movement of change, to shape justice systems around the needs of those who use them. There was widespread interest and support for what we are doing here – and we were able to draw important lessons from what is going on elsewhere.

Over the next few months, our existing online services will increase in scale and in functionality, and we will be developing new services, as well as doing further testing and piloting of new ways of resolving disputes, including continuous online resolution and video hearings.

In doing so, we will continue to listen, to engage and to collaborate with all those who want to improve the way our courts and tribunals system operates, improving access and efficiency for all those who need it.

Susan Acland-Hood
Chief Executive
HM Courts & Tribunals Service
The HMCTS reform programme

Our reform programme is reshaping the justice system around the needs of all those who use it by simplifying and streamlining our processes and providing people with new tools and routes to exercise their legal rights.
Why is reform needed?

Many of the everyday practices and procedures of our justice system, across all jurisdictions, are complex, slow and unwieldy. They have, for many years, relied heavily on paper-based processes and physical interactions even for resolving simple or administrative matters.

This can make the system confusing, costly and inefficient even for those that work within it. For members of the public that use it – often at difficult times of the lives – the system can feel inaccessible, bewildering and even intimidating.

Complexity should not put people off from pursuing justice. The court and tribunal system should be a leveller; a mechanism by which everyone – regardless of their wealth or status – can enforce their rights against another party. Simplicity and intelligibility is important in making that real.

The programme protects and sustains the fundamental principles that have made our justice system the envy of the world by introducing digital technology and modern ways of working to support public and professional users alike. In doing so, we are improving access to justice and the efficiency of the system for all.

What’s the vision of the reform programme?

The reform programme was launched in 2016 by the Government and the senior judiciary to improve the accessibility and efficiency of the justice system. In a joint statement, the then Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of the Tribunals said that reforms would combine “our respected traditions with the enabling power of technology.” They added:

“The vision is to modernise and upgrade our justice system so that it works even better for everyone, from judges and legal professionals, to witnesses, litigants and the vulnerable victims of crime. When they have to engage with the system, we want everyone to have available to them the finest justice system in the world.”

Read their full statement setting out the vision of the reform programme.

What progress has been made?

During the first phase of the reforms, we established the basics, testing early versions of our online divorce, probate, civil money claims, social security appeals and online plea services, and started putting infrastructure in place such as more Wi-Fi. Less visible but as important, work also began to prepare for the next phase such as procurement work, location analysis, leases for buildings, and detailed service design work.

In the second phase, we began opening up these online services to more people and starting new ones such as those in public family law, and immigration and asylum tribunals. We started building our ‘enabling’ services (such as technology for video hearings, and to support listing) and began the work to establish a move towards a more professional and responsive service (including setting up the first two Courts and Tribunals Service Centres (CTSCs) to deal with user queries more effectively and promptly and to support the work of local courts and tribunals).

Now heading into the third phase, we will be scaling up our new services and processes. Online services will be expanded and extended so they are available to a wider range of people and offer a complete end-to-end service to users. The number of CTSCs will expand, with more staff providing more services from them over time, and we will be designing and putting in place what we call ‘common capabilities’ – building blocks enabling us to build the next set of services more rapidly, and to support things like consistent and effective access to case information for legal professionals. Testing of the Common Platform in the criminal justice system will continue and expand, and more summary cases will be handled digitally rather than with inefficient paper-based systems.
Who are we working with?

The judiciary

The judiciary is at the heart of shaping modernisation and has been working closely and collaboratively with HMCTS to produce a better justice system for the public.

This reflects the governance of HMCTS – which is responsible jointly to the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice, and the Senior President of Tribunals, through the independent HMCTS Board. Senior judges sit on key HMCTS decision-making boards and regular engagement groups, and members of the wider judiciary are working closely with our teams on key projects across all jurisdictions.

During 2018, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals embarked on a wide-ranging exercise called Judicial Ways of Working (J WOW) to gather the views of judges and magistrates on courts and tribunals modernisation. Four documents outlining details of the reform programme across the four jurisdictions were published and the process received 10,000 responses.

Responses to the feedback gathered was published in January and has helped shape decisions around the future development of the programme.

Read these documents and the response to the feedback.

Our users

Research with court and tribunal users underpins everything we do. All our projects and initiatives are subject to extensive testing and piloting with members of the public and professional users, including lawyers, judges and court staff.

This insight is essential to effective design and development of all aspect of the reform programme, and ensures that changes we implement have been thoroughly examined and adapted based on the evidence of what works and what doesn’t.

HMCTS has worked with users to develop the programme.

Our stakeholders

Working closely with our stakeholders – legal professionals, groups representing public users, partners such as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the police, and others – is a critical element of the design, development and delivery of reform. This includes:

• collaboration at a project level to design and develop new services
• dialogue to share reform plans and exchange views with representative organisations, particularly among legal professional and public user groups
• communication to provide regular information and updates about reform.

International forum

We co-hosted a lively and informative inaugural forum with The Society for Computers and Law.

Over 200 delegates from more than 20 jurisdictions discussed cutting-edge court technologies from around the world, learning from the different experiences and ambitions for reforming justice globally. Countries at varying stages of developing online courts provided invaluable insight into challenges faced, lessons they’ve learnt, obstacles overcome and shared frank information about successes and failures in their reform processes.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice and Senior President of Tribunals addressed delegates during the two-day forum which examined the central issues that will face policymakers, judges, technologists and lawyers, who are planning or introducing online courts. Visit the forum web page for more details about the event.
What impact has this engagement had on the programme?

The programme is made up of more than 50 individual projects – and all of them have been significantly shaped and improved as a result of the involvement and engagement of others.

Our new online services in divorce, civil money claims and probate have, for example, been extensively tested and fine-tuned as a result of working with public users, while our proposals on flexible operating hours and scheduling and listing have drawn heavily on the views of legal professionals.

The programme has also benefited from scrutiny from Parliament and statutory bodies too. The House of Commons’ Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report into the programme in the summer of 2018 followed a report by the National Audit Office and made six recommendations, all of which were accepted. The Committee raised particular questions about the programme’s timetable for delivery, and we have since extended the length of the programme in response.

In addition, the Justice Select Committee of the House of Commons is undertaking an inquiry into the impact of the reform programme on access to justice. HMCTS submitted written evidence to the inquiry.

Why has HMCTS extended the length of the programme?

The reform programme is being delivered using an “agile” approach rather than by a “big bang” transformation. In this way, we are able to design, test and deliver small, incremental changes that bring benefits to users faster and with less risk.

Our reformed services have been well-received by the public as a result – and what we develop in one area of the programme we can often apply elsewhere too. It is a process that is necessarily incremental, iterative and adaptable, and one that enables us to modify plans as we progress.

Earlier this year, we decided on a number of changes to our plans as part of our latest business case for reform assessed by the Treasury and Cabinet Office inside Government. This regular assessment enables us to look at and stress-test our plans, learn from what we’ve done so far and to reflect on external changes that impact on the programme.

Reflecting carefully on the recommendations of the PAC, as well as the feedback from the JWOW process, and our progress so far, our latest business case included an extension to the programme’s previous timetable by a year to 2023.

This extension will give us more time to ensure an effective transition from legacy services to reformed services and to develop the essential ‘common capabilities’ we need to underpin and support these new services (you can read about these in Infrastructure and enabling services section). So far, we have built new things service-by-service; as we scale up, we need to spend more time developing the ‘common capabilities’ which will allow us to do more, faster.

It will also allow us to make sure we make good on our undertaking not to make changes to the physical court estate consequent on reform until we can demonstrate that the programme has delivered real changes that give people new and better ways of doing things first. This was a key part of our response to the consultation on our future estates strategy published in May this year.

The extension is a sensible and pragmatic response to ensure the effective delivery of the programme as a whole, and the wider changes that accompany the extension also include:

- The re-scoping of the work to reform the administration of Employment Tribunals – we are bringing forward system changes in response to the considerable increase in volumes witnessed over the last 12 months
- The removal of the court of protection project – although we will seek opportunities to use common components developed for other areas of the programme to improve the court of protection in the future
- Changes to design and the ordering of technology delivery within the Crime Programme – this will add three months to the original plans and helps ensure clearer benefits for the criminal justice system as a whole.

How is the programme being evaluated to ensure it improves access to justice?

Alongside external scrutiny and the project level monitoring and evaluation in place, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is to undertake an overarching evaluation of the programme to assess the key objectives of fairness and accessibility.

This overarching evaluation is currently at the scoping stage, due to be completed soon. An interim report is due by summer 2021 with updates as findings become available.

As part of this evaluation work, the MoJ will establish an advisory panel to support analysts as well as Ministers and will draw on a wide range of external expertise, including academics and legal practitioners, as well as those who have practical experience in the delivery of significant reform programmes. Full details of the panel, and their terms of reference, will be published soon.

You can read more detail about the plans to evaluate the programme.
Crime

Our ambition is to provide smarter, more joined-up and streamlined processes to deliver better criminal justice for all.
We are supporting digital working throughout the criminal courts to enable all participants in the criminal justice system to work from the same information reducing duplication of effort and introducing more consistent working practices. We will make processes easier and more accessible for all those involved.

What our reforms have delivered so far:

- A digital case management system to support the Single Justice Procedure (SJP) for summary offences has handled over 31,000 Transport for London cases, cutting delays and waste.
- The Make a Plea Online service for summary traffic offences has been rolled out to all police forces with more than 236,000 people entering a plea online since 2015.
- Magistrates’ Court Rota is in use nationally matching nearly 13,000 magistrates with court sittings.
- Digital Mark Up is in use across all Magistrates’ Courts, enabling the Legal Advisor in court to record the case outcome instantly.
- Jurors can now reply to a jury summons online.
- The Common Platform is handling real cases in a pilot in the Crown Court in Liverpool, and pilots have begun in SJP cases too.

By the end of this year, we will have:

- Completed a nationwide roll out so that all TV Licensing and DVLA prosecutions within the SJP are handled by our new digital case management system, with defendants able to plead online.
- Published online listings of all SJP cases being heard as a result of prosecutions by TfL and TVL.
- Started to pilot new proof of concept technology in video remand hearings.
- Introduced additional functionality within the Common Platform pilot in Liverpool, in advance of a roll-out to other Crown Courts (main roll-out taking place during 2020).
- Expanded the use of Common Platform in magistrates’ courts, starting with other SJP referrals and then widening out to cover other case types (with fuller roll-out during 2020).
Single Justice Service

HMCTS’s Single Justice Service (SJS) enables magistrates’ courts to deal with low-level crimes in a way that is quick and efficient for everyone involved – including the defendant – while still being fair and rigorous.

The Single Justice Procedure (SJP) – introduced as a result of the Criminal Justice & Courts Act 2015 - allows for a single magistrate sitting with a legal adviser to decide adult summary-only, non-imprisonable and victimless offences (such as speeding, fare evasion, or not having a TV licence (TVL)).

They can only do this where the defendant has pleaded guilty, or has failed to respond and so the case will be looked at without them (known as ‘proof in absence’). The defendant has the option to say that they want to have a hearing in court instead but most do not do so for offences of this kind.

A new digital case management system called the Automated Track Case Management (ATCM) system is being rolled out to support this process and make it more efficient. This has been operational in Lavender Hill Magistrates’ Court since April 2017 to handle all fare evasion cases prosecuted by Transport for London (TfL). As a result, court staff no longer need to print thousands of sheets of paper each week spend time preparing and transporting physical files to and from court.

Since December 2018, all cases being brought by TVL in the Midlands have been handled using the ATCM too and, by March 2019, there had been over 37,000 TfL and TVL cases handled using this new system.

All defendants prosecuted by TfL and TVL in the Midlands are also able to make a plea online if they choose to. This further increases the speed by which such cases are heard and resolved. In one case a defendant pleaded guilty online and within four days had received the outcome of the case and was able to pay their fine. This compares with the postal method which takes on average 29 days.

There has been a steady increase in the number of pleas being entered online for these cases with more than 2,000 online pleas entered by March 2019, with 73% of people saying they are satisfied or highly satisfied with the service.

Importantly, since we introduced online pleas for these cases we have seen more people responding than when the system was paper-only - up from 16% to around 20% now. This is good for access to justice, because it means fewer people’s cases being dealt with without their input.

We also know that not everyone finds it easy to go online, so a dedicated HMCTS team has been set up to deal with calls from members of the public who need help and support relating to TfL and TV Licensing cases. The traditional postal route also remains in place for those that do not wish to use online services at all – and it too has been improved and simplified as part of reform.

During 2019 we will expand the use of ATCM to handle all TVL and DVLA SJP cases across the country including the ability for defendants to make a plea online. All SJP cases should be using this system by the end of 2020.
User feedback
Here are some comments from people who have used our online plea service:

“*It’s very useful to be able to do it online and not have to go through the hassle of the postal system. The layout was clear and everything had a useful explanation with it.*”

“*It helped me understand my situation I was in and answered all the questions I had.*”

“*Very simple to use, makes life easier.*”

Make a Plea Online
This was introduced prior to the wider reform programme, and allows adults prosecuted for summary non-imprisonable motoring offences, such as speeding and having no insurance, to make a plea online instead of by post if they wish. It is available across all 43 police forces and, during 2018, 87,247 pleas were received through this service – about 1,600 pleas online each week. It applies only to minor offences where the previous system was to make a plea by post.
Common Platform

The Common Platform is the underpinning digital infrastructure for our reforms in criminal justice. It will deliver a single online system designed to act as a 'central hub' enabling the police, the CPS, HMCTS and legal professionals to access and share all relevant information about a case. It will improve the use of photographic and video evidence and help remove the manual handling of documents, duplication of process and the re-keying of information.

It began testing in September 2017 with pilots involving Cheshire-Mersey CPS, Merseyside Police and Liverpool Crown Court. As part of these pilots, prosecutors can now make available to all legal parties the Initial Details of the Prosecution Case (IDPC) for most either way and indictable cases once the police confirm that charging has taken place.

In spring 2019, we began pilots in two magistrates courts - Lavender Hill Magistrates’ Court (handling TfL cases) and Warwickshire Justice Centre (handling TVL cases) - to test the Common Platform in magistrates’ court hearings, using cases that have started in the Single Justice Procedure but then been referred to court for a hearing.

Over the course of this year we will develop more functionality to be used in the Liverpool pilot, following which we will begin roll-out to other Crown Courts (we expect the main roll-out activity to take place during 2020). In parallel, we will expand the use of Common Platform in our magistrates’ courts, starting with Single Justice Procedure referrals and then widening out to cover other case types (again, with the main roll-out happening during 2020).

In collaboration with the CPS, we will focus this year’s development on the court-based parts of the Common Platform. In light of the Attorney General’s review into the efficiency and effectiveness of disclosure in the criminal justice system, we will review the way the system should work for prosecutors.

The Common Platform feedback:

“Our experience of the pilot has been really positive. The user experience has been overwhelmingly good – screens are easy to navigate and intuitive” – court clerk
Key discovery work
We have been working with a wide range of partners to map out the way things are done now and think about how they might be done better – a process known as ‘discovery’. This has covered many aspects of the crime reform programme, including online plea and allocation, case progression, hearings and youth. This is now being fed into the detailed design for the Common Platform.

On online plea and allocation, we will make it possible for represented defendants (through their legal representative) to indicate a plea online, before coming to court; and for decisions on allocation to be taken outside the courtroom where that is appropriate. This is subject to legislation.
At present, decisions on allocation are often made based on a ‘best guess’ by the police about whether someone is likely to plead guilty or not guilty. Asking for an indicated plea online will support earlier engagement with the court and enable swifter allocation of cases as well as free up courtroom space and time currently used to hear pleas.
During the remainder of this year we will be looking to test various proofs of concept to understand how new processes for online plea and allocation may work.

On hearings, the objective is to enable appropriate hearings and case management activities to be held without requiring physical courtroom time, such as by telephone or video.

This extends the existing Video Remand Hearings project (see below) to ensure that the opportunities of such channels are realised across the case lifecycle. The use of hearings by video would always be at judicial discretion and decisions as to which categories of hearing could be fully video would be for the senior judiciary.

On youth, a multi-agency working group has looked specifically at the needs of children and young defendants to ensure that we do not apply adult processes to children, but instead look at each stage of the process and shape a version of it that is appropriate for young people, with the right safeguards and enhancements.

Video Remand Hearings
Since September 2018, we have been working closely with the Home Office-funded Video Enabled Justice (VEJ) pilot project in London and the South East of England to make video-enabled remand hearings more effective. Since the pilot started at Medway Magistrates’ Court there have been over 3,160 remand hearings heard via video.
During 2019 we will start to pilot a technical proof of concept testing video technology in a mock courtroom environment and the lessons we learn as a result, both in terms of technology and process, will support the design and implementation of a fully video solution for wider use across England and Wales.
We have held a series of online and national face to face workshops to engage defence practitioners to help support this work, and representatives from the Law Society and the Legal Aid Agency were invited to share their expertise and insight too.

For a full list of projects in the criminal jurisdiction see the table at the back of this document.
Civil, Family and Tribunals

We are developing a range of digital services to support the resolution of civil, family and tribunals cases fairly and speedily, and give new routes to justice which will in time comprise the ‘online court’.
Our reforms focus on simplifying procedures and giving people new routes to justice to help improve access, reduce delays and cut costs. They include changes to enable people to access services online, from application to resolution, and new systems to help people resolve more disputes themselves. We anticipate less reliance on physical hearings and specialist case officers will free up time for judges to concentrate on the most contentious issues.

Civil

In the civil jurisdiction, existing processes can be protracted, inefficient and costly. We are creating a system that enables people to manage and resolve a dispute fairly and speedily. This will involve more mediation and fewer hearings. It will involve simpler processes and online routes for those using seeking civil justice and provide good quality digital systems to replace inefficient, paper-based systems.

The extension of the programme by a year to 2023 will allow more time to develop some of the shared systems that sit behind our next set of online services and to review and re-order some of our planned work.

What our reforms have delivered so far:

- Nine out of ten members of the public who have used the service say they are satisfied with the Civil Money Claims Online service, and the time to settle cases has been more than halved – from three months to just over a month.
- More than 62,000 online claims using Civil Money Claims Online have been made since the service’s launch last year worth a total of more than £6m.
- More than 200 settlements have been reached online without involving a court.
- The online system for legal professionals supporting multiple claims is being piloted with 10 law firms.
- Court users in the Queen’s Bench Division (Claims and Appeals) and the seven business and property courts outside London can now issue claims, file documents and pay court fees online.

By the end of this year, we will have:

- Started an opt-out mediation pilot in Civil Money Claims Online, offering claimants and defendants the opportunity to resolve their case out of court for claims less than £300.
- Expanded the Civil Money Claims Online service and made it available to more professional users.
- Extended the E-Filing service to the Court of Appeal (Civil Division), Administrative Court, the Upper Tribunal Chambers and the Employment Appeal Tribunal.
Four projects make up our civil work, including:

**Civil Money Claims Online**

This is a digital service for people to resolve civil money claims in a simple, accessible and proportionate way.

Since March 2018, litigants in person have been able to issue and respond to online civil money claims of less than £10,000. By the end of April 2019, over 62,000 claims had been issued using this system and more than £6.36 million taken in court fees.

Almost 90% of users of the service say they are satisfied or very satisfied with the new service and cases are being resolved more quickly too. The average time to settle a case using the online process is 5.2 weeks compared to 13.7 using our non-reformed services.

The service also allows users to settle claims without the need for any third-party involvement. Parties can make and accept "without prejudice" offers online and a settlement agreement, drafted by the service, is provided to settle the case. By the end of April 2019, more than 200 settlements had been reached in this way.

A version of the system designed to support legal professionals managing multiple claims on behalf of their clients is being tested with 10 firms and will be made available to more professionals later this year.

In the summer this year, we will pilot an "opt-out" mediation service for defended cases up to £300, meaning those claims that meet the criteria will be automatically scheduled for mediation in an attempt to resolve the case before going to court, unless either party decides against it.

Additionally, we will also be working to expand and improve the service to make available to users a complete digital end-to-end system. Between summer 2019 and summer 2020, we will expand on the type of claims that can be issued and build further stages of the system, enabling:

- more online negotiation and settlement
- uploading of evidence
- giving judges the facility to decide cases ‘on the digital papers’ either at a face to face hearing or by determination on the ‘digital papers’
- the digital underpinnings for cases going to and through hearings.

**The Royal Courts of Justice**

In the first quarter of 2019 the project delivered the first tranche of developments to our E-Filing Service, extending it to both the Queen’s Bench Division (Claims and Appeals) and the seven Business and Property Courts outside of London. This means court users in these jurisdictions can now issue claims, file documents and pay court fees online.

More than 750 new users have registered to use the E-Filing service, and there are already over 5,000 cases now being managed using the new digital case management system. The project is now working on the timeline to extend the E-Filing service to the Court of Appeal (Civil Division), Administrative Court, the Upper Tribunal Chambers and the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

**Online claims feedback**

”E-filing is very easy, simple and straightforward to use”

“IT’s so handy to be able to issue a claim online and at our convenience. Saves a lot of stress and time!”

“Being able to issue a claim 24hrs a day is great!”

**Civil Enforcement**

As a result of the decision to extend the reform programme and the subsequent re-ordering of our work, some elements of the work planned for the Civil Enforcement project are being delayed – most notably, building a new digital process for Writs of Control. The work we have already undertaken is being put to good use, including research on the collection of information and the provision of guidance and signposting between the claim request to judgment stages of the process. These are already being incorporated in to the Civil Money Claims Online delivery plan.

We will also continue with the discovery phase for Warrants of Control (including working with users to understand how we can improve the service). Following successful pilots in the North East and North West regions, we are introducing 12 Warrant of Control Support Centres across England and Wales to centralise and standardise our service. These centres will introduce an innovative approach by engaging with debtors early with the aim of providing support and resolving the warrant as soon as possible, reducing the need for a bailiff to visit the debtor at their home address.

**Possession**

As a result of changes to the programme agreed earlier this year, this project will now start in early 2020 to improve, automate and streamline the shorthold tenancy possession process. The revised timeline has the potential to better align with any changes that could arise from the Government’s recent call for evidence, Considering the case for a Housing Court, which are expected to be announced soon.
Family

There has been much change in the practice and administration of family justice in the last five years. Our reforms will build on those improvements by making the system easier to understand and navigate so that it better meets the needs of the people who use it. We will introduce new technology for the family court to make the system simpler and more efficient for everyone, make improvements to the court estate, and develop enhanced case officer (legal adviser) functions to support judges better.

What our reforms have delivered so far:

• More than 41,000 Divorce Online applications have been made since the service was launched in April 2018, with digital uptake at 58% and 82% of users saying they were satisfied with the service.

• A financial remedy pilot for legal professionals enabling them to make consented divorce applications and receive outcomes digitally on behalf of clients.

• Our Probate Online service has received over 19,000 applications – and 9 out of 10 users say they are satisfied with the service.

• Started testing a new way for local authorities to apply for care and supervision orders in public law cases in the family court – more than 100 applications have been issued and progressed online.

By the end of this year, we will have:

• Established an Divorce Online service for legal professionals acting on behalf of clients across England and Wales.

• Introduced arrangements for decree absolute applications to be made online in divorce.

• Added more features to our digital service in family public law, including case management, evidence management and orders.

• Increased features to the Probate Online service for personal applicants, including applying for a caveat and intestacy.

• Made an Probate Online service for legal professionals available nationally.
There are five projects included in the family reform programme, including:

**Divorce Online**

This will deliver a national end-to-end digital service for individuals and/or their legal representatives to make an application to legally end a marriage or civil partnership and resolve associated financial issues.

We rolled out the first stage for personal applications in April 2018. This has allowed people to apply for an uncontested divorce, upload evidence and pay online. Since then more than 41,000 applications have been received with more than 8 out of 10 users saying they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

The service has been designed around the needs of public users with clear information and guidance. It takes half the time to fill in as the old paper forms. As a result, we return less than 1% of online applications because of user error compared to 40% in the old system.

In January 2019, we added acknowledgement of service and decree nisi applications online. By early summer, we plan for the decree nisi outcome to be added to the digital process too, with the decree absolute application following later in summer 2019. From the end of April this year, new scanning technology means that any paperwork sent in connection with online applications will be placed on the digital court file automatically.

Alongside this, we are also testing and growing an online system for legal representatives to apply for divorce on behalf of a client. We plan to make this service available nationally later in 2019.

A further element to this project’s work, and an important element of our aim to offer a fully digital divorce process from beginning to end, is testing digital processes around financial remedy. In the summer of 2018 we began a consent order pilot for legal professionals and in March this year we added financial remedy outcomes to this pilot. By early summer 2019, we plan to have added contested financial remedy applications to the testing phase.

**Probate Online**

Probate Online provides a simpler, digital means for users to apply for probate and a new case management system to reduce the cost and time of processing applications.

Since launching in limited testing in June 2017, more than 19,000 people have used the service to apply and pay online. The user satisfaction for our online service is high: 92% of people using the service said they were satisfied or very satisfied with it.

The service is available to anyone dealing an uncontested estate if the deceased lived in England or Wales, the applicant has the original will and the applicant is named as an executor in the will or any codicils (updates to the will).

We have made changes during the testing phase including introducing the online statement of truth. This means that most people no longer need to visit a probate registry or solicitor’s office to swear an oath. We have also used feedback from those who’ve used the service to improve it, including removing the need to sign the back of the will as people told us they found the requirement confusing.

Further improvements to the online application have been made including allowing main applicants to enter their name as it appears on the will if it is different to their current name and to provide a reason why. Furthermore, the online application now allows applicants to upload supporting documents (such as the death certificate), download a PDF of their completed application and print a cover sheet to accompany the original will.

In early 2019, we replaced the paper grant of probate with a new version that contains a digital seal and hologram removing the need for it to be embossed. We have also introduced an online service for users to apply for caveats (a legal document that prevents a grant of probate from being issued).

There have been some temporary delays in the issuing of probate in the last two months as we move to new systems. These are being resolved and delays are reducing.

We are also currently testing an online service for legal professionals and this will be nationally available from summer 2019.

**Family Public Law**

Reforms to family public law are focused on ensuring the court, parties and their representatives have access to the right information, at the right time, to help decide the best outcomes for children involved in public law cases. In particular, they will allow evidence to be submitted and shared electronically and cases to be managed much more securely and effectively. It will also allow orders to be written and produced in real time in court.

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**Divorce Online feedback**

“The online divorce [test] has been a triumphant success and shows, to my mind conclusively, that this is – must be – the way of the future.”

– Sir James Munby, President of the Family Division until July 2018

“Marvellous, pain-free and less stressful than the paper form.”

– User
(in many cases), meaning that everyone leaves with immediate clarity on what has been agreed.

Following extensive development and testing, the ‘Shared Storage Solution’ has been released and tested in Swansea to allow documents to be securely shared between local authorities and family courts.

In January 2019, the first phase of a new digital system was launched to enable local authorities to complete and submit a C110a application for care and supervision orders along with the supporting documents required by the family court to issue and progress the case online. The system incorporates the new shared storage technology and local authorities are now able to upload the bundle to cases. The system is being tested in four family court sites in Portsmouth, Stoke, Swansea and West London.

We have also changed the content and structure of the application to make it simpler and quicker for local authorities to provide the right information to assist the gatekeeper in making their decision, and reduce unnecessary delay.

By the end of April 2019, more than 100 applications had been issued and progressed through to gatekeeping online.

In parallel to making improvements to our existing service, we will be developing the next stages, including case management, evidence management and orders. This part of the work will include respondent and children’s solicitors and by March 2020 will lead to us testing an end-to-end service to take those using the service from application through to final order.

Adoption

We are also digitising the adoption process for both placed-adoption and step-parent/family-adoption cases, developing systems to manage these cases more securely and effectively.

In adoption, as part of our initial phase, we have undertaken user research with courts, local authorities, adopters and Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS). The findings from this research will help us to understand the complexities of these cases and shape the approach to developing the future service design.

We will further develop and test our ideas and initial designs and engage further with our users, focussing on the application process, issuing new proceedings and creating a directions order ready to test with users by March 2020.

Private Family Law

We will develop and implement systems and processes to enable private family law litigants to initiate and manage their cases online – again, fitting together seamlessly. We expect to begin this work in summer 2020.

Tony Donoghue, 55, from East Yorkshire was the sole executor of his father’s estate.

“It’s easy to use, fast and convenient. I found it so easy and efficient. It’s exactly what you want from an online government system – if only everything could be this easy!”

“Once I sent everything off, I was sent the grant of probate within a week. I think that really reinforced for me what a good and efficient service it is.

“If you’re already dealing with HMRC online for inheritance tax purposes, then having probate online too is far easier. Having everything in one place is the way things are going; it’s much more user friendly.

“Had I been told I had to go to a probate registry in person to swear an oath I wouldn’t have begrudged it – if that’s the process then that’s what you do – but my dad’s estate was relatively straightforward and I don’t think anyone who’s dealing with a straightforward estate would want to do that.”
Tribunals

We will create simpler processes and online routes into our tribunals, allowing people to manage and resolve disputes fairly and speedily. This will include new tools to support continuous online resolution with helpful ways for judges to communicate directly with parties and further development of the roles of case officers to support the judiciary.

What our reforms have delivered so far:

- More than 14,000 people have submitted Social Security and Child Support online appeals against Personal Independence Payment and Employment Support Allowance benefit decisions.
- Appellants can use Track Your Appeal Online, and receive text and email alerts letting them know what is happening.
- We have launched a small pilot digital service for Immigration and Asylum Appeals, and started testing the use of tribunals case workers in asylum appeals in two hearing centres to reduce delays.

By the end of this year, we will have:

- Tested continuous online resolution software with a small number of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) appellants to enable them to engage directly with the tribunal online instead of having to travel to attend a hearing.
- Extended online appeals against PIP and Employment Support Allowance decisions to Scotland.
- We will have a new case management system in all our employment tribunal offices by the end of the year.
- Begun a project to apply reformed services developed in the SSCS, IAC and others in specialist tribunals.
Social Security and Child Support

Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) reform will transform the current service for people appealing decisions made by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It allows people to start, progress and, where appropriate, have their case decided online without the need to attend a tribunal hearing in person. It will also significantly reduce the amount of paper in the system by digitising documentation and evidence.

We are designing the system around those who use it in order that we make the service simpler to understand, removing unnecessary stress and ultimately providing a quicker resolution of the appeal. We will continue to ensure the service is accessible to all who need it and will maintain impartiality and consistency.

We launched the Submit Your Appeal service last year allowing people to appeal a benefit decision online. It includes a function to digitally upload any evidence to support the appeal, such as photographs, medical reports or other relevant information. The service for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) appeals has now been rolled out throughout England and Wales and by the end of March over 13,000 appeals have been received for both. We plan to expand Submit Your Appeal to Universal Credit in summer 2019.

In addition, those submitting their appeal online in England and Wales can also sign up to the Track Your Appeal service, which allows the appeal to be tracked online through its key stages.

This includes information on when the appeal is received, when a hearing is booked and when a decision is made. These updates can be sent as emails or text messages.

We have also been developing software to support ‘continuous online hearings’, allowing judges and panel members to ask appellants and the DWP questions and get responses to allow them to make decisions. We will be testing this with a small number of selected online PIP appeals cases in summer 2019. This will allow users to engage directly with the tribunal online instead of having to travel to attend a hearing.

In the preliminary stages, appeals using continuous online resolution will focus on users who are digitally proficient – for example, people who have submitted their appeal online and who have their own email address. The technology we have developed has been user-tested to make it accessible and easy to use. Further evaluation will be done by using exit surveys. This feedback will be used to refine the system further.

We will also be scanning PIP appeals submitted on paper so they can be stored and progressed digitally to increase the speed and efficiency of dealing with all cases, regardless of how they are submitted. We intend to start this in summer 2019.
Immigration and Asylum

This project is focused on delivering an efficient and transparent Immigration and Asylum (IA) tribunal service that is simple, fair and accessible for everyone using it. It will build on the developments made and lessons learnt for the Social Security and Child Support Chamber, and will similarly enable cases to be resolved online where that is appropriate, as well as supporting the use of video and face-to-face hearings.

A new Immigration and Asylum Appeals digital service successfully launched in January 2019, at two Hearing Centres, Taylor House and Manchester. The digital appeals service is a pilot, which currently involves six law firms submitting online appeals relating to ‘protection’ or ‘revocation of protection’ on behalf of their clients. During the pilot, appeals will be submitted electronically by legal representatives and will be received instantaneously by both HMCTS and the Home Office. The appeals will then progress digitally via the online service from initial application, through to hearing and Judicial decision.

A key feature of the digital service is the role of tribunal caseworkers. Once an appeal is submitted by the legal representative, all of the subsequent HMCTS case management activities are carried out by the specially trained caseworker under the supervision of the judiciary.

The caseworker actively liaises with the Home Office to request evidence, sends directions to parties to comply with providing information, and ensures legal representatives submitting legal arguments comply with a set of Pilot Directions.

For all the pilot cases submitted online, the tribunal caseworker must be satisfied all information required to hold a hearing is complete, before they list the appeal for a Judicial hearing. Through effective case management of an appeal, we expect the overall number of cases requiring a hearing to reduce. For cases that do require a hearing, it is expected that hearings will be shorter (as a result of narrowing the issues through active case management) and that the number of appeals which are adjourned because of missing or incomplete information, will be significantly less.
Our first pilot cases are due for hearing in June. We will be testing the use of screens, recording equipment and digital bundles for these cases in London and Manchester.

The project is continuing to collect information from all its pilot service users. User research from the teams involved in immigration and asylum appeals, and from HMCTS reform projects, will help to further develop the IA appeals digital service. We will also continue to review the changes made to the digital appeals process, including the Home Office review and the Pilot Tribunal directions. This information will help to shape the future service when more users and appeal types are introduced into the pilot service throughout 2019.

**Upper Tribunal**

This project is focussed on new digital ways of working across the Upper Tribunal (and is the same project as described in the Royal Courts of Justice civil section, above).

**Employment Tribunals**

We have brought forward the first phase of this project as a result of the modifications to the overall reform programme. It will replace the existing case management system with the new Core Case Data (CCD) and link it with the existing online claim system. Work is well underway and we expect to start pilots in our Manchester and Glasgow employment tribunal offices in summer 2019.

We expect CCD will be used in all offices by December 2019. This will make the system easier to use for everyone, including the public, our staff and judges. The next phase of the project will introduce other capabilities – such as bulk scanning of claims – as well as potentially establishing a caseworker role (as in the Immigration and Asylum chamber set out above).

**Specialist Tribunals**

This project will establish new ways of working across the specialist tribunals, developed on a tribunal-by-tribunal basis, but re-using elements of what has been developed for SSCS, IA and others where that works to provide a good service quickly. This has been planned for later in the programme to enable it to learn from the earlier projects, and it will start in November 2019.

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**Track Your Appeal feedback**

“*A million times better than the written appeal process and is better for the environment due to less paper wastage.*”

– User

“It was easy to use as I was able to state exactly the areas that I wanted to appeal by the prompts given to use. Thank you.”

– User
Infrastructure and enabling services

This area of the reform programme will improve systems and processes across jurisdictions to support modern ways of working to ensure we provide the best support and service to all our users.
What our reforms have delivered so far:

- Two new **Courts & Tribunal Service Centres** in Stoke and Birmingham to begin to provide a national service for the public seeking information on their cases.
- **Wi-Fi has been installed in all of our courts and tribunals** and more than 80,000 professionals are accessing Wi-Fi in our courts each week.
- We have tested **fully video hearings** in the tax tribunal and further pilots are underway in civil and family courts in Manchester and Birmingham.
- We have closed underused and inappropriate **court buildings** raising £124m to invest more effectively in improving our justice system.
- An **Assisted Digital service** is providing help and support to people using our online services.

By the end of this year, we will have:

- Further upgraded the **Wi-Fi** in all criminal courts.
- Completed further testing on **video hearings** in civil and family courts in Birmingham and Manchester.
- Begin pilots testing **Flexible Operating Hours** in civil and family courts in Brentford and Manchester.
- Procured an external supplier of our digital **Scheduling And Listing** tool.

We have grouped these cross-cutting projects and services into the categories over the page.
Capabilities

Courts & Tribunals Service Centres
We want our physical courts and tribunals to be focused on trials and hearings, and our administrative work to be done with more consistency and resilience, and so we are moving administrative processing into dedicated Courts & Tribunals Service Centres (CTSCs).

CTSCs will also be the first port of call for the public wanting information on their cases – allowing us to answer calls, emails and queries much more quickly and reliably, and developing specialisms to improve consistency and accuracy.

The first two CTSCs – in Stoke and Birmingham – began operating earlier this year and are providing support to our first reformed services (divorce, probate, the Single Justice Service and Social Security and Child Support). The third will be in Loughborough and is expected to be operational by May 2020.

We have developed bespoke ways we train and support our staff in these centres. Staff joining a CTSC will receive two weeks of classroom training followed by the CTSC learning academy for the next six weeks. We aim to give our staff a deeper understanding of the system and the role they play within it, which will help them provide the best support to our users.

Assisted Digital

Our aim is to create online services that are so intuitive and easy to use that most people will choose to use them. However, for those that don’t find going online easy, we are offering help and support, and keeping (and improving) paper alternatives too.

The digital support offered to users is tailored to their needs and abilities, and is provided by telephone or face-to-face. We provide assistance using our online services and do not offer legal advice (though we will signpost people to this, if needed).

Our assisted digital services are being designed with extensive user research and testing, and we have worked with charities and the advice sector to ensure that these work for everyone.

Staff in our new CTSCs are trained to identify users who require support to use our online services and help them over the phone or refer them to a face to face appointment. We will introduce webchat and screen sharing support to help those who need support when online.

The digital inclusion charity, Good Things Foundation, is delivering free of charge face-to-face assistance via a network of local community partners, including libraries, Citizens Advice offices and community hubs. We are using 17 centres across England and Wales to try different approaches to delivery, and plan to add another seven sites this year.
For those who do not want or are unable to access support for online services, paper channels will remain and we are also improving these to make them more straightforward and accessible to use. The development of bulk scanning arrangements will enable paper-based applications and forms sent to us to be converted into digital form to ensure they can be processed efficiently internally too. We are also designing our services so you can still benefit from digital improvements if you complete a paper application, for example signing up to text notifications in our SSCS service.

**Our people**

As HMCTS changes, our staff needs will change too. Work is underway to train and develop staff, redesign roles, offer better routes for career development and progression, review policies for recruitment, retention, and redeployment, and to actively and sensitively manage the effects or uncertainties around change. We are engaging people at every stage and giving them a chance to help shape their future. We will be a smaller organisation with new skills and capabilities. Today, we have the equivalent of around 16,000 full time roles, of which 3,000 are filled by temporary or agency staff. At the end of the reform programme, we anticipate having around 11,300 full time roles. Around half will continue to work in courts and tribunals, with the other half working in CTSCs, or in headquarters or regional roles.

Some types of role – those predominantly concerned with processing paper, or re-keying between legacy systems, for example – will no longer exist; and others will change, typically becoming more skilled and involving less repetitive, routine work (as a result of better digital systems).

We will continue to have clerks and ushers (with no fewer of them per hearing than we have today and, in some cases, more) but their roles will change as technology helps them support judges and the public better. We will continue to have listing officers in the courts that have them now. We will also have staff in every court and tribunal focused on the condition of the building, and keeping the increasing digital technology in good order.

**Settings**

**The courts and tribunals estate**

The physical courtroom, and face-to-face interaction, will always play a critical role in the administration of justice. But many of our buildings have been significantly underused or are inappropriate for public use and some are located close to other buildings within our estate where services can be co-located.

Since 2015, 132 court buildings have closed following public consultations. Yet our court estate remains accessible to the majority of people.

The close proximity of courts and tribunals means that the majority of users will not face onerous journeys. Of 332 operational court and tribunal buildings providing face to face services, 245 are within 5 miles, 280 are within 10 miles, and 304 are within 15 miles of another court or tribunal. The move to focusing on key strategic locations will mean that more densely populated centres will have improved access to better quality court and tribunal buildings.

We also expect to see fewer hearings over the course of the reform programme as a result of the introduction of other routes such as more mediation, continuous online resolution, and fully video hearings, particularly with respect to administrative and procedural matters.

We therefore published our response to the Fit for the Future consultation setting out the principles upon which future decisions relating to the court and tribunal estate will be taken, particularly in relation to reform. These give greater reassurance on issues relating to user travel times and physical access to court and tribunal buildings, and include our undertaking not to make changes to the physical court estate consequent on reform until we can demonstrate that the programme has delivered real changes that give people new and better ways of doing things first.

We are also investing in new and refurbished physical facilities in key strategic locations and an additional £15m, announced in the Budget last year, has been invested in 450 improvements across 206 sites in 2018/19. This is on top of the original allocation of £89million.

We also want to ensure that our buildings provide the best possible service to all those who use them, particularly vulnerable people. Our Future Design Guide sets out the standards we will apply when we build new buildings or hearing rooms, and when we refurbish existing buildings.
Flexible Operating Hours

Most courts sit between 10am and 4pm, and we want to discover whether using courts more outside these hours could allow us to hear more cases in each courtroom, and give people more flexibility about when they can come to court.

Following feedback to our initial proposals in 2017, we have developed two pilots in the civil and family jurisdictions to test flexible operating hours - in Brentford County Court and Manchester Civil Justice Centre.

Local Implementation Teams involving partners across the justice system are in place in both locations and are responsible for the detailed design of the pilots in each site, including the start date of the pilots. The pilots will run for six months.

An independent evaluation of the pilots to assess the impact for all participants will be carried out before any future decisions on the use of flexible operating hours are made.

Scheduling and Listing

This project is designing a digital tool and new processes for supporting the administration of scheduling and listing cases. This will increase efficiency, reduce delays and make it easier and quicker for listing officers to perform their role.

Listing is a judicial function, and the tool will support this by improving collection and management of a wide range of information about judicial availability, rooms and needs of court users. This in turn will provide more comprehensive and reliable data about how successfully lists are balancing competing demands.

We recently tested a simple listing tool in a small number of courts. Feedback so far has helped the project to develop the design ensuring that the needs of court staff, professional users and the judiciary are met. We expect to have contracted a supplier by the end of this year to provide our solution.

Technology

Video Hearings

Fully video hearings are where the judge and all the parties join the hearing by video. They have the potential to reduce disruption, costs and inconvenience associated with court users having to travel back and forth to court, or spend time in a waiting room to progress a straightforward matter. They could also allow urgent hearings to take place even when those involved are distant from one another. The arrangements we are working on will enable people to use their own computers, without the need for participants to access specialist video conferencing equipment.

Video hearings should enable courts to deal with certain proceedings, particularly progress and preliminary hearings, in a more proportionate, flexible and efficient way. But video will only be suitable for some types of hearing and the final decision on whether a video hearing is appropriate will be a judicial one.

The principles of open justice will be upheld and protected as we introduce fully video hearings – we are developing proposals for remote viewing, if the judge is not sat in open court.

We first tested a prototype in immigration and asylum case management hearings involving legal professionals and Home Office representatives in October 2017 and from March to May last year we undertook a small-scale pilot in tax tribunals. The latter was evaluated by independent academics from the London School of Economics who reported “high levels of satisfaction with video hearings” from public and professional users, particularly due to the practical advantage of not having to travel to a physical court.

They evaluation reported that the hearing was clear, easy to navigate, and user-friendly. We published a blog on how we expect video hearings to be used in different jurisdictions last year. We plan to do more testing in the tax tribunal in the coming months.

We are also carrying out further small-scale testing in civil and family jurisdictions - in Manchester Civil and Family Justice Centre and Birmingham Civil and Family Justice Centre.

In Manchester, this testing has included urgent injunction applications often made by victims of domestic abuse in cases of intimidation or threat of violence. This category of hearings are often held at short notice, and usually involve a solicitor and their client waiting to appear before a judge at a court building, which adds extra stress at an already extremely difficult time.

In the pilots, the applicant and their legal representative appear instead via video from a law firm’s office – removing the need to travel to court and wait in an unfamiliar environment. An evaluation of this further work will be carried out by independent academics and published on completion.
Common digital capabilities

There are more than 30 common digital capabilities needed to support and underpin multiple reformed services. These include functions to enable users to upload documents like marriage certificates, but also more complicated things like the Core Case Data system, which will replace existing case management systems across civil, family and tribunals, allowing easier access to case materials and removing the remaining paper files from our courts.

The aim is to design and build these capabilities so that they can be re-used across all services rather than being separately designed for each – which will also help with the usability of the system for staff, and for professionals who use many different parts of it. Some have already been developed – Core Case Data, for example, is already supporting live online services in divorce, probate and SSCS, and security and access management systems are being rolled out too.

A fee register has also been developed to enable users to make payments online and a text notification system is already in use in SSCS, and will be extended to other services. The capability to generate documents such as a decree nisi or notice of issue using the PDF document format is also available, with plans to develop this capability further so that templates can be previewed and edited.

We will develop digital court bundles, with the ability to annotate and share appropriately. We will also develop systems to allow professional users to manage multiple cases of different kinds, tracking progress and seeing what needs to be done next.

The extension of the reform programme will give us more time to develop the full suite of common components once and well, before using them in the next set of services – avoiding the risk of service-by-service developments that don’t integrate as well as they could.

Upgrading Wi-Fi and IT infrastructure

Our goal is to provide a Wi-Fi service to enable all who attend court to work digitally anywhere in our court buildings. Wi-Fi has now been installed in all Civil, Family and Tribunal court buildings and we are in the process of upgrading the Wi-Fi in criminal courts to expand its strength and coverage too (currently, the Wi-Fi service has been fully upgraded in 54 criminal court buildings). A new Wi-Fi service, accessible across the Royal Courts of Justice (RCJ) is now available to all public and professional users.

Screens for Litigants in Person and Witnesses

Our aim is to allow unrepresented litigants and witnesses to view electronic case material in our courts and hearing venues by installing touch-screen devices on the benches and witness stands.

The early pilots at Hull Combined and Central London Family Courts are being extended to all tribunal chambers and civil courts. Testing of the hardware is expected to be completed by the end of August 2019 in anticipation of national roll-out in alignment with the other digital services.

A partner at a firm representing a woman whose injunction application was heard at a fully video hearing said:

“Domestic abuse clients’ lives have been turned upside down they often have multiple meetings and commitments to attend such as police interviews, meeting social workers and housing as well as obtaining court orders; video hearings are more respectful of that situation than having to travel to court and sit and wait for a hearing all day.

“Accessing the hearing has made a real difference to our client, she was a referral from victim support who commented how convenient it was for the client. The victim was too scared to go home last night and doing this over video has really made a positive impact.”
Projects summary

This summary describes the live projects in the reform programme with start and end dates.

Some of the timelines have changed following the previous edition of the Reform Update due to the extension of the reform programme.

See page 5 for more information.

Criminal Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>Proposed end date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Justice Service</td>
<td>Providing all the services needed by the magistrates’ court to administer the Single Justice Procedure including a new online digital case management system which equates to 850,000 cases each year.</td>
<td>February 2017</td>
<td>March 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Remand Hearings</td>
<td>Transforming the way in which hearings for defendants held in custody could be administered in the future.</td>
<td>July 2017</td>
<td>October 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Hearings</td>
<td>Ensuring that criminal trials and sentencing hearings are enabled by the right technology and physical environment in the courtroom to ensure the smooth running of hearings on the day, building on the increasing use of technology that we see already in the criminal courts. The project will also deliver quicker and more reliable sharing of results from hearings to all parties.</td>
<td>July 2017</td>
<td>September 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Common Platform           | The Common Platform forms the critical digital delivery components of the Crime Programme. The Common Platform is intended to deliver a unified way of digital working for HMCTS and CPS staff and the wider participants in the criminal case management process. Through digital working, we will improve the experience for court users and those working within the Criminal Justice System, whilst reducing cost and maintaining transparency.

Common Platform core digital delivery includes HMCTS case handling, hearing and resulting minimal viable product; HMCTS case handling optimisation (includes case progression, and online plea and allocation); CPS and shared case handling.

Youth, Case Progression and Online Plea and Allocation have all been incorporated into future Common Platform work. | July 2017 | March 2021 |
### Civil, family and tribunals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>Proposed end date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Divorce Online</strong></td>
<td>Delivering a transformed divorce service for people who want to end their marriage or civil partnership. This project will also reduce the HMCTS resource required to administer those cases. A digital service for applications for: divorce, nullity or judicial separation of marriage or civil partnerships, and online payment of fees.</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>October 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probate Online</strong></td>
<td>Implementing a streamlined, digital system to speed up and simplify the process for users who apply for a grant of probate in non-contentious cases.</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>October 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Security and Child Support</strong></td>
<td>Establishing a new, digital process to improve the experience of appellants, allowing them to submit, track and manage their appeal online. This will include verification checks and an online listing tool.</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>November 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil Money Claims Online</strong></td>
<td>Creating a new online process for the management of relatively simple and lower value civil claims. The project will also provide the capability for digital working for civil claims.</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>November 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RCJ and Upper Tribunals</strong></td>
<td>Delivering a digital case management system for the civil jurisdictions of the High Court and Court of Appeal, Upper Tribunal, the Employment Appeal Tribunal, Regional Business and Property Courts and District Registries</td>
<td>October 2016</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Public Law and Adoption</strong></td>
<td>Transforming our public family law function to enable users, including local authorities, to start and manage cases online for all public family law and adoption cases.</td>
<td>September 2017</td>
<td>August 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigration and Asylum</strong></td>
<td>Developing the administration of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber’s service so that it can adapt according to different needs of users. It will enable case resolution both online and by video.</td>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>September 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil Enforcement and Possession</strong></td>
<td>Reviewing the structure of civil enforcement to deliver better information and increase the likelihood of successful enforcement. This includes increased guidance, a simplified process, and a digital system to increase efficiencies. Making the accelerated possession claims process digital. As an interim step, automation of administrative processes will be implemented to make processes more efficient and save money. Considerations are being given to ways of standardising the administration of possession cases.</td>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>July 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Tribunal projects**         | Establishing new ways of working across the remaining tribunals, developed on a tribunal-by-tribunal basis.  
*Employment Tribunals has been subsumed within the overall Tribunal project.* | November 2019 | November 2021  |
| **Family Private Law**        | Implementing systems and processes to enable private family law litigants to initiate and manage their cases online.                                                                                         | September 2020 | March 2022       |
## Infrastructure and enabling services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>Proposed end date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Video Hearings  
(previously Virtual Hearings) | Implementing hearings in a digital environment outside traditional courts or tribunals. Developing the capacity to provide ‘On the Day Management’ of hearings, where the hearing attendees can be welcomed and communicated with, and can have ‘side conversations’ with each other, an improved telephone conferencing system will be delivered as part of the project. | Throughout entirety of reform programme | |
| Scheduling and Listing | Implementing a scheduling and listing tool and new processes to be used by court listing officers to support their work. | May 2017 | October 2021 |
| Flexible Operating Hours  
(feasibility study) | Completing a test and evaluation across two sites in different locations and jurisdictions to examine the feasibility of flexible, extended operating hours for hearings, including an independent evaluation of the pilots. | Autumn 2019 | Summer 2020 |
| Assisted Digital | Providing support to members of the public (including litigants in person) who have limited digital capability or who are unable to access resources and information digitally – including web-chat, telephone and face to face support. | September 2017 | March 2022 |
| Bulk Scanning and Printing | Developing a service which will remove our reliance on paper and provide greater flexibility on how operational activities are undertaken. Designing systems and processes to support a national printing and scanning capability, for users who continue to use paper channels. | September 2016 | December 2019 |
| Courts, Tribunals and Regional Tier | Developing a new organisational design for the staff in courts and tribunals. | August 2017 | March 2023 |
| Courts and Tribunals Service Centres (CTSCs) | Delivering a number of centralised case administration centres for HMCTS in England and Wales by consolidating administrative activity. | April 2017 | March 2023 |
| Estates Reform Project 1 (ERP1)  
(courts and tribunals estate) | Implementing the decisions made by ministers under that project and removing surplus capacity. | September 2015 | October 2019 |
| Estates Reform Project 2 (ERP2)  
(courts and tribunals estate) | Continually assessing the potential for further consolidation of the estate as reform is delivered based on the principles set out in *Fit for the Future*. The property elements of the Reform Programme have a longer tail beyond the end of the transformation programme due to the fact that rationalisation of the estate is dependent on the impact of the wider reforms, and the lead-times associated with exiting and disposing of property. | August 2016 | March 2027 |
<p>| Facilities Management Re-procurement project | Facilities Management and security service for the HMCTS Estate that support operational business-as-usual, while also supporting the delivery of the reform programme. | July 2016 | November 2020 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>Proposed end date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IT Infrastructure – Wi-Fi</strong></td>
<td>Delivering Wi-Fi in all courts and tribunals (already installed Wi-Fi in 99% of courts and tribunals). Upgrade of HMCTS Wi-Fi in crime sites.</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>December 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IT Infrastructure – Video Hearings (VH) Hardware</strong></td>
<td>Providing video conferencing equipment in Courts and tribunals to support video hearings.</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>November 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IT Infrastructure – Screens</strong></td>
<td>Implementing Screens in civil and family courts and tribunals to enable users and judicial office holders to access and view evidence and court documents electronically. Testing of the hardware is expected to complete by the end of July-August 2019 in anticipation of national rollout in alignment with the Reform digital services.</td>
<td>July 2018</td>
<td>December 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **People and cultural transformation**     | Focusing on the skilled and dedicated people who work in HMCTS, it includes five areas:  
  • designing the future of HMCTS organisation;  
  • developing future job profiles for HMCTS staff;  
  • increasing engagement of staff – both in the current programme of change, and more widely;  
  • ensuring we have policies and approaches that support recruitment, retention, redundancies and redeployment; and  
  • identifying the new skills and capabilities required in the HMCTS workforce, and helping to deliver them.                                                                                                      | November 2016 | December 2022       |
| **Data and management information**        | Consciously and deliberately planning the data and management information that we want our new systems to provide, and which will be the foundation of further improvement – allowing us to see much more readily where there are blockages or difficulties, and whether the things we are doing to address them are working.                                                                                                      | Throughout entirety of reform programme |          |
| **Approved Enforcement Agency (AEA)**      | Covering the re-procurement of Approved Enforcement Agency (AEA) contracts, due to expire, including a review of how this service is provided.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | August 2016 | April 2020          |
| **Enterprise Performance Framework (EPF)** | Developing a new performance framework to measure the performance of HMCTS and allow data to drive future improvement                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | July 2017   | January 2020        |
Completed or suspended projects

Following change in business case, some projects have been prioritised and others suspended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>Completed/ Suspended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham Estates Rationalisation Project (BERP)</td>
<td>Rationalising the HMCTS Civil, Family and Tribunals (CFT) estate in Birmingham to realise long term savings. Delivering a Birmingham CFT hearing estate that is fit for purpose and can withstand future change.</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
<td>✔️ April 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial Fees and Expenses Payment System (JFEPS)</td>
<td>Improving the payment of fees and expenses to all court judges and tribunal judges and panel members. The project is creating an online system to handle the processing of claims and expenses, which now includes fee-paid members.</td>
<td>December 2015</td>
<td>✔️ May 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Mark-Up</td>
<td>A court resulting tool for legal advisers and court associates in the magistrates’ court, for all criminal cases. The service is a digital process to record and transmit the results of the judicial decision makers in magistrates’ courts to the current case management system (Libra). It is an interim system, and will in due course be replaced by the ‘full’ Common Platform, which will replace Libra rather than integrating with it, and so be easier to use.</td>
<td>October 2014</td>
<td>✔️ March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Court and Tribunal Design Guide</td>
<td>Defining the principles and standards upon which HMCTS will base future building design. This was published in May 2019.</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
<td>✔️ May 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court of Protection</td>
<td>Intended to enable people using the Court of Protection to initiate and manage their cases online.</td>
<td></td>
<td>❌ Suspended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforming Compliance and Enforcement</td>
<td>Enforcing court orders and collecting historic criminal debt will continue unchanged after further upgrades to the service, including systems and technology, were put on hold.</td>
<td></td>
<td>❌ Suspended</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N.B. Figures used in this document are drawn from management information and are not official statistics.*
We want to hear your views

As our reform programme gathers pace, we want to continue the conversation with you. You can find out about our news and events, and tell us what you think in any of the following ways:

https://insidehmcts.blog.gov.uk/
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