



HM Courts &  
Tribunals Service

# Justice matters

How our change programme will make  
services better for everyone who uses them



# We're transforming the way we deliver justice because **justice matters**



## Our guiding principles

- **Just** – the independent judiciary are supported by processes that are modern, transparent and consistent
- **Proportionate** – the cost, speed and complexity are appropriate to the nature of the case
- **Accessible** – affordable, intelligible, and available for use by all



## Today's world

In the **modern world**, services need to take advantage of technology, and be designed around the people who use them. **We need a justice system to match.**

Justice is often seen as a long and complicated process. We have old court buildings, a lot of paper, and it can be hard for people to find the support they may need to access justice today. We're changing all of that.



## Investing for change

We're radically and permanently improving the way we deliver justice in the UK. This means **large-scale investment** in better systems and processes, and thinking again about the ways we've always done things.

How will our £1bn investment be used?

- Building a digital system for criminal justice - linking police, prosecutors and courts - putting an end to slow paper processes
- Bringing digital technology to civil and family courts and tribunals, including developing a new online court for fast resolution of simple matters
- Training and developing people, including in digital skills and excellent customer service



## Customer-driven modern technology

Services will be consistent, predictable and easy to understand.

**Online**, people will be able to:

- Find information and guidance about the justice system
- Start and progress their case
- Access information about their case
- Resolve disputes through the online court

Support will be available for users who need help with digital services.



## Customer-driven modern settings

In our modern world, justice can and should be delivered where it's most appropriate, and that may not always be in person.

- We will deliver justice online and via video-links, so that for a boundary dispute or a small money claim there's usually no need to go to a physical court.
- We will have fewer, better court buildings for those cases that do need to be heard in person. Buildings will be more flexible, and we will use them more efficiently.
- Our customer service centre staff will be available by telephone and webchat, and will help people book face-to-face assisted digital support if they need it.

**We want to make the justice system easier to use and more efficient for everyone.**

**The result will be a more effective service, focused on what customers need.**

**Your opinion matters.**

**Let us know what you think, or find out more by contacting: [changesomethingthatmatters@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:changesomethingthatmatters@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk)**



## A better system for everyone who uses it

Our justice system matters – for every citizen and for the role we play in the world. In just a few short years we will have revolutionised how justice is administered for the people at its heart. The experience will be one where everyone who uses the courts and tribunals feels that they've been treated swiftly, fairly and with respect.

To achieve this, we'll use an investment of around £1bn to **transform the setting of justice**, to **transform our technology** and to **transform our skills and capabilities**.

By centring all our energies on delivering a better customer experience and harnessing the power of technology to

enable us to work better and smarter, we are going to build a modern system for administering justice which will benefit those who need it most, for generations to come.

### Probate

We are developing an easy-to-use probate system. Currently, the service for probate can be time consuming with the completion of the form alone taking many weeks because of the information that needs to be gathered. It is also complex, with the result that 40% of applications need some re-working. Our online system will help us get it right the first time through a new streamlined application process.





## Our customer-driven modern world

**We all live in a customer-driven modern world. And we need a justice system to match.**

But justice is seen as a long and elaborate process. One that's played out in old, austere courtrooms. It's not fast, or efficient, or designed around the needs of the people who use it – all the things you'd expect from a modern service.

So we're setting out to radically and permanently improve the delivery of justice in the UK.

This means a large-scale investment. And not just revising systems and processes. It means thinking differently and challenging assumptions that

underpin the age-old way of doing things (some of which have been around for centuries).

It's a big undertaking. But one we're going to achieve. And the result will be a system that's in step with the way customers expect a modern service to be.

### Divorce

For those people who decide to divorce, the process will be simpler. The majority of these cases involve a very straightforward court process. Only around 2% of cases are contested. Yet the rules and forms are long and complex and have changed little since the 1970s. We will simplify the process and put all aspects of the service online.

### Guiding principles

**Just** – Decisions and outcomes are fair, the judiciary are supported by processes that are modern, transparent and consistent, and like cases are treated alike. A strong judiciary and meritocratic legal professions draw on the widest available pool of talents, to maintain public confidence and strengthen the rule of law.

**Proportionate** – The cost, speed, complexity, and degree of adversarial

protection make sense and are appropriate to the nature and value of the dispute at issue. An effective system will save people time and money.

**Accessible** – The system is affordable, intelligible and available for use by all, convenient for those who cannot easily attend in person, and supportive of those not comfortable with the law or technology.



## Customer-driven modern technology

**There's only so much we can do with a pen, a rainforest-worth of paper and a photocopier. It's time to change.**

Our current system has evolved over hundreds of years. And the result is a service that's built around processes and cases rather than people.

But we want to offer a service that allows customers to access what they need, when they need it, in the way that's most convenient to them. And by making better use of technology, that's what we'll be able to do.

### Guiding principles

1. Build from new and build what the user needs.
2. Make small adjustments at frequent intervals rather than introducing a whole new system in one go.
3. There is never a 'finished' product.

### In-court technology

- A new, joined-up system will mean the courts, police and prosecution service can easily share files so victims and witnesses don't have the frustration of trials being delayed.
- Video link systems will mean more vulnerable victims and witnesses will be able to give evidence from somewhere they feel safe. They also provide a more efficient and cost effective alternative to the physical movement of people from prison where appropriate.
- The Digital Case System (DCS), a web based digital document tool, is reducing the inefficiencies of paper and allowing evidence to be shared between parties. Already tens of millions of pages have been digitised – with the amount of paper taken out of courts reaching well over the height of the Burj Khalifa, the tallest structure in the world.

- Digital in-court presentation equipment will allow the presentation of digital data, such as CCTV, direct from parties' laptops.

### What are we going to do?

- Reduce the number of IT platforms we use in HMCTS, to create fewer, more integrated and manageable systems.
- Develop a digital platform that gives customers a single, easily navigated, point of entry for the entire court system.
- Simplify our processes and use technology to help us process low value disputes online, rather than in court.

### What are the benefits...

#### ...for customers?

- Consistent, predictable and easy to understand processes.
- Help when and how they need it.
- Ability to pay, plead and submit applications online and access the right information when and where they need it.

#### ...for court efficiency?

- Cases will be removed from the physical courts and dealt with online, freeing us to deal with in-court cases more quickly.
- A central system will mean we can manage demand and allocate hearings much more efficiently.
- With smarter, digital working there'll be a massive reduction in the amount of paper we use and the cost of couriering that paper.



## Customer-driven modern settings

**Historically, the question “Where will justice be delivered?” had only one answer: in court.**

But justice can and should be delivered where it’s most appropriate.

So we’re going to create a new automated way of handling the least serious cases, such as when someone admits to not paying a bus fare. These online services will be easy to use, but our customer service centres will also make sure someone is available to help people through our services.

### Guiding principles

1. Proportionality – only apply the full force of a judge and courtroom for very difficult issues, not preliminary hearings to agree process or least serious crimes.
2. Strip away unnecessary hearings, redundant paper forms, duplication and mistakes.
3. Innovate with our buildings, both courts and customer service centres.

### Resolving less serious cases online

Instead of going to court people accused of less serious offences such as non-payment of transport fares will be able to log on to an online system to see the evidence against them before entering a plea. If they plead guilty, they can opt in to an online system which allows them to view the penalty, accept the conviction and penalty, and pay their fine. This approach will allow defendants to conclude their case faster and with greater certainty, and means magistrates and courts can focus their resources and attentions where they are most needed. Though if someone wants to go to court, they will still be able to.

### What are we going to do?

- Review and reduce the size of our estate, sell buildings we no longer need and renovate those we do.
- Create online hearing centres to handle the least serious cases, supported by customer service centres.
- We may open courts for longer, or at weekends, and we’ll use video technology to make it easier for customers to attend hearings and give evidence.

### What are the benefits...

#### ...for customers?

- Online information and services which are clearly signposted and intuitive to use.
- By simplifying the process and handling cases in a more appropriate setting, we can remove much of the confusion and anxiety that people experience when attending court.
- Far less need to physically appear in court; if they have to be in court, they will be fully informed about what is happening and will spend the minimum amount of time there.
- A physical environment that enables citizens to present their case well.

#### ...for court efficiency?

- We’ll cut the cost of maintaining our courts by having fewer buildings, used in smarter ways.
- Cases will progress more smoothly and swiftly because only those people who need to be in court will be there.



## Customer-driven modern capabilities

### Creating a better customer experience will change how courts and tribunals service employees will work.

The focus of the work our people do will shift to support customers in new and better ways – increasingly from centralised locations. The result will be a smaller workforce, but everyone in that workforce will be equipped to deliver the services customers need.

#### Guiding principles

1. We will equip our people with the skills and knowledge to do well in the modern, digital world.
2. We will always act with fairness and respect, giving people the opportunity to influence things.

### What are we going to do?

- Create a National Standard to make sure the delivery of justice is consistent wherever you happen to be in the country.
- Provide training and support to develop the skills and capabilities we need for a customer-focused service.

### What are the benefits...

#### ...for customers?

- A consistent, more customer-focused service.
- Staff who are trained and empowered to deliver the services customers need.
- Highly professional customer service centres providing support to any customer who needs it.

#### The online court

We will be setting up a new online court in which anyone - regardless of their legal expertise - can progress a civil claim. Users of the system will answer a series of straightforward questions which take them down the right legal route leading to the possibility first of the parties sorting out the dispute themselves. If that does not resolve the case then trained online facilitators will attempt mediation but finally, if that does not succeed, members of the judiciary will pass judgement on the case on the basis of electronic documents.

#### Help with Fees

People who are entitled to financial assistance to help them pay court or tribunal fees can now apply for this online, making the process quicker and simpler for them.  
[www.gov.uk/get-help-with-court-fees](http://www.gov.uk/get-help-with-court-fees)

#### Get involved

What questions do you have about our change programme? What ideas do you have that could improve our service? To let us know, email [changesomethingthatmatters@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:changesomethingthatmatters@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk)

