



Family Public Law and Adoption Reform Project



Project vision:

To make the overall court process in relation to family public law and adoption more efficient, ensuring the court, parties and their representatives have access to the right information at the right time to support the court in its role to decide on the best outcomes for the children involved in public law cases and public & private adoption cases.

Hello!

Welcome to our project newsletter, which we hope will:

- Provide clear, concise, consistent and timely communication about the progress of the project;
- Help you to understand the effect the changes might have on you;
- Act as a complementary communication channel to forums and meetings; and
- Advise you how and where to find further information.

Please do share the newsletter with your colleagues, and let us know if you have any comments or feedback by contacting PublicLawAndAdoption@justice.gov.uk

What have the team been working on?

Since our last newsletter, we have hit our target milestone of going live with the 'Shared Storage Solution' in August 2018. This gives local authorities and HMCTS access to a secure, online storage facility where they can upload and share documents. Swansea are piloting this solution and to date have processed over 150 documents successfully. Feedback has been positive.

The Shared Storage Solution is a standalone system and following the successful testing in Swansea we have incorporated the functionality of that solution into the first phase of the rollout of our new digital system.

The new digital system we have been developing went live at the end of January 2019 and will allow Local Authorities to complete and submit a C110a application for care/supervision orders along with the supporting documents required by the Family court to issue and progress the case online. The product will also provide the functionality to upload the case bundle to cases. This will be tested in our 'private beta', which means that it will be trialled with a restricted number of users, allowing us to have more control on applications that go through the new service, limit the volume, start small and get feedback before rolling out the service out to a wider audience.

We have also started to progress our **Adoption** activity, to deliver a transformed digital end to end service for individuals and/or their legal representatives wishing to make an application for adoption.

We held internal and external adoption fact finding sessions in the summer, and have shared the joint outputs from both sessions, with those that attended. Building on this we recently completed our Discovery Phase to better understand the current process for users, gathering evidence (via observation and interviews) and identifying opportunities to improve ways of working.

Whilst travelling the country we have engaged with a variety of people who are involved in the Adoption service including: Local Authorities, legal advisers, Cafcass and Cafcass Cymru, adoptive parents, judges and a broad cross section of HMCTS staff. This has been invaluable to us in understanding the needs of our users.

What Happens Next?

In relation to Family Public Law, we launched our '**Private Beta**' pilot at the end of **January 2019**. This phase will test the online application through to the first stages of gatekeeping, using the improved form we have developed.

This is being piloted at four family court pilot sites: Portsmouth, Stoke, Swansea and West London and there are five Local Authorities that are taking part: Hillingdon, Portsmouth, Southampton, Staffordshire and Swansea. We plan to include more of the Local Authorities associated with these family court sites during the pilot.

Less paperwork

The aim of the digital application process is to make it easier for Local Authorities to complete and HMCTS staff to process applications, reducing paperwork. The benefits of the project will increase as we extend the digital process to more areas and realise greater efficiencies.

C110a application

The online C110a application includes improvement to the form that we identified from our user research. The changes to the structure and content of the C110a application make it simpler and quicker for Local Authorities to provide the right information, which assists the gatekeeper in making their decision and reduces unnecessary delay.

Automatic notifications

In the new system for C110a applications, Cafcass and Cafcass Cymru receive an automatic notification to make them aware that a new case has been submitted. The Family Court also receive a notification to advise that a new application has been received. Court staff and Gatekeepers are able to log into the system to view the application and documents.

The gatekeeping team are then able to consider the application and upload standard directions, which are securely shared through the digital system with local authorities and Cafcass/Cafcass Cymru.

Welsh language

Please note that, as this is a pilot, sites operating in Wales do not have a Welsh language equivalent solution during this phase. As the systems are developed, however, there will be a full Welsh language service available when launched nationally.

Training support

We have ensured that all required training and materials were provided to all involved in this testing phase, in advance of our anticipated go live date.

Further Development

In parallel to the pilot we will be developing the next stages of the Public Law service, for example case management, evidence management and orders. We will continue to work with users to ensure it sufficiently meets user needs.

For Adoption we will build a prototype of an online application and we will also concentrate on the digital capabilities that are required in Adoption, which cannot be reused from those we are developing in Public Law

The child at the forefront

The work we are doing may sound technical and IT focussed, but everything is being designed with the interest of the child at the forefront. We aim to achieve this by making the process easier and quicker for our staff, the judiciary, and professional users, helping to ensure that the best outcome for the child is reached as efficiently as possible.

Useful links and information

- Read a blog from our Service Manager [here](#).
- Find all the latest blogs from Inside HMCTS [here](#). You can also sign up for news alerts when new posts are published by clicking [here](#).
- Read the latest information and updates on the HMCTS court reform programme on our [website](#).
- To find out more about the different phases of a government project visit click [here](#).

Get in touch!

And finally, we want to hear from you - especially if you are interested in taking part in testing our digital products.

You can contact the project team directly at: PublicLawAndAdoption@justice.gov.uk

