

Financial Remedy: digital process

Financial remedy service has delivered a national end-to-end 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.

Personal applicants can [apply for a divorce online](#) through GOV.UK and legal representatives must now submit [applications for divorce on behalf of their clients](#) using MyHMCTS.

A further element of a fully digital divorce process is a digital process for financial remedy.

Background

The financial remedy project started in 2017 to move the process online to allow divorcing couples to resolve their associated financial matters. The aim was to create a more efficient service and enable the parties to view their cases and progress online. Consented Financial Remedy cases were taking 77 days on average from issue to final order in the year to April 2018. We involved stakeholders from the beginning, starting with an inception event with the judiciary and operational teams. It was important to ensure our stakeholders were involved with the conception and planned enhancements to move the process online. The Department for Work and Pensions and pension companies also signed up to the service.

Stage 1 of the pilot, 'Apply for a consent order (Form A, form D81)', began testing in the South West Regional Divorce Centre (RDC) in August 2018 with 5 members of the judiciary and 5 firms of solicitors.

The system was very much a basic Minimum Viable Product (MVP) to start with, with much of the manual work being completed by operations staff at the RDC; feedback from this was that it was time consuming and a more efficient service was needed.

We worked quickly to improve this and enabled the orders to be reviewed and completed digitally by both judges and case administration personnel.

With the system working well, we increased the number of solicitors using the system gradually and with that, increased the number of judges completing the work. We also moved the administration of the work to the Courts and Tribunals Service Centre (CTSC) in Stoke.

During the implementation process, we held a weekly call with solicitors to gather feedback and ideas on improvements for the system, this helped us to tweak and improve the system. The weekly calls were minuted. With the improvements to the system, the service is now mandated and being used by solicitors nationally with over 300 judges trained.

To ensure we were gathering feedback on the system, we had a monthly call with the divorce and financial remedy stakeholders. The calls were minuted.

We also held a weekly call with the CTSC to ensure their workload was manageable and to inform them of any enhancement rollouts to the system. These calls were also minuted.

With the process starting with an MVP, there were no real problems with implementing the new process.

Impact of the actions

Through moving the consent order application online and listening to feedback we have greatly improved the timeliness. It now takes an average of 35 days from issue to final order. However, this includes cases which are referred to a judge more than once. The average time from issue to final order is now on average 7 days.

Financial Remedy Centres (FRCs) were rolled out nationally, they deal with mainly contested applications and any consent order hearings.

Examples of positive feedback from service users and tweets received from solicitors using the system:

Love a competition but can anyone beat my record? Order submitted via online @HMCTGovuk financial remedy portal on 19 August. Approved 11 days later. thank you @ResFamilyLaw thank you HMCTS

I just want to take a moment to recognise and congratulate @HMCTGovuk for their online divorce and financial remedy procedure – decree absolute in less than 4 months from issue of petition and 9 days to approve a FRO by consent. Truly impressive, well done!

Principal Lawyer at Slater & Gordon Lawyers, divorce lawyer and collaborative lawyer.

Further information

[HMCTS Reform projects explained](#)

[HMCTS engagement groups](#)

[Engaging with HMCTS external stakeholders](#)