

Press release: HM Courts and Tribunals Service tests fully digital divorce application

The pilot scheme means someone who wants a divorce can apply online – making the process easier to understand and removing some of the stress during a difficult time for families.

Launched last year, the pilot initially allowed people seeking a divorce to use an online system which offers prompts and guidance to assist them in completing their application. They would then print off the form and send it to the court. This month HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has extended the service so that the application is now fully digital – submitting the form, sending the relevant documents, and payment. In the first week we have received 130 online applications.

The online system has drastically cut the number of applications being returned because of errors – showing a 90% improvement from paper forms. It has already gained positive feedback from people welcoming the simplified, streamlined and easy to understand system which delivers their application instantly – without the worry of it being lost in the post.

The next stages will include making the system available for use by legal representatives.

These changes are part of an over £1 billion programme to transform the court system – making it quicker, more accessible and easier to use for all.

Susan Acland-Hood, CEO of HMCTS, said:

We are investing over £1 billion to reform and modernise the justice system.

These measures are drastically cutting the number of applications returned because of errors – streamlining the process and ensuring we are best supporting people going through a difficult and often painful time.

Other examples of the government's court reforms which are making access to justice easier for everyone include:

- A paperless system, in operation at Lavender Hill Magistrates' Court, which means thousands of offenders caught dodging fares or using fraudulent tickets can now be punished more swiftly and effectively.
- A service which allows people to submit their tax appeals online – drastically cutting the number of applications being returned as incomplete or inaccurate.

- A digital programme which will allow defendants, victims, witnesses and professional users to share legal documents and cases online.