



HM Courts & Tribunals Service

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Andy Slaughter MP
Chair of the Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
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Sent by email

12 March 2025

Dear Chair,

UPDATE ON THE HMCTS REFORM PROGRAMME

Thank you for your letter of 26 February 2025 and for the opportunity to address the Committee at the session earlier this month alongside colleagues from the Ministry of Justice.

As I set out to the Committee, the Reform Programme was very ambitious. Delivering change in a large operational environment and through a global pandemic added greater complexity. Despite these challenges, we have achieved a great deal and realised the vast majority of the programme's original vision. This was summarised in my letter of 13 February and I attach a diagram of projects delivered at Annex A.

We have already delivered over £200m in savings for the programme through sale of estate, as well as £63m of annually recurring cashable savings from the changes already delivered. We expect this figure to rise to at least £135m once all the final changes are embedded, with further savings due to come from, for example, the decommissioning of technology. The programme will provide a positive return on investment over its business case appraisal period.

We are also delivering a range of benefits for others which we are not treating as financial benefits in our assessment. In particular, the thousands of parties (including other government departments) who use our digitised services each day benefit from considerable time savings and improved accessibility.

HMCTS now has in place a firm foundation of modernised services which we own, and can continually improve, update, and build upon cost-effectively. We are using new data and our Access to Justice assessments to drive efficiencies and to solve common problems faced by particular groups in accessing justice.

That said, although the programme has come in under budget, in common with other major transformation programmes, the programme has not achieved the entirety of its

intended scope, and we have had to trim back some services to take account of policy and operational challenges which have emerged along the way and to make sure we delivered the changes which have the biggest benefits for HMCTS and our users. The digital work we have recently descoped particularly affects the County Court, and I have included more detail about this at Annex B. As we discussed at the Committee hearing on 4 March, there remains a strong case for future financial investment – both in terms of further financial savings and improved experience for those who use our services. This is a case we will continue to make.

You asked for a breakdown of the projects in the programme, including their costs and specific outcomes, which I have attached as a table at Annex C. This is necessarily a relatively high-level summary of what we have delivered, and does not list each and every thing the programme has accomplished. Nor does it set out other big reforms we have delivered during this time, such as automatic referral to mediation for civil small claims, or “no-fault” divorce.

Each of the digital services we have delivered allow users to engage with their cases digitally end-to-end, enabling them to apply online, attach documentation, upload evidence, view the progress of their case, and receive a final case outcome.

Lastly, you asked for confirmation of timescales for when the Ministry of Justice will complete the final evaluation report on the Reform Programme. The commitment is to publish this evaluation an appropriate period of time after the programme has closed, to allow reforms to bed in fully and for data on outcomes to be collected. The exact timing of this is subject to Spending Review outcomes, and the Ministry of Justice will write to you to confirm timings once this is complete.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Goodwin', with a stylized, cursive script.

Nick Goodwin

Chief Executive, HM Courts & Tribunals Service

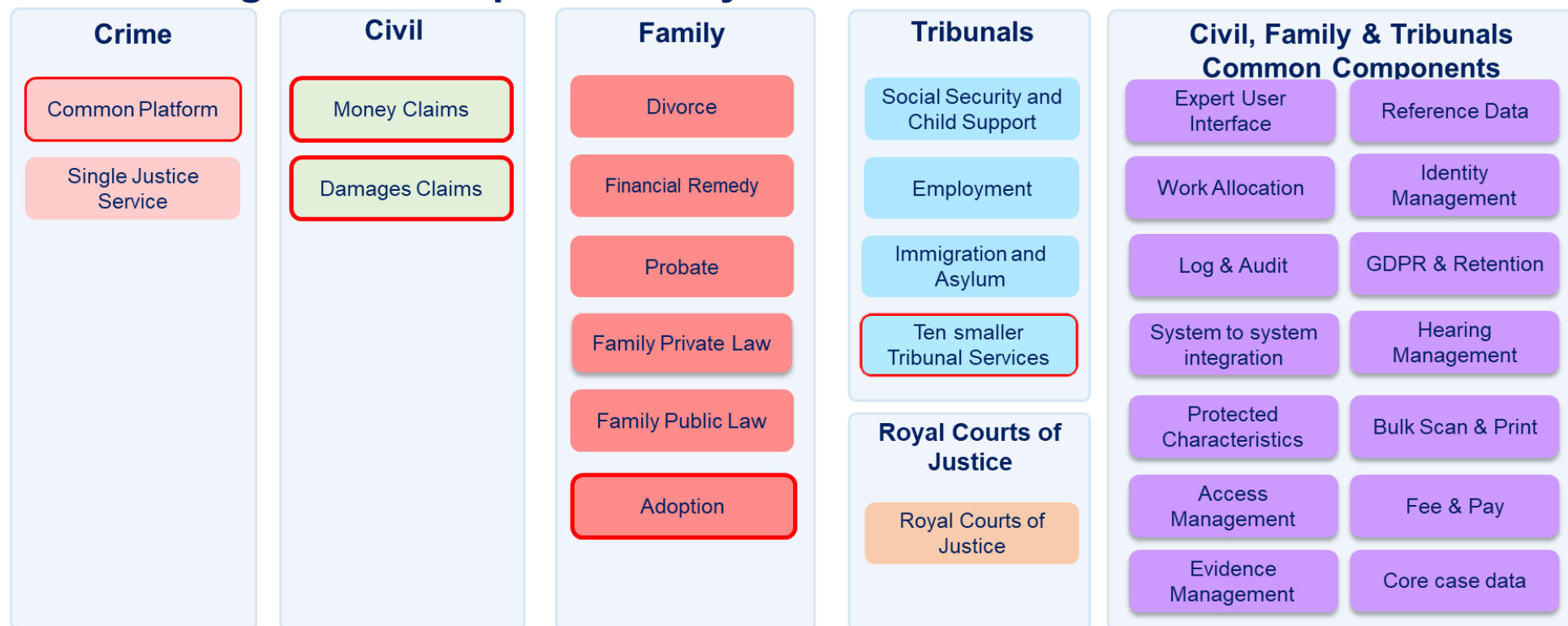
Annex A – Diagram of projects delivered

Annex B – Civil, Family and Tribunal scope delivered and de-scoped

Annex C – Summary of projects, costs and outcomes

Annex A – Service projects delivered

Reform Programme Scope Summary



Items descope

- **Crime:** The scope of the Common Platform was reduced, with CPS retaining and improving their existing case management system.
- **Money Claims and Damages claims** - Service for Bulk Claimants, Damages Service for LIPs, complex cases and other low volume elements were descope.
- **Adoption** – this service is limited to submission of the application digitally.
- **Ten smaller Tribunal Services** – nine smaller tribunals were descope with just one, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal, reformed.
- Two service projects were descope completely

Housing
Possession

Civil Enforcement

Annex B – Civil, Family and Tribunals scope delivered and de-scoped

Civil

The County Court deals with over 1.7m cases a year including recovery of personal & business debt (money claims), torts & personal injury (damage claims), recovery of property (possession claims), and applications covering injunctions, insolvency and enforcement.

Civil users span bulk issuers issuing multiple claims to seek recovery of monies owed; business and organisations of all sizes; and individual citizens issuing singular claims. Users can be legally represented or unrepresented and claims can range in financial value. There are multiple permutations for how a case may progress depending on how users engage and respond to a claim – for example, users can admit or part-admit a claim, settle a claim, defend a claim or not respond. There are thresholds for unresolved defended claims which are allocated to either the small claims track, fast track, intermediate track or multi track depending on value and complexity of the claim.

What we have delivered

We have focused on delivering new digital end-to-end services for as many cases that proceed through the County Court as possible.

- The new *money claims* digital service allows legal professionals and unrepresented users to issue and progress money claims of any value.
- The new *damages* service allows legal professionals to issue and progress damages claims of any value.
- These services provide users with the ability to: issue their case online (circa 370k claims per annum), respond online, upload evidence or documentation digitally, and view the progress of their case on a single online dashboard. Both reformed services provide a digital system for progressing and resolving defended cases.
- Users can receive and review directions orders online – the judge (or legal adviser) can review the case online and make Standard Directions Orders digitally, enabling the user to review the order immediately. These orders are made three times faster from the point of the claim being issued, compared to those claims issued using legacy systems.
- *Applications* – We have added digital functionality to allow applications made during the life of a case to be submitted, and responded to, entirely digitally. This enables cases to keep progressing efficiently and without delay.
- *Digital listing tool* – We have deployed a new digital listing tool (“ListAssist”) which is fully integrated with the wider digital services, removing data re-entry, and making the process of listing hearings more efficient.
- *Final orders* – Cases can continue to be progressed digitally to prepare for the final hearing and ultimately the generation of the final order that can be viewed online. Early analysis continues to evidence that cases progress to final hearing much quicker than cases not issued on reformed systems.

Our reform services are helping more users to engage with the process and resolve their disputes quickly and efficiently – more defendants are now responding to claims, thereby increasing the volume of cases referred to and settling at mediation; more users are also admitting to claims and settling claims before judgment. We will continue to track these trends and the potential wider impacts for likely reducing the amount of enforcement action required.

Combined, the digital services we have completed will mean that:

- Approximately 23% of cases can be issued on the new digital system, with a further 64% issued digitally on the existing legacy services – Money Claims OnLine system (MCOL) and Possession Claims OnLine (PCOL).
- Approximately 50% of County Court and judicial workload will be handled completely digitally: by staff, judges and parties to the case.

Work in progress

Digitisation of housing possession proceedings in the civil courts (proceedings brought in the civil courts where a landlord or lender seeks possession of a property from a tenant) was de-scoped from the programme as the policy context was changing. However, work is underway outside of the programme to digitise the process. This will allow us to implement the Government's legislative agenda in this area.

Once complete, and taken with the reforms above, this will mean that:

- 32% of cases can be issued on the new digital system, with a further 59% issued digitally on the existing legacy services – Money Claims OnLine system (MCOL).
- 61% of County Court and judicial workload will be capable of being handled completely digitally.

Scope not completed

Some claim types were de-scoped from the programme to ensure we were able to deliver the greatest benefits within available time and funding. The cases that have been de-scoped account for approximately 30% of County Court judicial workload. Descoping this work takes the total workload of the County Court that will remain on paper to be handled by judges and court staff to 39%. The de-scoped areas are as follows:

- *Bulk claims.* HMCTS provides a 'bulk claims' service for organisations which need to issue large volumes of money claims (e.g. debt collection or utility companies). This service allows these organisations to securely transfer the data for these cases rather than having to submit cases individually. A high proportion – as much as three quarters – of all money claims issued are received by HMCTS through this service. The current service provides the ability to digitally issue claims via HMCTS's digital service Money Claims Online (MCOL) service. The vast majority of these claims (around 95%) are not defended, and most result in a default judgment – an automated digital process. The cases that are defended are transferred to the legacy Caseman IT system, which is an internal case management system, and dealt with by the local hearing court using the paper process.

- *Case progression for unrepresented users (damages claims and higher value claims).* Damages cases involving unrepresented defendants can still be issued digitally but revert to the paper process following issue of the claim. Claims over £25k involving unrepresented users are progressed digitally up to the stage that the defendant responds and continue to be handled on legacy IT systems if they are defended and the claimant confirms their intention to proceed.
- *Complex claims.* The digital service we have delivered for legally represented claims allows claims involving up to three parties. More complex claims are not currently supported and require a paper process to be followed. Complex cases represent around 5% of money and damages claims issued in the County Court.
- *Civil enforcement.* The initial programme scope included digitising the process for applying for and managing enforcement of civil debts. Many cases do not require the use of enforcement mechanisms and this was de-scoped to allow us to complete the digitisation of the earlier part of the civil litigation journey.

Family and Tribunals

We have delivered the vast majority of the scope across Family and Tribunals, delivering digital services covering:

- *Divorce* – We have delivered an end-to-end digital service for users and/or their legal representatives to apply to legally end a marriage or civil partnership for both defended and undefended cases. There are some less common case types which have always remained out of scope (nullity and judicial separation). This is a high-volume service: we handle over 100,000 cases a year.
- *Financial Remedy* – The project delivered an end-to-end digital service which allows individuals and/or their legal representatives to make both consented and contested applications for financial remedy. This is a case type related to resolving financial issues associated with the dissolution of marriage or civil partnership. We dealt with just over 40,000 cases last year.
- *Probate* – The new service is an online service to allow users to apply for a ‘Grant of Probate’, a document showing the applicant has the authority to deal with the deceased’s assets, in non-contentious cases. The project has provided an end-to-end digital service for personal applicants and solicitors. We dealt with just over 300,000 cases last year.
- *Family Public Law* – Public law involves local authority intervention to protect children. The project has delivered an end-to-end digital service to allow local authorities to complete and submit online applications for childcare and supervision orders. Last year the total number of Public Law cases started was 15,500.
- *Family Private Law* – Private law involves parental disputes concerning the upbringing of children. This is an online service to allow litigants to initiate and manage cases involving family disputes relating to children. By closure, the project will have provided an end-to-end digital service for both legal representatives and litigants-in-person. This service focuses on early resolution of cases, transparency

for all the parties as the case progresses, and reducing the time taken to reach a final order. The total number of Private Law cases started last year was just over 50,000.

- *Adoption* – A digital ‘front-end’ application which allows applicants to apply, pay for and submit an adoption application, and for the local authority to access their cases digitally.
- *Social Security and Child Support Tribunal* – This tribunal deals with appeals related to benefit or child support decisions made by Government – for example appeals against Department for Work & Pensions decisions on certain benefits, for example Personal Independence Payment. The project has produced a digitised end-to-end service. Last year we received 137,000 cases.
- *Employment Tribunal* - The Employment Tribunal is responsible for resolving claims from citizens in dispute with an employer who they believe has treated them unlawfully. The project has delivered an end-to-end digital service for all single issued appeals. Support for cases involving multiple appellants has not been delivered within the available funding and time, but is now being delivered in business-as-usual. In total, we received over 110,000 new cases last year.
- *Immigration and Asylum Tribunal* – The project delivered an end-to-end digital service which enables users to manage appeals against Home Office decisions on immigration and asylum cases, including for bail applications. Last year, First-tier Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber receipts were 58,000, while Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) receipts and judicial review cases were a further 5,000.
- *Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal* – An end-to-end digital journey for this tribunal.

The following areas of scope were not completed:

- *Adoption*: The journey past the initial application stage was de-scoped. This is a low volume service: we handle around 9k cases a year.
- *Other smaller tribunals*: The initial scope had envisaged digitisation of ten smaller tribunal jurisdictions: Criminal Injuries Compensation, Special Educational Needs and Disability, Primary Health Lists, Care Standards, Mental Health, Asylum Support, War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation and the Property, Tax, and General Regulatory Chambers. The programme had planned to deliver a simplified end-to-end digital service which was proportionate for the relatively low volumes through these tribunals. This scope was later reduced to involve digitising just the Criminal Injuries Compensation jurisdiction.

Together the scope reductions across Civil, Family and Tribunals together amount to around 15% of the overall reduction of benefits we assumed would flow from our reforms (other reductions relate to for example, “judicial benefits”).

Annex C – Summary of projects, costs and outcomes

Sub - programme / project		Total cost (£ms)	Outcome
Civil, Family & Tribunals	Adoption	3	We have delivered a digital online 'front-end' application which allows applicants to apply, pay for and submit an application for an adoption, and for the local authority to access their cases online. The journey past this application stage was de-scoped.
	Civil (money claims and damages)	62	See Annex A.
	Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal (Special Tribunals)	5	The original scope of the programme was to digitise a group of ten smaller tribunals: Criminal Injuries Compensation, Special Educational Needs and Disability, Primary Health Lists, Care Standards, Mental Health, Asylum Support, War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation and the Property, Tax, and General Regulatory Chambers. The project had intended to deliver a simplified end-to-end digital service which was proportionate to the comparatively low volumes going through these services. In designing these services, the decision was taken to reduce the scope digitising just the Criminal Injuries Compensation jurisdiction due to increasing complexity and an inability to standardise across the ten tribunals.
	Divorce and Financial Remedy	21	This project delivered two services: Divorce and Financial Remedy. We delivered an end-to-end digital service for users and/or their legal representatives to apply to legally end a marriage or civil partnership. There are some less common case types which have always remained out of scope (nullity and judicial separation). The project also delivered an end-to-end digital service which allows individuals and/or their legal representatives to make both consented and contested applications for financial remedy. This is a case type related to resolving financial issues associated with the dissolution of marriage or civil partnership.
	Employment Tribunal	7	The project has delivered an end-to-end digital service for all single-issued appeals. Support for cases involving multiple appellants has not been delivered within the available funding and time and is being explored in business-as-usual.
	Family Private Law	13	Private law involves parental disputes concerning the upbringing of children. The project delivered a digital service to allow litigants to initiate and manage cases involving family disputes relating to children. By closure, the project will have provided an end-to-end digital service for both legal representatives and litigants-in-person. This service focuses on early resolution of

		cases, transparency for all the parties as the case progresses, and reducing the time taken to reach a final order.
Family Public Law	13	Public law involves local authority intervention to protect children. The project has delivered an end-to-end digital service to allow local authorities to complete and submit online applications for childcare and supervision orders.
Immigration & Asylum	16	The project delivered an end-to-end digital service which enables users to manage appeals against Home Office decisions on immigration and asylum cases. including for bail applications.
Probate	12	The project delivered a new digital service which allows users to apply for a 'Grant of Probate', a document showing the applicant has the authority to deal with the deceased's assets, in non-contentious cases. The project has provided an end-to-end digital service for personal applicants and solicitors.
Royal Courts of Justice	9	The project rolled out an off-the-shelf digital case management system which brings together all information relating to a specific case, 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 housed at the Royal Courts of Justice.
Social Security and Child Support Tribunal	20	This tribunal deals with appeals related to benefit or child support decisions made by Government, mainly appeals against Department for Work & Pensions decisions on certain benefits, for example Personal Independence Payment. The project has produced a digitised end-to-end service.
Common Components	123	Fourteen pieces of digital functionality which have been re-used across the civil, family and tribunal services. Examples include: a case management system, a digital scheduling and listing tool, a digital component which enables task management of the activity which HMCTS staff and the judiciary are required to undertake to progress cases, the ability for professional organisations to register for and access HMCTS services (MyHMCTS), and support for the upload and viewing of evidence in digital cases.
Bulk scanning and printing	4	The Bulk Scan service has enabled us to provide access to justice for those people unable or unwilling to utilise our digital channels, as well as the ability to validate hard copy documents where required to do (such as wills). Currently 70k documents a month are handled via this service. In addition, our Bulk Print service is enabling timely distribution of case documents to users.
Other programme costs	19	Other programme costs, including the programme management office.

Sub-total		327	
Crime		317	The Crime sub-programme has delivered and implemented new digital systems for magistrates' courts and the Crown Court across England and Wales: • Common Platform: A digital case management system that streamlines operations by minimising duplication of tasks associated with paper-based processes. It enhances collaboration among criminal justice agencies by enabling secure access to case information in one place. • Automated Track Case Management (ATCM): A service for the Single Justice Procedure that uses the Common Platform as a case management system. The Single Justice Procedure allows for a simplified process for dealing with low level offences in the magistrates' court where there has been no engagement by the defendant. By replacing outdated legacy systems, the Common Platform improves the efficiency and effectiveness of criminal court proceedings across both magistrates' courts and the Crown Court. The new systems aid the overall efficiency of the criminal justice system by - for example - automating the generation of notices, orders, and warrants.
Sub-total		317	
Enablers	Future Operations sub-programme	62	This sub-programme put in place five centralised administrative centres ("Court & Tribunal Service Centres"). These allow for better and more efficient handling of back-office and user-contact administrative functions. The programme also put in place a new telephony and call handling system to support the centres. Lastly this programme was also responsible for designing the new HMCTS operating model and organisational structure.
	Property sub-programme	121	This sub-programme carried out an extensive rationalisation of the operational court and tribunal estate between 2015 and 2020. This closed 135 operational sites, carrying out a number of improvements to sites receiving workload from those closing sites. This rationalisation closed sites which were under-utilised and / or in a poor physical condition. The programme released over £200m in sales proceeds which were reinvested in digitisation. It also reduced running costs from the closed sites, and allowed capital maintenance budgets to be focused more effectively on a smaller estate.

Future Hearings sub-programme	72	This programme delivered a number of different enabling digital systems related to supporting hearings. The two largest areas were: • A new integrated digital scheduling and listing tool ("ListAssist"). This is in use across Civil and Family courts and in some tribunals. • Rolling out a digital tool, along with associated ways of working, to support remote hearings across a range of different case types.
Strategic Data Platform and data strategy work	29	This workstream has put in place new digital infrastructure to support collection, management, and analysis of data produced by the new HMCTS systems. It improves data ingestion, processing, and analysis capabilities. The workstream has also developed an is implementing a data strategy aiming to transform HMCTS into a data-centric organization, improving performance and decision-making by utilising data effectively. This includes work to put in place improved management information from the new systems.
IT infrastructure	35	This project rolled out a range of IT hardware to support digitisation. Specifically, it rolled out Wifi to a range of courts, hardware t support video hearings (cameras and screens) and devices for use by magistrates.
Sub-total	319	
Other programme costs	264	This includes teams producing the user-centred designs for the new digital services and the user research which underpinned those, and a business architecture team and communications and stakeholder management support to the projects above. It also includes business change teams who implemented the changes into live operations, and the judicial and staff training budgets for the changes. Finally, it also covered the programme's overheads in terms of finance and accountancy, HR, commercial, and programme office.
Sub-total	264	
Total	1,228	

NB: This is a summarised extract from a live accounting system and is not a full and final statement of where the Reform budget has been spent.