



**Informing Progress - Shaping the Future**

## **FOIL Update 12<sup>th</sup> September 2025**



### **An evaluation of HMCTS Digital Services Reform**

HMCTS have quietly published a report based on work undertaken by Frontier Economics and IFF Research on the digitalisation of seven Civil, Family, and Tribunals services: damages (DCP), divorce, family public law, financial remedy, Online Civil Money Claims (OCMC), probate, and Social Security and Child Support.

This update focuses on the findings relating to the DCP and OCMC services only. The limitations of this research and the report findings should be acknowledged. The work is based on empirical data collection during the early stages of the reform process for both platforms, with no data or feedback collected after April 2024. The number of research interviews conducted with legal professionals is also limited and the participant sample was based on prior selection by HMCTS (page 76). The research is also said to be supporting a wider evaluation programme by the Ministry of Justice and HMCTS.

Of note, is the comment that *'(a)cross most professional audiences (judges, legal professionals, HMCTS staff), there was a sense that reformed services were rolled out and mandated too early, without sufficient testing or consideration of non-standard circumstances.'* (pages 38-39). Similar concerns were expressed about the adequacy of training across these groups as well.

In respect of the DCP, the digital option was seen as less preferable for legal professionals, leading to the reduction in digital uptake in the later stages of the reform window subject to evaluation. Importantly, the digital reform is said to have had a limited impact on access to justice. Professionals felt it was more difficult to correct user errors on the reformed system, leading to cases dropping out of the digital service and being processed on the legacy

system. There was evidence of some legal professionals circumventing the platform to avoid delays. Due to the number of cases the reformed service was unable to accommodate at the time of the research, legal professionals, HMCTS staff and the judiciary believed the reformed system had added to their workload overall (page 52).

The observations about the OCMC platform, were slightly less critical although Judges felt errors were more prevalent and harder to rectify than under the legacy system.

The report can be accessed at the following [link](#) and should help inform FOIL's own work through the DCP Subgroup and in respect of the Justice Committee's Call for Evidence on Access to Justice. The findings also strengthen FOIL's earlier calls for a public and transparent survey across all users of these digital platforms.

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