

HM COURTS & TRIBUNALS SERVICE FACTSHEET: ONLINE DIVORCE SERVICE GOES PUBLIC

An online divorce application service for people without legal representation is now available to the public through GOV.UK meaning 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 couples.

Who can use the new service?

The new service can be used by anyone in England and Wales wishing to apply for a divorce without legal representation.

Will the service be available to legal professionals?

We are currently working with legal professionals to develop an online application for them to use which will allow them to submit a petition on behalf of their client online.

Where can I access the new service?

The new service is available on Gov.uk or via: www.gov.uk/apply-for-divorce

What does the service include?

The new service allows applicants to complete their divorce application, upload their documents, pay and submit online.

Is the online service available to Welsh language speakers?

The divorce project will deliver a digital divorce service for Welsh language speakers later in the project at a point when an end-to-end digital divorce journey is in place in line with agreed guidance. Paper application forms continue to be available in Welsh language for users to utilise.

When was the service launched?

Following a successful pilot which began in early 2017, the divorce project entered a 'private beta' development phase, which enabled continuous development of the product so it is suitable for wider release.

From the 31 July 2017, applicants wishing to apply for a divorce through the East Midlands Divorce Centre in Nottingham were able to create their online application from the comfort of their own home. This was subsequently extended to the West Midlands Divorce Centre in Stoke, South West Divorce Centre in Southampton and the North West Divorce Centre in Liverpool.

A further release in January 2018 delivered additional features and functionality allowing citizens who wished to apply for a divorce digitally to upload documents, pay and submit their applications online.

Since then over 1100 applications for divorce have been received and a decision was taken to make the service available to all eligible users via Gov.uk. This service launched on 1 May 2018.

Will it cost more to get a divorce?

The fees associated with applying for a Divorce remain the same whether applying using the paper or digital routes.

Does this change the law surrounding divorce?

The law on divorce remains unchanged. The same level of judicial scrutiny will be applied to all cases as with the current manual process and no steps in obtaining a divorce are being removed.

What are the next steps for the project?

The project team are currently working with legal professionals to develop an online application for them to use which will allow them to submit a petition on behalf of their client online.

The divorce project team is also developing the rest of the end-to-end system for the divorce online solution, including: Acknowledgement of Service; Decree Nisi; and Decree Absolute.

The project will continue to gather customer and user insight to assist in shaping the future design model and digital development, and this will continue throughout the project to ensure the system that is developed meets our users' needs.

Will you put in place support for people who may not be able to access computers? Or who may not have the confidence or skills to use them to resolve a dispute?

Yes. Assisted digital arrangements are in place to ensure that those who may have difficulty in accessing digital channels are supported. At present this includes 'light touch' assistance over the telephone, and more intensive face-to-face support for users who are completely digitally excluded. We are currently piloting the face-to-face provision in six locations across England and Wales with a view to extending this service if successful. Further we intend to introduce webchat functionality to support users online.

Contact

If you have any comments or feedback please email the project team at:

Divorce@Justice.gov.uk