

# **IT Systems in the Civil & Family Courts in England and Wales**

*Presentation by Mr Justice Ryder*

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## Existing Case Management

- CaseMan and FamilyMan case management systems run on local servers with dumb terminals, introduced in 1995.
- HMCS have developed an upgrade with IT supplier in Oracle 11 for operation on a central server, known as Systems Upgrade Projects (SUPS)
- SUPS is in pilot stage and running well in jury management and civil and family pilots. A project to roll-out the upgrade to all courts is being developed.

## **SUPS high level benefits and concepts**

- Modern vendor supported hardware and software
- 3 tier architecture for Case Management Systems provides integration capability e.g EFDM
- Common look/feel across all applications; Screens upgraded to provides the modern browser, look and feel
- Capability to operate on MoJ IT Infrastructures (LINK/LIBRA/Aramis)
- Each courts own distributed server and database replaced with a new centralised server and database. SUPS will allow any court user to view and work on cases at another court but with restrictions for adoption and suitors cash
- Largest civil and family courts are on a common IT infrastructure, but HMCS need to extend this to all local courts providing local services.

## Why are we looking to introduce EFDM?

- **Civil & Family courts:** poor relation; heavily paper based; inflexible in terms of location, resources and filing times
- **This leads to:** lost files; onerous manual processes; poor customer service; poor use of resources
- **How** can this be addressed?
- By **removing** the reliance on **paper files** – and associated space, resources and processes
- We believe that **EFDM** will achieve this by enabling documents and data to be filed, served and managed electronically, and accessed from any location.
- The EFDM technology and likely commercial model have been **proven** to work in other jurisdictions

## What is EFDM and how are we looking to introduce it?

### EFDM:

- allows **case documents** to be sent, received, tracked and managed electronically by the courts, judiciary and parties
- will create an **electronic case file** for all case documents
- will take **court fees** and be integrated with HMCS accounting system
- will allow completed cases to be **stored** and **archived** electronically

### We are looking for:

- **integration** with upgraded county court and RCJ Case Management Systems
- a customised **COTS** system, to reduce risk, development costs / time
- **Earliest** national rollout is from 2009/2010

## Family Courts and EFDM - Some Issues

- Users are concerned about the level of security in sending confidential documents relating to children electronically
- How can we restrict staff access to Adoption and Care Records to ensure confidentiality?
- How should we deal with original documents, such as birth and marriage certificates?
- Court files in Family cases sometimes contain large documents which the court may need to print or the parties file bundles in advance for the judge.
- Should 'lay' Magistrates be trained to work with EFDM?

## Key Staff Benefits

- **improved back office** processes, resulting in **major time savings** in post opening, fee accounting, work allocation, entering of data onto current CMS and file creation/ management
- an **automated records management process** including archiving and destruction of files
- **flexibility** in the allocation of work and court estate for senior managers better informed **decision making** from having full / ordered files

## Key User Benefits

- **faster, more efficient** court processes providing greater confidence in the court system
- **increased convenience**, the ability to file documents and check their status at any time of the day
- Potential to **streamline practitioners' accounting processes**

## Key Judicial Benefits

- files **instantly available** regardless of where Judge is sitting
- better **case management** from being able to check order status
- better **telephone hearings** from all parties accessing the same information
- better use of **judicial time** from work being instantly available

## Key Judicial aspects of EFDM

- Judicial **work queue** for review of documents
- Judicial access to **non-solicitor EFDM users** (such as counsel)
- **speedier referral** to judge by court staff
- **judiciary supporting** each other across a wide area
- ability for judges to sort, mark and save documents and **make notes**
- access by **links** to case law & precedents
- alerts for **case management** and other purposes

## Key Programme Issues in England & Wales

### **Business Change & Service Delivery:**

- The level of business change needed e.g. when to move to full scanning
- User take up
- Cultural change e.g. the judiciary using the screen as their working tool
- Service issues e.g. 24/7 filing functionality, access to justice, Litigants In Person

### **Strategy & Policy:**

- Funding constraints (legislative restrictions over 'transaction model' and HMCS Treasury fee policy implications )

### **Technical:**

- The level of integration with existing Case Management Systems to deliver optimum benefit

### **Commercial:**

- Attractiveness of the EFDM England & Wales model to suppliers over other jurisdictions
- Ensuring significant risk share/transfer and incentivisation to the supplier

## Research into EFDM

- HMCS have researched EFDM in USA, Singapore and Victoria (AU). Facilities for **e-filing appear to fairly common** across these jurisdictions but **integrated management of electronic case records, documents and diary functions are less common**.
- Singapore courts have the **most electronic functionality and experience** in this field we have seen. We will monitor progress of the potential Intelligent Litigation System being developed.
- The ICMS Project for the Victoria Courts will be one of the **most advanced outside the US**, covering all jurisdictions state-wide.
- We are monitoring progress in Northern Ireland and Ireland where they are developing **Integrated Case Management Systems** with e-filing functionality.
- The EFDM system for E&W will need to have far **greater capacity** to deal with the volumes of documents.
- **Few jurisdictions have identified and calculated tangible benefits** in time savings to justify the costs of EFDM.

## EFDM Programme Background

### Stages Delivered:

- **April 2005:** Feasibility Study commissioned by Joint Steering Group (JSG) on IT/Modernisation
- **Oct 2005:** Field Research Study to Colorado, Texas & the US Federal Courts
- **Dec 2005:** Feasibility Study presented to JSG
- **Feb 2006:** EFDM Programme commenced.
- **June 2006:** Delivery of **Programme Brief (including Preliminary Business Case)**
- **June 2007:** Completion of '**Programme Definition**' stage, including the delivery of detailed business & technical requirements, a 'Blueprint' of the EFDM Operating Model and an Outline Business Case.
- **July 2007:** HMCS Governance Group & MoJ Change Group mandate to proceed to '**Procurement Stage**'. Completion of MoJ Internal Gateway 0 Review Assurance process.
- **October 2007:** OGC External Gateway 0 Review with recommendations to take forward during the procurement stage.
  
- **Next Steps going forward:**
- **Sept – Dec 07:** Programme review and development of procurement strategy