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Delegated by default? Privately owned technology in the family justice system – opportunities and challenges for access to justice

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Appendices

Appendix A. The MOJ AI Action Plan for Justice's cross cutting principles, and the Judicial AI Working Group and HMCTS AI principles

1. MoJ cross cutting AI principles

- **Put safety and fairness first**: AI in justice must work within the law, protect individual rights, and maintain public trust. This requires rigorous testing, clear accountability, and careful oversight, especially where decisions affect liberty, safety, or individual rights.
- **Protect independence**: AI should support, not substitute, human judgment. We will preserve the independence of judges, prosecutors, and oversight bodies, ensuring AI works within the law and reinforces public confidence.
- **Start with the people who use the system**: We will design AI tools around the needs of users, e.g. victims, offenders, staff, judges and citizens. That means solving real problems, co-developing solutions with users, and localising services to reflect the diverse realities of justice.
- **Build or buy once, use many times**: Build common solutions that can be used across the system where possible, reducing cost and duplicated effort.

2. Judicial AI Working Group and HMCTS AI principles

a. Lawful: The use of AI will comply with all applicable laws, standards and regulations.

b. Proportionate: AI systems will not make decisions where it is essential to have human oversight to ensure justice is administered fairly and upholds judicial independence.

c. Fair: AI systems will treat all people fairly and impartially, and will not discriminate unfairly against individuals or organisations.

d. Reliable: AI systems must function consistently in a robust, secure and safe way, be grounded in data and comply with organisational technology standards.

e. Secure: AI systems will protect privacy by ensuring data quality, availability and security in accordance with privacy laws.

f. Explainable: People will have access to, and be able to understand, information on how AI systems operate, enabling individuals affected by AI systems to understand their outputs.

g. Transparent: We will provide public access to relevant information about AI systems in use across the courts and tribunals, while protecting valid security and intellectual property concerns.

h. Accountable: The use of AI will be properly governed, with clear lines of accountability identified to ensure effective human oversight of AI systems throughout their lifecycle.

i. Contestable: The use of AI in the courts and tribunals should be open to challenge, with proportionate and accessible processes in place for people to contest the outputs of an AI system.

Appendix B. Programmes and projects related to AI governance in healthcare

Date	Description	Led by	Output
2018	Code of Conduct for Data Driven Health and Care Technology – principles include those related to AI	Nuffield Trust, later updated to DHSC Guidance in 2021	Guidance
2019	*Artificial Intelligence : How to Get it Right – Putting policy into practice for safe and data-driven innovation in health and care* – report highlights the fragmentation of existing system and recommended the need to develop the governance framework for AI and digital tech	Commissioned by NHS X, written by Joshi and Morley (2019) [1]	Report and recommendations
2019	Health Tech Connect database – support for developers and companies to identify and comply with relevant regulatory requirements	NICE, later transferred to the NHS Innovation Service as Accelerated Access Collaborative	Online resource
2020	Regulatory Sandbox for AI – specifically focused on developing regulation and quality standards for digital triage, diagnostics and community/home care via digital agencies (paused due to the pandemic). Funded by a grant from the £10m Regulators Pioneer Fund – also included an evaluation of the sandbox itself.	CQC	Report and regulatory changes
2021	Combined Ways of Working/Combined Review Service – created a single review process for MHRA regulatory and research ethics approval of Clinical Trials of Investigational Medicine Products and coordinated assessment for medical devices. Placed on a statutory footing in 2025 under the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) (Amendment) Regulations 2025.	MHRA and the UK Research Ethics Service	Revised regulatory and ethics review process

[1] Joshi, I., Morley, J.,(eds) (2019). *Artificial Intelligence: How to get it right. Putting policy into practice for safe data-driven innovation in health and care*. NHSX_AI_report.pdf

2021	Good Machine Learning Practice for Medical Device Development	MHRA	Guidance
2021	Consultation on the Future Regulation of Medical Devices in the United Kingdom – included recommending strengthened post-market surveillance	MHRA	Guidance and changes to legislation
2022	Published roadmap and change programme setting out regulatory approach to software and AI as a medical device in the UK. Eleven work packages focused on issues including qualification, classification, pre-market requirements, post market surveillance and the cyber security of software devices. Good machine learning principles for medical device development, interpretability and regulation of adaptive AIaMD also included.	MHRA	Secondary legislation, BSI standards and guidance
2022	Evidence Standards Framework for Digital Health Technologies, including Early Deployment Standards to assess whether Digital Health Technologies are suitable for evidence generation programmes	NICE	Evidence Standards Framework including Early Deployment Standards
2023	AI and Digital Regulations Service – a single point of access for developers and prospective users/purchasers of AI and digital health technologies who are seeking guidance on regulatory pathways and evidence of effectiveness	NICE, CQC, MHRA	Guidance

Appendix C. Access to Justice and the HMCTS Reform Programme

The flagship access to justice initiative announced as part of the reform programme was the Online Solutions Court, modelled on initiatives developed internationally, including the Civil Resolution Tribunal in British Columbia. It was envisioned that the Online Solutions Court would incorporate an automated triage function, based on decision trees (a form of machine learning) to help litigants understand their rights, identify their legal claims and direct them to most appropriate form of dispute resolution. If the court proved to be the most appropriate forum, the same automated system would support litigants to complete and submit relevant documents, including the claim form, online making the justice system more navigable for litigants in person[2]. A second stage of the Online Court would enlist case officers – court administrators supervised by judges – to manage claims and facilitate settlement via a range of methods including mediation, online alternative dispute resolution and early neutral evaluation[3]. If resolution was not reached via Stage 2, litigants would then proceed to Stage 3, where their claim would be adjudicated by a judge, either online, via telephone or on the papers. Where cases did transfer to court, simplified end-to-end digital processes would reduce the need for people to access costly legal advice to progress their case. While the Online Solutions Court was initially intended to deal only with specified civil claims up to a value of £10,000, it was argued that it should properly be seen as a 'template for securing now and over time in the future the critical object of greater access to justice'[4]. In 2017, the then Chief Executive of HMCTS, Susan Acland-Hood, stated that the Online Solutions Court would 'genuinely transform access to justice, and put us in the international vanguard'[5]. Of the three stages, senior judicial proponents of the project considered Stage 1 to be the most important. Lord Justice Briggs, whose 2015 review of the civil courts had proposed the structure of the Online Solutions Court, described 'interactive triage' as the 'main feature of his reforms', stating that without it the court would be 'as unnavigable as before'[6].

Digital reform in the family jurisdiction

In the family jurisdiction, by the time the reform programme concluded in 2025, three services had been digitised: divorce, financial remedy and public family law. Only one of these services

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[2] Etherton, T. (2017). *The civil court of the future*. Lord Slynn Memorial Lecture, 14 June 2017. https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/slynn-lecture-mr-civil-court-of-the-future-20170615.pdf

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Acland-Hood, S. (2017, 28 September). *We're delivering reform – and starting to make a difference*. Inside HMCTS. https://insidehmcts.blog.gov.uk/2017/09/28/were-delivering-reform-and-starting-to-make-a-difference/

[6] Wilmot-Smith, F. (2019) Justice, Ebay Style. *London Review of Books* 41(18). 26 September 2019 https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v41/n18/frederick-wilmot-smith/justice-ebay-style

(divorce) was intended to cater to public (as opposed to professional) users. A reformed digital service for private family law (which will allow child arrangement orders, non-molestation orders and occupation orders to be submitted online) has been subject to significant delays: a national rollout initially trailed in early 2026[7] has now been pushed back until autumn 2026[8]. Table C1 summarises the aims, scope, features and intended users of digitally reformed services in family justice.

Table C1. Comparison of aims, scope , features and intended users of digitally reformed services in family justice

	Financial Remedy[9]	Family Public Law[10]	Divorce[11]	
Aims	Simple, fair, accessible service; faster processing; fewer errors; reduced admin time; reduced cost.	Better service for users; improved efficiency of the FPL court process; ensure court/parties have the right information at the right time to support decisions in children's best interests.	Simple, fair, accessible service; faster processing; fewer errors; reduced admin time; reduced cost.	Aims
Scope	Consent and contested routes; reform limited to legally represented cases (~80% of applicants); consent pilot Apr 2019, mandate Aug 2020; contested mandate Jan 2023.	Care proceedings under the Children Act 1989; full end-to-end service; phased rollout 2019-22, local authority onboarding Feb 2022, mandated for all DFJ areas in Nov 2022.	Ending marriage/civil partnership; spans Old Divorce Law (pre-Apr 2022) and New Divorce Law/no-fault (from Apr 2022); public pilot 2018/end-to-end Jul 2019; professional mandate Sept 2021.	Scope
Intended users	Legal professionals via MyHMCTS,	Local authorities, solicitors and external legal professionals (via	Public users (petitioners/applicants and respondents) directly, plus legal	Intended users

[7] UK Parliament (2025, 25 November). *Domestic abuse: family courts*. House of Commons written answers. https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-11-17/91439

[8] UK Parliament (2026, 28 May). *Family proceedings*. House of Commons written answers. https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2026-05-19/3098

[9] As described in MoJ commissioned evaluation (Frontier Economics and IFF Research 2025a:11-12).

[10] As described in MoJ commissioned evaluation (Frontier Economics and IFF Research 2025b:10-13).

[11] As described in MoJ commissioned evaluation (Frontier Economics and IFF Research 2025c:11-15).

	.	judges, HMCTS staff.	MyHMCTS); judges; HMCTS staff.	professionals, judges and HMCTS staff – a genuine public-facing channel used directly by unrepresented parties.	
Features for professional users		Application: party/rep/divorce details, upload, digital statement of truth, fee payment. Case management features: manage cases, respond to queries, upload extra documents, download approved consent order, share case with colleagues. Accessed via the MyHMCTS interface.	For local authorities and legal professionals: complete/submit application and pay online; track progress; view/manage cases; upload evidence/orders; electronic notifications; digital support to complete applications; access documents in court or on own device.	Upload documents; complete/submit petition/application; pay online; Acknowledgement of Service; apply for decree nisi/conditional order and decree absolute/final order; case tracking via MyHMCTS portal; automated court allocation.	Features for professional users
Features for judges		All aspects of case management moved into the Core Case Data Platform (CCD): including viewing case details online, accessing documents digitally (rather than in paper files) and digitally creating, uploading and approving orders and case management applications. Accessed vis new judicial interface: MyHMCTS.	All aspects of case management moved onto CCD, including viewing case details online and accessing documents digitally (rather than in paper files). Case listings managed digitally via the ListAssist tool.	All aspects of case management moved onto Manage Cases or CCD, including viewing case details online and accessing documents digitally (rather than in paper files). Hearings managed digitally.	Features for judges
Features for HMCTS staff		Consent orders completed digitally and communication with judges, legal professionals and public users conducted within the Manage Cases platform- a separate	Administrative tasks and checks are completed digitally on the Manage Cases platform.	Administrative tasks and checks are completed digitally on the Manage Cases platform. Communication with judges and legal professionals also	Features for HMCTS staff

	interface that connects to CCD.		happens within the online manage cases platform.	
Available to public users / Litigants in person	**No** Litigants in person excluded from the digital platform – paper documents are scanned and processed digitally within HMCTS but litigants in person cannot access the system directly.	**No** Litigants in person excluded from the digital platform – paper documents are scanned and uploaded by HMCTS via a bulk scanning service.	**Yes** Upload documents; complete/submit petition/application; pay online; Acknowledgement of Service; apply for decree nisi/conditional order and decree absolute/final order; manage case progression online, automated court allocation; support for less digitally comfortable users. Note – no automatic prompt to make financial remedy application between decree nisi and decree absolute stages.	Available to public users / Litigants in person

A better service for users?

Across the reformed financial remedy and public family law systems, users reported similar concerns. The MoJ-commissioned evaluations of HMCTS digital services, published in 2025, found that 90% of professional users of the reformed financial remedy service[12] and 92% of professional users of the family public law service had experienced technical issues – difficulties uploading documents and 'My HMCTS crashing' were the most commonly reported issues across both services. The potential consequences of technical issues were described as being particularly serious in the context of the public family law service, with one interviewee stating: 'I had a really, really urgent [application] last week and… the entire system was down, so I couldn't submit [the application for] what was a life and death situation . . . It caused an enormous amount of anxiety.'[13] Judicial users of both the Financial Remedy and the Family Public Law reformed service felt that digitisation had increased their administrative burden and

[12] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025a). *HMCTS Reform Digital Services Evaluation: Supplementary Report – Family Public Law*. Ministry of Justice Analytical Series, p.33. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68c2df868c6d992f23edd8f5/HMCTS_Reform_Digital_Services_Evaluation_-_Family_Public_Law.pdf

[13] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025b). *HMCTS Reform Digital Services Evaluation: Supplementary Report – Financial Remedy*. Ministry of Justice Analytical Series, p. 37. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68bed461c771153e08e0dd3c/HMCTS_Reform_Digital_Services_Evaluation_-_Financial_Remedy.pdf

in doing so made their work more difficult and less enjoyable while generating 'huge frustration' for 'judges on the ground'[14].

The right information at the right time?

Issues with documents disappearing from reformed systems led to professional users of both the Family Public Law and Financial Remedy service to develop manual workarounds – the above MoJ evaluations reported both judges and professional users resorting to emailing documents directly and communicating outside the system for urgent matters, because they did not feel communication within the digital service was sufficiently effective[15] When asked whether they trusted MyHMCTS to handle complex or more sensitive cases, over a quarter of legal professional users of the Family Public Law service, and over one third of professional users of the Financial Remedy service disagreed[16]. Professional users of the Financial Remedy service reported that notifications were not always sent at key points, while both judicial and professional users of the Family Public Law service expressed strong concerns that urgent communications about serious situations can be missed on the reformed service[17].

Improved efficiency, faster processing and reductions in delays?

Rather than increasing efficiency, the MoJ evaluation of the digital Family Public Law Service reported that technical issues and a lack of functionality had prevented both judges and legal professionals from capitalising fully on the potential productivity gains offered by reformed services. For judges, difficulties locating and viewing case documents were a key area of concern, with judges reporting documents, including confidential documents, being uploaded to the wrong place or with the wrong name[18]. The MoJ evaluation of the Family Public Law Service also reported that there 'is no firm evidence to suggest that administrative or user errors are less common under the digital service' negating a key proposed benefit of the new system[19]. The MoJ evaluation further concluded that the additional and duplicative administrative burden created by reform had resulted in a lower-than-expected reduction in the duration of cases[20]. The MoJ evaluation of the reformed Financial Remedy service found that, for the judiciary at least, 'issues with the reformed service outweighed the expected benefits'[21]. Both judges and legal professionals reported a higher burden of administration which contributed to processes

[14] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025a) … *Family Public Law*, p.46; and Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025b) … *Financial Remedy*, p. 49.

[15] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025a) … *Family Public Law*, p.40; and Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025b) … *Financial Remedy*, p. 6.

[16] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025a) … *Family Public Law*, p.37; and Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025b) … *Financial Remedy*, p. 40.

[17] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025b) … *Financial Remedy*, p.6.

[18] Ibid., p.41.

[19] Ibid., p.41.

[20] Ibid., p.6.

[21] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025a) … *Family Public Law*.

taking longer than prior to reforms[22]. Strategic decisions at programme level, such as the decision to separate the divorce and financial remedy portals and cases, creating different log-ins and case reference numbers for each service were felt to further contribute to delays[23]. Overall, judges felt that the limited functionality of and underinvestment in the system undermined its potential, comparing the bespoke system unfavourably to commercial alternatives. One judge stated: '*I like the idea, I like the format, I like the portal…but if it's not going to be subsidised to a Microsoft level of injection of capital then we are left with a third-tier system… We are struggling because of a lack of infrastructure and injection of resources for the IT.' Judge (FR)*

A 'simple, fair and accessible service'?

The online divorce service was one of the first to be implemented in the HMCTS reform programme, accompanied by significant internal communication and advertising[24]. Initially, the new service was heralded as a success, with reform leaders emphasising that the new service was 'quicker, more accessible and easier to use for all'[25], emphasising the significant reduction in error rate (from 40% to 1%) for users completing applications[26]. This framing did not reference the experience of legal professionals who reported technical issues, problems with document labelling, difficulties communicating with the court and HMCTS, and low levels of trust in the ability of the system to deal with complex cases[27].

Judges using the service also referenced the increased administrative burden created by the new system, and concerns about locating documents, while legal professionals raised concerns that they 'had not been listened to in the development of the service'[28]. Concerns about the performance of the reformed digital system were validated in 2025 when a BBC File on Four investigation reported on persistent issues with vital documents disappearing from the system alongside glitches that meant that confidential case information had been exposed. Journalists from the BBC were given access to the report from an internal investigation in 2024, prompted

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[22] Ibid., p.20.

[23] Pilling, G., Hepner, D., Miller, G., Smith, M., and Garnett, E. (2026). *HMCTS Reform Evaluation Thematic Report: digitalisation*. Ministry of Justice. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69bd70811263ce46c3690c52/HMCTS_Reform_Evaluation_Thematic_Report_-_Digitalisation.pdf

[24] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025c). *HMCTS Reform Digital Services Evaluation: Supplementary Report – Divorce*. Ministry of Justice, p.21. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68bed42d44fd43581bda1cae/HMCTS_Reform_Digital_Services_Evaluation_-_Divorce.pdf

[25] Gov.uk (2018, 30 January). *HM Courts and Tribunals Service tests fully digital divorce application.* https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hm-courts-and-tribunals-service-tests-fully-digital-divorce-application

[26] Lennon, A. (2018). *Online divorce application: national rollout will be just the beginning.* https://insidehmcts.blog.gov.uk/2018/05/08/online-divorce-application-national-rollout-will-be-just-the-beginning/

[27] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025c) … *Divorce*.

[28] Ibid.

by a complaint from a whistleblower, which revealed that data breaches were 'large scale'[29]. The report of the internal investigator found that HMCTS took several years to react to multiple warnings from technical staff while deciding not to tell judges and staff about the issues, on the basis that this might 'cause more harm than good'. The report also concluded that errors in the IT system had led to issues with access to confidential information that affected no-fault divorce cases, with the potential consequence that 'an abusive parent could potentially see the address of the other parent in a child custody case, putting them and the child at possible risk'[30].

Reducing cost?

The reformed digital divorce service was intended to reduce costs for both HMCTS and for public users. For HMCTS, proponents argued that the system would reduce the costs associated with processing cases by reducing user error and automating key processes[31]. However, in 2023, a report from the National Audit Office found that by April–June 2022, the divorce service's actual unit cost was £128 against an expected £52. This unit cost was 146% higher than forecast: the largest overshoot of any service in the £1.3billion reform programme. The National Audit Office attributed the high unit cost to the fact that that 'HMCTS cannot resolve all divorce cases that start off as digital applications without manual intervention'[32], citing HMCTS's own analysis which found that 55% of cases initiated online had to be resolved manually by staff[33].

Costs to public users, it was argued, would be lowered through the provision of a simplified, streamlined digital service that would 'reduce the need for legal representation' and in doing so, increase access to justice. However, the MoJ evaluation found evidence to suggest that the new digital divorce service may have created a channel through which fee-charging, unregulated intermediaries could capture users who would otherwise have self-served directly with HMCTS. The MoJ evaluation stated that an observed decline in the numbers of legally represented parties using the divorce service may partly reflect a '*possible rise of third-party online divorce companies*' which are '*not registered as solicitors firms*' and so appear in the data as unrepresented users. The evaluation report goes on to state that these companies '*may benefit from the digital divorce service which allows them to process cases more efficiently*', but that because they '*charge a fee for their services, the access to justice benefits of using them are limited*'[34]. The evaluation explicitly states that an expanded role for unregulated intermediaries was an unintended consequence of reform which instead '*had the objective of*

[29] Harte, A. (2025, 11 November). *File on 4: Courts IT bug* [transcript]. BBC Radio 4. https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/fileon4/2025/11_11_25_Courts_IT_Bug.pdf (accessed: 13 July 2026).

[30] Ibid.

[31] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025c) … *Divorce*.

[32] National Audit Office (2023). *Progress on the courts and tribunals reform programme*. Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC 1130, Session 2022–23. https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/progress-on-courts-and-tribunals-reform-programme-1.pdf

[33] Ibid.

[34] Frontier Economics and IFF Research (2025c) … *Divorce*, p. 25.

increasing access to justice by making it easier for public users to self-serve'[35]. A 2023 Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation into unregulated providers of legal services raised concerns that consumers purchasing services from online divorce companies were not getting a fair deal[36]. The CMA identified concerns that traders in the sector may not be '*complying fully with their responsibilities to consumers under consumer protection law*' and highlighted concerning practices, including '*aggressive upselling, the refusal of refunds and failing to respond to complaints*'. Official guidance issued by the CMA to providers of unregulated online divorce services raised particular concerns about the '*marketing of online divorce services where the service consists of assistance with completing forms that are available to consumers online – in other words, purely administrative services for divorce management*', stating further that '*businesses must not mislead consumers about the substance of what they will or will not do for them, and the costs they will face*'[37].

Improving understanding of rights and options in the pre-court space?

Proposals for the Online Solutions Court described above, with its 'automated triage system' advising users of their rights and options pre-court, were quietly abandoned early in the reform programme. In 2019, the then Master of the Rolls, Sir Terence Etherton, stated: '*we do not have, nor are there any plans for, a single online court. The senior judiciary originally had a bold vision for a single common digital platform for Civil, Family and Tribunal claims with, so far as possible common forms and processes… That proposal was rejected by the Government in 2017*'[38]. Instead, the MoJ favoured reforming the county court. Outside the reform programme, jurisdiction specific projects had emerged – in 2019, for instance, the Ministry of Justice's legal support policy team piloted a Housing Disrepair Online Signposting Tool (OST)[39], with the intention that the model could be replicated for other areas of law. In 2024, the then Lord Chancellor Alex Chalk announced that the Treasury had allocated £55million to the Family Courts to create a digital 'one-stop shop' which would offer 'targeted, online guidance and earlier legal advice, shortening waiting times and supporting families through non-court dispute resolution'[40]. The funding appears to have materialised as two linked, rule-based, guided

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[35] Ibid., p.25.

[36] Competition and Markets Authority (2024b, 9 October). *CMA cautions will writing and legal service providers as new guidance launched.* https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-cautions-will-writing-and-legal-service-providers-as-new-guidance-launched

[37] Competition and Markets Authority (2024a, updated 30 January 2026). *Unregulated legal services: Consumer protection law guidance*. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unregulated-legal-services-consumer-protection-law-guidance/unregulated-legal-services-consumer-protection-law-guidance

[38] Etherton, T. (2020) Rule-Making for a Digital Court Process: The Civil Procedure Rules—20th Anniversary Conference, 2019. In Andrew Higgins (ed.), *The Civil Procedure Rules at 20* (online edn, Oxford Academic, 22 Oct. 2020). https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198863182.003.0003

[39] Sharma, R., and Hay, M. (2023). *Summary of Housing Disrepair Online Signposting Tool*. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summary-of-housing-disrepair-online-signposting-tool

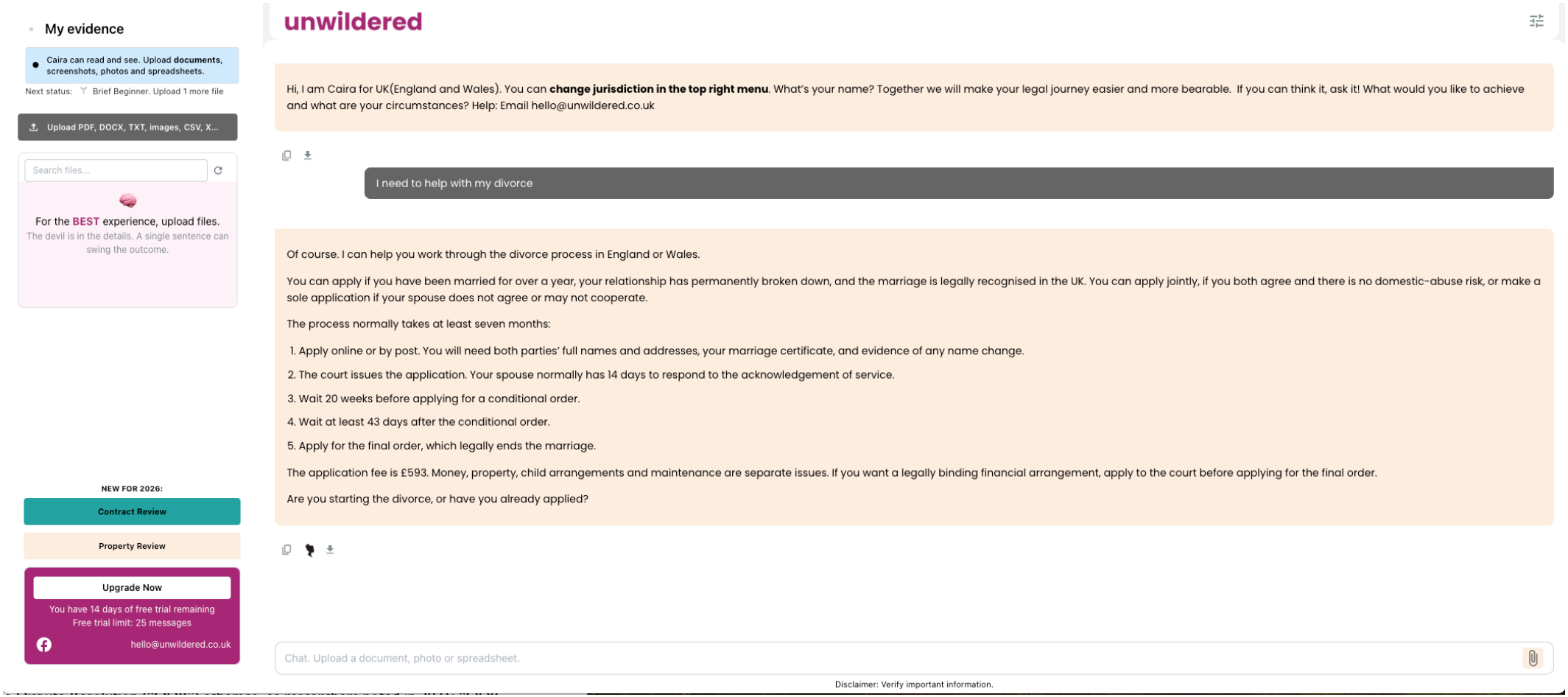
[40] HM Treasury (2024, 6 March). *Spring Budget 2024*. HC 560, paragraph 2.25. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8578eb559930011ade2cb/E03057752_HMT_Spring_Budget_Mar_24_Web_Accessible__2_.pdf

pathway tools hosted on gov.uk and currently in public beta. The 'Find ways to make your child arrangements' tool[41] uses a series of structured questions to triage users to different advice, support and dispute resolution options based on their circumstances. The 'Make a child arrangements plan'[42] service is designed to help users plan, agree and record child arrangements. The tool adopts a structured questionnaire approach, utilising a combination of closed and free-text boxes to help users generate a proposed child arrangement plan that can be downloaded and shared. The MoJ AI Action Plan for Justice, published in July 2025, announced that the internal Justice AI Unit would explore the development of a generative AI chatbot to support users to resolve child arrangement disputes, iterating on the services described above. While these initiatives are laudable, they are piecemeal, and the majority have been funded and developed outside of the reform programme. The promised holistic digital reforms, intended to support people without legal representation to understand and resolve their disputes before issuing court proceedings have entirely failed to materialise.

[41] https://www.gov.uk/find-ways-to-make-child-arrangements

[42] https://propose-child-arrangements-plan.service.gov.uk/confirmation?format=pdf

Appendix D. Exchange with unwildered



Nuffield Family Justice Observatory

Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (Nuffield FJO) turns research, collaboration and new ideas into better experiences for children and families in the family justice system in England and Wales.

Nuffield FJO was established by the Nuffield Foundation, an independent charitable trust with a mission to advance social well-being. It funds and undertakes rigorous research, encourages innovation, and supports the use of sound evidence to inform social and economic policy and improve people's lives. The Nuffield Foundation is also the founder and co-funder of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and the Ada Lovelace Institute.

We are always keen to expand our network of partners and would invite anyone who is interested in improving the lives of children and families in the family justice system to get in touch.

For further information or to get involved:

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