

# COMPANIES HOUSE

## BEST USE OF THE INTERNET BY THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Other shortlisted candidates:  
**Havering Council**  
**HM Treasury**  
**Lambeth Council**

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Winner of this year's award for Best Use of the Internet by the Public Sector is Companies House for its online company information, filing and registration services.

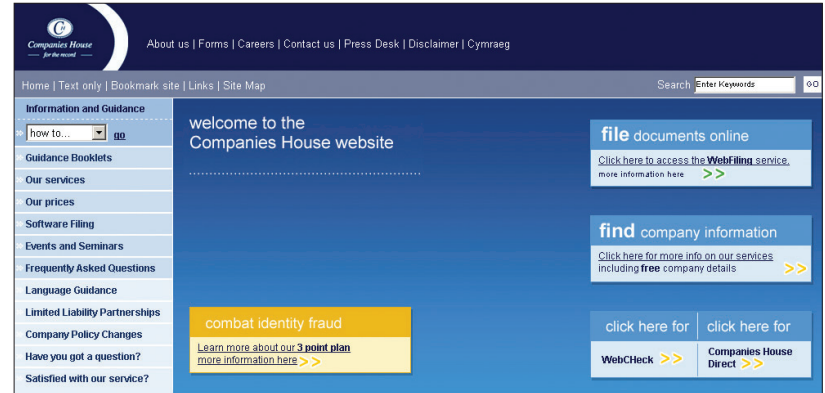
The existence of the Companies House website coincides with a huge surge in company registrations, and the site's ease of use makes it not just an efficient public service but a strong contributor to UK plc.

Since it began incorporating companies in the 19th century, Companies House has registered more than five million companies. Of those, more than a million have been registered in the past five years. The registration service has been online for four and a half years.

The numbers are indeed impressive. The site has 4.5 million users monthly. More than 85% of incorporations are now received electronically and processed within 24 hours. In addition, about 12,000 companies register for electronic filing services every week.

More individuals now seem inclined to incorporate because the website has lowered barriers to entry and cut red tape. This improvement in access to government services makes the website a significant milestone in the government's ambition to deliver services online.

E-filing services, meanwhile, provide companies and accountants with a secure means of cutting down on paperwork and streamlining formerly onerous administration tasks. Developed in consultation with business users, the Companies House WebFiling system offers protection from corporate identity fraud risks, as the system has an in-built security



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system designed to protect companies from unauthorised filing of changes to registered office and directors' details.

As well as the time and efficiency benefits,

### EASY ACCESS

The Companies House website offers a facility through which businesses, professionals and members of the public can access all public domain company documents: annual returns and accounts, director listings and company records. Information on two million companies is currently available.

WebFiling is a cheaper service than its paper equivalent. Filing annual returns online is half the price of paper returns.

The judges commended the Companies House online offering. 'It offers services to accountants at high volumes, and has very good service level agreements in place.' They found it 'hugely impressive: an excellent example of good project management, being tested before reaching the public.' They also applauded the site for its positive impact on UK business and its performance compared with less effective websites hosted by other public sector bodies.

As one judge said: 'Other public bodies could learn from them.'