

# **Business Plan 2010-11**

Driving efficiency and performance



# Our Role, Vision and Values

## Our Role

We investigate complaints from individuals and businesses unhappy about the handling of their complaints by HM Revenue & Customs, the Valuation Office Agency or The Insolvency Service.

## Our Vision

We will have a reputation for fulfilling our role expertly, professionally and effectively, and we will help the organisations we investigate to become exemplars in complaints handling.

## Our Values

- We are objective, impartial and independent
- We get it right
- We understand our customers' needs, and our services are free and accessible to all
- We value the experience and insight of our customers and staff who come from diverse backgrounds
- We handle all complaints with respect, professionalism and openness
- We are efficient and focus on outcomes
- We work collaboratively and provide transparency in our approach
- We provide feedback to the organisations we investigate to improve their customer understanding and complaint handling
- We recognise that we have privileged access to information and we protect it
- We continue to develop ourselves within a high performance environment.

# Our strategy 2009-2014

## Our Vision

We will have a reputation for fulfilling our role expertly, professionally and effectively, and we will help the organisations we investigate to become exemplars in complaints handling.

## Strategic goals

- An informed and intelligent advocate for service improvement
- Excellence in professional complaints handling
- Trusted provider of assurance and redress.

## Strategic themes

Enhancing  
the customer  
experience

Building strategic  
partnerships and  
collaborations

Promoting diversity,  
equality and  
accessibility

Protecting confidentiality  
and using information  
appropriately

Raising  
performance

Delivering value  
for money

# Our six strategic themes

## Our six strategic themes direct our approach to annual business planning.

In 2009 the Adjudicator set the priorities as:

- Restore customer service performance to acceptable levels
- Review outcomes and learning
- Work with the departments to ensure that complaints are dealt with efficiently and timeously.

## Work in 2009-10 started to focus on business improvement, driving changes to working practices and maximising efficiency.

This included:

- Changing working practices around Tax Credit complaints and those involving Extra Statutory Concession A19
- Enhancing the flow of management information
- Recruiting additional temporary staff resources and developing a full training and mentoring programme

- Restructuring the office into three distinct teams; one team of specialist investigators to help the Adjudicator review and resolve the oldest cases; one team of expert investigators to examine newer complaints ready for the Adjudicator's decisions; and one team of experienced advisors to help customers understand the Adjudicator's remit, how the complaints processes work and what information is required
- Starting to benchmark with other complaints organisations
- Developing relationships with the voluntary sector
- Undertaking a formal audit of back end processes and developing initial process maps.

These changes enabled us to increase productivity to contain the backlog of work and begin to reduce volumes on hand without any adverse effect on quality.

Our 2010-11 Business Plan continues the strong focus on raising performance and is aimed at eliminating the backlog of work by April 2011.

# Our Business Plan 2010-11

## Strategic theme 1 : Enhancing the customer experience

Action	Timescale
Develop a robust triage system to identify priority cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hardship and exceptional circumstances</li> <li>• Referral through an MP</li> <li>• Under consideration by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman</li> <li>• Flagged as urgent by the Adjudicator</li> </ul>	April 2010
Clarify escalation routes for telephone callers requiring additional support	June 2010
Refine the new process for handling Tax Credit complaints using customer feedback and in collaboration with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Tax Credit Office	Ongoing
Work with HMRC to assess the opportunity for developing a new approach to taxation cases, using the Tax Credit learning as a blueprint design	January 2011
Capture and analyse representative customer journeys to identify areas for improvement in the handling of cases, customer communications and working practices	March 2011

## Strategic theme 2 : Building strategic partnerships and collaborations

Action	Timescale
Develop sound professional relationships with the voluntary sector to consider issues from different customer perspectives and improve forecasting for customer need	Ongoing
Be an active member of the British and Irish Ombudsman Association (BIOA) to share ideas on working practices within the specialist complaints handling arena	Ongoing
Benchmark working practices against other Ombudsman organisations	Ongoing
Work with HMRC, the Valuation Office Agency and The Insolvency Service, at different organisational levels, to feedback learning and improve complaints handling	Ongoing
Develop a process to share case studies with the departments throughout the year rather than solely via the Adjudicator's Annual Report	January 2011

**Strategic theme 3 : Promoting diversity, equality and accessibility**

Action	Timescale
Update the corporate style of Adjudicator's Office communications to reflect a modern, trusted and facilitative organisation	Ongoing
Revise the Adjudicator's Office website to improve navigation, readability and access	March 2011
Publish a small quantity of printed Annual Reports to ensure access to information for customers not IT enabled	September 2010
Contrast customer journeys for different customer groups to identify any specific adjustments required to meet needs better	March 2011
Develop diversity monitoring for customers to focus and tailor complaints handling	March 2011
Change to biennial customer surveys and research alternative approaches to focus on business improvement using customer feedback	March 2011
Ensure staff training and development continues to enhance skills and improve service delivery	Ongoing
Draw on the experience and insight of our customers and staff who come from diverse backgrounds to help drive service improvement	Ongoing

**Strategic theme 4 : Raising performance**

Action	Timescale
Consolidate the new team structure and balance staff resources across teams	Ongoing
Clear the backlog of oldest cases	April 2011
Achieve an average waiting time of no longer than 6 months from acceptance of complaint to the start of the investigation for current cases	Ongoing
Maintain quality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of Plain English</li> <li>• clarity of communications</li> <li>• investigations in line with the Ombudsman's Principles for Good Complaints Handling</li> <li>• no factual inaccuracies</li> <li>• all work to the standard required by the Adjudicator</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Clear traditional investigations at a minimum of 3-4 case closures per month, depending on case complexity	Ongoing
Clear Tax Credit investigations at 8-15 reviews or closures per month depending on staff experience and case complexity	Ongoing
Reply to 98% of Assistance Cases within 10 working days	Ongoing
Deal with 90% of investigation correspondence within 15 working days	Ongoing
Develop visual management and team accountability	Ongoing
Build on peer mentoring and specialisms to share knowledge and develop investigation skills	Ongoing
Improve internal electronic storage of customer information and investigation papers to better support the Adjudicator's decision-making on cases	Ongoing

**Strategic theme 5 : Protecting confidentiality and using information appropriately**

Action	Timescale
Refresh staff on security policy, Business Continuity Planning, Data Protection, asset and risk registers	Annual
Ensure movement and storage of files is in line with agreed procedures	Ongoing
Review system access for each member of staff	Annual
Undertake a review of data security and the Data Guardian role	July 2010 and annual
Ensure regular Senior Management Team liaison with the Data Guardian	Ongoing
Review formal Information Management procedures	May 2010 and annual

**Strategic theme 6 : Delivering value for money**

Action	Timescale
Use telephone and video conferencing to maximise teamwork across locations and minimise travel costs	Ongoing
Manage the budget carefully throughout the year to minimise spend	Ongoing
Identify and mitigate business risks	Ongoing
Invite a further audit to identify additional areas for improvement in processes and working practices	September 2010
Predict volumes and types of complaints to match staff resources and expert skills to customer need	Ongoing
Use opportunities from natural wastage to align grade mix to business need	Ongoing
Plan management moves to reduce overheads and restructure teams	Ongoing
Develop a cost per unit average for different types of cases to better understand how to focus resources	March 2011