



Tribunals Service

Tribunals Service
Business Plan 2006-07



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Chief Executive's foreword



It gives me great pleasure to introduce the first business plan of the new Tribunals Service. The plan explains how we will move forward in setting up the agency and how, as a single agency, we will meet the policy and operational goals and targets we have been set.

The UK tribunals system provides an independent judicial service for resolving a wide range of disputes. It is a critical part of the system through which people are guaranteed access to rights and justice. Tribunal cases range from appeals against decisions made by government departments covering areas such as benefits, immigration, taxes and criminal injury compensation, to the educational requirements of children with special needs and learning disabilities. We have employment tribunals which determine a wide range of claims in respect of employment rights, and other tribunals that deal with regulatory decisions on issues such as pensions, financial services and transport.

Every year, these tribunals deal with more contested cases than the civil courts. The outcomes of these cases have a significant impact, not only on the lives of those involved, but on all employees wherever they are working, and on anyone who interacts with government agencies

across the board. Many of them will be disadvantaged and vulnerable, and the decision of the tribunal will help to ensure that they have fair and equal access to the opportunities and rights that should be available to all.

Until now our major tribunals have been managed in a disparate way, generally attached to the central government department responsible for the policy and initial decision that is now being referred to or challenged. Although all of these tribunals have independent judiciary, administration and service delivery infrastructures, they have not been seen as truly independent of their parent departments. Bringing them together within the Department for Constitutional Affairs recognises their place as a key part of the justice system and will enable us to improve and modernise the service they offer, to the benefit of both the individual customer and society in general. It will also provide the platform for reform identified in the Leggatt Review of Tribunals and the broader vision for reform set out in the DCA White Paper 'Transforming Public Services: Complaints, Redress and Tribunals'.

The creation of a single unified Tribunals Service is a major challenge. The business of tribunals is complex and diverse and each separate jurisdiction requires specialised administration and judiciary. Because tribunals have developed separately from each other, their processes vary enormously, as does their business culture. In creating the new

service we will actively seek to maintain the distinctive character of existing tribunals, but at the same time ensure that we obtain the maximum benefit for our users of creating a single, modern delivery structure.

This opening year of the Tribunals Service's life will be a transitional one. Our first major task is to complete a thorough review of all of our business, which will enable us to identify the scope for change and plan its implementation of change carefully. In doing so we will remain resolutely focused on the opportunities to improve the service we offer to our customers and stakeholders and on the need to plan for change in partnership with them, our staff and with the judiciary.

This first business plan sets out the process through which we intend to produce a detailed strategy for the development of the service over the next three to five years. As the first Chief Executive of the Tribunals Service I wholeheartedly welcome the opportunity to create this organisation, and feel privileged to lead it through the transformation to what I intend will be a model of public service in a modern society.



Peter Handcock
Chief Executive

Purpose, vision and values

Purpose

The primary tasks of the Tribunals Service are:

- to provide a responsive and efficient tribunals administration
 - to contribute to the improvement of the quality of decision-making across government
 - to reform the tribunals justice system for the benefit of its customers and the wider public, and
 - to promote and protect the independence of the judiciary.
-

Vision

In delivering our primary tasks we aim to be a modern, customer-focused organisation that delivers excellent performance in improving the quality of original decision making and the resolution of tribunals disputes. We will:

- work effectively in partnership with the judiciary and others
 - drive up standards of original decision making
 - use creativity and innovation to transform service delivery
 - provide customers with choice, where possible, in the way they access services
 - engage with everyone - staff, customers and stakeholders - at each stage of the business, and
 - make efficient and effective use of resources.
-

Values

In common with the rest of DCA we will value:

- customers - putting our customers first
 - achievement - valuing our people and their contributions to service delivery and making the Tribunals Service a place where people are proud to work
 - leadership and teamwork - giving people the freedom and support to succeed
 - personal responsibility - doing what we promise and making a difference, and
 - diversity - recognising that we are all different.
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Key Performance Indicators

Tribunal	Key Performance Indicators	Target
ETS	The percentage of single Employment Tribunal cases where the hearing begins within 26 weeks of receipt	75%
	The minimum percentage of above target to be achieved by individual regional offices	65%
	The average time taken to issue the decision of the employment tribunal to the applicant following the tribunal hearing	4 weeks
EAT	The percentage of Appeals listed for a first hearing within 26 weeks of receipt	75%
TAS	The average time from the receipt of an appeal from the original decision-making agency to the first tribunal hearing	11 weeks
	The average time for a rehearing of a case returned from the Social Security Commissioner following an appeal against the original tribunal	8 weeks
AIT*	The percentage of substantive asylum applications including the final appeal that are decided within 6 months	75%
CICAP	The percentage of cases where a decision on eligibility for compensation is issued from receipt of the ready-to-list bundle provided by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA)	75% in 6 months 95% in 12 months
	The Percentage of both eligibility and quantum (value) cases that are to be resolved within:	
	6 months	65%
	12 months	90%
	2 years	98%
	Number of appeals resolved per hearing day	6
MHRT	The average time taken from the date of receipt of the application to the date when the notification of the written decision is received by the applicant for:	
	Section 2 (Mental Health Act 1983) cases	7 days
	Section 3 (Mental Health Act 1983) cases	5 weeks
	Restricted cases	14 weeks
SENDIST	The average time taken from the date of receipt of the application to the date when the notification of the written decision is received by the applicant	4.3 months
	The percentage of: Cases registered, Case statements processed, Decisions issued, within 10 working days	96% 96% 80%

* Shared with Home Office



Tribunals Service

‘The Tribunals Service will bring together the administration of central government tribunals and also act as a catalyst for reform.’

Why do we need a Tribunals Service?

In 2000 the Government asked Sir Andrew Leggatt to undertake a review of the system of tribunals which has grown up over the decades. His report - *Tribunals for Users: One System, One Service* - was published in August 2001 and gave a picture of an incoherent set of institutions which, despite the efforts of the thousands of people who work in tribunals, provided a service to the public which falls short of that which they might provide if operated collectively.

The Government accepted this analysis and in 2003 announced its intention of bringing together all the major central government tribunals into a new, unified system. The White Paper 'Transforming Public Services: Complaints, Redress and Tribunals' published in July 2004 set out in more detail the Government's intention both to unify the tribunal system and to make the unified system a new and different type of organisation. It was not to be just a federation of existing tribunals, but instead an organisation dedicated to improving the quality of decision making and resolving disputes, using any appropriate method, and working with its partners in and out of government. Its task is to help to improve administrative justice and justice in the workplace, so that the need for disputes is reduced.

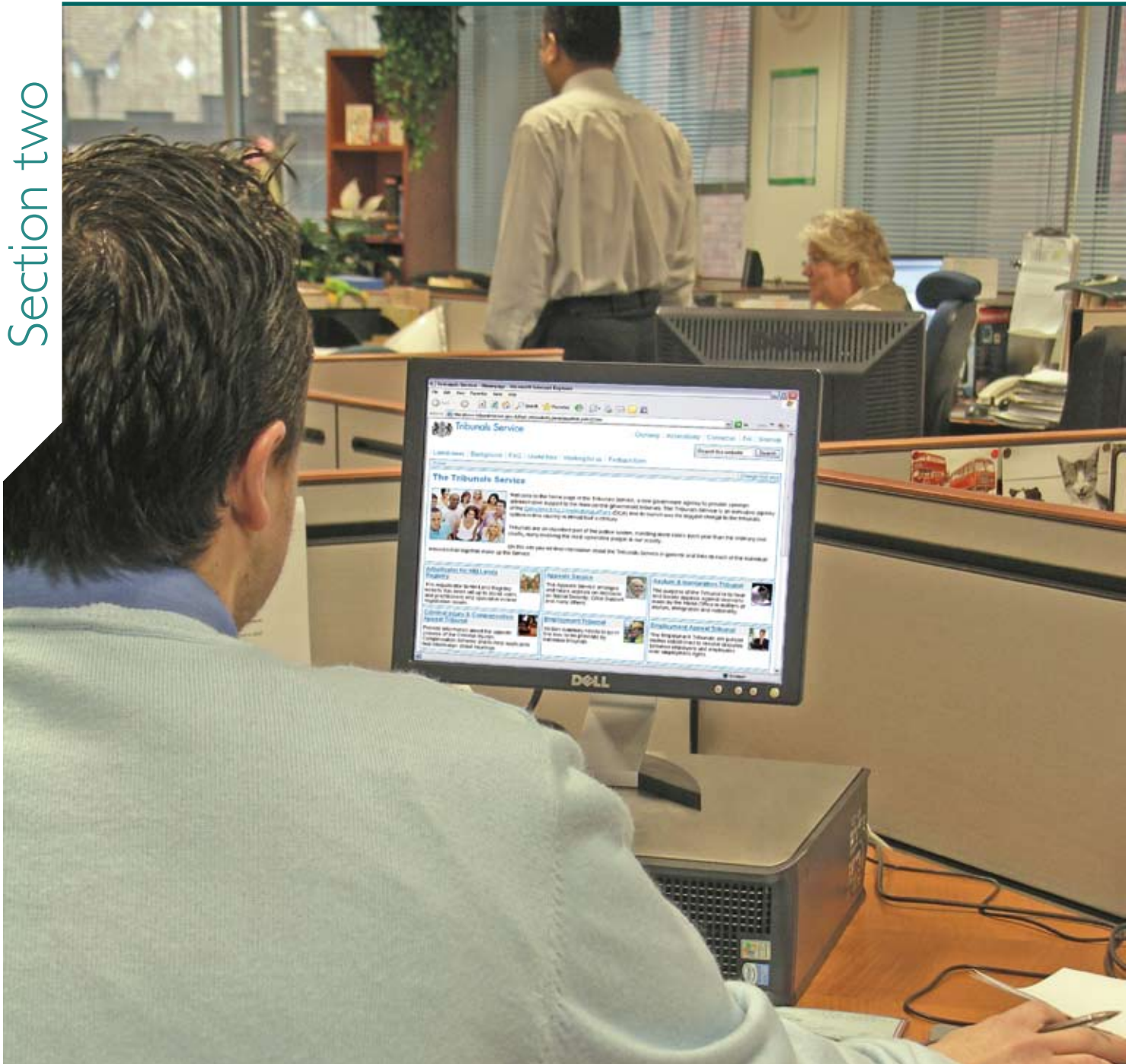
Building this new system involves the setting up of a new executive agency within the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA): the Tribunals Service.

The Tribunals Service will bring together the administration of central government tribunals and also act as a catalyst for reform. The agency will be launched in April 2006, and will initially comprise the 16 tribunals already within the DCA, plus five further tribunals transferring in from other government departments. These tribunals are:

- Adjudicator to HM Land Registry
- The Appeals Service
- Asylum and Immigration Tribunal
- The Commissioners Office (TCO)
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel (CICAP)
- Employment Tribunals Service (ETS)
- Financial Services and Markets Tribunal (FINSMAT)
- Gender Recognition Panel
- General Commissioners of Income Tax
- Information Tribunal
- Immigration Services Tribunal (IMSET)
- Lands Tribunal
- Mental Health Review Tribunal
- Pathogen Access Appeals Commission
- Pensions Appeal Tribunals (PAT)
- Pensions Regulator Tribunal
- Proscribed Organisations Appeals Committee
- Special Commissioners of Income Tax (SCIT)
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST)
- Transport Tribunal
- VAT and Duties Tribunals

More details of each of these tribunals and the cases they hear are in Annex B.

Section two



‘Creating a single organisation from this structure will be a major challenge but is an essential first step if we are to realise the potential benefits of the new organisation.’

Our priorities and objectives for 2006-2007

- To maintain current standards of service delivery and improve them wherever possible
- To develop the capability of the organisation to deliver reform, and
- To reduce the volume of appeals reaching a full tribunal hearing and to dispose of those that do in more effective and efficient ways.

The creation of the Tribunals Service as an executive agency brings together over 20 tribunals, formerly managed by six government departments. It will enable us to embark on the process of creating a modern, efficient tribunal service.

Before we begin the transition process in earnest, we need to undertake a range of work to both create and position the organisation. We have already started a number of projects to help us to identify the scope for change and improvement in our services. These will enable us to produce integrated strategies for the main aspects of our work. At the end of this year, we will publish a strategic plan setting out our programme of change and explaining how we will deliver it over the next three to five years.

This work will absorb a significant amount of resource and management attention, but we see it as paramount that customer service should not be allowed to suffer during this period. Against this background, we have three main objectives for this year. Our first objective will be to maintain current standards of service delivery and improve them wherever possible.

The agency comes into being in April 2006 as a collection of tribunals, each with separate administrative processes, management structures, estates and jurisdiction specific judiciary. For corporate services (HR, finance and IT) it will rely on a number of different models related to the practices of former sponsoring departments.

Creating a single organisation from this structure will be a major challenge but is an essential first step if we are to realise the potential benefits of the new organisation. This creates our second objective of developing the capability of the organisation to deliver reform. We will achieve this by completing by October 2006 all the analysis needed to develop strategies to inform both our plans for the Government's 2007 spending review, and our five-year plan which is due to be published at the end of 2006.

The White Paper 'Transforming Public Services: Complaints, Redress and Tribunals' clearly identified the need for the Tribunals Service to be more than a managerial federation of existing tribunals. The most radical part of our mission is to develop systems to record and share tribunal decisions in ways that can genuinely influence and improve future decision-making at all levels and to resolve genuine disputes in more proportionate and cost-effective ways. This mission provides our third objective: to reduce the volume of appeals reaching a full tribunal hearing and to dispose of those that do in more effective and efficient ways. We will begin to shape our approach to this objective this year through projects designed to test the potential for change to existing practices.

The following pages set out plans for meeting our objectives, including specific initiatives, our approach to service delivery, relationships with our people and key stakeholders and ensuring value for money.

Maintaining service standards

Clearly, as an organisation the whole Tribunals Service has a great deal of work to do in planning for future change: the timetable for the production of a five-year strategy is a challenging one. But we are absolutely committed to maintaining the quality and efficiency of our service to all our customers, in both large and small tribunals, while we complete that work. To help us achieve this goal, for 2006-07 we will retain the main performance measures for each tribunal. These are set out in Annex C and we will report on the performance of each individual tribunal in our first annual report.

For 2006-07, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), drawn from the major existing performance indicators will measure our success. This approach strikes a balance between measuring and reporting on a manageable number of high-level indicators (individual jurisdictions currently have numerous and very complex indicators tailored to their specific processes) and the need to provide a wide coverage of performance, both for the organisation and within jurisdictions.

Part of the work in developing our five-year strategy will include creating a balanced scorecard to enable us to measure how successful we are in meeting the key objectives in the plan. This will include an overarching set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the levels of service delivered to customers. Our aim will be to measure performance across different tribunal jurisdictions with a common set of measures, although the target levels may need to be adjusted to reflect variation in the business process of individual tribunals. This approach will ensure that we are able to capture the whole range of tribunals' services rather than just focus on those with the greater volumes and higher profile.

Developing the capability of the organisation to deliver reform

The Tribunals Service brings together nearly 3,000 staff from six major government departments, working from over 170 locations in England, Scotland and Wales. Their systems, working culture and processes are inevitably varied. Given the huge differences in availability and quality of accommodation, the location of staff and differences in IT, the creation of the Tribunals Service will require careful planning if service delivery is not to be compromised.

Before we launch our programme of change, we must ensure that we have properly involved our people across the whole organisation and have the necessary governance and change management procedures in place. A key component of a new corporate structure will be putting in place the resources and skills to ensure effective project and programme management.

Additionally, we hope that other tribunals will join us over the next two years, and we need to ensure we have the capacity to integrate them successfully into our organisation.

By October 2006 we will develop corporate strategies for the following areas of our business:

- jurisdictional business processes and our overall delivery model
- IS/IT
- people (see section on Developing our organisation and people)
- organisational change and integration
- estates, and
- funding.

Pages 14 to 19 provide an outline of the work we plan to undertake in the course of this year to inform our five-year strategy. Detailed programme and project plans covering all of this activity will be in place by April 2006 (and will be available on the Tribunals Service website: www.tribunalsservice.gov.uk).

Jurisdictional business processes and our overall delivery model

The creation of a single Tribunal Service agency provides an opportunity to build on best practice from all of the individual jurisdictions, optimise efficiency, provide a better and more accessible service for our customers and create a straightforward and transparent system for all users.

Goal	Key tasks	Target date
Development of a new business model(s) for operational delivery	• Review and map current business models	June 2006
	• Identify common elements and constraints to integration (physical, legislative, financial, etc)	October 2006
	• Develop options for a future business model(s) and produce a project proposal and business case for the preferred option(s)	March 2007
Early efficiency improvements	• Identify early opportunities to integrate operational delivery	October 2006
	• Review options for integration of common services/support functions (venue booking, clerking, booking part time judiciary/ chairmen, panel members, processing payment of fees, etc)	October 2006
	• Identify resources required to undertake functions and transitional issues	December 2006
	• Implement revised processes and common services	March 2007
Early performance improvements	• Review methods/best practice to improve performance such as increasing disposal rates, increasing session utilisation, reducing adjournments, etc	October 2006
	• Implement revised processes and review performance results	March 2007
Overarching review of Tribunal members	• Review current Terms and Conditions, fees and salaries for all tribunal judiciary	
	• Review support functions for the judiciary	August 2006
	• Review use of the different types of tribunal members and potential for appointment to multiple jurisdictions	December 2006

Information Systems

Few areas offer as much scope for improving efficiency as Information Systems and IT generally. The following goals will help deliver better service to users of all tribunals as well as empowering staff and reducing operating costs.

Goal	Key tasks	Target date
Delivery of plan to rationalise the IT applications currently used by the various tribunals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a comprehensive review of tribunals' legacy systems • Provide an options analysis for ongoing use of legacy systems • Develop a plan to reduce the number of applications in use across the Tribunals Service 	July 2006
Development and implementation of the ETS CASEFLOW system to all ETS sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out CASEFLOW to all ETS sites • Undertake a review of CASEFLOW and assess its suitability for further roll out across the Tribunals Service • Produce a business case to support any recommendations arising from the review 	October 2006
Development and implementation of the Appeals Service GAPS2 System to all Appeals Service sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out GAPS2 System to all Appeals Service sites 	July 2006
Delivery of an integrated infrastructure enabling access by all areas of the Tribunals Service to common DCA IT services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out access to DCA services to the incoming tribunals • Introduce a common standard to email addresses 	August 2006
Piloting the use of digital audio dictation to enable tribunal decisions to be promulgated more quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a selected number of tribunal jurisdictions to pilot digital dictation • Roll out digital dictation to the selected jurisdictions • Produce a business case to support any recommendations arising from the review 	December 2006
Supporting the implementation of the DISC Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the implications of the implementation of DISC to IT Delivery within the Tribunals Service • Clearly communicate the goals of DISC and ensure appropriate IT support is in place to ensure Tribunals Service business continuity during DISC roll-out 	June 2006
Ensuring all managers and staff can access DCA IT services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a series of communication events to Tribunals Service managers articulating the shared service model • Ensure appropriate procedures are in place to enable seamless delivery of IT 	May 2006

Organisational change and integration

Restructuring the agency from a collection of individual tribunals with different management structures and corporate service arrangements to a single organisation managed on a regional basis will require the development of a new business model. Development will cover three main areas: defining structure and responsibility for operational policy and key stakeholder relationships; restructuring corporate and common services to support a multi-jurisdictional regional structure; and aligning operational managers and their responsibilities.

Goal	Key tasks	Target date
Defining regional structures and senior management responsibilities under new model	• Design new regional structure	September 2006
	• Assign responsibilities for operational policy, key stakeholder relationships and governance	October 2006
	• Ascertain level and identify resources required to support revised model and transitional issues	December 2007
Restructuring corporate and common services to support regional structure	• Design a new model identifying the optimum level of resources required for corporate functions (planning, finance, performance management and reporting) at centre and regional levels	October 2006
	• Identify resources required to undertake functions at both centre and regional levels, as well as any transitional issues that may arise	December 2006
	• Implement the new model	April 2007
Detailed design of regional models	• Design in detail the management structures within individual regions	November 2006
	• Design a standard model to provide consistent levels of delegated authority and governance	December 2006
	• Identify resources and transitional issues	January 2007
	• Implement the new structure	April 2007

Estates

Formation of the agency creates an estate of 170 buildings mainly from the former estates of The Appeals Service, the Employment Tribunals Service and the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal. This creates opportunities to reduce potential duplication and under-utilisation and to offer customers a wider range of venues. Our aim will be to concentrate on providing an estate that offers our customers and staff good quality accommodation and achieves a balance between accessibility and utilisation.

Goal	Key tasks	Target date
Audit of estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a review of the quality of the estate to assess suitability and maintenance position 	June 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review contractual position of all buildings to identify lease breaks, terminations and disposal opportunities, etc 	October 2006
Development of design standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key customer standards for tribunals' accommodation in consultation with users 	October 2006
Development of estate strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify future estate requirements based on both a review of business requirements and the proposed future delivery model 	December 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a detailed estate strategy to achieve the optimum solution based on the opportunities available 	March 2007

Funding

The following work will be undertaken to develop funding models for the organisation and establish a policy in respect of charging fees and other income. These will feed into our 3-5 year financial strategy.

Goal	Key tasks	Target date
Development of revised cost models to inform financial and performance planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an activity-based costing exercise for the main tribunal jurisdictions to identify cost drivers and variable, fixed direct and indirect costs for the main procedural stages 	September 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop resource allocation models for the main jurisdictions, identifying fixed and variable resource requirements for specific levels of workload and performance 	December 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish revised baseline and apportionment of management overhead 	March 2007
Development of Tribunals Service Efficiency plan (this will form an integral part of our 3-5 year strategy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark costs of common activity across individual tribunals 	September 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce common measures on efficiency (ineffective hearings, adjournment rates, etc.) 	April 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a cross-cutting review for optimal delivery of common and corporate services 	December 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop proposals for a workload measurement system following pilots 	December 2006
Establishment of policy on methods of funding individual tribunals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review funding methods and costs base 	November 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce revised structure 	April 2007
Development of Tribunals Service strategy for wider markets initiative and other income raising opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an initial evaluation of opportunities and develop core policy 	September 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a more detailed evaluation and introduce new services as appropriate 	April 2007

Beginning the process of reform

Our third objective is to reduce the volume of appeals reaching a full tribunal hearing and to dispose of those that do in more effective and efficient ways.

We believe that a large number of cases that come before tribunals could be resolved in ways more proportionate to the issue at stake. In some jurisdictions, success rates are significantly higher than in others. That may suggest that there is a case for an alternative to the full tribunal procedure to be used when reviewing the original decision. Such an approach would be beneficial to both the customer (for whom the procedure would be less complex) and less resource-intensive for the original decision-maker. During the year, we will start two separate pilots to test these concepts and provide the evidence upon which future policy and procedural changes can be based.

The first pilot will be undertaken jointly with the Legal Services Commission to provide customers with enhanced advice. The aim of the pilot will be to develop an innovative and cost-effective mechanism for providing additional or improved information and advice to potential users, with the following objectives:

- to inform customers of the options available to resolve their dispute
- to assist customers in making a well-informed choice
- to help customers to decide whether their case is worth pursuing, and
- to support users in presenting the best possible case.

We believe the outcome of this will be fewer cases but, equally importantly, those cases will be better prepared and require fewer adjournments.

The second pilot will cover early neutral evaluation, mediation and other alternative dispute resolution methods. The objective will be to identify, test and propose successful and cost-effective alternative mechanisms for resolving administrative and employment disputes without the need for a full hearing.

Work will also be undertaken to improve our understanding of customer needs and attitudes. During the year, we will commission research of potential and existing tribunal users with the following objectives:

- to ascertain why some potential customers do not use the tribunal system
- to consider how tribunals can be made more attractive to potential customers
- to increase our awareness and understanding of attitudes of both potential and actual tribunal customers, and
- to explore other options to resolve disputes going before tribunals.

section three



‘...we will be seeking the views of our customers. This will help us to ensure that we have comprehensive quality and customer-related indicators to support year-on-year improvements.’

Delivering to our customers

Many tribunals already provide excellent standards of customer service. This is a strength that we will maintain and build on. Our goal is to ensure that all jurisdictions match the standards of the best.

All tribunals have arrangements in place to measure customer satisfaction, such as regular surveys. For the forthcoming year, we will maintain existing arrangements to provide a baseline against which to measure improvements. During the year, we will be developing a new range of KPIs and a balanced scorecard which includes measures for customer satisfaction.

As an integral part of the process of developing our strategy, we will be seeking the views of our customers. This will help us to ensure that we have comprehensive quality and customer-related indicators to support year-on-year improvements. Our customer consultation policy will be a key component of our organisational strategy.

Work is already underway to standardise complaints procedures throughout the Tribunals Service, ensuring consistency with DCA's procedures, and the co-ordination of customer surveys to ensure feedback from our customers improves service delivery.

We are totally committed to the principles of Charter Mark, and these will be incorporated into our five-year strategy. We will seek Charter Mark accreditation for the whole of the Tribunals Service. However, in view of the changes proposed elsewhere in this plan, we do not intend to extend Charter Mark accreditation further for services based upon existing business models.

Working with the Judiciary

Our partnership with the tribunals' judiciary is absolutely fundamental to everything we do. The independence of the judiciary is the core value on which the new tribunal system is built. Tribunals are being brought together in DCA and in our new agency precisely to demonstrate and reinforce that core value. We will work closely with the Senior President and other tribunal presidents and, through them, the whole tribunals judiciary, both legal and non-legal.

The 2004 White Paper proposed a form of unification of tribunal jurisdictions and judiciary that would both improve efficiency and flexibility in the provision of tribunal justice and at the same time maintain the high level of expertise which is so fundamental to tribunals.

Unlike the creation of the Tribunals Service, these changes would require legislation. While we hope to be able to publish a draft Bill during 2006-07, it may be a while before Parliamentary time allows the introduction of the Bill. In the meantime, however, we will move as far as we can towards the realisation of the White Paper's vision of a more cohesive and coherent jurisdictional and judicial framework.

The cost of judges and members forms the largest component of the Tribunals Service's budget and so we need to look carefully at the ways in which the administration supports the judiciary in enabling them to deal efficiently with the cases that come before them. In this and in everything we do, we will always respect the judiciary's independent role.



section four

'In 2006-07, the Tribunals Service will deliver the efficiency savings expected by HM Treasury and originally committed to by other government departments for the individual tribunals within the new agency.'

Making effective use of resources and infrastructure

The Tribunals Service will move towards realising a vision of a new, more cohesive and efficient organisation in which people, processes and supporting infrastructure are concentrated on delivering services that meet customer needs. We face significant challenges in achieving this, driven by the need to improve services without increasing the taxpayer burden.

We need to make the best use of our resources and ensure we have the right tools in order to carry out this scale of organisational change. There are a number of key areas that we have to address as a matter of priority in order to enable us to fulfil this agenda.

Estate

All tribunals face the challenge of finding suitable, accessible, independent accommodation. In some areas of the country there are clusters of accommodation, owned by different tribunals, delivering the same type of service. Sometimes this even takes place within the same building. Utilisation rates vary considerably and some tribunals need to resort to casual hiring of venues whilst others have hearing rooms empty.

Information Services and Technology

It is clear that there is inefficiency of effort and resource in the area of tribunals' information technology needs. Most tribunals, whether large or small, are currently obtaining and using their own information systems independently and often face constraints on investment from their sponsors. Yet there are common requirements and system needs that could be better met by a more joined-up approach.

Business Process and Procedure

The current demarcation between tribunals produces an inflexible approach to fluctuating workloads, but judiciary and staff cannot easily be deployed across jurisdictions, leading to inefficiencies in service delivery for the user and taxpayer.

The resource cost of the Tribunals Service will be £285 million. The main costs are:

- staff: £85 million
- judicial: £135 million, and
- accommodation: £40 million.

In 2006-07, the Tribunals Service will deliver the efficiency savings expected by HM Treasury and originally committed to by other government departments for the individual tribunals within the new agency.

Sharing tribunal venues

As soon as possible, we will establish a common estate of good quality tribunal hearing venues providing reasonable access to the majority of the population. In more remote locations, we will promote alternatives to static hearing centres.

We are already promoting the sharing of the current estate and the reduction in casual hiring by smaller tribunals, especially in locations where larger tribunals already have facilities. A clearing centre for shared hearing venues will continue to be developed.

Initially we are looking to identify opportunities for co-location, which does not require full integration. However, where we can move towards full integration of premises, we will be able to become more flexible in the way we operate and make more efficient use of processing staff.

One example of sharing in practice is in Loughborough and Leicester, where centres established for the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal are now used by other tribunals. They provide an excellent service to customers and an award-winning environment for staff. We envisage building on these examples, to provide capacity to take on the work of smaller tribunals.



Information Services and IT

Currently, each tribunal operates its own set of IT systems. Over time, we expect this mix of systems to reduce, and be replaced by an integrated infrastructure and support services as soon as practicable after transfer.

The creation of the agency bringing together a number of tribunals creates economies of scale. There is potential to develop a range of systems that will reduce operating costs and increase efficiency, such as:

- common booking information for hearing rooms
- centralising payment of fees
- web services, including a website linked to jurisdictional sites, and
- use of digital audio to enable decisions to be printed and issued faster.

The Employment Tribunal Service is currently in the process of procuring new IT support to create e-files and to facilitate more effective sharing of workload across regional offices. This system may be capable of replication across other tribunal jurisdictions.

Support Services

The Tribunals Service will have shared support services. HR and IT will be provided by DCA on a shared services model. Estates will be managed to gain best opportunities to rationalise across the Tribunals Service, whilst the finance and resources function will call on DCA finance for specialist expertise and access to systems and standards.

Nominated individuals from each of the departmental shared services will be designated as business partners responsible for ensuring the services are delivered effectively under the service level agreements.

This model supports both the Gershon agenda, introduced in the wake of a review of civil procurement in central government by Sir Peter Gershon to improve public sector efficiency, and DCA's commitment to improve efficiency but also professionalism in service delivery. It will also ensure tribunals work to and access common policies, value for money services and shared best practices.

The shared services model will, over time, enable more efficient services to be provided for all tribunals. Initially the move to DCA will result in minimal changes of reporting lines creating 'virtual' centres that will make best use of current staff in their current locations serving their current tribunals.

section five



‘Now we need to take this work forward, both in determining our HR and people policies and then, crucially, implementing them effectively across our new organisation.’

Developing our organisation and people

The Tribunals Service is an organisation of people. They will be drawn from six major government departments and will bring different cultures, values and terms and conditions into the new organisation.

Extensive work has already been undertaken through a European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM) benchmarking exercise and staff workshops to identify the key initiatives that we need to take forward to produce a single people strategy. From these workshops, we have already produced a statement of expectations.

Now we need to take this work forward, both in determining our HR and people policies and then, crucially, implementing them effectively across our new organisation. We have identified the following priorities and actions for the coming year.

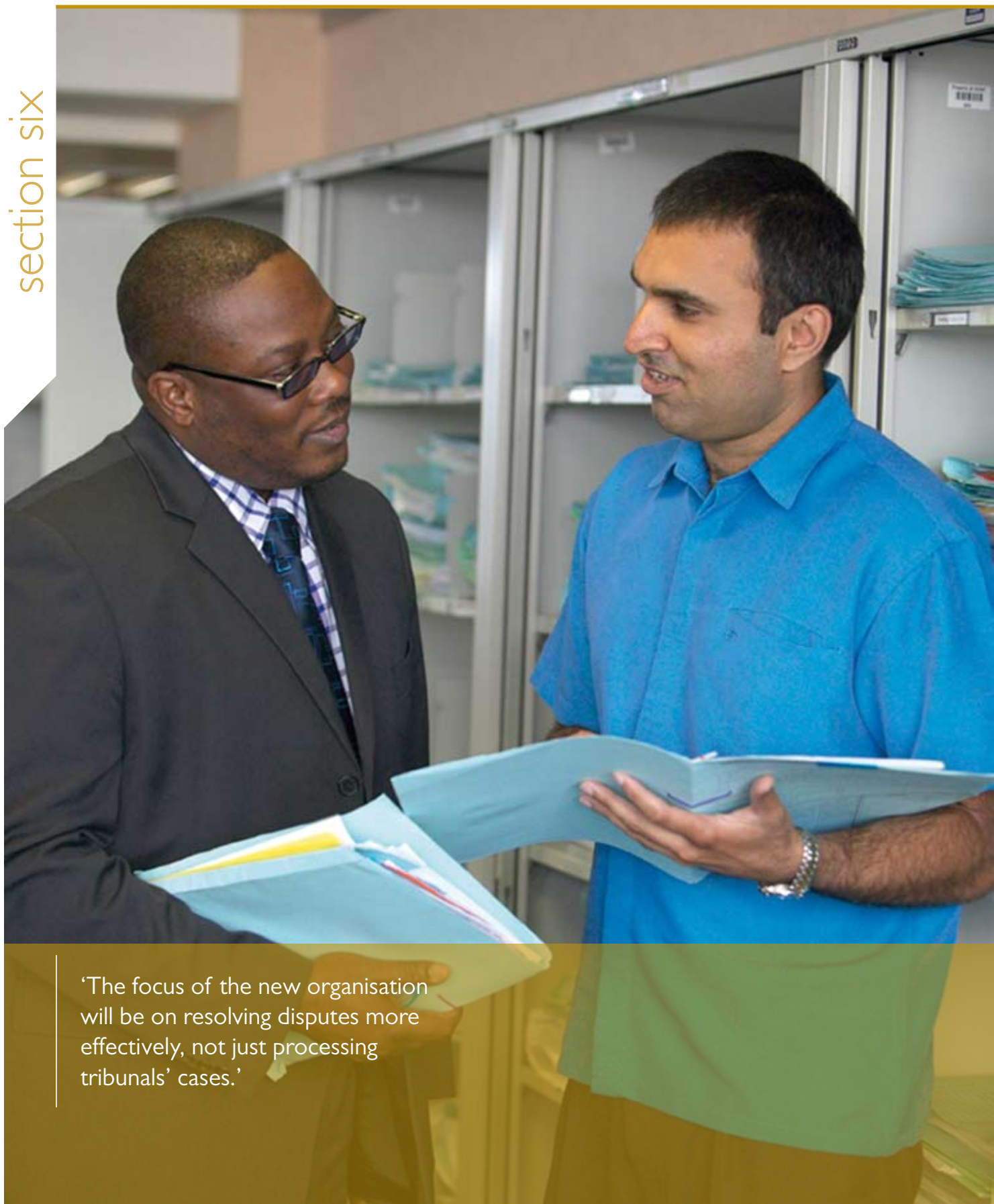
Goal	Key tasks	Target date
Implementation of a new organisational structure for Tribunals Service	• Fill all senior and corporate management vacancies in the Tribunals Service	June 2006
	• Ensure delivery of effective HR policy induction	
	• Ensure recruitment is supported by appropriate induction plans	
Development and implementation of an effective diversity and equality strategy within the framework of DCA HR Policies and meeting the needs of the Tribunals Service	• Develop, communicate and implement a statement of people values and CE Diversity statement	April 2006
	• Launch people strategy and evaluate it through effective stakeholder and customer feedback arrangements	June 2006
	• Develop and implement a Tribunals Service diversity strategy, which meets the needs of the business and supports DCA strategy	
	• Complete implementation	September 2006

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Goal	Key tasks	Target date
Ensuring the HR people policies and strategies (including learning and development and reward) support organisational goals and business needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the effective deployment of management and specialist competence throughout the Tribunals Service 	September 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that an effective employment involvement framework at agency and office level is implemented by 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure full participation in the development and effective launch of the new arrangements for DCA pay and grading in the Tribunals Service 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure full Tribunals Service participation in the development and evaluation of new DCA HR policies including performance management and the learning and development strategy 	
Support for the launch of Professional Skills for Government and develop a programme for effective leadership throughout the Tribunals Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate a common understanding of leadership 	May 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify gaps in competence, prioritise and develop leadership competence in all managers and ensure Tribunals Service participation in DCA leadership initiatives 	September 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop 360° development feedback for managers 	
Ensuring HR policies, including learning and development, are implemented in line with Investors in People (IIP) standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify critical training needs 	May 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and prioritise a learning and development programme to meet the needs 	April 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate learning and development in line with IIP standards 	
Ensuring Tribunals Service sick absence meets the Cabinet Office target of 7.5 days per full time equivalent staff member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train managers on DCA sick absence management policy 	July 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor performance at key business level 	April 2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Tribunals Service representation in the policy support groups 	May 2006
Ensuring all managers and staff can access DCA HR Services		July 2006

section six



‘The focus of the new organisation will be on resolving disputes more effectively, not just processing tribunals’ cases.’

Supporting departmental strategy

Tribunal reform sits alongside DCA's other reforms to the justice system and can be seen as a significant step in progress towards unifying the administration of justice.

The 2004 White Paper 'Transforming Public Services: Complaints, Redress and Tribunals' set out a vision for a new organisation comprising both the judicial and administrative elements of tribunals. The focus of the new organisation will be on resolving disputes more effectively, not just processing tribunals' cases. A single administrative structure is a key component for achieving the vision set out in the White Paper. As a key enabler of the wider reforms to the administrative justice system, it will also contribute to DCA and Government reform agendas.

What is the DCA strategy?

DCA's five-year strategy is organised around four key themes:

- developing policies that empower citizens and communities, protecting them from crime and anti-social behaviour, helping them to manage their problems more effectively, safeguarding their rights, and connecting them more closely to the democratic system
- making better use of education, information and advice so that people can resolve their disputes and problems as quickly, effectively and proportionately as possible, away from formal court and tribunal hearings when this is more appropriate
- changing radically the way we deliver services so that the courts, tribunals, advice and legal services, and constitutional arrangements are modern and a better match to the needs of users and the taxpayer, and
- re-shaping DCA's organisation and infrastructure and the way we work, so that they are structured around meeting the needs of the public and work well with the rest of government.

The launch of the Tribunals Service contributes to all of these either directly or as a key enabler of the wider reforms set out in the White Paper.

How does the Tribunals Service support this?

The Tribunals Service will contribute to three of DCA's four objectives, namely:

- to provide criminal, civil, family and administrative justice systems that command public respect and confidence
- to ensure that the public, especially the socially excluded and vulnerable, have access to excellent services, which enable them to exercise their rights in law and understand, exercise and fulfil their responsibilities, and
- to create a modern, efficient and effective department that has the capacity and capability to deliver excellent public services.

The Tribunals Service will also contribute to the DCA performance target to achieve earlier and more proportionate resolution of legal problems and disputes by:

- increasing advice and assistance to help people resolve their disputes earlier and more effectively, and
- increasing the opportunities for people involved in tribunals to settle their disputes without the need for a full hearing – and reducing delays in resolving those disputes that need to be decided by a full hearing.

Responsibility for the joint PSA with the Home Office covering asylum and immigration will transfer to the Tribunals Service.

section seven



‘...to promote effectiveness in, and provide advice on, the overall operation of the employment tribunal system, to ensure that it meets the needs of all of its users.’

Working in partnership with stakeholders

We are committed to building and maintaining effective working relationships with organisations that have a particular interest in the operation of the tribunal jurisdictions.

These include the Council on Tribunals, ACAS, the Legal Services Commission, Citizens Advice Bureau, welfare rights organisations, not-for-profit bodies and customer/representative organisations.

We will make sure that the way in which we work with stakeholders is appropriate for the individual groups. We will take their interests into account in decision-making and operations to ensure our services best meet the needs of our customers.

An early example will be the setting up of an Employment Tribunal System Steering Board, which will be a forum for those stakeholders who have a strategic interest in the way in which employment tribunals operate. The group will comprise representatives from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Trades Union Congress (TUC), DCA and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI). It will have an independent chair and two external members.

The role of the group will be to promote effectiveness in, and provide advice on, the overall operation of the employment tribunal system, to ensure that it meets the needs of all of its users.

Working with policy departments

We recognise the importance of maintaining very close links with those responsible for the policy behind each jurisdiction and with original decision-makers. We will establish formal partnership agreements with the following organisations, setting out key relationships where necessary:

We will also develop better feedback links to stakeholders so that we can contribute to improvements in the standards of first instance decision-making.

Advising and supporting ministers and other government departments

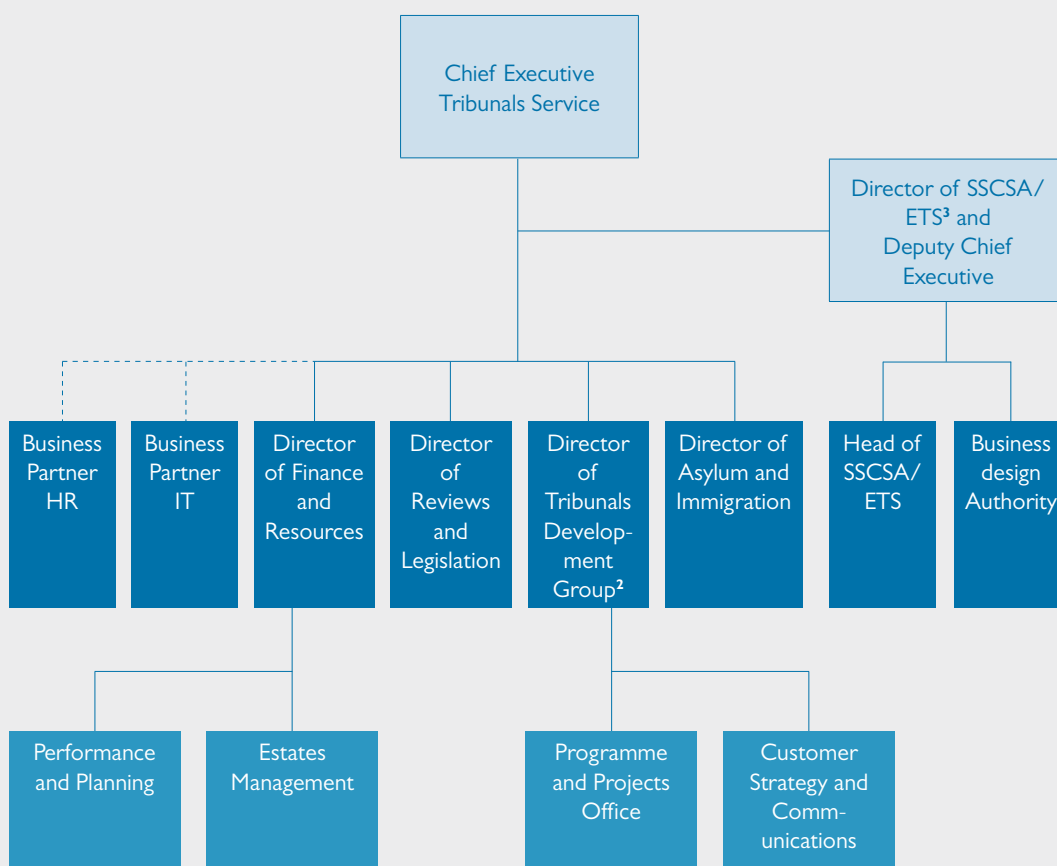
The work of the Tribunals Service will not be confined to purely operational matters. DCA has reshaped itself so that policy development in the traditional sense is now closely aligned with operations. As part of maintaining and improving service delivery, the Tribunals Service will:

- provide a first point of contact and advice to departments seeking to provide new forms of redress
- assist other departments in the creation of new tribunals or the adding of jurisdictions to existing tribunals, and
- represent DCA in its relations with the ombudsman community.

We intend to continue to meet the Lord Chancellor's targets for dealing with correspondence from Members of Parliament.

A	Organisation chart	37
B	Description of individual jurisdictions	38
C	Individual performance measures and targets	41
D	Tables of financial allocations and workload projections	44

A. Organisational chart¹



¹ The organisational chart will be subject to change during the year.

² This group includes:

- Finance and Tax Tribunals
- Lands Tribunal
- Transport Tribunal
- Immigration Services Tribunal
- The Commissioners' Office
- Adjudicator to HM Land Registry
- Information Tribunal
- Gender Recognition Panel
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel
- Mental health Review Tribunal
- Special Educational Needs

³ Social Security and Child Support Appeals and Employment Tribunals Service

B. Description of individual jurisdictions

In this annex, we list the tribunals that form part of the Tribunals Service and explain the jurisdiction of each of them.

Adjudicator to HM Land Registry

The Adjudicator to HM Land Registry deals with disputed applications to the Land Registry where no agreement has been reached as well as applications for putting a document right or setting it aside.

The Appeals Service

(Social Security and Child Support Appeals)

The Appeals Service, consisting of 775 staff, was formerly part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Its main responsibility is to hear appeals against decisions on the payment of a variety of benefits and other decisions made by the delivery agencies of DWP. The most commonly heard cases involve the Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefit. The Appeals Service handles approximately 250,000 cases a year.

Asylum and Immigration Tribunal

The Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT) is the largest of the tribunals already administered by DCA. It was launched in April 2005, superseding the former Immigration Appellate Authority. In its formative year, the tribunal employed 1,100 staff and handled some 173,000 cases relating to decisions on asylum, immigration, human rights, citizenship and race discrimination.

The administrative arm of the AIT also supports the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC), Proscribed Organisations Appeal Commission (POAC) and the Pathogens Access Appeal Commission (PAAC). The work of these tribunals is described on pages 39 and 40.

The Commissioners Office

The Commissioners deal with appeals on a point of law from decisions made by the Appeals Service tribunals in Social Security, Child Support, Tax Credit, Child Trust Fund, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit cases. They also deal with appeals on a point of law from decisions of the Pensions Appeal Tribunals made on or after 6 April 2005. In addition, Commissioners have an originating jurisdiction in cases arising from the Forfeiture Act 1982.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel (CICAP)

CICAP joins from the Home Office with 70 staff. Its responsibility is the disposal of appeals against decisions taken by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA). Current workload is approximately 3,700 cases a year.

Employment Tribunals Service (ETS)

The Employment Tribunals Service (ETS) was formerly part of the Department of Trade and Industry. Its role is to carry out the administrative tasks necessary to enable claims to Employment Tribunals in England & Wales, Employment Tribunals in Scotland and subsequent appeals to the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) to be determined. It employs 725 staff and its current workload is approximately 89,000 cases a year, with 1,100 proceeding to the EAT.

Financial Services and Markets Tribunal

The Financial Services and Markets Tribunal hears references arising from decision notices issued by the Financial Services Authority (FSA).

Gender Recognition Panel

The Gender Recognition Panel deals with applications for gender recognition; which will allow transsexual people who have lived in their acquired gender for a specified time to apply for Gender Recognition Certificate and gain legal status in that gender.

General Commissioners of Income Tax

The General Commissioners of Income Tax hear appeals against decisions made by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs on a variety of different tax related matters including Income Tax, Corporation Tax, Capital Gains Tax, National Insurance Contributions, Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Sick Pay and Stamp Duty Land Tax.

Information Tribunal

The Information Tribunal deals with appeals against decisions of the Information Commissioner, in respect of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. A designated panel of the tribunal handles national security appeals.

Immigration Services Tribunal

The Immigration Service Tribunal deals with appeals against decisions of the Immigration Services Commissioner. It also hears disciplinary charges brought about by the Commissioner against immigration advisers.

Lands Tribunal

The Lands Tribunal deals with appeals from Valuation Tribunals and Leasehold Valuation Tribunals, land compensation and discharge and modification of restrictive covenants.

Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT)

The Mental Health Review Tribunal was formerly part of the Department of Health. It employs 79 staff and hears applications made by or on behalf of patients under the Mental Health Act 1983. Hearings are held where a patient is detained - in a hospital, nursing home or mental health unit. A panel, chaired by a legal member and consisting of a medical member and a lay member, hears the application in an inquisitorial rather than adversarial way.

The number of applications to the tribunal has increased from just over 20,000 in the year 2001-02 to nearly 22,000 in 2004-05, while the number of applications which have lead to hearings also increased over this period by about 1,000 to just under 12,000.

Pathogens Access Appeal Commission

The Pathogens Access Appeal Commission hears appeals against decisions to restrict access to a prescribed set of dangerous pathogens and toxins, and regarding the arrangements for keeping such materials.

Pensions Appeal Tribunal

The Pensions Appeal Tribunal deals with appeals relating to war pensions.

Pensions Regulator Tribunal

The Pensions Regulator Tribunal deals with appeals arising from decisions of the Pensions Regulator.

Proscribed Organisations Appeal Commission

The Proscribed Organisations Appeal Commission deals with appeals against decisions made by the Secretary of State for Home Affairs to refuse to de-proscribe organisations.

Special Commissioners of Income Tax

The Special Commissions of Income Tax deal with appeals arising from decisions of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs with regard to Income Tax.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST)

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal was formerly part of the Department for Education and Skills. It employs 60 staff and hears and decides parents' appeals against local authority decisions on children's special educational needs and claims of disability discrimination in schools. In 2004 SENDIST completed 10 years of working as an independent judicial body and now handles over 3,000 cases a year.

Special Immigration Appeals Commission

The Special Immigration Appeals Commission deals with appeals against decisions made by the Secretary of State for Home Affairs under the terms of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission Act 1997.

Transport Tribunal

The Transport Tribunal deals with appeals against decisions of traffic commissioners and the Registrar of Approved Driving Instructors, oversees the resolution of disputes under the Postal Services Act 2000 and handles appeals from Transport for London.

VAT and Duties Tribunal

The VAT and Duties Tribunal deals with appeals arising from decisions of HM Revenue and Customs with regard to VAT and customs and excise duties.

C. Individual performance measures and targets

The following pages set out the performance measures for individual tribunals. These are based on their existing measures that have been developed independently.

A key part of the Tribunals Service strategy will be to review all these performance measures and seek to identify where, as a single agency, targets should be increased.

The Appeals Service

- The average waiting time for an appeal will be no more than 11 weeks from the time of receipt by the Appeals Service. This excludes cases awaiting further evidence.
- For cases returned from the commissioner, the average waiting time for an appeal to be reheard will be no more than eight weeks from the date of return to the Appeals Service. This excludes cases requiring further evidence.
- The number of cases over 20 weeks old at 31 March 2007 will be at the same level, or lower, than the target number as at 1 April 2006 (4,458 cases). This excludes cases awaiting decision in lead cases in a higher court: the effective date will commence from withdrawal of stay being notified.

Customer Standards

The Appeals Service will:

- reply to 85 per cent of general enquiries within 10 working days
- respond to 85 per cent of complaints within 15 working days
- respond to 90 per cent of ministerial correspondence within 20 working days
- answer the telephone within 30 seconds for 95 per cent of cases

- ensure that a Tribunal Clerk acknowledges arrivals and meets the appellant not less than five minutes before the hearing time to explain the procedure
- ensure that our service is available and accessible between 8:30am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday. This includes sign posting at venues, making sure facilities such as ramps and appropriate seating at venues are available and staff are there to take phone calls.

Employment Tribunals

- 75 per cent of single employment tribunal cases will be brought to hearing within 26 weeks.
- The above target will be achieved in a minimum of 65 per cent of all employment tribunal offices.
- 85 per cent of decisions will be issued within four weeks of the tribunals hearing.

Asylum and Immigration Tribunals

- The number of unfounded asylum claims in 2007-08 will be less than in the 2002-03 year (Shared with Home Office).

These are joint PSA targets with the Home Office.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel

Waiting Time Targets

- To issue a decision on eligibility for compensation in 75% of cases within 6 months of receiving the ready to list (hearing) bundle from CICA and 95% within 12 months.
- To resolve (both eligibility and quantum) 65% of cases within 6 months of receiving the ready to list bundle; 90% within 12 months, and 98% within 2 years.

Caseload Target

- To resolve (both eligibility and quantum) 6 cases per hearing day.

Mental Health Review Tribunals

- The average waiting time from the date of receipt of the application by the secretariat to the date of the first hearing will be no more than:
 - 7 days for Section 2 Mental Health Act 1983 cases
 - 5 weeks for Section 3 Mental Health Act 1983 cases
 - 14 weeks for Restricted cases.
- The average waiting time from the date of receipt of the application by the secretariat to the date of the disposal (notification of the written decision to the applicant) will be no more than:
 - 10 days for Section 2 cases
 - 5 weeks for Section 3 cases
 - 15 weeks for Restricted cases.

- The average time from the date of the final hearing to the date of dispatch of written decision of the tribunal, including the reasons, to all parties for Section 2 cases will be no more than 3 days.
- The average time taken from the date of the final hearing to the date of dispatch of written decision of the tribunal, including the reasons, to all parties for Section 3 and Restricted cases will be no more than 7 days.
- The number of cases disposed of each month is to be no more than plus or minus 10 per cent of the monthly forecast for the same period.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal

- The time taken to dispose a case will be no more than 4.3 months.
- 96 per cent of cases will be registered within 10 working days.
- 96 per cent of case statements will be processed within 10 working days.
- 80 per cent of decisions issued within 10 working days.
- 96 per cent of all expense claims will be accurately paid within 15 working days.
- The outcomes of appeals in the High Court will be published in the Annual Report.

The Commissioners Office

- 85 per cent of all workload will be disposed of within 30 weeks.

Adjudicator to HM Land Registry

- 90 per cent of beneficial interest cases will be dealt with within 8 weeks.
- 70 per cent of all other cases will be dealt with within 50 weeks.

Financial Services and Markets Tribunal

- 60 per cent of cases will be disposed of within 40 weeks.

Immigration Services Tribunal

- 80 per cent of cases will be disposed of within 30 weeks.

Information Tribunal (Incorporating National Security Appeals Panel)

- 50 per cent of cases will be resolved within 60 working days.

Lands Tribunal

- 60 per cent of cases will be disposed of within 50 weeks.

Pensions Appeal Tribunals

- 80 per cent of cases will be disposed of within 20 weeks.

Special Commissioners of Income Tax

- 60 per cent of cases will be disposed of within 40 weeks.

Transport Tribunal

- 90 per cent of cases will be disposed of within 16 weeks.

VAT and Duties Tribunals

- 50 per cent of Category 1 and 3 cases will be disposed of within 70 weeks.
- 70 per cent of Category 2 cases will be disposed of within 35 weeks.

General performance targets for customer service that apply to a majority of our tribunals

Unless other performance targets are in place, tribunals will:

- reply to 95 per cent of correspondence received within 5 working days.
- answer 85 per cent of complaints within 5 working days.
- deal with 85 per cent of Ministerial complaints/correspondence within 15 working days.
- deal with 85 per cent of compensation claims within 10 working days.
- answer 85 per cent calls to the customer service centre at first point of contact.
- answer 90 per cent of calls to the customer service centre within 20 seconds.
- ensure no more than 2 per cent of calls to the customer service centre are abandoned after 20 seconds.
- reply to 95 per cent of email enquiries received at the customer service centre within 5 working days.
- ensure that written requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 are dealt with within 20 days.
- ensure that written subject access requests under the Data Protection Act 1998 are dealt with within 40 days.

D. Tables of financial allocations and workload projections

The following tables set out the indicative workload figures for each agency and the overall breakdown of the indicative budget for 2006-07.

Table 1 - Budgets

Tribunal Service Indicative Budget 2006-07	
	£m
Asylum and Immigration Tribunal	80
Appeals Service	50
Employment Tribunals Service	54
Tribunals Group	12
Mental Health Review Tribunals	21
Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel	4
Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal	4
Operational Costs	225
Corporate Costs	20
Estates	40
Total Running Costs	285
Change Funding (one-off)	1
Capital	4
Total Capital/Change	5

Table 2 - Workload

Tribunal Service Workload	
Tribunal	Indicative workload
Appeals Service	249,000
Employment Tribunals Service	89,000
Asylum and Immigration Tribunal	152,000
Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel	3,700
Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal	3,300
Mental Health Review Tribunals	22,000
Other Tribunals	20,000
Total	539,000

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