



OJC
Office for
Judicial
Complaints

2009–2010 Business Plan and 2009–2012 Corporate Plan

Office for Judicial Complaints

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Foreword



This is the fourth Corporate and Business plan that I have had the pleasure of presenting, but sadly my last as head of the OJC as I am leaving the office in the near future to take up a new post.

The last year has seen considerable change at the OJC with many new procedures being adopted. We have worked hard to improve the quality and speed with which we deal with complaints.

Our efforts are now bearing fruit with significant improvements in the time taken to provide responses to complainants.

My team and I will continue to improve the way in which we work and the service which we provide in the coming year and in the longer term.

Last year we looked at all our systems to ensure that the personal information we hold electronically and on file are kept secure, confidential and safe.

We also established links with a number of other countries, including Germany and the United States of America in order to share best practice with jurisdictions that are in the process of implementing or revising systems for the handling of judicial complaints.

We are proud to have one of the most advanced systems for the handling of judicial complaints in the world; and over the next three years we will continue to develop our international and domestic links and to ensure that we continue to develop the effectiveness and efficiency of our processes, by drawing on the experiences of others.

I have enjoyed my time at the OJC and would like to thank my team for their hard work in providing a professional service that is impartial, fair and transparent.

The Senior Management Team

Pennie Turrell – Deputy Head of the OJC

Responsible for the most complex and sensitive cases, providing advice on matters of policy and process.

Pennie also deals with the Judicial Appointments and Conduct Ombudsman providing advice and information as required.

Jane Tweedie – Head of Casework management

Jane and her team are responsible for all incoming communication with the OJC.

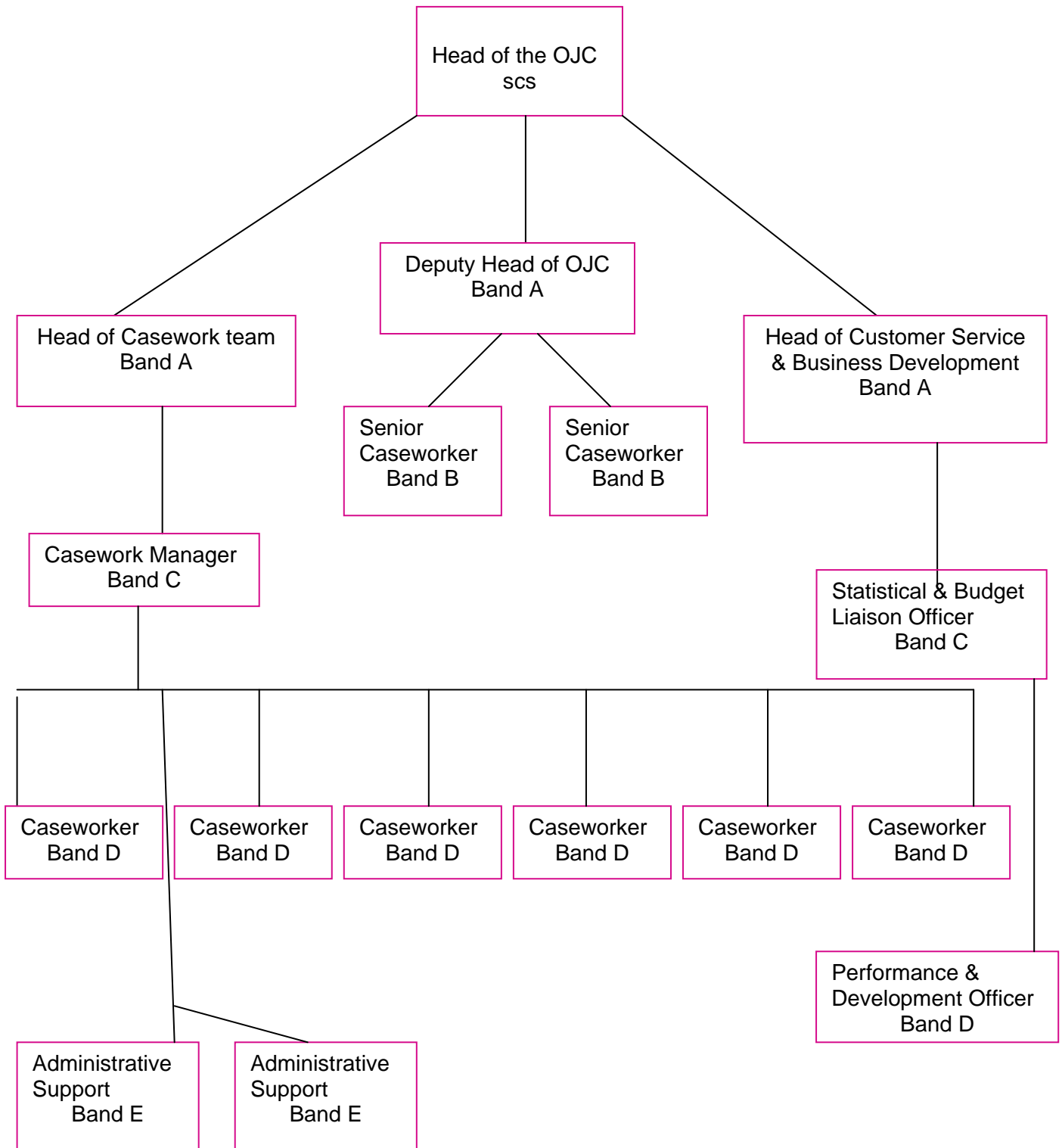
Provides responses to all enquiries as well as the majority of complaints, ensuring that our service targets are delivered.

Philip Hales – Head of Customer Service and Business Planning

Responsible for all Business services including Finance, Reporting, Information Assurance, Planning and development of Customer Service.

Provides support and advice to all Review Bodies.

The Office for Judicial Complaints



Role of the Office

The Office for Judicial Complaints (OJC) came into being on 3 April 2006, as a result of the Constitutional Reform Act 2005. The rules that govern us were altered under the Judicial Discipline (Prescribed Procedures) (Amendment) Regulations 2008. Under the terms of the regulations the OJC is:

- Required to consider all complaints and disciplinary conduct matters against Judicial Office Holders in accordance with regulations made under the Act. This includes consideration of the merits of the complaint and recommendations on appropriate action.
- Jointly responsible to the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice.

The changes to the rules came about as a result of a review of the way we work and are aimed at streamlining our procedures to enable complaints to be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Our relationship with the Ministry of Justice

The MoJ is working for a Democratic, Just and Safe Society.

The OJC supports this goal by contributing to one of the MoJ's strategic objectives. The OJC supports the objective of delivering fair and simple routes to civil and family justice by operating an effective complaints system, which wins the confidence of both public and judiciary.

As an associated office of the MoJ, the OJC has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) clarifying its relationship with the MoJ. The MoU sets out the roles and responsibilities of both the MoJ and OJC and identifies key performance and service delivery targets which we agree to achieve in return for our funding.

The MoU is reviewed every 3 years and any amendments are reflected in our Business Plan.

Our Values

We aim to provide a professional and independent service that is able to support the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice in the effective and fair handling of complaints against judicial office holders by well motivated and skilled staff.

To achieve our aim we will:

- Provide a timely, consistent, transparent and informative service to all of our users.
- Continually improve our service by ensuring all our staff have the required knowledge and skills to perform their jobs effectively.
- Ensure that all complaints and conduct matters are dealt with in accordance with the timescales and procedures laid down in the regulations.
- Provide an excellent support service to investigating Judges involved in the consideration of complaints and conduct matters.
- Facilitate the functions of the Review Bodies, providing support to all Review Body members and the people that they are dealing with.
- Seek feedback from our users at appropriate times in order to develop and improve our service.
- Ensure that all information held either on paper or electronically is kept safe and secure in compliance with MoJ information assurance policy.

The people we interact with

Whilst we interact with a diverse range of organisations and people the following groups are our key stakeholders:

- Members of the public who use our service
- Judicial Office Holders
- The Lord Chancellor
- The Lord Chief Justice
- Members of staff working in Courts and Tribunals
- The Judicial Appointments and Conduct Ombudsman (JACO).

In addition we have established contacts with similar organisations in a number of other countries, with a view to sharing knowledge and experiences.

We are also looking at ways to improve public involvement in our work, by extending our group of critical friends and by evaluating our customer survey.

Improving our service

Last year we implemented a new structure, this is set out on page 5 to this plan. Already this is showing improvements in reducing the time taken in dealing with complaints. We anticipate further improvements in the coming year.

We have introduced a system of unit costs and we will use this to demonstrate the efficiency our organisation.

Although there has been a considerable increase in the number of complaints we deal with we have not required any increase in budget to deal with this work load which we will manage by improving our efficiency.

We will be evaluating our Customer satisfaction questionnaire, with a view to using the information we gain to improve our service.

We are offering our staff the opportunity to improve their complaint handling skills further by obtaining an accredited qualification. These skills and abilities will be used to improve the way we work.

Public Engagement

We are trying to involve the public in our work, as we regard it as important that our processes are as open as possible, within the constraints of the rules that govern us.

We have made alterations to our website and will shortly be able to allow complaints to be made on-line direct from our website. We will also be offering complainants the opportunity to tell us a little more about themselves electronically so that we can tailor our service to meet customer needs.

We have just sent out a customer survey to clients and will be evaluating the information we receive and analyse ways to improve our procedures and services.

Equality & Diversity

We serve a diverse society, one that is made up of men and women; people of different races, cultures and religions; people with and without disabilities as well as people of different ages and sexualities.

We will recognise, respect and value diversity in every aspect of our business.

This year we will be focusing on expanding our knowledge of mental disabilities, as we have found in our last customer survey that we have many customers who have mental disabilities. We would therefore like to be able to provide a service that is supportive of customers with such disabilities.

Relationships with other Nations

We have established contacts with a number of other countries and Dale Simon has represented the OJC at the National College on Judicial Conduct, in the United States of America. Dale delivered a well received speech and answering questions on the way particular complaints are dealt with by the OJC.

We hope to build on the contacts we have made to improve our knowledge and improve services in the coming year.

Our People

Learning & Development

As a result of our review of staff training needs we are equipping our staff with additional skills to improve still further the skills we offer.

During the coming year some staff will be beginning a professional course on complaint handling. Others will be learning how to use applications such as M.S. Publisher and Adobe to improve the quality of the reports we prepare.

We learnt from our last client questionnaire that some of the people we deal with suffer from a mental disabilities. We have therefore arranged for all staff to received training on how to assist these people in the way they make complaints about Judicial Office Holders. In addition we will train our staff on how to understand distraught and particularly upset clients.

Some staff have been equipped with skills in Information Assurance so that they can ensure that the personal and confidential information we deal with are held in a secure way.

Leadership

We will ensure that our senior managers are trained and equipped with the skills required to lead and inspire staff and deliver an excellent service to our customers.

Recognising success

We will continue to recognise the achievements of our staff, promote excellence and reward outstanding performance.

Business & Service Improvement

We have identified a programme of improvements over the coming financial year, key elements of which are set out below.

- Continue to improve our processes, by developing new ways to deal with complaints as quickly and effectively as possible.
- Evaluate our Unit Costs system to ensure that the information we obtain accurately reflects the work we do.
- To improve the skills and ability of our staff.

We will gain a better understanding of our clients from the training we have received on mental health and from the information we glean from our customer survey.

Budget, Organisation & Staff Resources

The table below sets out the number of staff that we currently have at each grade.

Grade	Number of staff
Senior Civil Servant	1
Band A	3
Band B	2
Band C	2
Band D	7
Band E	2
Total	17

Budget Information

There has been no increase in the budget from that received last year, we will be able to deal with the increase in workload by being more efficient in the way we work.

Pay bill	£778,300
Other Running and Programme Costs	£164,950
Total	£943,250

Risk Management

The effective identification and management of risk is an important aspect of management. The OJC maintains a comprehensive risk log which is subject to monitoring and adjustment on a monthly basis.

All risks that are identified and recorded in our risk log are allocated an asset owner, one of the senior management team, who is responsible for managing and mitigating that risk.

We use our risk recording and management system to inform our business decisions and support better decision-making through a good understanding of the risks that confront the OJC and their likely impact.

Charter Mark

The Senior Management Team at the OJC decided to put an application for Charter Mark on hold until our new staff and processes were embedded. We hope to start working on this again during the course of this financial year.

Key Performance Indicators

KPI 1 - To provide timely, consistent, transparent and informative service to all users.

	Objective	Delivery/ milestone	Resources
1.1	Provide a prompt service to users	<p>The following targets are met for dealing with complaints as set in the Regulations:</p> <p>90% of Complaints Acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt</p> <p>85% of initial response provided to complainants within 15 working days of receipt</p> <p>85% of Complainants are provided with a monthly update on the progress of their complaint</p> <p>All parties are informed of the outcome of a complaint within 90 working days of a complaint being received (subject to external factors beyond the control of the OJC)</p> <p>Ministerial correspondence responded to within 15 working days of receipt by the OJC</p> <p>Case papers provided to the Judicial Appointments and Conduct Ombudsman within 5 working days of a request being received</p>	All OJC staff
1.2	Provide a professional service	Ensure that staff have the skills needed to deal with complaints effectively	All OJC staff
1.3	Analyse our customer service survey which took place in March 2009 with particular emphasis on satisfaction levels in comparison to previous years.	November 2009	10 days of official's time

KPI 2 - To measure our performance in the way that we handle Review Body cases.

	Objective	Delivery/ milestone	Resources
2.1	To provide Review Body members with all relevant case papers in sufficient time to allow adequate time for consideration prior to hearings	Provide papers at least 5 working days in advance of the first meeting. To review and implement feedback from Review Body members questionnaire	Business team staff
2.2	Improve communication with Review Body members by way of regular newsletters and the creation of a discussion forum on our website	Produce a bi-yearly newsletter for Lay members and Judicial members of the panel	Business team staff
2.3	Provide regular updates to interested parties on the progress of the Review Body	Provide monthly updates	Business team staff
2.4	To ensure that all information is handled under the Information Assurance guidelines	June 2009	All staff
2.5	Renew Lay member appointments (due April 2009). Review whether need another recruitment campaign	April 2009	Business team staff
2.6	Circulate the Lay Members Newsletter to relevant judicial office holders.	June 2009	Business team staff 10 days
2.7	Hold a Lay members' annual meeting/training day.	December 2009	Business team staff 4 days

Priorities

PT 1 - To further promote awareness and understanding of the role and responsibilities of the OJC by 31st March 2010.

	Objective	Delivery/ milestone	Resources
1.1	To review all of our leaflets to ensure that they are user friendly	To conduct a review of our leaflets, incorporating input from our 'critical friends' group	Critical friends group and OJC business team. £5000 for reprinting.
1.2	To undertake a programme of visits to establish links and exchange ideas with organisations involved in the judicial discipline process	To complete 5 visits within the financial year.	15 days of Head of OJC time. 30 days of official's times.
1.3	To expand on awareness of the OJC through visits to Advisory Committees, Courts, Coroners, Tribunals and HMCS regions	March 2010	15 days of official's time.
1.4	To review advice given out on our website- (Judicial decision and case management)	September 2009	6 days of official's time.

PT 2 - Ensuring that all complaints and conduct matters are dealt with in accordance with the timescales and procedures laid down in the regulations.

	Objective	Delivery/ milestone	Resources
2.1	Consider the findings of the JACO audit, once received, responding to any recommendations	July 2009	3 days of official's time.

PT 3 - To continue to improve our processes, building on lessons learned over the past year.

	Objective	Delivery/ milestone	Resources
3.1	To introduce new process for obtaining court tapes in the early stages of the complaint, to shorten the life of a complaint	June 2009	5 days of official's time.
3.2	Introduce a protocol for dealing with complaints about HMCS staff, Advisory Committee staff and Barristers	December 2009	10 days of official's time.
3.3	Introduce a comprehensive procedure for dealing with requests for compensation	January 2010	10 days of official's time.
3.4	Review new processes, looking for ways to further improve efficiency and customer service.	July 2009	5 days of official's time.

PT 4 - To obtain more information concerning the diversity of our clients and use that information to improve the service that we provide.

	Objective	Delivery/ milestone	Resources
4.1	To analyse and make use of the information received through use of our online diversity questionnaire.	March 2010	10 days of official's time.
4.2	To make further contacts with organisations representing the interests of people suffering with mental health issues to seek advice into how we might improve the service we provide to our customers	March 2010	2 days of official's time.
4.3	Use overseas contacts to share knowledge between similar organisations, improve customer service and develop best practice.	March 2010	2 days of official's time.

PT 5 - To measure the cost effectiveness of our performance.

	Objective	Delivery/ milestone	Resources
5.1	Analyse the use of the OJC's Unit Cost system, developing reporting procedures to measure efficiency and customer service.	December 2009	10 days of official's time.
5.2	To train a member of staff in the use of 'LEAN' methodology and practice and to prepare a project plan to implement changes to our current processes where identified.	February 2010	20 days of official's time.