

Legal Ombudsman

PO Box 6806
Wolverhampton
WV1 9WJ
T 0121 245 3100

www.legalombudsman.org.uk

9 March 2016

Sir Mike Pitt
Chairman
Legal Services Board
One Kemble Street
London
WC2B 4AN

Dear Mike,

Please find attached our report for the month of February in respect of the statutory targets set by the LSB.

Both the senior leadership of the Legal Ombudsman and the OLC board were disappointed that, whilst the underlying drivers of improvement look promising, the 90 day timeliness performance is actually the worst we have experienced since you exercised your statutory powers. This result has been discussed in some depth by the OLC Board, at its meeting today, and we are satisfied that there is complete clarity about what needs to be done to address this and that everything possible is being done to rectify the situation, commensurate with our need to operate as a responsible ALB and to maintain our momentum on the resolution of the full range of issues which led to the qualification of our accounts.

We have been impressed by the way in which our new Chief Executive and Chief Ombudsman have put their personal stamp on meeting all of the challenges which we are currently addressing. We are working closely with them to provide both support and accountability and are pleased to see that they have already achieved some significant successes. We have confidence that their efforts will bear fruit on this particular challenge in the next couple of months and see no reason to re-visit our performance assumptions for 2016/7.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Green
Chair
Office for Legal Complaints

Att:


LEGAL
OMBUDSMAN

Legal Ombudsman performance against LSB s.120 targets

Target	description	Target	Performance to 29 February 2016	Target met
1. Timeliness:	The number of cases resolved within 90 days (from first point of contact must not fall below 60% in any month	90 days: 60%	<= 56 days: 95 out of 512 cases accepted in December 2015 19%) <= 90 days: 281 out of 644 cases accepted in November 44%) <= 180 days: out of 475 cases out of 540 accepted in August 2015 88%) <= 365 days: out of 443 cases our of 477 accepted in February 2015 99%)	No
2. Unit cost:	The unit cost per case must not exceed £1,750 in any quarter Unit cost will be reported quarterly, on a rolling twelve- month basis.	£1,750 (Rolling 3 months)	Rolling Quarter: (December, January, February) £1598 12 month average to February 2015: £1765	Yes
3. Quality:	The average satisfaction of complainants and lawyers (regardless of the outcome of the case) must not fall below 40% in any quarter.	40%	Overall satisfaction reported in the most recent independent customer satisfaction data, for cases closed to 30 September 2015: 55%	Yes

Where any of the targets are not met, the OLC is required to provide two supplementary reports to the LSB. These are provided below:

1. The reasons for the failure to meet the 90 day time target

The failure to meet the 90 day time target remains the result of a combination of the following factors:

- *Technical difficulties with the CRM system.* During January and February there was minimal disruption from CRM. This will be reflected in improvements in April and May
- *Short term impacts to Ombudsman working practices and Ombudsman workload management.* The changes to Ombudsman working practices and workload management detailed in previous months remain.
- *Lower than planned investigator resource resulting in delays in delays to allocation of cases to investigators*
- *We are carrying a significant number of vacancies in the investigator pool, and we have had a higher than normal number of long term sickness absences (due to non-work-related issues.)* There has been a delay in recruitment action, due to the MoJ spending controls and the need for approvals to recruit, but the selection process is nearing completion and a number of new investigators will join the Legal Ombudsman on 11 April As a result of these factors there have been delays between acceptance of complaints and their allocation to an investigator.

2. Details of timetabled remedial action proposed to bring performance back into compliance with targets.

Technical difficulties.

We are moving to a new CRM supplier in April and as part of the transition process we will be taking steps to make the infrastructure more robust. Having learned the lessons from working with our previous supplier we have built in new conditions to the contract with our new supplier to remedy any deficits in a more timely way. We have been careful to recruit the supplier using the experience of our new Head of IT, informed by the experience of operational staff on the limits of the old (current) contract.

Ombudsman working practices

We are pleased to report that the average waiting time for an Ombudsman decision is now three weeks (four at last report). We are aiming for two weeks and are confident we can deliver this by April/May. This has been achieved by embedding Ombudsman in teams and developing skills within the organisation to create a pool of temporary ombudsman as and when needed.

Lower than planned investigator resource

Another positive development is our recruitment of new staff. We received authority from MOJ to recruit 11 new investigators. These posts are being offered 4 March 2016. Some of these will be internal promotion (6) and will not have to undertake as lengthy a training programme as the external recruits. All new investigators will be deployed by mid- May. In parallel all long term sickness absences are being monitored by the Executive and RemCo and we anticipate a reduction in sickness absence rates. This will have a significant impact on the unallocated cases.

3. Unit Cost

The target for the rolling quarter unit cost has been met. The 12 month average is improving. The cost efficiencies realised in the latter part of 15/16 have not fed through to a full year of savings. We are always mindful of the need to make further efficiencies and will continue to do this.