

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicator Certification

We hereby certify that the performance indicators are based on proper records, are relevant and appropriate for assisting users to assess the performance of the Office of the Information Commissioner, and fairly represent the performance of the Office of the Information Commissioner for the financial year ended 30 June 2008.



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Senior Investigations Officer

4 September 2008



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4 September 2008



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2007/2008

DESIRED OUTCOME

Access to documents and observance of processes in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* ('the FOI Act').

DESCRIPTION

Under the FOI Act, the main function of the Information Commissioner is to provide independent external review of agencies' decisions by dealing with complaints about decisions made by agencies under the FOI Act. The Commissioner's other responsibilities include:

- ensuring that agencies are aware of their responsibilities under the FOI Act;
- ensuring members of the public are aware of the FOI Act and their rights under it;
- providing assistance to members of the public and agencies on matters relevant to the FOI Act; and
- recommending to Parliament legislative or administrative changes that could be made to help the objects of the FOI Act to be achieved.

The Office of the Information Commissioner is made up of the Commissioner and the staff appointed by the Governor to assist the Commissioner to discharge those functions and responsibilities under delegated authority. These functions take the form of two services.

Service 1: Resolution of Complaints.**Service 2: Advice and Awareness.**

The intent of the FOI Act is to ensure that proceedings on external review are conducted with as little formality and technicality as the requirements of the FOI Act and proper consideration of the matters before the Commissioner permit. Therefore, when dealing with complaints, the policy of the Commissioner is to ensure that wherever possible the conduct of external review proceedings is not unduly legalistic or formal. Accordingly, the preferred method of resolving complaints is by negotiating a conciliated outcome between the parties. However, where a conciliated outcome cannot reasonably be achieved, the Commissioner is required to make a determination by making and publishing a written decision with reasons.

Officers delivering the Advice and Awareness service also emphasise the spirit of the FOI Act when delivering advisory services. Wherever possible, agencies are encouraged to release information outside the FOI process where it is reasonable to do so or, where necessary, to follow the correct processes for dealing with an access application or an application for amendment of personal information under the FOI Act. Policy development within agencies which establishes routine information disclosure outside formal FOI processes is encouraged so that the impact of the obligations placed on agencies by the FOI Act on the day-to-day operations of those agencies is minimised. Many potential disputes are also resolved informally with assistance from the Office.

The Performance Indicators ('the PIs') of the Office detailed below have been designed to reflect the satisfaction of parties who utilise the services of the Office, show the extent to which conciliation is achieved and measure efficiency by relating workload to costs. There are three Effectiveness PIs and two Efficiency PIs, which are summarised below:

Effectiveness performance indicators

1. Satisfaction of parties with external review process.
2. Satisfaction of agencies with advice and guidance provided.
3. The extent to which complaints were resolved by conciliation.

Efficiency performance indicators

4. Average cost of external reviews finalised.
5. Average cost of advisory services delivered per recipient.

1. EFFECTIVENESS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1.1 Satisfaction of parties with external review process

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Target	90%	90%	86%	80%	85%
Actual	86%	86%	85%	75%	88%

The above indicator shows the level of satisfaction with the external review process by the parties to each of the complaints finalised during the year.

A Post Review Questionnaire (PRQ) is sent to the parties to an external review to seek their views on whether there was an independent, objective and fair process with an emphasis on user-friendly processes which met their needs. Three key questions are asked:

1. Were you satisfied with the external review process?
2. Do you consider that you were kept adequately informed regarding the progress of your case?
3. Was the officer assigned to your case professional in his or her dealings with you?

A PRQ was sent to each of 210 parties who participated in an external review process following finalisation of the review process. Of the 210 PRQs sent, 141 participants (67%) responded by returning a completed PRQ. 81 responses were received from agencies; 55 were received from complainants; and 5 were received from third parties.

The outcome of answers to question 1 above is used to calculate this indicator. The answers to questions 2 and 3 are also used by the Office, but for internal performance management of complaints officers. Information in response to all three questions is taken into account when reviewing external review procedures.

Of the 141 responders, 124 (88%) answered ‘yes’ to question 1 and confirmed that they were satisfied with the external review process.

1.2 Satisfaction of agencies with advice and guidance provided

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Target	98%	(a)	98%	98%	98%
Actual	100%	(a)	98%	97%	97%

The Advice and Awareness section of the Office provides a range of advisory services. Those services are provided indirectly through published information and the internet website of the Office. Advice is also given in person by telephone, email and counter enquiries and through group training presentations and briefings.

A survey was sent to each of 306 State and local government agencies and Ministers. Of the 306 surveys sent, 285 agencies (93%) responded by returning a completed survey.

Of the 285 respondent agencies, 206 confirmed receiving advice and guidance from this office.

Of those 206 agencies that received advice, 200 agencies (97%) expressed satisfaction with the advice and guidance provided to them by this office.

(a) Until 2000, surveys of agencies were undertaken annually. At that time the results indicated a consistently high level of satisfaction. In order to reduce the burden on agencies the survey was then conducted biennially. Therefore, a survey was not conducted in 2001, 2003 and 2005.

Having reviewed the practice of biennial surveys in 2006, a survey is now conducted on an annual basis in conjunction with the annual statistical returns of agencies.

1.3 The extent to which complaints were resolved by conciliation

The external review model adopted by the Office emphasizes informal resolution processes such as negotiation and conciliation, wherever possible. If a complaint cannot be resolved by conciliation between the parties to the complaint, the Information Commissioner is required to make a formal determination.

The PI set out in 1.3 is designed to represent the success rate of the preferred resolution method. Therefore, the PI shows, as a percentage, those complaints finalized by conciliation as opposed to those complaints that required a decision by the Information Commissioner.

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Target	n/a	70%	74%	75%
Actual	66%	72%	74%	62%

In total, 433 matters of all types were finalised by the Office in 2007/08. However, of those 433 matters, only 117 were complaints, as defined in s.65 of the FOI Act. Of the 117 complaints resolved in 2007/08, 72 (62%) were resolved by conciliation. That is, as a result of negotiations conducted by the Office the parties agreed that no issues remained in dispute which required a decision by the Information Commissioner.

Note: The reduced outcome in 2008 of complaints resolved by conciliation is primarily due to a policy decision by the Commissioner to expedite the final determination of complaints. This is the subject of comment in the Commissioner’s overview section of this Report.

2. EFFICIENCY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Office currently operates with 10 FTEs to deliver services under the two main functions prescribed by the FOI Act. As the primary function of the Office is to deal with complaints received under the FOI Act, approximately 70% of the Office's resources are allocated to the complaint resolution (external review) function. The other main function of the Office is to provide advisory services to agencies and to the public. About 30% of the Office's resources are allocated to the delivery of advice and awareness services.

2.1 Service 1 - Resolution of Complaints Average cost of external reviews finalised

Included in calculating this PI are only those matters dealt with by the Resolution of Complaints section of the Office in 2007/08 which were technically formal "complaints" (see s.65 of the FOI Act) and applications that required a determination under the FOI Act rather than general complaints or requests for assistance that are not technically "complaints". General requests for assistance or for the intervention of the Office, including misdirected applications, are reported on as part of the service of the Advice and Awareness section. Most of those kinds of matters are dealt with by officers in the Advice and Awareness section of the Office.

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Target	n/a	\$4166	\$5548	\$6692
Actual	\$5413	\$5270	\$6456	\$5869

The table above reflects the costs incurred in resolving complaints and applications (eg. to lodge a complaint out of time; permission not to consult; etc.) that may require a determination. It is calculated by dividing the number of complaints and applications resolved by the Office in 2007/08 (174) into the net accrual cost for the Resolution of Complaints service (\$1,021,267- as advised by DOTAG).

Variations in the actual and target average cost are due primarily to fluctuations in the number of matters received and resolved in particular financial years.

2.2 Service 2 – Advice and Awareness Services Average cost of advisory services delivered per recipient

In calculating this PI the total service units delivered by the Advice and Awareness section of the Office in 2007/08 was used. The service units recorded by the Office relate to where direct advisory services were provided. Those units will consist of a total of all telephone calls attended, written advice given by email and letter, counter inquiries attended and recipients of training and briefings.

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Budget	n/a	\$55	\$120	\$152
Actual	\$184	\$105	\$92	\$107

The table above reflects the average cost of providing advice and awareness services to recipients. It is calculated by dividing the total number of recipients of advice and awareness services provided by the Office in 2007/08 (2817) into the net accrual cost for the Advice and Awareness service (\$302,801 - as advised by DOTAG).

Variations in the actual and target average cost are due primarily to fluctuations in the number of matters received and resolved in particular financial years.

In past financial years, the Independent Audit Opinion of the Auditor General has been provided in two separate certifications, one for the Performance Indicators and one for the Financial Statements. This year both certifications are again provided within the one document, a copy of which can be found on page 56.

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