

Administrative Justice Council - Business Plan 2020-2022

The Business Plan sets out the strategic objectives of the Administrative Justice Council and the activity to meet these objectives for 2020-2022. The Business Plan covers a three-year period but will be updated with new projects over the course of this period. Projects/priorities will fall under the objectives and overall principles listed below:

Objectives

The Administrative Justice Council ('the Council') has the following objectives:

- To keep the operation of the administrative justice system under review;
- To consider how to make the administrative justice system more accessible, fair and efficient;
- To advise the Lord Chancellor, other relevant ministers, the judiciary and Ombudsman schemes on the development of the administrative justice system;
- To share learning and areas of good practice across the UK;
- To provide a forum for the exchange of information between Government, the judiciary, ombudsman schemes, academics and those working with users of the administrative justice system;
- To identify areas of the administrative justice system that would benefit from research; and
- To make proposals for reform.

Principles

The Council's purpose will be to help make the administrative justice system increasingly accessible, fair and effective by:

- playing a pivotal role in the development and sharing of good practice;
- promoting understanding, learning and continuous improvement; and
- ensuring that the needs of users are central to the operation and ongoing reform of the system.

Strategic Objective 1: To keep under review the operation and delivery of the administrative justice system, and to make recommendations for improvements				
Aim	Activity	Responsible Body	Target Date	Outcome
To bring together key stakeholders in administrative justice to identify problems and propose solutions to the most pressing issues	Identify areas for review and report on possible reforms to improve the system	Panels, Steering Group and Council	Ongoing	That grievances would be resolved in a fair, timely, open and proportionate manner, and with a continuous search for improvement at every stage of the process That the AJC responds and contributes to policy making by adding expert views on proposals
	Engage with groups who represent users of the system to help shape the views of policy makers and influence reform	Panels, Steering Group and Council	Ongoing	
	Identify and respond to relevant bills, consultations and calls for evidence on administrative justice as appropriate.	Steering Group	Varied	
	End of year conference with relevant stakeholders	Secretariat/ Academic Panel	End of each financial year (funding permitting)	

Strategic Objective 2: To consider how to make the administrative justice system more accessible, fair and efficient				
Aim	Activity	Responsible Body	Target Date	Outcome
To strengthen and promote good quality decision-making by public bodies, identifying the costs and assessing the impact of those affected	Engage with the government officials to gain a better understanding of their decision-making processes	Secretariat, Chair	Ongoing	Those taking administrative decisions do so on soundly-based evidence and with regard for the individual needs of those affected
	Working Party on Benefits Reform in collaboration with JUSTICE	Members of the AJC, Secretariat and JUSTICE	Q4 2020-21	
	Explore a new one-way fee in tribunals, where the state party pays a fixed sum to HMCTS where its original decision is found to have been unlawful and impose stricter rules on state parties to tribunal decision-making	Pro Bono Panel	Ongoing	Cost saving to HMCTS by reimbursing unnecessary proceedings
	Lesson learning project on the economic and personal impact from incorrect decisions on PIP and ESA applications by the Department for Work and Pensions	Advice Sector Panel	Q4 2020-21	Improved quality of decision-making by the DWP, with reduced cases before the tribunal and reduced cases overturned by the tribunal.

To consider impact of modernisation of tribunals on litigants in person	Monitoring the development and effectiveness by HMCTS and others of “Stage 1” (Briggs) automated triage and information / guidance and research whether users of the new online interface can navigate the system effectively with the assistance available (including “assisted digital”)	Pro Bono Panel	Ongoing Q1 2021	Litigants are able to navigate and use the system more effectively
	Recommendations made and implemented from the findings of the Stakeholder Engagement Survey	Pro Bono Panel	Ongoing	Frontline agencies are better equipped to help people to go digital
	Continuous engagement with HMCTS on the development of the programme and its pilots	Council		HMCTS are better informed of the needs of users whilst developing the programme
To work towards making Ombudsman schemes as accessible, effective and efficient as possible	Sharing best practice between ombudsman schemes	Council	Ongoing	Government engagement on the re-introduction of a Public Services Ombudsman Bill
	Keeping the draft Public Ombudsman Bill on the government’s agenda and contributing to further consultation	Council, Secretariat	Ongoing	

	Advocating for own initiative powers for ombudsman schemes	Council	Ongoing	Own initiative powers for ombudsman schemes giving them the power to investigate systemic issues
Strategic Objective 3: To advise the Lord Chancellor, other relevant ministers, the judiciary and Ombudsmen on the development of the administrative justice system				
Aim	Activity	Responsible Body	Target Date	Outcome
To advise the Lord Chancellor, ministers, the judiciary and Ombudsmen on issues affecting the administrative justice system and to make recommendations on how to improve it	Send briefings, reports with policy recommendations, annual reports and correspondence on specific issues that need attention	Secretariat, Chair	Ongoing	That the Lord Chancellor, ministers and the judiciary are fully informed on the development of the administrative justice system and that recommendations are taken onboard
Strategic Objective 4: To share learning and areas of good practice across the UK				
Aim	Activity	Responsible Bodies	Target Date	Outcome
To exchange information with similar oversight bodies, government departments and NGOs	Communication and engagement with Civil and Family Justice Council, NGOs and government departments	Secretariat, Council	Ongoing	An increased awareness of good practice across government and oversight bodies
To share areas of best practice across the separate UK jurisdictions	Information sharing across UK devolved administrations	Council	Ongoing	Improvements to the administrative justice

				system across the United Kingdom
To share learning between ombudsman schemes and tribunals	To roll out pilots between ombudsman schemes and tribunals	Ombudsman and Tribunals Familiarisation Working Group, Academic Panel	Ongoing	Shared understanding, training, best practice with potential for cross-referrals
Strategic Objective 5: To provide a forum for the exchange of information between government, the judiciary, ombudsmen, academics and those working with users of the administrative justice system				
Aim	Activity	Responsible Body	Target Date	Outcome
To bring together key stakeholders in administrative justice	Bi-annual Council meetings	Secretariat	Ongoing	Have a broad reach engaging with stakeholders from all parts of the administrative justice system
	Workshops and events bringing together key members of the administrative justice system	Secretariat, Academic Panel	Ongoing	
To promote the work of the AJC	Sharing the work of the Council with government departments, among the tribunal judiciary, Ombudsman schemes, and in user representative organisations	Secretariat	Ongoing	Increased visibility and transparency of the Council's work
Strategic Objective 6: To identify areas of the administrative justice system that would benefit from research				
Aim	Activity	Responsible Body	Target Date	Outcome
To exchange ideas between the Steering Group, Academic Panel, Pro Bono Panel, Advice Sector Panel and the Council	Meetings of the panels, Steering Group and Council	All	Ongoing	Research informs government policy.

To consider academic research which has been presented to the Council and make recommendations to improve specific areas in the system	Academic, Pro Bono Panel and Advice Sector panels present research to the Council for consideration	Academic Panel/Pro Bon Panel/Advice Sector Panel	Ongoing	Increased evidence-based research into how the system could work better.
To bring stakeholders together to discuss themes within administrative justice based on academic research	Thematic workshops organised by the Academic Panel	Academic Panel, Secretariat	Ongoing	
Strategic Objective 7: To develop a plan for continued funding for the sustainability of the AJC				
Aim	Activity	Responsible Body	Target Date	Outcome
To continue the facilitation and operation of the AJC	To engage with funders, look for new funding opportunities and to provide progress reports to current funders	Secretariat	Ongoing	The continued operation of the AJC