



02/08

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## **TRIBUNALS SERVICE TAKES FORWARD REFORMS**

Actions to deliver a national, unified tribunals system with a strong local presence are outlined in the Tribunals Service's Business Plan, published today.

The Business Plan for 2008-09 outlines how the organisation will, over the coming year, drive forward its strategy to reform its 28 tribunals into a more efficient, independent and user-focused service.

This will involve:

- the opening of the Service's first administrative support centre, providing effective back office case administration for a number of tribunals, and developing plans for two more;
- developing and starting to roll-out a new network of hearing centres designed to host a number of tribunals;
- setting up the first Chambers, plus the Upper Tribunal, for the new two-tier tribunals system outlined in the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007;
- delivering a common IT infrastructure across the entire Tribunals Service estate, enabling more efficient working between tribunals; and
- developing new targets and customer service standards to drive up performance within tribunals.

Work will also take place during the year to bring eight new and existing tribunals, currently tied to other government departments, into the Tribunals Service family. They are the Estate Agents Act Appeals, Consumer Credit Appeals Tribunal, Family Health Service Appeals Authority, the Reserve Forces Appeal Tribunal, the Adjudication Panel for England, the Agricultural Lands Tribunal, the Gangmasters Appeal Tribunal and the Agricultural Dwelling Houses Advisory Committee.

Peter Handcock, Chief Executive of the Tribunals Service said:

“Tribunals deal with more than half a million cases a year, often involving the most vulnerable people in society. We are committed to ensuring that the needs of those people are at the heart of our reform agenda.

“In the two years since we were formed, we have laid the foundations necessary to ensure a first class service to the public. We now look forward to building on this in the coming year in conjunction with our judicial colleagues, and in welcoming more tribunals to our family.”

### **Notes to Editors**

1. Copies of the *Tribunals Service Business Plan 2008/09* are available at <http://www.tribunals.gov.uk/publications.htm>.
2. Copies of the Tribunals Service strategy '*Delivering the future: one system, one service*' are available from <http://www.tribunals.gov.uk/latestnews.htm>.
3. The Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 received Royal Assent on 19 July 2007. It contains provisions for a new judicial and legal framework to complement the Tribunals Service structure, including the creation of two new tribunals, the First-tier Tribunal and the Upper Tribunal, into which most existing tribunals will be transferred. The First-tier Tribunal will be made up of a number of Chambers. Work on implementing the two Tribunals during 2008-09 is subject to the Government's response to the Transforming Tribunals consultation document, see <http://www.tribunals.gov.uk/latestnews.htm>, which is expected in May.
4. The Tribunals Service is an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice, formed in April 2006 to provide independent administrative support to central government tribunals and organisations. Some 28 are currently administered by the Service. These include employment tribunals, asylum and immigration tribunals, finance and tax tribunals, social security and child support appeals and the Information tribunal. For more details see [www.tribunals.gov.uk](http://www.tribunals.gov.uk).
5. For further details contact TS Senior Press Officer Paula Ogun on 020 7340 6510 or email [pressoffice@tribunals.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:pressoffice@tribunals.gsi.gov.uk)