

New Two Tier Tribunal System Launched Today

07/08

3 November 2008

The Government has launched two new tribunals today, consisting of a First-tier and an Upper Tribunal. This is part of a radical overhaul of the tribunals' structure designed to strengthen the system and achieve improved and consistent standards for tribunal users.

Most tribunal jurisdictions, currently administered by the Tribunals Service, will transfer into the First-tier and Upper Tribunal in phases from 3 November, implementing a key part of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007. The two tribunals consist of chambers, grouping together jurisdictions dealing with similar work or requiring similar skills. Existing tribunal judges and non-legal members will transfer into the new system and continue their vital work in the same way as at present, preserving jurisdictional expertise.

Justice Minister Bridget Prentice said:

"Tribunals deal with more than 500,000 cases a year ranging from those involving the most vulnerable in society to multi-national businesses and therefore it is vital that the system is truly effective and serves their needs.

"Bringing together and strengthening the expertise from a wide range of specialist tribunals will ensure that users remain at the heart of the service."

The important change for users comes with the establishment of the Upper Tribunal and the First-tier's onward appeal rights to it. For some jurisdictions this will create new statutory appeal rights and for others bring the appeal rights within the tribunals rather than the courts.

The unified tribunals' structure is headed by Senior President Lord Justice Carnwath providing, for the first time, statutory leadership for tribunals.

Senior President Lord Justice Carnwath said:

"These reforms are the most radical changes to the tribunals' system in 50 years and will ensure tribunal users continue to experience a service that is speedy, inexpensive and accessible.

"The creation of the Upper Tribunal, will group all tribunal appeals in one cohesive structure. Over time the decisions of the Upper Tribunal will build comprehensive caselaw for each area covered by the tribunals, as well as administrative law itself. By providing clear decisions on points of law and greater clarity for First-tier tribunals the new structure will benefit all tribunal users.

“I look forward to working closely with the Government and stakeholders to ensure that we continue developing a system that is responsive to the needs of users.”

Notes to Editors

1. The Chambers in the First-tier are:
 - Social Entitlement;
 - General Regulatory;
 - War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation;
 - Health, Education and Social Care;
 - Taxation; and
 - Land, Property and Housing
2. The three Upper Tribunal Chambers are:
 - Administrative Appeals;
 - Lands; and
 - Finance and Tax.
3. The Employment Tribunal and Employment Appeal Tribunal will be separate from the First-tier and Upper Tribunal, although there will be close links between them. The results of the recent Government consultation on bringing the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal into the unified tribunals structure will be published shortly.
4. The Tribunals Service, an executive agency within the Ministry of Justice will continue to provide an integrated administration of the new tribunal system.
5. For more details please contact the Tribunals Service Press Office on 020 3334 6510, or the Ministry of Justice Press Office on 020 3334 3536. If you would like information on the judicial aspect of the tribunal reform or would like to request an interview with a member of the tribunal judiciary, please contact Judicial Communications Office on 020 7073 4852.