

The Social Fund Commissioner's Annual Report  
**2009/2010**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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# The Social Fund Commissioner's Annual Report 2009/2010



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# Foreword

I am pleased to present this Annual Report for the 12 months ended 31 March 2010, which is my first report as Social Fund Commissioner. I would like to pay tribute to the commitment of my predecessor, Sir Richard Tilt, and his contribution to the development of the Independent Review Service.

I have conducted a programme of introductory meetings during the first few months following my appointment in December 2009, and I continue to meet a wide range of stakeholders.

Payments from the Social Fund are targeted at some of the poorest and most vulnerable of our fellow citizens, who suffer multiple disadvantages. The United Kingdom of today is a very different society from that of 1988, when the Social Fund first came into existence. The Department for Work and Pensions' recent consultation, *Social Fund Reform: debt, credit and low-income households* (March 2010), provided a welcome and timely opportunity to reflect on the challenges of modernising and simplifying the Social Fund scheme. I look forward to engaging with Ministers and officials on their detailed proposals for change.

We have continued to focus on making decisions as efficiently as we can, whilst seeking to maintain our reputation for quality and impartiality. We have continued to scrutinise our use of resources and our case processes with a critical eye; in order to ensure that our productivity and objectivity are not compromised.

The issues at the forefront of my mind, as Social Fund Commissioner are:

- the extent to which we add value to the simplicity, quality and purpose of the citizen's journey through the Social Fund decision making process;
- the extent to which the customer is at the centre of our concerns;
- how we make best use of our unique insights, gleaned from over two decades of casework experience, to benefit Social Fund customers;
- how we ensure that performance standards in our casework are maintained and improved; and
- the extent to which our service provides value for money for the taxpayer.

I do not underestimate the challenges that Jobcentre Plus faces as it pursues quality initiatives that are designed to further improve the standard of Social Fund decision making. Enhancing the quality of decision making at the first point of contact with the citizen is an area where I believe we can make a positive contribution by sharing our insights.

I conclude with my thanks to staff at all levels within the Independent Review Service for their commitment and achievements during a year in which we have experienced our highest workload since 1988.

**Karamjit Singh CBE,  
Social Fund Commissioner  
for Great Britain**



# Executive Summary

## Delivering the Review

- In 2009/2010, our total workload was 49,927, which represents a 73% increase on the workload for the previous year.
- To set this in context, this was our highest workload since 1988 and accounts for almost 10% of all IRS reviews carried out during the last 22 years.
- Inspectors changed almost 42% of decisions.
- These changed decisions resulted in payments totalling £4,984,301 from the £141 million budget for grants and payments totalling £1,107,763 from the £720 million budget for loans.
- Inspectors cleared 96.7% of straightforward cases (which did not generate an enquiry or which generated a simple enquiry that could be dealt with very quickly) within 12 days of receipt of the papers from Jobcentre Plus.
- Inspectors cleared 89.5% of complex cases (which needed extensive enquiry/ investigation or where the nature of the case was exceptionally complex) within 21 days of receipt of the papers from Jobcentre Plus.
- Inspectors cleared 89.2% of urgent cases (for living expenses or other needs where a very urgent decision was needed) within 24 hours of receipt of the papers from Jobcentre Plus.
- During 2009/2010, our unit cost was £99, down from £154 for the previous year. We calculate this to include all our direct costs of staff, non-manpower and capital expenditure, and to include our indirect costs of accommodation and related costs which are outsourced and paid for centrally.

## The Standard of Social Fund Inspectors' Decisions

- Reading individual cases is the primary means by which we assess the standards of Inspectors' decisions. During the year 1,241 cases (2.5% of our workload) were read by both Social Fund Commissioners, Managers and Inspectors with lead responsibility for research and development. Case readers found that a high proportion of decisions (86.1%) met the quality standard.
- This year our high workloads led us to conduct a critical review of our work processes. We are exploring new, more flexible ways of personalising Inspectors' reviews without compromising the quality standards which underpin the review.

## Customer Experience

- We received 2,641 complaints about our decisions, which represented 5.4% of our workload. Errors led us to change the outcome in 205 cases which represented 7.8% of the complaints we received and 0.6% of our total workload.
- We received 96 complaints about our service and upheld 64 of them, which represented less than 1% of our workload.

## Building Relationships

- We delivered 17 free workshop conferences across Great Britain to a total of 3,277 attendees drawn from more than 600 organisations. The intention behind these conferences is to increase the understanding and personal effectiveness of representatives when dealing with Social Fund applicants.
- We continued to feed back to Jobcentre Plus on findings and observations from our casework to share information that can help to drive improvements in the standard of decision making and be used to inform operational or policy developments.
- Both Social Fund Commissioners and staff from the Independent Review Service met a wide range of stakeholders as listed in Appendices 8, 9 and 10.

## Responses to External Consultations

- The Social Fund Commissioner was invited to respond to the Department for Work and Pensions' consultation paper on Social Fund reform. His response is summarised in this report and the full response can be viewed at [www.irs-review.org.uk](http://www.irs-review.org.uk).
- The Social Fund Commissioner was also invited to respond to the Administrative Justice Tribunals Council's consultation paper on principles for administrative justice. He welcomed the principles as a very positive and useful encapsulation of what should be expected in a good administrative justice system. The Commissioner did not suggest substantial changes because he felt the principles were consistent with the IRS' approach.

# About the Social Fund Commissioner and the IRS: what we do and how we do it

The Social Fund Commissioner heads the Independent Review Service (IRS) for the Social Fund, which was created in 1988. Based in Birmingham, our work covers all parts of England, Scotland and Wales.

In December 2009 the present Commissioner, Karamjit Singh CBE, was appointed by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to take over from the outgoing Commissioner, Sir Richard Tilt.

The Social Fund Commissioner's statutory duties are to:

- appoint Social Fund Inspectors;
- appoint other staff to the IRS;
- monitor the quality of Inspectors' decisions;
- arrange training for Inspectors; and
- report annually in writing to the Secretary of State on the standard of reviews by Social Fund Inspectors.

The discretionary part of the Social Fund is a scheme of grant and interest free loan payments designed to help people on low income with costs that are difficult to meet from regular income. It is administered in Jobcentre Plus, an agency of the Department for Work and Pensions.

The core business of the IRS is to provide an independent tier of review for applicants dissatisfied with decisions taken in Jobcentre Plus on their applications to the discretionary Social Fund. The independent review is delivered free of charge to the applicant, by highly trained Social Fund Inspectors.

The IRS has a reputation for expertise, efficiency and fairness. The key principle that drives our business aims and objectives is our commitment to the provision of a high quality and accessible service to all customers of the Social Fund. Our specific aims and objectives, as set out in our current corporate plan, are included at Appendix 1 of this report.

Our organisational structure is built around two distinct areas of business:

- our core review work; and
- utilising the unique insight derived from our casework to improve standards and inform policy developments.

## Core Review Process

The review process requires the Inspector to establish the facts of the case, which may involve asking the applicant or their representative for relevant information. The Inspector then applies the law to the facts.

The Inspector must decide whether the decision made by Jobcentre Plus is correct and reasonable in law. The next stage of the review requires the Inspector to look at the merits of the case and decide whether that decision is the right one, taking account of any new evidence and relevant changes in circumstance.

The outcome of this process may result in the same decision as Jobcentre Plus, a different one, or – on very rare occasions – a decision to refer a case back to Jobcentre Plus for a fresh decision. The basic principle is that each individual case is decided on its own merits.



Inspectors have the power to review their own or another Inspector's decision to correct errors. The recourse available to citizens who remain dissatisfied with an Inspector's decision is via judicial review in the High Court.

### Utilising Insight from Casework

Our unique position at the end of the review process means that we have a wealth of experience and expertise to share with practitioners and policy makers alike. Our nationwide overview of the Social Fund enables us to identify issues with significant relevance to those who use, or deliver, the Social Fund.

We use this valuable insight in a variety of ways, and through various liaison forums, to facilitate improvements in standards, raise awareness of the Social Fund, to inform policy developments and to feed into quality initiatives that Jobcentre Plus has in place.

### Northern Ireland

The Social Fund Commissioner holds a separate statutory appointment as the head of the Office of the Social Fund Commissioner, based in Belfast, which deals with reviews in Northern Ireland. The Social Fund scheme in Northern Ireland is legally distinct from the scheme in Great Britain and is established under separate legal instruments. The office in Belfast is sponsored by the Department for Social Development. The Social Fund Commissioner provides an annual report to the Minister for Social Development, Northern Ireland Assembly.



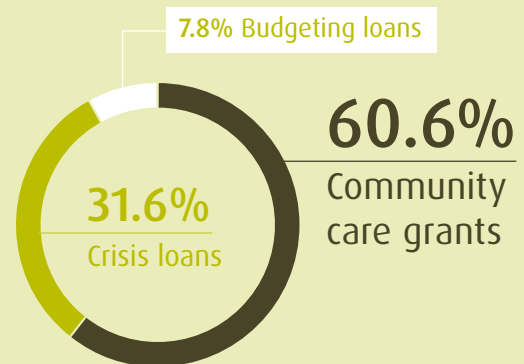
# Delivering the Review

One of our key business values is to put the customer at the centre of all that we do. The people who apply to the Social Fund are amongst the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. Often they are not well-equipped to deal with bureaucracy and complex procedures. In recognition of the need to simplify the customer journey, we aim to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity through a streamlined process which delivers high quality reviews that are fair, clear and consistent. Our structure, work processes and performance targets place a strong focus on achieving these aims.

In 2009/2010, our total workload was 49,927, which represents a 73% increase on the workload for the previous year. This continued the sharp upward trend which began in 2008, as illustrated by Graph 1. To set this in context, this was our highest workload since 1988 and accounts for almost 10% of all IRS reviews carried out during the last 22 years. We were determined to maintain our commitment to customers throughout the year, despite the significant challenge this presented. We critically examined our casework processes to

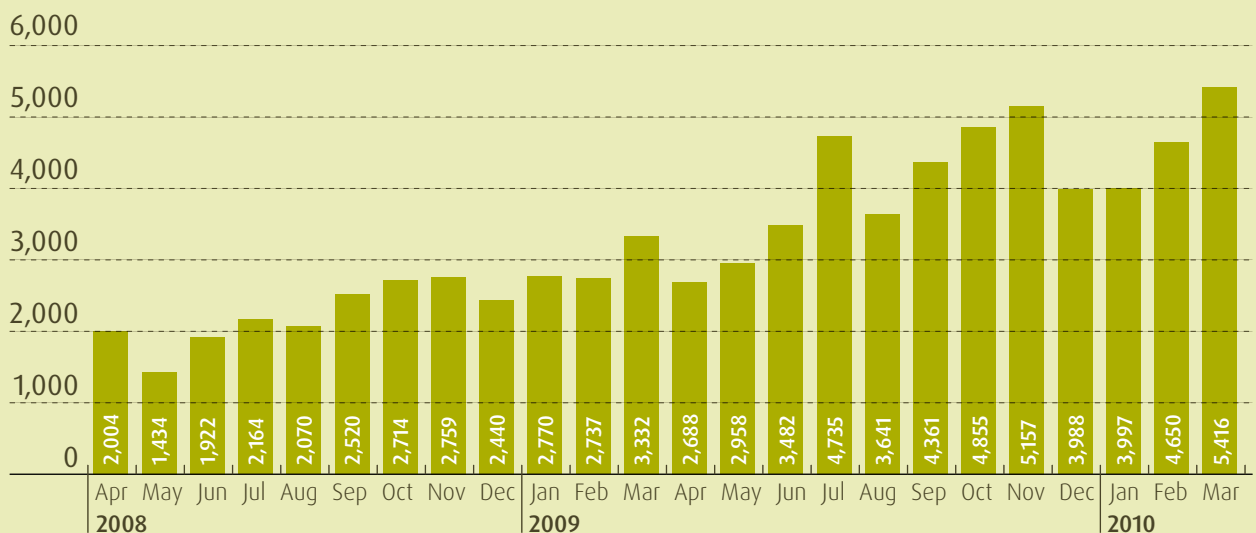
maximise efficiency whilst maintaining high standards in decision making and service. As part of our ongoing business planning programme we will continue to do this.

Chart 1. IRS Workload



Customers can apply to the discretionary Social Fund for a community care grant, a budgeting loan or a crisis loan. Chart 1 shows how our workload was broken down between these different types of application. Appendix 2 shows the breakdown of our workload by month. There are a number of Jobcentre Plus offices across the country that process Social Fund applications and our intake of work from each of these offices varies. Appendix 3 shows

Graph 1. IRS Workload by Month (April 2008–March 2010)



the breakdown of our workload by Jobcentre Plus Benefit Delivery Centre.

During 2009/2010 Jobcentre Plus received higher numbers of Social Fund applications and review requests for all types of award. It was inevitable that this level of increased activity would have an effect on the IRS' workload but our increase across all types of award has outstripped that experienced by Jobcentre Plus. Customers request an Inspectors' review when, following the review by Jobcentre Plus, the customer has been refused an award or they are dissatisfied with the amount awarded. In 2009/2010 a higher proportion of the applications which fell into these categories resulted in an independent review. Inspectors reviewed:

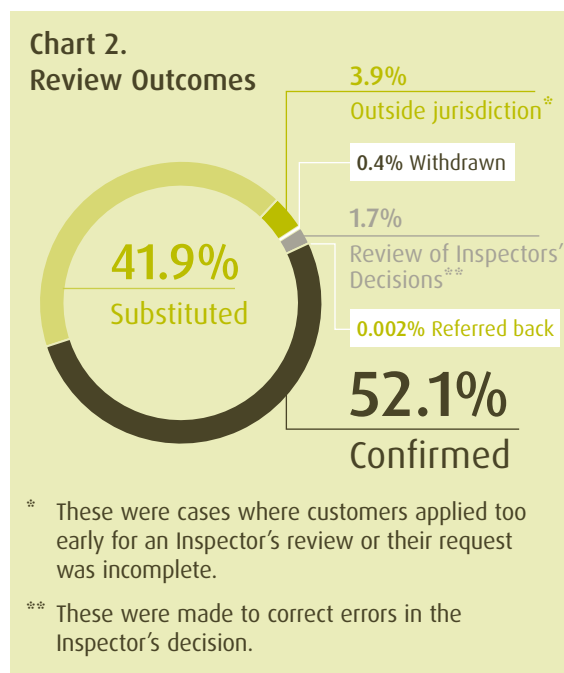
- 25.5% of community care grants compared to 17.5% in 2008/2009;
- 16.9% of budgeting loans compared to 10.4% in 2008/2009; and
- 19.7% of crisis loans compared to 14.7% in 2008/2009.

In conducting a review the Inspector can:

- confirm Jobcentre Plus' decision;
- change the outcome of the decision; or
- exceptionally, refer the case back to Jobcentre Plus for further investigations and a new decision.

Chart 2 shows how our workload was broken down into overall outcomes.

The Inspector will confirm a decision where the final outcome is right, whether or not there was an important error in the decision making process in Jobcentre Plus. The Inspector will change a decision where an important error led to the wrong outcome or where new evidence or a change in circumstances makes this appropriate.



The Commissioner's Advice to Inspectors describes an important error as:

*"...one on which the decision, at any stage in the process, turns and that leads to a different decision at that stage. In other words, an error at one of the key stages of the decision-making process, which knocks the decision "off-course" and makes the rationale for the decision incorrect."*

Inspectors identified important errors in 47.5% of the Jobcentre Plus decisions they reviewed.

Appendix 4 shows a breakdown of decision outcomes for community care grants, budgeting loans and crisis loans by Jobcentre Plus Benefit Delivery Centre.

Inspectors made payments totalling £4,984,301 from the £141 million budget for grants and payments totalling £1,107,763 from the £720 million budget for loans.



## Completion Times

We recognise that the independent review is, for most customers, the end of a lengthy process. Therefore, we aim to complete reviews as quickly as possible, whilst seeking to ensure that customers have a proper opportunity to understand the issues in their cases and to engage with the process.

Before completing the review, the Inspector must take steps to gather any crucial

information from the customer that is missing from the case. The time allowed for the customer to respond is included in our overall completion times, which are measured from the date we receive the papers from Jobcentre Plus. Table 1 below sets out our targets and our achievements.

Appendix 5 shows the breakdown of our achievements by month.

**Table 1. Completion Times of Inspectors' Reviews**

Action/Timescale	Target %	Achievement %
<b>Straightforward/no enquiries:</b> • completed within 12 working days of receipt of papers	95	96.7
<b>Further investigation/complex enquiries:</b> • completed within 21 working days of receipt of the papers	90	89.5
<b>Urgent cases:</b> • completed within 24 hours of receipt of the papers	90	89.2

We had 2,974 cases which fell into the complex category. In 313 instances, the Inspector took longer than the target of 21 working days to complete the review. This should be viewed in the context of:

- a sharp increase in caseload;
- the decision we took before the start of the year to reduce the time allowed for completion of complex cases from 23 working days to 21 working days; and
- the proportion of cases falling within this longer time scale reduced to fewer than 8% from more than 11% the previous year.

Inspectors completed 3,183 urgent cases. In 343 instances, they took longer than 24 hours to complete the review. This was almost exclusively because they needed to contact the customer in writing to resolve important issues. Wherever they can, Inspectors will resolve issues by telephone but this is not always possible.

## The Cost of the Review

We are conscious that the cost of the review is an essential element of the overall service the IRS delivers; the cost must be proportionate and provide best value for money for the taxpayer.

During 2009/2010, our unit cost was £99, which compares with £154 for the previous year. This includes all our direct costs of staff, non-power and capital expenditure,

our indirect costs of accommodation and related costs which are outsourced and paid for centrally.

We have also compared our unit cost with the average awards made by Inspectors. Table 2 below shows details of the average amounts awarded where no previous payment had been made and when the amount already paid was increased. Given the personal circumstances of many customers who apply for an independent review, these average awards are significant amounts of money.



**Table 2. Analysis of Inspectors' Awards**

Application Type	Average increase in award amount	Average amount of new award
Community care grants	£260.73	£465.19
Budgeting loans	£395.00	£407.97
Crisis loans	£165.68	£206.42

# The Standard of Social Fund Inspectors' Decisions

We recognise our reputation is built on the expertise of our Inspectors, the quality of the review and our progressive outlook. We set demanding standards for Inspectors and we support them to achieve and maintain these in a range of different ways. The standards are set out in Appendix 6.

The Social Fund Commissioner monitors the quality of decisions by looking at a range of quality indicators including: reading cases to assess Inspectors' decisions against our demanding quality benchmark; analysing clearance times; evaluating reasons for complaints and enquiries; and listening to what people tell us about the quality of our products and service through customer surveys and at meetings. All of this information helps us to measure how we are performing, identify areas which can be improved and implement solutions.

## Support for the Review

Our holistic approach to quality includes a staff forum, which is held regularly and is attended by the Social Fund Commissioner and other staff. This forum draws together the range of quality indicators and identifies scope for improvement and support. There is a separate forum, also attended by the Social Fund Commissioner and other staff, which generates and disseminates solutions.

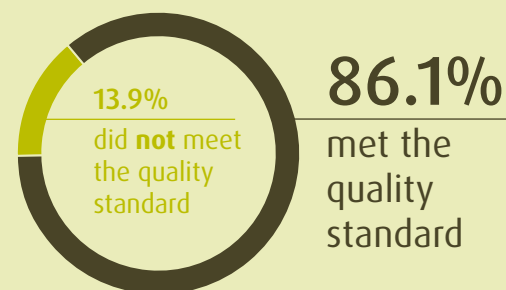
To support Inspectors with the interpretation and application of the law a large body of Social Fund Commissioner's Advice is available to them. This can be viewed at [www.irs-review.org.uk](http://www.irs-review.org.uk) and is updated as new advice becomes available. We also offer technical learning opportunities tailored for individuals. For example, during the year, we delivered training and updates on crisis loans, jurisdiction issues and the rules governing the different types of Employment and Support Allowance benefit.

To increase Inspectors' understanding of the customer perspective, we hold awareness sessions that deal with issues that some of our customers may face. In 2009/2010 following requests from Inspectors we held workshops on the different causes and effects of asthma.

## Case Reading

Reading individual cases is the primary means by which we assess the standards of Inspectors' decisions. During the year 1,241 cases (2.5% of our workload) were read by both Social Fund Commissioners, Managers and Inspectors with lead responsibility for research and development. Each case undergoes a careful assessment against our demanding quality benchmarks, to establish whether it meets the required standard. Case readers found that a high proportion of decisions (86.1%) met the quality standard. They found the outcome to be wrong in 6.5% of decisions and lessons learnt from these cases will be fed into our quality process. The main issues identified related to information gathering. As part of our learning process, we plan to deliver training that will strengthen our performance in this area.

Chart 3. Case Reading Results



## Trialling New, Simpler Ways of Working

This year our high workloads led us to review our traditional approach to the review process. We are exploring new, more flexible ways of conducting reviews tailored to the needs of an individual case without compromising the quality standards which underpin our work. Our aim is to resolve significant numbers of cases at an earlier point, therefore reducing the time a customer has to wait for an Inspector's decision and reducing the amount of contact a customer needs to have with us. In cases where Inspectors do not need to make any enquiries, they make a decision straight away. Where they need more information, they contact the customer by telephone wherever possible. Case Studies 1 to 4 illustrate the different approaches Inspectors adopt according to the needs of a particular case.

We are also in the process of strengthening the focus and clarity of Inspectors' letters and decisions. Our overall aim in carrying out this work is to focus on customers' needs, to maintain and build on the high quality of the services we provide and to deliver those services more efficiently.

### Case Study 1

Mr W had recently been released from prison and applied for a community care grant for some household items and various items of clothing. The Inspector needed to contact Mr W for more information about his situation and need for the items. Because she had a phone number, the Inspector was able to contact Mr W very quickly. Having gathered all of the information she needed, the Inspector was able to award Mr W a community care grant to help him settle back into the community.



### Case Study 2

Mr J applied for a community care grant for basic household items. Information available to the Inspector when he received the case showed that Mr J had lived in unfurnished accommodation for over a year and had some health problems. The available information suggested to the Inspector that Mr J might be at risk of going into care and therefore that a community care grant might be payable. However information about the health problems appeared inconsistent with the daily tasks Mr J said he was able to perform, so the Inspector needed to clarify the situation. Mr J had not provided a telephone contact number and so the Inspector had to write to him. This letter focused on the key questions about the impact of Mr J's health and his living conditions on his ability to cope at home. Mr J's reply was detailed and resolved the apparent inconsistency about his health issues. The Inspector went on to pay a community care grant for the most important things Mr J needed to help him stay in his own home.

### Case Study 3

Mr S applied for a community care grant to help him buy household items and new clothes. He had cancer and was terminally ill. Unfortunately he could not be paid a community care grant because of the amount he had in savings. Refusal of a community care grant was inevitable in this case so the Inspector made a decision straight away. It was important for Mr S to know the final outcome as quickly as possible and to be advised about other help that may be available to him.

### Case Study 4

Mr R had led an unsettled way of life but had recently moved into an unfurnished tenancy. He applied for a community care grant for basic household items but was refused by Jobcentre Plus, on the basis that he was not setting up home as part of a planned resettlement programme. When the Inspector looked at the case, he could see that the information available showed that Mr R was setting up home as part of a planned resettlement programme. He was getting support to enable him to settle into his new home and to address his alcohol and anger management issues. The Inspector had enough information to show that Mr R should be paid a community care grant and did not need to contact him before making a decision. The Inspector went on to pay Mr R a community care grant for the most important items he needed to set up home.



# Customer Experience

Each of the cases Inspectors review will already have had an initial decision and review conducted in Jobcentre Plus. We are mindful of the urgency of applications and the length of time they have already spent in process. It is vital that we offer a service that is responsive and customer focused.

The nature of our business means our customer base is diverse and constantly changing. We are committed to using information drawn from our case work, our contact with customer representatives, and views expressed by customers in response to surveys, in order to improve the service the Social Fund offers everybody.

## Our Client Base

We analyse information about age, gender and the areas of the country where customers live to help us understand the make-up of the IRS' client base and to ensure we treat all our customers equally and fairly. Because the Department for Work and Pensions does not

publish information about the diversity of its Social Fund customers, we do not have any way of knowing whether those who pursue an independent review are reflective of those who apply initially, or request an internal review in Jobcentre Plus. Nevertheless our analysis provides useful information about the characteristics of our customers and this helps us shape the service and information we provide.

Since 2003 we have issued a survey to all customers who apply for an Inspector's review asking for information about their ethnicity. Appendix 7 shows the results of the survey for 2009. The results show broad consistency in decision outcomes across the different ethnic groups. However we recognise the response rate reflects a postal survey and the results need to be considered in this context.

In contrast, information about gender, age and location is recorded on every case we receive, so we know these results are representative of those who use our service. Appendix 7 shows these in detail. Briefly, although the differences are not significant, the figures show that more men than women apply for an Inspector's review, but women have a higher success rate and receive a higher average award. The largest proportion of our customers (49%) are aged between 25 and 44 years, with pensioners making up the lowest number of our service users. It is perhaps not surprising that we receive significant numbers of applications from people between the ages of 25 and 44 years. These are people more likely to have families requiring support or to have caring responsibilities for elderly relatives.

The IRS has a diversity and race equality action plan which is published on our website ([www.irs-review.org.uk](http://www.irs-review.org.uk)) and which sets out the work we are doing to ensure our service continues to meet the needs of our diverse range of customers.



Case studies 5 to 12 illustrate the diversity of our customers' experiences.

#### Case Study 5

Mr F was released from prison after 15 months. He lost his home, possessions and clothes because of his imprisonment. He had put on three stones in weight during his time in prison and applied for a community care grant for clothing on his release.

#### Case Study 6

Ms D was in her 20s. She had Hepatitis C and was following a methadone programme. She had spent periods in prison, sleeping rough and staying in hostels before moving into her own flat. A resettlement organisation was supporting her with this move. They had helped her to find the flat and apply for benefits, and were providing support in relation to her addiction issues and training needs. She applied for a community care grant for household items and furniture for her new home.

#### Case Study 7

Mrs C and her two young children were victims of domestic violence and had moved to a women's refuge on the advice of the police. She applied for a community care grant for removal expenses and household items for the family's new home.

#### Case Study 8

Mr A lived with his partner and four children. He was working and receiving tax credits on top of his wages. He applied for a crisis loan for household items and clothing.

#### Case Study 9

Ms L had several health problems which included: anxiety; depression; obsessive compulsive disorder; and back pain. She had a history of self-harm and medical professionals assessed her at continued risk of self-harm. She had recently moved from her family home to a place of her own. She applied for a laptop computer because she was housebound, paid bills online and wanted to avoid becoming isolated.

#### Case Study 10

Ms F was a single parent with three children. The family came to the UK in 2007 as asylum seekers. Once they had been granted leave to remain in the UK, they had to move out of the accommodation provided for them. Ms F applied for a community care grant for household items to equip their new home.

#### Case Study 11

Mr G was homeless and applied for a crisis loan for a tent to sleep in whilst he was looking for somewhere to live.

#### Case Study 12

Mr K and his partner were both of pension age. They were moving to sheltered accommodation due to health reasons. They applied for a community care grant for removal costs.

## Customer Feedback

We issue customer survey forms throughout the year asking for views about the quality and speed of service and decision making, our telephone service and the accessibility of the review. We use the results to gauge customer satisfaction with the service we provide and to give us a better understanding of the needs of our customers.

Overall the results show a relatively high level of satisfaction amongst customers – 75% of those who responded to the survey were happy with the way their reviews were dealt with and over 85% said they would use the IRS again. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a difference between those who had received a decision in their favour and those who had not.

The Social Fund sits within a legal framework and contains some complex legal concepts. Our customers are not technical experts, and we do not expect them to have a detailed understanding of the law. For this reason, it is not enough for the Inspector's decision to be technically correct. Decisions should be explained in clear and plain language, so that customers can see how the law has been applied to their particular circumstances. Of the people who responded to our survey, 89.7% of them said the Inspector's decision was explained clearly.

The main issues raised by customers were the amount of time which the whole of the review process took, delays at different stages and the inconvenience of providing the same information twice when Jobcentre Plus was unable to provide the relevant case papers for the Inspector to complete the review. Case Study 13 illustrates this point.

### Case Study 13

Miss M applied to the Social Fund for a community care grant for a cot, a settee, a fridge-freezer, a washing machine and cot bedding.

Miss M was unhappy with the Reviewing Officer's refusal of a community care grant for a cot, cot bedding and a washing machine. Her case progressed to an independent review, but Jobcentre Plus was unable to provide all the relevant papers including her initial application form.

All the Inspector knew about Miss M's situation was what she had applied for, that she had an 8 month old baby and that she had moved to her current home in June 2009. This information was not enough for the Inspector to make a sound decision. This meant that Miss M had to start from scratch and repeat important details about her situation even though she applied for a community care grant several months earlier.

## Complaints about Inspectors' Decisions

We are committed to using all sources of customer feedback to consider improvements to the service we provide. Customer complaints are dealt with by Inspectors on our Customer Service Team who have the power to correct errors in decisions.

During 2009/2010, we received 2,641 complaints about decisions, which represented 5.4% of our workload. Errors led us to change the outcome in 205 cases which represented 7.8% of the complaints we received and 0.6% of our total workload.

We analyse all complaints in order to identify learning points and areas for improvement. Where we changed the outcome of decisions following a complaint, the most common reason related to the amount awarded.

During the year the High Court dismissed an application for judicial review of an Inspector's decision [*R (on the Application of Tilianu) v. Social Fund Inspector and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions* [2010] EWHC 213 (Admin)]. This was the 30th judicial review of an Inspector's decision since 1988. Understandably, there were more during the early years of the scheme – 27 of the judicial reviews were heard during the first decade of the Social Fund (between 1988 and 1998). This case involved the question of whether Mr Tilianu had a right to reside in the United Kingdom, and therefore was habitually resident and able to access the crisis loan scheme. Those who are not habitually resident are specifically excluded from receiving a crisis loan. This is a complex area of law for Inspectors and the judgement helpfully set out the approach they should take to determine whether a Social Fund applicant is habitually resident in the United Kingdom.

### Complaints about IRS Service

Our Customer Service Team also investigates and responds to complaints about our service. During 2009/2010, we received 96 complaints about our service and upheld 64 of them. Service complaints upheld represented 0.1% of our total workload. The main areas where errors occurred were in typing or recording details, not issuing papers the customer requested and not returning relevant papers to Jobcentre Plus promptly.

### IRS External Complaints Panel

In 2002 the IRS set up an independent panel of people external to us to scrutinise how the Customer Service Team deals with complaints about Inspectors' decisions.

The panel's objectives are to:

- look at the impartiality, fairness, openness and clarity of IRS complaints processes and services;
- provide an independent assurance to the Social Fund Commissioner on the effectiveness of IRS complaints handling; and
- maintain transparency and openness in IRS internal arrangements for complaints handling.

During 2009/2010 the Panel met three times and examined 59 complaints. Overall, it concluded that the standard of handling complaint work remained very good; 97.1% of the complaints examined were found to have been handled effectively. The panel noted a marked improvement in the overall standard of explanation and clarity of the Customer Service Team's letters.

The panel's feedback is helpful and has become an important part of our quality assurance process. We thank them for their continued work and commitment.

# Building Relationships

In all of our dealings with people and organisations, it is vital that we uphold our reputation for independence and impartiality, and our ability to balance objectivity and sensitivity. Equally, as a modern and outward looking organisation, it is important that we remain receptive to external issues. We welcome the opportunity to meet external contacts and we approach these exchanges in ways that do not interfere with our independence and impartiality.

Since his arrival in December 2009, a key priority for the new Social Fund Commissioner has been his active programme of introductory meetings with a range of individuals and organisations that have a common interest in tackling poverty and in welfare reform. These include: politicians; departmental officials; chief executives of welfare rights, adviser and charitable organisations; chief executives of think-tanks; academics; researchers and organisations that are involved in dispute resolution. Karamjit Singh has used these meetings to explore different perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing the Social Fund and its potential customers.

Throughout 2009/2010 we pursued our established annual programme of meetings with Ministers, the Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus, officials within the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus, and a range of welfare rights and adviser organisations across Great Britain.

A full record of this year's meetings for both Commissioners can be found at Appendix 8.

As part of a longstanding agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions, we continue to feed back findings and observations from our casework and to share information that can help to drive improvements in the standard of decision

making and be used to inform operational or policy developments.

Issues we have discussed with the Department include the need for timely provision of papers by Jobcentre Plus for independent reviews, the quality of decision making in Jobcentre Plus and a range of operational issues. The main types of errors Inspectors identified in the cases they reviewed related to Jobcentre Plus not having the right information and not trying to obtain it before making a decision. Inspectors also identified a particular problem with Jobcentre Plus not sending the customers' papers to the IRS promptly. In his early discussions with officials, the new Commissioner was encouraged by the Department's ongoing commitment to investing in improving standards of decision making; so the customer receives the right decision at the earliest opportunity.

We have also drawn to the attention of Jobcentre Plus issues highlighted by welfare rights advisers during our programme of meetings with organisations and individuals who support Social Fund applicants through the process. These included delays and inconsistency in decision making, the amount of evidence required by Jobcentre Plus decision makers before they make a decision and their reluctance to deal with representatives over the telephone even when appropriate authority has been supplied.

We offer practical support and information to help raise awareness of the Social Fund scheme and its review process. Our Journal contains news items about the Social Fund. It also contains anonymous real life case studies, chosen to illustrate particular legal points and which bring a human dimension to the practical application of the law. Our website ([www.irs-review.org.uk](http://www.irs-review.org.uk)) includes a

wide range of information and all of our publications, which users can download free of charge.

During 2009/2010 we delivered 17 free workshop conferences across Great Britain to a total of 3,277 attendees, who were drawn from over 600 organisations. The intention behind these conferences is to increase the understanding and personal effectiveness of representatives when dealing with Social Fund applicants. We received positive feedback from attendees about improvements in their knowledge of the Social Fund and the review process. Appendix 9 gives details of the workshop conference programme.

As part of our work to raise awareness, we also participated in annual conferences held by a range of organisations, including delivering presentations, hosting information stands and involvement in interactive workshops. Full details of the conferences we attended are included at Appendix 10.

We approach all of these activities with a strong focus on value for money and we regularly evaluate their effectiveness.



# Responses to Statutory Consultations

## Social Fund Reform

In March 2010, the Department for Work and Pensions issued a consultation paper: *Social Fund Reform: debt, credit and low-income households*. The Green Paper represents the first time in twenty two years that there has

been an extensive consultation process on the Social Fund. We have reproduced below the Executive Summary from the Commissioner's response. The full response can be viewed at [www.irs-review.org.uk](http://www.irs-review.org.uk).

### **Executive Summary from the Social Fund Commissioner's Response to the Department for Work and Pensions' Consultation Paper: *Social Fund Reform: debt, credit and low-income households***

The review of the Social Fund is welcome and necessary in order to reflect the needs of a society that is very different to that in 1988 when the Fund was established. I welcome the intention to reform the Fund so that it not only offers financial help but also offers support to tackle underlying problems. I believe the reforms should be developed with a focus on the quality of the customer journey and to achieve value for money.

#### **Reforming the Loans Scheme**

- Allowing customers to access a budgeting loan from day one of their benefit entitlement is an important step forward; which should improve access to affordable credit and financial advice.
- I support the principle of a single gateway for the Social Fund loans scheme. However, the need for very different information, in order to decide which type of loan is most appropriate, means that the process would not be as simple for the customer or the decision maker as it first appears.
- In deciding the type of support to offer customers, its timing and whether to attach conditions to any award of a loan, the action taken should be proportionate to the nature and extent of the problems

in order to achieve effective targeting and value for money.

- Customers' ability to plan and manage their income would be enhanced if loans were recovered from benefit at a consistent rate and in way that does not prevent access to further budgeting loans.
- Customers in the greatest financial difficulty are often those who are refused an award because of their outstanding debt and/or inability to repay a loan. It will be necessary for an appropriate level of support to be extended to customers who are refused a loan.

#### **Reforming the Grants Scheme**

- The potential for negotiating discounted rates to provide goods or services instead of cash should deliver better value for money and make the budget go further. It will ensure customers get items of good quality which should lead to fewer repeat applications. Although a standard range of choice is likely to be appropriate in many cases, it may not be suitable for customers with unusual or particular needs.
- I support the principle of resettlement grants for vulnerable people to set up home and the notion of professional involvement, which resonates with the holistic approach aimed at helping customers move to independence.
- Whilst standardising the amount of the grant has some attractions, there are likely to be some situations where a

standard grant is insufficient because the customer has non standard needs.

- Some vulnerable people who are resettling without the help of a professional may be in greater need of support and should be referred to an appropriate professional.
- A number of people who qualify for a grant under the current scheme are unlikely to do so under the reformed scheme. Ministers will need to give further thought as to how the needs of such customers will be met.
- I believe there is a case for considering the provision of grants rather than loans for very vulnerable customers who are unlikely ever to be able to work, as they have no opportunity to increase their income in the short or long term.

#### **Citizen Redress**

- Due to the urgency of applications, and the length of time it can take for customers to have their cases resolved, I believe there is a case for shortening and simplifying the end-to-end process; by having a single tier of decision making within Jobcentre Plus, followed by direct

access to an independent tier of review. This should reduce administration costs, as well as simplifying the process for customers and enabling speedier resolution of disputed decisions.

- In order to realise and maximise the potential savings that a single tier review system could deliver, it will be necessary to invest in improving the standard of first line decision making. I am aware that Jobcentre Plus embarked on a programme of improvement during 2008 which began with developing and implementing a comprehensive quality assurance framework. This focus on quality should help to increase the proportion of decisions that are right first time.
- The Welfare Reform Act 2009 signifies the intention to exclude some aspects of Social Fund decision making from independent review. It is a fundamental tenet of administrative justice that citizens should have recourse to an independent grievance process. Whatever shape the eventual reforms take, the citizen's right to an independent grievance process should be an integral part of the system.

## **Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council**

In March 2010, the Commissioner was invited to comment on the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council's consultation on "Principles for Administrative Justice – the AJTC's Approach". He welcomed the principles as a very positive and useful encapsulation of what should be expected in a good administrative justice system.

The Commissioner did not suggest substantial changes because he felt the principles were consistent with the IRS' approach. In his response the Commissioner commented that an organisation which adhered to the ten principles developed by the AJTC was likely to inspire and retain public confidence which it was possible to measure in a number of ways.



# Investing in Staff

We could not achieve all that we do, and deliver a high level service to our customers, without the continued commitment and drive of our staff. They are key to our success and remain our most valuable resource.

Ultimately, the people who deliver our service are strongly placed to see what works well for our customers and where changes might be made for the better. We use the experience and expertise of our staff at all levels to make improvements in the way we work and shape our annual business plan.

## Training and Support for Staff

The IRS is pleased to have been recognised as an Investor in People since 1997. A comprehensive training programme supports the delivery of our annual business plan and all members of staff are encouraged to review and manage their training and development needs as part of the ongoing performance management process.

All new staff receive intensive induction, training and coaching when they join the IRS and their development continues once they are established in their roles. Training may relate to specific technical issues crucial to a role, or wider awareness of the issues facing those who use our service or particular legal or procedural issues which relate to the way we work. For example, during 2009/2010 all members of staff received additional training, and passed an examination, on information security matters.

## Professional Development

This year eight members of our staff from across the organisation completed a 15-month course, run by De Montfort University's School of Law, leading to a Certificate of Professional Development in Administrative Justice. All achieved either a merit or a distinction. Their knowledge

and understanding of law and practice across the administrative justice landscape has deepened and their legal skills have been developed. A second group of our staff are due to begin the course in September 2010.

Members of our Human Resources, Finance and IT teams are professionally qualified and are actively encouraged to keep their knowledge and skills up to date.

We are confident that such commitment to development will enhance the expertise and professionalism of the IRS, as well as aiding the personal development of the individuals concerned.

In line with our commitment to providing high standards of service and good quality decisions, we spent about £231,000 of our direct budget allocation on training and developing our staff in 2009/2010.

## Staff Costs

We had 108 staff in post on 31 March 2010 and these accounted for 79% of our direct budget expenditure including necessary overtime to make up staff shortages. The IRS budget for 2009/2010 was based on 110.65 staff posts. During the year we recruited a total of 23 people, including staff for our administration team and IT team as well as Social Fund Inspectors.

## Information Technology

Our staff are supported in their work by our IT system, including our bespoke case management system. This plays an essential part in enabling us to monitor efficiency and to identify areas requiring further research, and to assist our liaison with the Department for Work and Pensions by providing information specific to a particular issue or geographical area.

In 2009/2010 we spent just under £445,000 on our IT systems, including the costs of our small in-house IT team, external support and necessary hardware and software. We spent £186,000 to upgrade the IT network to improve data security. This was part of our longer term aim to secure access to the Government Secure Intranet (GSI). A number of UK government organisations use the GSI to transfer information electronically and securely. Accreditation to the GSI network should improve further the speed at which information can be transferred securely between the IRS and Jobcentre Plus; which should have a positive impact for our customers.



# The Social Fund Commissioner's Annual Report 2009/**2010**

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## Appendix 1

### IRS Business Objectives and Values 2010

#### Business Objectives

1. Deliver impartial decisions to published standards.
2. Make continuous improvements in the standard of our work and in doing so, seek and take into account the views of our users.
3. Provide advice and information to the public, their advisers and staff of the Department for Work and Pensions about the Social Fund, the role and work of the IRS and the right of applicants to seek an independent Social Fund review.
4. Support Jobcentre Plus to improve standards of Social Fund decision making and operational delivery through regular feedback, training and advice.
5. Advise and inform the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Department for Work and Pensions officials on the Welfare Reform Programme and other potential policy changes.
6. Commission and undertake research to help improve the operation and development of the Social Fund and its role in wider government objectives.
7. Plan for and deliver the necessary business transformation required for the IRS.
8. Focus business resources to achieve the most effective outcomes and deliver value for money for the taxpayer.

#### Business Values

Our business values, which we set out below, are the foundation of our approach to work. These values will guide staff in the delivery of their work and will help to recognise the contribution they make. We will:

- place our customers at the centre of all that we do;
- treat all customers, users and colleagues with respect and courtesy;
- respect and accept the differences of others and work together as an organisation to build a diverse workforce;
- work to improve standards for all customers of the Social Fund;
- promote easy access for customers and potential customers of the fund;
- be receptive and responsive to the external environment and the way it influences and shapes our business future;
- be open to learning in our work and use this to make improvements to the service we give; and
- recognise and value our people for the contribution each makes to delivering the best services for our customers.

## Appendix 2

### IRS Review Workload by Month 2009/2010<sup>1</sup>

Month	Community Care Grants	Crisis Loans	Budgeting Loans	Total Workload
April	1,607	892	189	2,688
May	1,737	1,009	212	2,958
June	2,094	1,116	272	3,482
July	2,869	1,413	453	4,735
August	2,240	1,148	253	3,641
September	2,759	1,325	277	4,361
October	3,022	1,496	337	4,855
November	3,107	1,579	471	5,157
December	2,347	1,214	427	3,988
January	2,310	1,284	403	3,997
February	2,901	1,472	277	4,650
March	3,295	1,772	348	5,415
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,288</b>	<b>15,720</b>	<b>3,919</b>	<b>49,927</b>

<sup>1</sup> Workload comprises decisions on applications for an Inspector's review; applications for community care grants also considered for crisis loans, and vice versa; and reviews of Inspectors' decisions under section 38(5) of the Social Security Act, 1998.

## Appendix 3

### IRS Review Workload by Jobcentre Plus Benefit Delivery Centre 2009/2010 <sup>2</sup>

Location	Community Care Grants	Crisis Loans	Budgeting Loans	Total Workload
Balham	4,597	1,899	487	6,983
Basildon	350	184	80	614
Belle Vale	1,693	1,133	178	3,004
Bradford	531	421	85	1,037
Bristol	2,412	960	133	3,505
Chesterfield	884	620	78	1,582
Chorlton	2,297	1,526	507	4,330
Ilford	999	513	136	1,648
Inverness	1,457	793	106	2,356
Llanelli	384	138	48	570
Milton Keynes	1,720	847	287	2,854
Newcastle	548	301	114	963
Newport	793	362	157	1,312
Norwich	984	572	136	1,692
Nottingham	755	440	104	1,299
Perry Barr	4,307	2,153	468	6,928
Sheffield	1,972	851	297	3,120
Springburn	2,660	1,343	326	4,329
Stockton	503	328	59	890
Sunderland	442	336	133	911
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,288</b>	<b>15,720</b>	<b>3,919</b>	<b>49,927</b>

<sup>2</sup> Workload comprises decisions on applications for an Inspector's review; applications for community care grants also considered for crisis loans, and vice versa; and reviews of Inspectors' decisions under section 38(5) of the Social Security Act, 1998.

## Appendix 4

### Spread of Decision Types by Jobcentre Plus Benefit Delivery Centre 2009/2010<sup>3</sup>

Location	Community Care Grants – %			Crisis Loans – %			Budgeting Loans – %		
	Confirmation	Substitution	Refer Back	Confirmation	Substitution	Refer Back	Confirmation	Substitution	Refer Back
Balham	47.3	52.7	0.0	45.4	54.6	0.0	96.0	4.0	0.0
Basildon	60.1	39.9	0.0	67.2	32.8	0.0	98.6	1.4	0.0
Belle Vale	58.5	41.5	0.0	61.5	38.5	0.0	97.5	2.5	0.0
Bradford	56.8	43.2	0.0	56.2	43.8	0.0	95.9	4.1	0.0
Bristol	46.2	53.8	0.0	40.9	59.1	0.0	97.2	2.8	0.0
Chesterfield	60.4	39.6	0.0	46.8	53.2	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Chorlton	53.4	46.6	0.0	48.0	52.0	0.0	96.6	3.4	0.0
Ilford	49.0	51.0	0.0	47.8	52.2	0.0	89.7	10.3	0.0
Inverness	54.6	45.4	0.0	53.6	46.4	0.0	99.0	1.0	0.0
Llanelli	55.5	44.5	0.0	46.2	53.8	0.0	94.6	5.4	0.0
Milton Keynes	59.4	40.6	0.0	47.4	52.6	0.0	92.5	7.5	0.0
Newcastle	60.0	40.0	0.0	58.6	41.4	0.0	97.2	2.8	0.0
Newport	55.1	44.9	0.0	49.6	50.4	0.0	96.1	3.9	0.0
Norwich	52.7	47.3	0.0	48.8	51.2	0.0	96.9	3.1	0.0
Nottingham	60.2	39.7	0.1	50.2	49.8	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Perry Barr	50.9	49.1	0.0	42.9	57.1	0.0	96.2	3.8	0.0
Sheffield	61.3	38.7	0.0	48.7	51.3	0.0	98.2	1.8	0.0
Springburn	56.3	43.7	0.0	48.3	51.7	0.0	97.0	3.0	0.0
Stockton	58.8	41.2	0.0	58.3	41.7	0.0	98.0	2.0	0.0
Sunderland	52.5	47.5	0.0	62.8	37.2	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0

<sup>3</sup> When reviewing decisions, an Inspector has the power to: confirm Jobcentre Plus' decision; refer the case back to Jobcentre Plus for a fresh decision to be made; or substitute Jobcentre Plus' decision with one of his own.



## Appendix 5

### IRS Decision Completion Times by Month 2009/2010

Month	Community Care Grants % completed within		Crisis Loans % completed within		Budgeting Loans % completed within		Urgent cases % completed within 24 hours <sup>6</sup>
	12 days <sup>4</sup>	21 days <sup>5</sup>	12 days <sup>4</sup>	21 days <sup>5</sup>	12 days <sup>4</sup>	21 days <sup>5</sup>	
April	99.7	89.0	98.9	96.9	100	100	87.5
May	99.4	89.1	99.5	93.1	99.5	50.0	83.7
June	98.5	91.1	100.0	92.5	99.6	100	91.5
July	99.0	92.2	100.0	89.7	99.3	100	90.9
August	99.1	90.9	99.7	95.5	99.6	66.7	85.8
September	98.7	90.0	98.7	89.5	84.9	-	85.5
October	97.1	87.8	99.1	88.6	88.3	50.0	85.7
November	97.1	89.5	98.1	85.0	82.2	33.3	92.2
December	97.4	89.5	98.8	91.7	96.9	100	89.5
January	98.7	86.2	98.7	87.0	99.0	66.7	92.2
February	91.7	91.1	95.0	92.3	99.6	-	90.3
March	89.4	87.4	93.1	92.0	96.2	100	90.9

<sup>4</sup> Of those cases which required no enquiries or only straightforward enquiries, we aimed to complete 95% in 12 days.

<sup>5</sup> For those cases requiring further investigation or complex enquiries, we aimed to complete 90% within 21 days.

<sup>6</sup> We aimed to complete 90% of urgent cases within 24 hours.

## Appendix 6

### IRS Quality Standards for the Review

We will deliver Inspectors' reviews that are independent, impartial, fair and legally sound. In each case we will work to increase our applicants' ability to understand and participate fully and effectively in their review.

To achieve this, the review will meet the following quality standards.

Before the decision is made the Inspector will:

- examine thoroughly all the evidence presented to decide the key issues, establish the relevant facts and identify all necessary enquiries;
- ask the right questions, in the right way, to enable all the relevant facts to be established; and
- deliver the information to the applicant in such a way that clarifies the key issues the Inspector has to decide, the facts he already knows about those issues and the information he still needs.

In making the decision the Inspector will:

- take full account of the relevant information provided in the case and reflect that in the decision;
- correctly interpret and apply the law, including the Secretary of State's directions;
- ensure the rules of natural justice are met: that the applicant knows the case he must answer and has been given a fair opportunity to put his own case; and that there has been no bias;
- reach an outcome that is reasonable and is right in all the circumstances of the case;
- tailor each letter and decision to the case ensuring, in particular, that the applicant's level of understanding is respected;
- explain the law clearly, in a way the applicant can understand, avoiding legal terminology wherever possible; and
- apply any relevant Commissioner's Advice to Inspectors.

In doing this we will deliver the review:

- promptly and within published Customer Service Standards; and
- in the most cost effective way, delivering value for money.

## Appendix 7

### Diversity Monitoring Results 2009/2010

Ethnic Group	Responses to survey	Represented cases (*)	Substituted cases (*)	Average award amount
White	6,479 (78.6%)	678 (10.5%)	3,599 (55.5%)	£263.88
Mixed	331 (4.0%)	42 (12.7%)	192 (58.0%)	£321.78
Asian or Asian British	483 (5.9%)	55 (11.4%)	275 (56.9%)	£327.52
Black or Black British	787 (9.6%)	140 (17.8%)	446 (56.7%)	£313.65
Chinese or other ethnic group	158 (1.9%)	21 (13.3%)	82 (51.9%)	£290.88

\* Percentages relate to the number of responses to the survey

Gender	Applied for Inspectors' reviews	Represented Cases	Substituted cases	Average award amount
Male	19,016	2,965	8,375	£237.91
Female	17,674	2,854	8,724	£292.66

Age	Applied for Inspectors' reviews	Represented Cases	Substituted cases	Average award amount
16-24	7,076	1,196	3,405	£261.62
25-44	18,120	2,772	8,757	£274.33
45-59	8,739	1,331	3,782	£256.44
60+	2,755	520	1,155	£244.70

## Appendix 8

### Social Fund Commissioners' Meetings 2009/2010

During the period April 2009 to November 2009, **Sir Richard Tilt** met:

#### Department for Work and Pensions

- Paul Archer, Director of Contact Centres, Jobcentre Plus
- Suzy Brain England OBE, Chairman, Department for Work & Pensions Standards Committee
- Martin Brown, Head of Products and Transformation Division, Jobcentre Plus
- Yvette Cooper, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
- Val Gibson, Director of Benefits & Fraud Directorate, Department for Work & Pensions
- Helen Goodman, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work & Pensions
- Jeremy Groombridge CB, Director of Transformation and Product Management, Department for Work and Pensions
- Richard Heaton, Director General, Legal Group, Department for Work & Pensions
- Angela Keith, Benefit Delivery Centre Manager, Belle Vale and Chorlton
- Catriona Lindsay, Social Fund Centre Manager, Scotland
- Bill Marks, Benefit Delivery Manager, North West Region
- Sandra Maughan, Manager, National Performance Team, Benefits & Fraud Directorate, Department for Work & Pensions
- Nick Moon, Social Fund Team, Welfare and Wellbeing Group, Department for Work & Pensions
- Terry Moran, Chief Executive, Pensions, Disability & Carers Service
- Fiyaz Mughal, Department for Work & Pensions Standards Committee
- Ruth Owen CBE, Chief Operating Officer, Jobcentre Plus
- Sindy Sanderson, North East Social Fund Lead – Regional Service Delivery Team
- Tony Short, Head of Benefits, Products & Transformation Division, Jobcentre Plus
- Beverley Walsh, Products & Transformation Division, Jobcentre Plus
- Jobcentre Plus staff in the North East, North West and Scotland at annual meetings

#### Adviser, Charitable and Voluntary Organisations

- Welfare Rights organisations in Glasgow and the North East at annual meetings

#### Other

- Professor Alan France, Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP), Loughborough University

During the period December 2009 to March 2010, **Karamjit Singh CBE** met:

## Department for Work and Pensions

- Suzy Brain England OBE, Chairman, Department for Work & Pensions Standards Committee
- Martin Brown, Head of Products and Transformation Division, Jobcentre Plus
- Helen Goodman, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work & Pensions
- Jeremy Groombridge CB, Director of Transformation and Product Management, Department for Work and Pensions
- John Hammond, representing Margaret Tovey, Customer Services Director
- Hayley Husbands, Benefit Delivery Centre Manager, Plymouth
- Tony Jeffers, Benefit Delivery Manager, Perry Barr
- Isabel Letwin, Acting Director General, Legal Group, Department for Work & Pensions
- Sandra Maughan, Manager, National Performance Team, Benefits & Fraud Directorate, Department for Work & Pensions
- Claire McGuckin, Customer Services Director, South West Region
- Nick Moon, Social Fund Team, Welfare and Wellbeing Group, Department for Work & Pensions
- Pat Nicholas, Benefit Delivery Centre Manager, Bristol
- Sue Owen CB, Director General, Welfare and Wellbeing, Department for Work & Pensions
- Linda Regan, Group Manager, East Midlands Benefit Fraud Director
- Graham Rigby, Benefit Delivery Manager, West Midlands Region
- Pete Searle, Head of Benefit Reform Division, Department for Work & Pensions
- Adam Sharples, Director General, Employment, Department for Work & Pensions
- Tony Short, Head of Benefits, Products & Transformation Division, Jobcentre Plus
- Darra Singh, Chief Executive, Jobcentre Plus
- Beverley Walsh, Products & Transformation Division, Jobcentre Plus
- Jobcentre Plus staff in the East Midlands, South West and West Midlands at annual meetings
- Jobcentre Plus staff at Benefit Delivery Centres in Balham, Milton Keynes, Newcastle and Perry Barr

During the period December 2009 to March 2010, **Karamjit Singh CBE** met:

### Adviser, Charitable and Voluntary Organisations

- Andy Bell, Deputy Chief Executive, Sainsbury's Centre for Mental Health
- Derek Douglas, Operations Director, Novas Scarman Trust
- Paul Farmer, Chief Executive, MIND
- David Gooding and colleagues, District Manager, Bedworth, Rugby & Nuneaton CAB
- David Harker, Chief Executive and Lizzie Irons, Head of Policy, Citizens Advice
- Linda Kelly, Chief Executive, Lloyds TSB, Foundation for England and Wales
- Alan Markey, Chair NAWRA & Citizens Advice Specialist Support
- Fiona Seymour, CAB Specialist Support Officer
- Vanessa Stainislas, Chief Executive, Disability Alliance
- Welfare Rights organisations in the East Midlands, South West and West Midlands at annual meetings

### Other meetings

- Danny Alexander MP, Chief of Staff to Nick Clegg, Leader of the Liberal Democrats
- Lord Michael Bichard, Director, Institute for Government
- Professor Trevor Buck, Professor of Socio-Legal Studies, De-Montfort University
- Judy Clements OBE, The Adjudicator, The Adjudicator's Office
- Lord Dholakia OBE, DL, former President of the Liberal Democrats
- Lisa Harker, Co-Director, Institute for Public Policy Research
- Lawrence Kay, Research Fellow, Policy Exchange
- Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
- Terry Rooney MP, Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee
- Andrew Selous MP, Shadow Work and Pensions Minister
- Gavin Poole, Managing Director and colleagues, Centre for Social Justice
- Narinder Uppal, Manager, Chartered Management Institute
- Professor Steve Webb MP, Lead Spokesperson, Work and Pensions

## Appendix 9

### IRS Workshop Conferences Programme 2009/2010

Date	Location
April	Wrexham
May	Newcastle
	Edinburgh
	Carlisle
June	Bradford
July	Brighton
	Wolverhampton
September	Peterborough
	London
October	Derby
November	Swindon
December	Ipswich
January	Newport
February	Birmingham
	Bristol
March	Luton
	Bolton

## Appendix 10

### Conferences Attended by IRS Staff

- Age Concern Conference
- Chartered Institute of Housing Conference
- Citizens Advice England Annual Conference
- Citizens Advice Scotland Annual Conference
- Council Partners Conference
- Highland Council Conference
- MIND Conference
- “Moving On” Council Conference
- National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers (NAWRA) Annual Conference
- Scottish Council for the Homeless Conference
- Tenant Participation Advisory Service England Conference
- Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland Conference
- Women’s Aid Annual Conference





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