



The Adjudicator's Office 2009 Annual Report is published today

Judy Clements OBE, appointed Adjudicator in April this year for complaints about HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), the Valuation Office Agency, the Office of the Public Guardian and The Insolvency Service, publishes her 2008/09 Annual Report today. This is the sixteenth report to be published since the office was created in May 1993.

Judy Clements writes "I am delighted to be taking on this role at a time when HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) faces a number of challenges, ranging from building on the progress it has made in restoring its customers' trust following the data disc loss in October 2007, through to working towards meeting its demanding targets and vision against a very difficult funding and wider economic backdrop. I would also like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Dame Barbara Mills DBE QC, whose achievements included playing an important role as a critical friend to HMRC following the troubled launch of tax credits in 2003."

The report includes statistics from the various Adjudicator complaints – handling for HMRC, The Insolvency Service, The Office of the Public Guardian, and the Valuation Office Agency.

During the year the Adjudicator's Office

- ◆ Handled over 5,085 general enquiries from customers compared to 4,231 in the previous year.
- ◆ Received 2,174 complaints of which 1,451 were about tax credits, compared with 2017 complaints last year of which 1543 were about tax credits.
- ◆ Investigated 1,714 compared to 1,720 in the previous year.

The report states her intention to work with Departments to significantly improve the quality of their complaints handling and promote a learning culture. "I am encouraged by the receptive response from all departments to date. In particular the Benefits and Credits Directorate in HMRC from whom we receive the majority of complaints in the form of tax credits. The findings from the quality review I commissioned after my arrival, gave a sound platform for us to explore more effective ways of working with Benefits and Credits to reduce further the volume of complaints we investigate. This has resulted in some very positive outcomes in the short time I have held this

office. Not only have I seen a modification of approach to recovery in 'joint and several liability' tax credits cases, we have also begun the process of implementing a new recovery plan aimed at eliminating our backlog, and reducing the turnaround times for complaints by summer 2010."

Notes for editors

1. The Adjudicator's Office was set up in 1993, to look into complaints about the Inland Revenue (including the Valuation Agency). In 1995 the office's remit was extended to cover complaints about Customs and Excise and the Contributions Agency. In April 2001 the office took on complaints about the Public Guardianship Office (now the Office of Public Guardian) and from April 2003 the office has taken on complaints about The Insolvency Service. In April 2005 the Inland revenue and customs and Excise merged to form HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). From the 1 September this year the office ceased to take complaints from the Office of Public Guardian.
2. Judy Clements OBE replaced Dame Barbara Mills as Adjudicator on 20 April this year. She acts as an impartial referee when people are not satisfied with the way the organisations have dealt with their complaint. She looks at complaints about handling issues, such as mistakes, delay, staff attitude, and quality of advice. She does not consider complaints about the law, or where an independent tribunal already exists for settling disagreements. Neither does she look at complaints that have been, or are being, considered by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Her recommendations are independent and her services are free to complainants.
3. This report covers the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009 and is available free of charge from the Adjudicator's Office, 8th Floor Euston Tower, 286 Euston Road, London NW1 3US. Telephone 0300 057 1111 or 020 7667 1832. It is also available on www.adjudicatorsoffice.gov.uk
4. Further information about the office (including leaflets on how to complain) can also be obtained from the above address or website.
5. Statistics for the year to 31 March 2009 are attached in the following tables.

Media enquiries to Simon Oakes, Head of Office, 0300 057 1823 or 020 7667 1823.

Statistics 2008/09

	HM Revenue & Customs	Valuation Office Agency	Office of the Public Guardian	The Insolvency Service	Total
Complaints taken on for investigation	2,092	41	33	8	2,174
Investigation cases completed	1,650	31	26	7	1,714
Number upheld	566	5	5	1	577

Note: The Public Guardianship Office (PGO) became the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) in October 2007. We did not take on for investigation any complaints about the OPG in 2007/08 but we did take on 15 complaints about the PGO.

In 2008/09, the Adjudicator recommended HMRC pay a total of £188,597 compensation to complainants. She also recommended that HMRC give tax and interest amounting to £30,427 and that HMRC write off £1,976,113 in overpaid tax credits.

The Adjudicator recommended that the VOA pay £320 compensation to complainants, that the PGO pay £2,473 and the Insolvency Service pay £2,961.