



### **The Adjudicator's Office 2015 Annual Report is published today**

Judy Clements OBE, The Adjudicator for complaints about HM Revenue and Customs, the Valuation Office Agency, The Insolvency Service and HM Treasury, Pension Wise publishes her 2014-15 Annual Report today. This is the 22<sup>nd</sup> report since the formation of the office in May 1993.

Judy Clements writes "I am very pleased to present my annual report for the year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. This is my final report before I step down, after almost seven years in office. It is the 22<sup>nd</sup> report in the history of the Adjudicator's Office."

In the report Judy reflects on her time as The Adjudicator: "Throughout my stewardship, I have championed the needs of vulnerable customers, feeding back strong lessons for learning and service improvement.

My challenge to the departments has always been to achieve a fundamental shift in their approach to complaint handling: to establish a mind-set of responsibility for resolution of complaints away from treating them as simply something to be cleared."

She goes on to say, "The departments have made inroads to consolidate learning and transform complaint handling. However, the achievements are still not uniform across all parts of each department and the coming year will be very challenging for senior managers to bring all aspects of complaint handling up to the standard of the best, without any areas slipping backwards."

And finally she concludes: "**I am pleased to leave the office workload in the best state it has been in for a decade** and am sure the role of Adjudicator will continue to be of benefit to customers and the departments into the future."

The largest proportion of complaints received by The Adjudicator were about Tax Credits and HMRC's refusal to write off overpayments. Other complaints included PAYE issues around Extra Statutory Concession A19.

The Adjudicator has continued to build strong relationships with all the departments and they remain receptive to her feedback for service improvement. In addition, she was very pleased to become the independent reviewer for complaints about HM Treasury, Pension Wise.

HMRC customers remain the largest group of users of The Adjudicator's services. The number of complaints referred to The Adjudicator by customers of the Valuation Office Agency and The Insolvency Service remain low, and to date no complaints about Pension Wise have been received.

## 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). HM Customs and Excise and the Contributions Agency joined in 1995. From April 2003 the office took on complaints about The Insolvency Service. In April 2005 the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise merged to form HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). In March 2015 The Adjudicator was asked to become the independent reviewer for complaints about HM Treasury, Pension Wise.
2. Judy Clements OBE replaced the late Dame Barbara Mills DBE QC as Adjudicator in April 2009. She acts as an impartial referee when people are not satisfied with the way the departments 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. Her recommendations are independent and her services are free to complainants.
3. This report covers the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 and is available free of charge from the Adjudicator's Office, PO Box 10280 Nottingham NG2 9PF. Telephone 0300 057 1111. It is also available electronically at [www.adjudicatorsoffice.gov.uk](http://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 2015 are below.

Media enquiries to: Margaret Allcock, Head of Office, 03000 571781.

### Statistics 2014-15 (2013-14 in brackets)

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	HM Revenue & Customs	Valuation Office Agency	The Insolvency Service	Total
Complaints taken on for investigation	1044 (1087)	31 (27)	27 (17)	1102 (1131)
Investigation cases completed	1808 (2311)	35 (23)	7 (16)	1850 (2350)
Number upheld either partially or wholly	1543 (2073)	15 (5)	4 (6)	1562 (2084)

In 2014-15, The Adjudicator recommended HMRC pay a total of £243,967 in compensation to complainants for worry and distress and poor complaint handling (£246,094 in 2013-14). She also asked HMRC to reimburse £123,605 for direct costs (£180,615 in 2013-14). The Adjudicator recommended that HMRC give up liability for tax and overpaid Tax Credits amounting to £2,629,197 (£3,942,549 in 2013-14).

The Adjudicator recommended the VOA pay a total of £900 in compensation (£325 in 2013-14). There were no direct costs (£14,291 direct costs in 2013-14). The Adjudicator recommended The Insolvency Service pay £375 in compensation (£500 in 2013-14). There were no direct costs (£42,287 direct costs in 2013-14). No recommendation was made for liability to be given up for either of these departments.