



An Coimisiún um Chaidreamh san Áit Oibre
Workplace Relations Commission

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Stakeholder and Service User Research

Coyne Research

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1. Introduction

The overall objective of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) is to deliver a world-class workplace relations service and employment rights framework that serves the needs of employers and employees and provides maximum value for money. To measure their ongoing performance and to identify relative areas of strength and areas for improvement the WRC commissioned Coyne Research to conduct stakeholder and service user research. This report contains a summary of the findings from this research.

2. Research Approach and Methodology

The research was conducted across two phases. An initial in-depth, qualitative phase, followed by a more far reaching quantitative phase.

Phase One – Qualitative Research

A mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted by the Coyne Research project team between April and June 2017. In total thirteen stakeholders from a variety of sectors were interviewed including; solicitors, employee representatives, employers and industry representatives.

Phase Two – Quantitative Research

For the second phase an online survey was conducted amongst recent users of the WRC services.

This covered:

- Information Services - Telephone Service and WRC Website (www.workplacerelations.ie)
- Adjudication Service
- Conciliation Service
- Advisory Service
- Mediation Service - Face to Face and Early Resolution Service (ERS)
- Inspection Service.

The information service fieldwork commenced in June 2017, whilst other service users were interviewed between December 2017 and January 2018. The sample sizes that were achieved amongst each of the different service user groups are outlined below in table 1.

Table 1 – Phase Two Sample Sizes

Service	Sample Size
Telephone Service	94
WRC Website	465
Adjudication Service*	201
Conciliation Service	105
Advisory Service	26
Early Resolution Service (ERS)	54
Face to Face Mediation Service	40
Inspection Service	60

*Results for the Adjudication Service survey have been weighted to reflect the actual case outcome profile.

3. Summary of Research Findings

Overall satisfaction with the WRC and the WRC’s service provision is high. The formation of the WRC as a “one-stop-shop” was widely welcomed, with stakeholders stating that it offered a speedier and simpler approach for the users. Feedback on each of the specific service areas is outlined below.

3.1 Telephone Service

Those who had recently used the telephone service were mainly employees (67%), with some employers (16%) also contacting the service. The main purposes for contacting the service were to acquire information on employment rights (54%), to acquire information on how to make a complaint (12%) and to check the status of employment permit applications (10%).

Satisfaction with the telephone service was high with 91% of service users satisfied with service provision. This was driven by high levels of satisfaction with both the processes and the staff, as show in table 2.

Table 2 – Summary of Results - Telephone Customer Service

Key Metrics - Satisfaction	% Very/ Quite Satisfied (4/5) *
Overall Satisfaction with the WRC Information Service	91%
Clarity of Information Provided	93%
Usefulness of Information Provided	90%
Relevance of Information Provided	95%
Approachability of Staff	97%
Knowledge/ Understanding of Issues	91%
Impartiality	88%

*Questions were asked on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied

Base: All WRC Phone Information Service Users - 94

The vast majority (92%) of those contacting the telephone service said that they would be likely to use the service in the future.

3.2 WRC Website (www.workplacerelations.ie)

The main reasons given for visiting the WRC website were to make a complaint/refer a dispute (40%), to check on a decision/ determination of a previous case (37%), and to get information on how to deal with an employment issue (26%).

Circa three in five (56%) were satisfied with their experience of using the site. Lower levels of satisfaction were driven by difficulties in using the website, specifically ease of navigating and searching for information, particularly previous cases or decisions.

Table 3 – Summary of Results – WRC Website

Key Metrics - Satisfaction	% Very/ Quite Satisfied (4/5) *
Overall Satisfaction with the WRC Website	56%
Key Metrics - Ease of Use	% Very/ Quite Easy (4/5) *
Ease of Finding the WRC Website	77%
Ease of Finding Relevant Information	53%
Ease of Navigating the Website	57%

Questions were asked on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very dissatisfied/difficult and 5 is very satisfied/ easy
 Base: All WRC Website Users – 465

Frequent users of the WRC website who participated in the in-depth interviews provided detailed feedback regarding the website and key areas for improvement. These included improving the usability of the website particularly its search functionalities and the tagging of certain information and documents on the site. Despite these challenges the majority of users (77%) would be likely to visit the WRC website in the future.

3.3 Adjudication Service

Both employees and employers who had been through the adjudication process were interviewed, with employees, or their representatives, accounting for 73% of the sample and employers or employer representatives 23%. The outcome of the stakeholders most recent case had a notable impact on their responses.

Circa three in five (56%) were satisfied with their overall experience of the Adjudication Service. Notably higher amongst those employees whose case was upheld (64% satisfied) versus those whose case was not upheld (31% satisfied).

Ratings of the adjudication hearing locations were positive with four in five (80%) rating the standard of the venue as good, two in three (65%) rating the location as convenient, a similar proportion (67%) rating it easy to access.

In addition, WRC staff members were also positively rated, with seven in ten (71%) service users rating the staff as professional and two in three (65%) rating them positively for impartiality.

Table 4 – Summary of Results – Adjudication Service

Key Metrics - Satisfaction	% Very/ Quite Satisfied (4/5) *
Overall satisfaction with the Adjudication Service	56%
Customer Service	60%
Key Metrics - Staff	% Very/ Quite Good (4/5) *
Professionalism	71%
Understanding of Individual/ Specific Issues	64%
Impartiality	65%
Key Metrics - Decision Making	% Very/ Quite Satisfied (4/5) *
Clarity of Decision Making	67%
Time Taken to Make a Decision	52%

Questions were asked on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is the lowest score and 5 is the highest score.
 Base: All WRC Adjudication Users – 201

Half (52%) of service users were satisfied with the time taken to make a decision. Notably different amongst those whose case was upheld (57% satisfied), versus not upheld (33% satisfied).

Heavy service users who participated in the in-depth interviews highlighted several areas for improvement to drive higher overall levels of satisfaction, including:

- Review of the e-complaint form.
- Improved communications between the Adjudication Service and the relevant parties.
- Review of the adjournments process.
- Improved consistency in the approach taken by Adjudication Officers.

3.4 Conciliation Service

The majority of stakeholders who had recently used the Conciliation Service were Trade Unions (46%) or Employer Representatives (29%). Overall levels of satisfaction amongst those who had engaged with the service were very high, with nine in ten (90%) very likely to use the service in the future. High levels of satisfaction were driven by the professionalism, impartiality and approach taken by the conciliation team.

Table 5 – Summary of Results – Conciliation Service

Key Metrics - Service and Staff	% Very/ Quite Good (4/5) *
Administrative Service	88%
Professionalism of Staff	92%
Impartiality of Staff	90%
Conciliation/Facilitation Skills	86%
Understanding of the Issues	89%

Questions were asked on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is the lowest score and 5 is the highest score.

Base: All WRC Conciliation Service Users – 105

The majority of heavy users called for the continuation of the current level of service offering from the Conciliation Service.

3.5 Advisory Service

A niche profile of stakeholders had engaged with the Advisory Service, with the majority being Trade Unions or other employee representatives.

There was a relatively low level of awareness of the Advisory Service and what they offer amongst stakeholders interviewed for the qualitative phase. Therefore, key areas for improvement focused on communications around the service offering, including;

- Establishing a clear pathway to the Advisory Service for potential users.
- Wider communication of the service offering.
- Wider communication of the benefits of engagement.

Amongst those who had engaged with the Advisory Service satisfaction with the service, the process and the staff were all high, with the vast majority satisfied and likely to use the service again.

3.6 Early Resolution Service (ERS)

A range of stakeholders who had recently contacted the ERS were included in the sample; Trade Union or Employee Representatives (37%), Employer Representatives (22%), Employees (20%) and Employers (19%).

Two in three (65%) were satisfied with their experience of using the service, with those whose case was settled at this stage notably more satisfied. The service is considered impartial by users, with over four in five (83%) rating it as good and over three in four (78%) rating it as professional.

There were evident concerns amongst some stakeholders regarding the use of the telephone, rather than a face-to-face meeting, for the resolution of complaints. Therefore, clearer communication regarding the role of the ERS and the benefits to utilising it is called for.

3.7 Face to Face Mediation Service

The provision of a face-to-face Mediation Service was praised by all stakeholders. However, engagement with the face-to-face mediation service amongst stakeholders was relatively limited.

Those who had experience of mediation were positive regarding all aspects of the service and the potential that it has to resolve disputes, with ratings high for staff professionalism, mediation skills and impartiality.

Amongst stakeholders interviewed for the qualitative phase of research there was an appetite for increased access to mediation services. In addition, they felt there was a need to improve the process by which potential participants are informed about whether or not mediation will be offered or will take place.

3.8 Inspection Service

A range of companies who had experienced a WRC inspection were interviewed. Amongst those included in the sample four in five (78%) were found to be compliant and one in five (22%) were non-compliant.

Overall ratings of the inspection process were high; with over nine in ten (91%) rating the process as professional and over four in five (85%) rating it as impartial.

Amongst those who experienced an inspection over half (52%) said that they had made voluntary changes to their company's policies/ practices since inspection and over four in five (83%) claim the inspection was useful to help them understand how to comply with employment rights legislation.

Within the qualitative phase of research, stakeholders who had experience of the inspection team saw their role as extremely important. The majority were positive about their interaction with the service including the process involved and the staff dealt with. There were a few areas highlighted for improvement by these stakeholders including the timely provision of more detailed, written feedback after every inspection and more widely disseminated communications regarding the aggregated inspection performance across different sectors.