



# WRC

An Coimisiún um Chaidreamh san Áit Oibre  
Workplace Relations Commission  
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## Workplace Relations Commission

### Work Programme 2017

#### **Introduction**

The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) was established on 1 October 2015.

The core mission of the Commission centres around the promotion and improvement of industrial and employment relations generally and the maintenance and proper employment standards.

The collective and specialist services of the Commission play a vital role in contributing towards industrial peace and workplace and public service reform which goes to maintaining and sustaining enterprise efficiency and productivity. Apart from delivering an impartial and effective employment rights adjudication service, achieving appropriate and essential employment standards compliance and enforcement is central to the strategic operations of the Commission.

#### **Work Programme Requirement**

Section 22(1) of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 provides that the Board, after consultation with the Director General, shall prepare and submit to the Minister, a Work Programme of the activities that the Commission intends to carry out in the year to which the Programme relates. Such a Programme must be submitted to the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation by 1 December every calendar year.

The Commission is staffed by almost 180 permanent employees who are civil servants and part of the staffing establishment of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. They are supplemented by a further 27 Adjudication Officers who are contracted to assist the Adjudication Service on a case-by-case basis. The appointments of the latter are for a five year period.

The purpose of the Programme is to ensure that the WRC deploys its staffing and other resources appropriately through activities targeted at achieving the strategic objectives set out in the WRC Strategy Statement 2016-2018.

## **Work Programme 2017**

### **Statement of Strategy 2016-2018**

At its centre, the WRC Strategy Statement *Workplace Relations: Assisting the Recovery in a Changing and Challenging Environment* focuses on meeting the Government's fundamental goal of having in place a world-class workplace relations service which is simple to use, independent, effective, impartial and efficient, to provide for workable means of redress and enforcement within a reasonable period and to reduce costs to business.

The Strategy reflects that vision and identifies a range of objectives:

- Consolidating the Workplace Relations Commission
- Achieving an internally and externally recognised WRC culture and brand
- Ensuring robust corporate governance around delivery of services
- Driving value through technology
- Delivering high quality customer service
- Enhancing and expanding the dispute resolution service and delivery
- Developing further and delivering an expert suite of collective and individual dispute resolution services
- Providing fast and efficient "real-time" adjudication of the highest quality
- Driving employment legislation compliance through working with employers and, where necessary, robustly prosecuting recalcitrant employers
- Promoting awareness of employment law and becoming the "go-to" service for such information
- Publishing Regular Commentaries/Data on WRC activities and involving stakeholders on operational aspects of the WRC services

This Statement was submitted to and approved by the Minister in early-2016.

The Act provides that the Board, in the preparation of the Work Programme, shall have regard to that part of the Strategy Statement applicable to the year to which the Work Programme relates. Accordingly, the Programme specifies activities designed to address those strategic goals, as well as the day-to day activities that comprise the Commission's core mission.

### **Work Programme 2016: Key Achievements**

The Commission achieved considerable success in its first year of existence: corporate governance structures were established and are fully functioning, the Statement of Strategy 2016-2018 was published as was the Work Programme 2016, the Business Plan 2016, the Annual Report 2015, and a Six Month (and Twelve Month) Commentaries on progress to date.

From an operational perspective, the Adjudication Service, while managing the administrative issues associated with implementing new systems, received just under 12,000 specific complaints in the ten months to end-October 2016 and decisions in respect of these complaints issued within 6 months of the complaint being submitted; a significant improvement on the time-scales experienced by users of the pre-existing structures.

In terms of Inspection and Enforcement, some 4097 inspections have been completed to date this year with a total of 1541 employers found to have been in breach. With regard to improving compliance generally, 18 Fixed Payments notices have issued and most employers have opted to pay the fine. Almost all Compliance Notices have been uncontested. It is considered that this new approach will prove particularly effective in securing early resolution of issues arising in the workplace, avoiding disputes and other consequences.

On the industrial relations front, the Conciliation Service has chaired 1,156 conciliation conferences to date this year. The outcomes of these conferences have involved the preservation of jobs, the restructuring of organisations, the variation of employee terms and conditions, pay increases or concessions, greater flexibility in terms rosters and other operational changes. These interventions have been critical in maintaining a high level of industrial peace in a challenging industrial relations landscape.

## **Work Programme 2017: Key Goals**

These fundamental operational activities and services, and others, will continue into 2017 and beyond. For 2017, however, a number of key issues and objectives have been identified and are addressed in the Work Programme 2017. These have both an external and internal focus.

### **External**

#### **1. Legacy and Current Adjudication Cases**

Since its inception, while ensuring that new complaints with are dealt with in “real time” the WRC Adjudication Service has reduced the number of legacy Employment Rights/Industrial Relations Complaints from 2397 in November 2015 to fewer than 1000 while the number of equality/equal status cases has halved to 892. It is the intention of the WRC to eliminate the legacy cases from its hearing pipeline by mid-2017 whilst at the same time improving further on the hearing and decision timescales for new complaints.

#### **2. Mediation Services**

The Early Resolution and Mediation arms of the WRC form an integral element of the broad sweep of the Commission’s services.

Experience to date is that potential users have not fully availed on the services on offer. Possible reasons for this level of usage have been identified over the course of WRC engagement with stakeholders. With that in mind, the Commission will instigate a campaign designed to raise awareness of the service and, at the same time, adjust the delivery model in consultation with stakeholders and in light of the annual WRC customer survey feedback.

In this regard, a key outcome envisaged is that potential mediation cases will selected in a manner that maximises the potential for resolution with a consequent overall reduction in the number of complaints requiring full adjudication.

#### **3. Website**

The current website is primarily an information platform. Stakeholder feedback would suggest that the website, as well as supporting WRC communications could be reviewed to improve “usability”.

Over the course of 2017, the Commission will develop an interactive and process-driven website which will deliver clear brand recognition, enhance customer service and interaction with the WRC and will result in considerable process efficiencies and overall savings.

#### **4. Communications Strategy**

The WRC developed a stakeholder engagement framework in 2016. This will be further enhanced through the development and roll out of a communications strategy designed to project fully the WRC organisational identity, achieve clarity amongst our stakeholders on the range of services available and to drive and steer demand to the appropriate activity.

### **Internal**

#### **5. HR Strategy**

The WRC will roll out a human resource policy involving succession planning, coaching, mentoring, the provision of legal advice and training and career development designed to ensure that the development of an internal, unitary corporate WRC identity which has a talent pool sufficient to meet ongoing staff turnover and to give the flexibility to the organisation and its staff to respond quickly to shifting demand patterns across the full range of its activities.

#### **6. Inspection and Enforcement IT Platform**

During 2017, the Commission will develop and roll out a new IT administrative support platform for the Inspection Division. This system will deliver significant resource and processing efficiencies and support the case management of WRC Inspections and associated prosecutions. This will involve:

- The recording of complaints, referrals and risk initiated inspections,
- Facilitating case research,
- Arranging inspections,
- Recording contraventions,
- Issuing of Contravention Letters, Compliance Notices and Fixed Payment Notices, and
- Managing prosecutions.

The Work Programme in its totality is set out in the Appendix. The achievement of these goals is contingent on the availability of adequate resources, particularly in the event of State employees obtaining full access to the services of the Commission.

## **Divisional Programmes**

### **Advisory Service**

The Advisory Service promotes good practice in the workplace by assisting and advising organisations in all aspects of industrial relations in the workplace.

It provides advice and assistance to employers, employees and trade unions in situations where there is no trade dispute and it helps employers and employees to develop positive working relationships and mechanisms to solve problems.

Its services include:

- preventive mediation, advising on grievance procedures and structural change,
- publishing codes of practice around workplace relations generally,
- facilitating joint management/staff forums to work through issues of mutual concern; for example workplace change or difficult industrial relations issues,
- providing good practice training workshops on a variety of aspects of the employment relationship including the operation of workplace procedures and, through a facilitative process, can assist organisations to implement them,
- commissioning and publishing research on current industrial relations themes, and
- facilitating management and employee representatives in the resolution of disputes in situations where negotiating arrangements are not in place and where collective bargaining fails to take place.

The WRC offers training on a variety of aspects of the employment relationship, including workplace procedures, communications, the negotiation process, dignity in the workplace and support in the management of workplace change. Such training is tailored to the needs of individual workplaces.

Programmes are delivered both, on a stand-alone basis, or as a module in an organisation's own training programme.

Individual programmes are:

- Developed to suit the particular needs of every organisation and to accommodate the grievance/disciplinary/dispute arrangements in place.

- Designed to meet the needs of front-line managers whose role demands excellent people management skills and a good understanding of workplace conflict prevention and dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Designed to meet the needs of employees and employee representatives whose role demands a good understanding of workplace conflict prevention and dispute resolution mechanisms.

### Advisory

Work Programme Objectives	Actions/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Improve site-specific workplace relations</b>	Carry out reviews of industrial relations, chair joint working parties, facilitate resolution of individual disputes including referrals under the IR Act 2015  Facilitate voluntary dispute resolution, deliver workplace mediation and equality mediation services,	Throughout 2017	Effective, tailored programme delivery, high client satisfaction, and improved relations
<b>Provide workplace training</b>	Develop bespoke training programmes for clients etc.	Throughout 2017	High success rate and customer satisfaction with service
<b>Initiate the enhancement and broadening of the remit of the Frequent Users Programme</b>	Roll out the frequent user programme for Adjudication Division across all Divisions	Q217	Consequent reduction in WRC resource allocation arising directly from this initiative

### Conciliation Service

The Conciliation Service provides a timely delivery of a flexible, responsive service designed to meet the needs of employers and their employees to resolve disputes when they have failed to reach agreement during their own previous negotiations. The substantial majority of cases referred to conciliation are settled. If no agreement is reached then, if the parties wish, the dispute may be referred to the Labour Court.

Conciliation is a voluntary process in which the parties to a dispute agree to avail of a neutral and impartial third party to assist them in resolving their industrial relations differences. The Workplace Relations Commission provides a conciliation service by making available Industrial Relations Officers

of the Commission to chair 'conciliation conferences'. These officers are sometimes referred to as 'IROs' or as 'Conciliation Officers'. Conciliation conferences are basically an extension of the process of direct negotiations, with an independent chairperson present to provide advice, steer the discussions and explore possible avenues of settlement in a non-prejudicial fashion. Issues are often complex and require a strong commitment by officers and all parties over a protracted period of time. Participation in the conciliation process is voluntary, and so too are the outcomes. Solutions are reached only by consensus, whether by negotiation and agreements facilitated between the parties themselves, or by the parties agreeing to settlement terms proposed by the Conciliation Officer.

The Industrial Relations Officer treats as confidential all information received during the course of conciliation.

The conciliation process is informal and non-legalistic in its practice. The parties are free to represent themselves or be represented by trade unions or by employer organisations. The Commission is of the view that the process does not require legal representation of either party at conciliation meetings.

The Service in recent years, due to the three Public Service Agreements now has a significant involvement in public service/civil service disputes; a high proportion being on an "ad hoc" basis.

### **Chairing of Negotiating Fora**

As well as the chairing meetings of the National and the individual Sectoral Oversight Groups established under the National Public Service Agreements since 2010, the Conciliation Service also provides Chairpersons to a range of negotiating fora i.e. National Mechanical Contracting Forum, the Electrical Contractors Forum, the Health Service National Joint Council, the Teachers Conciliation Council, the Local Authority National Council, Construction Industry Forum as well as others. Officers also Chair all Joint Labour Committees (JLCs).

### **Education and Training Boards (ETB) and Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools Appeals Procedures**

Officers of the Conciliation Service also act as Independent Appeal Officers under the provisions of the Codes of Practice for Dealing with Complaints of Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Grievance and Disciplinary procedures within designated education divisions.

## **Early Resolution Service/Mediation**

### **Early Resolution Service**

The Early Resolution Service (ERS) is one of a suite of mediation services operated by the Commission. This is a telephoned based service whereby, in certain instances, complainants may be offered the assistance of the Early Resolution Service where all parties have indicated consent to participate in this mediation process.

Case Resolution Officers of the Service offer quick, neutral and impartial third-party assistance to help resolve disputes through mediation without the need for a formal hearing or inspection. If a complainant or respondent does not wish to use the service, or if the dispute is not resolved by the service, the complaint is sent without any delay to the Adjudication Service.

### **Mediation**

The objective of the Mediation Service is to provide an alternative dispute resolution process to that of a formal adjudication hearing in respect of claims involving breaches of employment and equality rights.

Where parties indicate their acceptance to participate in this process, a mutually convenient meeting will be arranged. This is a voluntary system and parties can withdraw their consent to continue their involvement in the mediation process and proceed to Adjudication at any stage. The service is an informal operation in which the Mediator remains neutral and impartial with no power to impose a resolution. The service aims to help parties try to reach a mutually acceptable settlement.

Any settlement reached at mediation is legally binding and may be enforced on application to the District Court.

A key focus for 2017 will be to instigate a campaign designed to raise awareness of the service and, at the same time, adjust the delivery model in consultation with stakeholders and in light of the annual WRC customer survey feedback.

In this regard, a key outcome envisaged is that potential mediation cases will be selected in a manner that maximises the potential for resolution with a consequent overall reduction in the number of complaints requiring full adjudication.

## Workplace Mediation Service

The Workplace Mediation Service provides a tailored response to particular types of issues and disputes emerging in workplaces. It is particularly suitable to address workplace disputes involving individual or small groups who are experiencing interpersonal differences, conflicts and difficulties working together. This service is delivered by a team of mediators drawn from the Conciliation and Advisory Services and is managed by the Conciliation Service.

This confidential service gives employees and employers in dispute an opportunity to work with a mediator to find a mutually agreed solution to the problem. Workplace mediation is a voluntary process which requires the agreement of both sides to participate in the service and to work towards a solution to the problem.

The aim of the process is to allow each person involved in the dispute the opportunity to be heard and to work with the other party to reach a solution. It is a flexible process which may involve joint meetings or meetings with the mediator alone, depending on the particular situation.

Typically, the types of situations that are dealt with by the Mediation Service include:

- a working relationship that has broken down, or
- issues having arisen from a grievance and disciplinary procedure.

If no agreed solution is reached the mediator assists the participants decide how best to proceed.

## Conciliation/Early Resolution/Mediation

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Provide timely, effective and efficient Conciliation service and ensure demand is met whilst maintaining delivery of all services</b>	Provide conciliation in an appropriate timeframe to facilitate resolution of industrial relations disputes. Proactively engage with clients to assist in providing assistance in the maintenance of positive industrial relations	As and when required by clients throughout 2017	Maintenance of high success rate in the resolution of industrial relations disputes.
<b>Enhance client usage of relevant mediation services of WRC</b>	Enhance bespoke services in consultation with stakeholders and in light of customer survey results	Q217	Enhanced delivery and increased usage of mediation services

<b>Provide a range of complementary mediation services in both employment rights and workplace relations disputes</b>	Facilitate and deliver voluntary participation in mediation processes	Throughout 2017 and within 3 weeks of acceptance by all parties to engage in mediation process dealing with employment rights claims	Cases triaged effectively and efficiently to bring about an overall reduction in numbers advancing to adjudication process in employment rights claims.
<b>Chair and facilitate various different industrial relations and statutory fora in both the private and public sector</b>	Facilitate discussions in a timely fashion. Assist parties deal with all issues in accordance with procedures and operations as set in both voluntary and statutory requirements	Throughout 2017	High customer satisfaction with workplace relations mediation service  Effective delivery and operation of all issues raised in accordance with protocols and procedures
<b>Ensure effective two-way communication with primary clients</b>	Maintain effective dialogue with key clients in all regions and nationally	At all times during 2017	Effective operation of communication channels maintained

## Adjudication Service

The Adjudication Service investigates disputes, grievances and claims that individuals or small groups of workers make under the employment legislation listed in *Schedule 5* of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 and under a number of other Acts, i.e. equality legislation, the Unfair Dismissals Act, the Redundancy Payments Act, and the Protection of Employees (Employers' Insolvency) Act 1984.

A complaint must be presented within 6 months of the date of the alleged breach of the Act. The time limit for submitting a complaint may be extended by a further 6 months if there was a reasonable cause for the delay.

While the adjudication officer generally conducts an inquiry, the Director General may decide to deal with the complaint by written submissions only, unless either party objects within 42 days of being so informed.

At the inquiry both parties have an opportunity to be heard and present any relevant evidence. The hearings are held in private. The adjudication officer makes a decision in accordance with the relevant law and the decision is given to the parties in writing. Such decisions are published on the internet in a manner that does not identify the parties.

The focus of the Service in 2017 is to eliminate all “legacy” cases while driving down the time period to five months between receipt of a specific complaint to the issuing of a decision in most cases.

### Adjudication Service

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Deal with post-establishment complaints within established timelines and ensure that current demand is met while clearing all pre-establishment complaints during the year</b>	Oversee efficient and effective throughput of cases through registration, hearing and adjudication	Throughout 2017	Throughput at levels agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department
<b>Deliver high quality decisions</b>	Monitor and review quantity and availability of adjudicators to ensure delivery capacity.	Throughout 2017	Sufficient adjudicators available consistently
	Internal Quality Control Review Group will review decisions to identify learning points, to ensure consistency of decisions in common areas, to improve the service provided to customers of the Adjudication Service. In addition, feedback on decisions appealed to the Labour Court will be formalised.	Throughout 2017	High quality decisions with declining number of appeals and judicial reviews Internally and externally recognised and delivered WRC adjudication standard
	Maintain and improve internal structures to assist Adjudicators in researching and writing decisions		
<b>Ensure ICT system facilitates the delivery of efficient and effective adjudication and mediation services</b>	Review quarterly and update where needed the Complaints & Adjudication Solution IT System	Throughout 2017	Easy to use ICT system working efficiently and effectively

### Inspection and Enforcement Services

#### Functions

The Inspection Services and Enforcement Services monitor employment conditions to ensure compliance with and, where necessary, the enforcement of employment rights legislation. This

includes redress for the employees concerned and payment of any unpaid wages arising from breaches of employment rights.

Inspectors visit places of employment and carry out investigations on behalf of the Commission in order to ensure compliance with employment-related legislation. In certain circumstances, the Labour Court may request that an inspector carry out investigations on its behalf. Such investigations involve, but are not confined to, examining books, records and documents related to the employment, and conducting interviews with current and former employees and employers.

If necessary, inspectors may be accompanied by other inspectors or the Gardaí. Inspectors are also empowered to work in Joint Investigation Units with the Department of Social Protection and the Revenue Commissioners, and to exchange information with these bodies. In addition, where appropriate, the WRC carries out inspections in tandem with bodies such as the Garda Síochána and others.

Where breaches of legislation have been found, an Inspector may, depending on the section of legislation involved, issue either a Compliance Notice or a Fixed Payment Notice to an employer, or, if the matters are offences under legislation, to recommend prosecution of the employer by the WRC. A person who receives a Fixed Payment Notice may, within 42 days of the date of the Notice, make a payment to the Commission of the amount specified in the Notice. If the payment is made within that period, no prosecution will be instituted against such a person. However, failure to make payment against a Fixed Payment Notice will cause a prosecution to be instituted by the WRC in the Courts.

The WRC is empowered under certain employment legislation to bring summary prosecutions against employers who are alleged to be in breach of that legislation.

During 2017, the focus of the Division will be on driving compliance through targeted inspections and usage of Compliance Notices, Fixed Payment Notices and efficient and effective prosecution. In addition, the Commission will develop and roll out a new IT administrative support platform for the Inspection Division. This system will deliver significant resource and processing efficiencies and support the case management of WRC Inspections and associated prosecutions. This will involve

- The recording of complaints, referrals and risk initiated inspections,

- Facilitating case research,
- Arranging inspections,
- Recording contraventions,
- Issuing of Contravention Letters, Compliance Notices and Fixed Payment Notices, and
- Managing prosecutions.

### Inspection and Enforcement Services

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Promote and enforce compliance with employment law</b>	Risk-based inspections, complaint-based inspections, with other State bodies where appropriate	Throughout 2017	3,800 Inspections concluded incl. 2,000 unannounced workplace visits
	Prosecute, as appropriate, offences of non-compliance with employment legislation	Throughout 2017	A 90% successful prosecution rate
	Maintain standard process with regard to and measure effectiveness of issuing and processing of Compliance and Fixed Charge notices	Throughout 2017	Notices issued appropriately and having effect. Review and evaluation of process by end-2017
	Regular engagement with stakeholders	Throughout 2017	Key stakeholders met at least once yearly
<b>Enforce awards arising from decisions of adjudication and Labour Court proceedings</b>	Press enforcement of decisions and awards arising from decisions of adjudication and Labour Court in relation to adjudication and inspection activity	Throughout 2017	Decisions and awards pursued in manner that maximises efficiency and effectiveness

<b>Issue licences and enforce legislation in relation to Employment Agencies and the employment of Young Persons</b>	Licences processed and issued in an efficient and lawful manner	Throughout 2017	700 licences issued
<b>Co-operate with other enforcement agencies</b>	Review existing MOUs and agree two additional MoUs with appropriate bodies	Throughout 2017 required	Review/Conclude by end-2017
<b>Drive Value through technology</b>	Develop and roll out ERCES system for Division	Q317	New administrative system operating successfully delivering significant resource and processing efficiencies

### Information, Customer Service and Central Processing

The Unit provides information on rights and entitlements under employment legislation and processes and registers complaints and applications to the WRC.

This is done through:

- the provision of information relating to employment rights, equality and industrial relations matters by means of a telephone service manned by experienced Information Officers,
- the design and production of informational booklets, leaflets and other literature relating to employment rights, industrial relations and equality,
- the processing of complaints and applications to the WRC,
- the provision of information to relevant parties regarding the status of complaint and dispute referrals, and
- the management of the Workplace Relations website.

### Information, Customer Service and Central Processing

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Time frame	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Provide non-directive information on WRC activities generally, employment legislation and redress mechanisms</b>	Provide a high quality accessible, customer-focused and user-friendly response to telephone, email, white mail and other employment rights enquiries	Throughout 2017	90% of queries dealt with at initial query

<p><b>through a variety of delivery formats</b></p>	<p>Participate in and deliver employment law seminars, presentations, exhibitions, roadshows</p> <p>Update and republish information material to reflect new corporate identity and legislative changes</p>		<p>Attend/participate in 50 events</p> <p>Full range of publications updated by March 2017</p>
<p><b>Efficient processing of complaints and applications to the WRC</b></p>	<p>All complaints processed in a timely and efficient manner and referred to the appropriate redress forum</p>		<p>15,000 complaints processed efficiently and effectively</p>

### **Registrar/Legal Advisor**

The Registrar/Legal Advisor to the WRC sources and provides high quality and timely legal services and advice to the Director General, Adjudicators and staff and to ensure legally robust procedures and systems are in place throughout all activities of the Commission. In this regard, it may be necessary, on occasion, to source specialist legal advices on specific issues.

Additionally, the Registrar/Legal Advisor;

- manages all aspects of legal matters that arise from time to time in the context of the operation of the WRC,
- ensures that the legal training needs of all members of staff are fully met,
- ensures that the Director General and staff are kept informed of relevant legal and legislative developments which impact on the work of the WRC,
- monitors Labour Courts Appeals and informs Adjudicators and staff of the outcomes where appropriate, and
- provides a specialised database and library facility for Adjudicators and staff.

The Registrar/Legal Advisor takes an active part in the Management Team of the WRC.

The primary objective in 2017 will be to maintain and improve the legal service and training programmes while developing a specialised database and library facility for Adjudicators and WRC staff generally.

### Registrar/Legal Advisor

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>WRC legal service operating effectively and efficiently</b>	Structures, procedures, and business processes operating efficiently	Throughout 2017	Legal service established and fully functional.
<b>Provide appropriate legal training to staff and adjudicators – legally sound approach to all activities of WRC</b>	Identify training structures, training needs and deliver	Throughout 2017	Training structures in place learning being and implemented
<b>Manage legal services used within the WRC</b>	Provide for legal services where appropriate (including panels for legal advice where appropriate)	Throughout 2017	Systems functioning effectively
<b>Manage and provide for timely, effective and robust legal advice on all aspects of legal matters before the WRC</b>	Consider correspondence, provide advice, brief Counsel where necessary, manage case progress and outcome	Throughout 2017	WRC manages legal matters effectively and efficiently.
<b>Develop and maintain a specialised database and library facility for Adjudicators and WRC staff generally</b>	Ensure appropriate access to relevant external databases such as Westlaw, Bailii, etc. develop internal database on all aspects employment and equality law, and establish virtual and physical library	Q1 2017	Databases and library in place and fully utilised
<b>Set and manage legal costs within budget parameters</b>	Monitor spend on legal costs/identify efficiencies.	Throughout 2017	Legal Costs managed effectively, efficiently and within budget

## **Corporate Division**

The WRC Corporate Division seeks to put in place and sustain a sound and effective corporate culture and governance framework across the WRC; one in which our employees are familiar with and work together to achieve the WRC Vision and goals.

In this regard, the Division is responsible for the corporate services functions of the WRC, including overall corporate governance, budgets, business planning, risk and information management, human resource strategy and policy (e.g. the development and implementation of WRC-specific HR practices including workforce planning, learning and development initiatives, and staff support systems), ICT, supporting the work of the Divisions, servicing the Director General and the Board, financial management (including liaison with internal and external auditors) and facilities management in a number of locations and the provision of a shared service arrangement to the WRC and the Labour Court.

In addition, the Corporate Division has the primary liaison function in terms of Departmental operational and policy communications.

In addition to embedding further corporate governance and business planning processes and overseeing the move to new premises of the Cork WRC office the Division has two key challenges in 2017.

Firstly, the it will roll out a human resource policy involving succession planning, coaching, mentoring, the provision of training and career development programmes designed to ensure the development of an internal, unitary corporate WRC identity which has a talent pool sufficient to meet ongoing staff turnover and to give the flexibility to the organisation and its staff to respond quickly to shifting demand patterns across the full range of its activities.

Secondly, the WRC developed a stakeholder engagement framework in 2016. This will be further enhanced by the Division through the development and roll out of a communications strategy designed to project fully the WRC organisational identity, achieve clarity amongst our stakeholders on the range of services available and to drive and steer demand to the appropriate activity.

## Corporate Division

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Maintain robust corporate governance framework in WRC</b>	Oversee and monitor internal standards/policies/procedures	Throughout 2017	Corporate governance in WRC in line with best practice
<b>Ensure WRC carries out statutory functions within budget</b>	Oversee efficient and effective expenditure, monitor service demand and activity levels and liaise regularly with DJEI in this regard	Throughout 2017	Work programme achieved consistent with proper utilisation of budget allocation
<b>Begin roll out of WRC HR strategy and policy that fully supports the activities of the WRC and supports and develops its staff</b>	Roll out WRC-specific HR practices including performance-focused workforce planning, learning and development initiatives, and staff support systems etc.	Throughout 2017	HR Policy that supports achievement of WRC mission and goals and supports and develops staff fully operational
<b>Manage the WRC risk-based strategic, business planning performance culture at all levels of the organisation</b>	Assist in deliberation around and implementation of Board strategy and work programme and roll out via Corporate, Divisional, Unit and personal business plans, measure and take remedial action against risks and report on progress to MC and Board on a regular basis	Throughout 2017	WRC fully operating within coherent strategic and business plan framework
<b>Achieve Customer Brand Recognition</b>	Develop and begin roll out of a communications strategy to project the WRC organisational identity and fully market the range of services on offer	Q117	WRC Brand fixed in stakeholder consciousness – evaluated by a range of mechanisms (customer/general surveys, stakeholder engagement etc.)
<b>Drive Value through technology</b>	Initiate redevelopment of interactive and process-driven website	Q217	Website will provide for deliver clear brand recognition, enhance customer service and deliver considerable process efficiencies
<b>Enhance and inform the policy debate on workplace relations developments</b>	Identify areas of policy concern and input to policy formulation	Throughout 2017	Regular relevant commentaries and reports published
	Publish Regular Commentaries/Data on WRC activities that contain clear and focused data presentation	Throughout 2017	Enhanced understanding of WRC activities and services and of how well positioned workplaces are around compliance and best-practice.

**Workplace Relations Commission Work Programme 2017**

**Advisory Division**

Work Programme Objectives	Actions/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Improve site-specific workplace relations</b>	Carry out reviews of industrial relations, chair joint working parties, facilitate resolution of individual disputes including referrals under the IR Act 2015  Facilitate voluntary dispute resolution, deliver workplace mediation and equality mediation services,	Throughout 2017	Effective, tailored programme delivery, high client satisfaction, and improved relations
<b>Provide workplace training</b>	Develop bespoke training programmes for clients etc.	Throughout 2017	High success rate and customer satisfaction with service
<b>Initiate the enhancement and broadening of the remit of the Frequent Users Programme</b>	Roll out the frequent user programme for Adjudication Division across all Divisions	Q217	Consequent reduction in WRC resource allocation arising directly from this initiative

**Conciliation/Early Resolution/Mediation Division**

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Provide timely, effective and efficient Conciliation service and ensure demand is met whilst maintaining delivery of all services</b>	Provide conciliation in an appropriate timeframe to facilitate resolution of industrial relations disputes. Proactively engage with clients to assist in providing assistance in the maintenance of positive industrial relations	As and when required by clients throughout 2017	Maintenance of high success rate in the resolution of industrial relations disputes.
<b>Enhance client usage of relevant mediation services of WRC</b>	Enhance bespoke services in consultation with stakeholders and in light of customer survey results	Q217	Enhanced delivery and increased usage of mediation services
<b>Provide a range of complementary mediation</b>	Facilitate and deliver voluntary participation in mediation processes	Throughout 2017 and within 3 weeks of acceptance by all	Cases triaged effectively and efficiently to bring about an overall reduction in numbers advancing to

<b>services in both employment rights and workplace relations disputes</b>		parties to engage in mediation process dealing with employment rights claims	adjudication process in employment rights claims.
<b>Chair and facilitate various different industrial relations and statutory fora in both the private and public sector</b>	Facilitate discussions in a timely fashion. Assist parties deal with all issues in accordance with procedures and operations as set in both voluntary and statutory requirements	Throughout 2017	High customer satisfaction with workplace relations mediation service  Effective delivery and operation of all issues raised in accordance with protocols and procedures
<b>Ensure effective two-way communication with primary clients</b>	Maintain effective dialogue with key clients in all regions and nationally	At all times during 2017	Effective operation of communication channels maintained

### Adjudication Division

<b>Work Programme Objectives</b>	<b>Action/Tasks</b>	<b>Delivery Timeframe</b>	<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>
<b>Deal with post-establishment complaints within established timelines and ensure that current demand is met while clearing all pre-establishment complaints during the year</b>	Oversee efficient and effective throughput of cases through registration, hearing and adjudication	Throughout 2017	Throughput at levels agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department
<b>Deliver high quality decisions</b>	Monitor and review quantity and availability of adjudicators to ensure delivery capacity.	Throughout 2017	Sufficient adjudicators available consistently
	Internal Quality Control Review Group will review decisions to identify learning points, to ensure consistency of decisions in common areas, to improve the service provided to customers of the Adjudication Service. In addition, feedback on decisions appealed to the Labour Court will be formalised.	Throughout 2017	High quality decisions with declining number of appeals and judicial reviews Internally and externally recognised and delivered WRC adjudication standard

<p><b>Ensure ICT system facilitates the delivery of efficient and effective adjudication and mediation services</b></p>	<p>Maintain and improve internal structures to assist Adjudicators in researching and writing decisions</p> <p>Review quarterly and update where needed the Complaints &amp; Adjudication Solution IT System</p>	<p>Throughout 2017</p>	<p>Easy to use ICT system working efficiently and effectively</p>
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### Inspection and Enforcement Division

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<p><b>Promote and enforce compliance with employment law</b></p>	<p>Risk-based inspections, complaint-based inspections, with other State bodies where appropriate</p>	<p>Throughout 2017</p>	<p>3,800 Inspections concluded incl. 2,000 unannounced workplace visits</p>
	<p>Prosecute, as appropriate, offences of non-compliance with employment legislation</p>	<p>Throughout 2017</p>	<p>A 90% successful prosecution rate</p>
	<p>Maintain standard process with regard to and measure effectiveness of issuing and processing of Compliance and Fixed Charge notices</p>	<p>Throughout 2017</p>	<p>Notices issued appropriately and having effect. Review and evaluation of process by end-2017</p>
	<p>Regular engagement with stakeholders</p>	<p>Throughout 2017</p>	<p>Key stakeholders met at least once yearly</p>
<p><b>Enforce awards arising from decisions of adjudication and Labour Court proceedings</b></p>	<p>Press enforcement of decisions and awards arising from decisions of adjudication and Labour Court in relation to adjudication and inspection activity</p>	<p>Throughout 2017</p>	<p>Decisions and awards pursued in manner that maximises efficiency and effectiveness</p>

<b>Issue licences and enforce legislation in relation to Employment Agencies and the employment of Young Persons</b>	Licences processed and issued in an efficient and lawful manner	Throughout 2017	700 licences issued
<b>Co-operate with other enforcement agencies</b>	Review existing MOUs and agree two additional MoUs with appropriate bodies	Throughout 2017 required	Review/Conclude by end-2017
<b>Drive Value through technology</b>	Develop and roll out ERCES system for Division	Q317	New administrative system operating successfully delivering significant resource and processing efficiencies

### Information, Customer Service and Central Processing

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Time frame	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Provide non-directive information on WRC activities generally, employment legislation and redress mechanisms through a variety of delivery formats</b>	Provide a high quality accessible, customer-focused and user-friendly response to telephone, email, white mail and other employment rights enquiries	Throughout 2017	90% of queries dealt with at initial query
	Participate in and deliver employment law seminars, presentations, exhibitions, roadshows		Attend/participate in 50 events
	Update and republish information material to reflect new corporate identity and legislative changes		Full range of publications updated by March 2017
<b>Efficient processing of complaints and applications to the WRC</b>	All complaints processed in a timely and efficient manner and referred to the appropriate redress forum		15,000 complaints processed efficiently and effectively

## Registrar/Legal Advisor

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>WRC legal service operating effectively and efficiently</b>	Structures, procedures, and business processes operating efficiently	Throughout 2017	Legal service established and fully functional.
<b>Provide appropriate legal training to staff and adjudicators – legally sound approach to all activities of WRC</b>	Identify training structures, training needs and deliver	Throughout 2017	Training structures in place learning being and implemented
<b>Manage legal services used within the WRC</b>	Provide for legal services where appropriate (including panels for legal advice where appropriate)	Throughout 2017	Systems functioning effectively
<b>Manage and provide for timely, effective and robust legal advice on all aspects of legal matters before the WRC</b>	Consider correspondence, provide advice, brief Counsel where necessary, manage case progress and outcome	Throughout 2017	WRC manages legal matters effectively and efficiently.
<b>Develop and maintain a specialised database and library facility for Adjudicators and WRC staff generally</b>	Ensure appropriate access to relevant external databases such as Westlaw, Bailii, etc. develop internal database on all aspects employment and equality law, and establish virtual and physical library	Q1 2017	Databases and library in place and fully utilised
<b>Set and manage legal costs within budget parameters</b>	Monitor spend on legal costs/identify efficiencies.	Throughout 2017	Legal Costs managed effectively, efficiently and within budget

## Corporate Division

Work Programme Objectives	Action/Tasks	Delivery Timeframe	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Maintain robust corporate governance framework in WRC</b>	Oversee and monitor internal standards/policies/procedures	Throughout 2017	Corporate governance in WRC in line with best practice
<b>Ensure WRC carries out statutory functions within</b>	Oversee efficient and effective expenditure, monitor service demand and activity levels and	Throughout 2017	Work programme being achieved consistent with proper utilisation of budget allocation

<b>budget</b>	liaise regularly with DJEI in this regard		
<b>Begin roll out of WRC HR strategy and policy that fully supports the activities of the WRC and supports and develops its staff</b>	Roll out WRC-specific HR practices including performance-focused workforce planning, learning and development initiatives, and staff support systems etc.	Throughout 2017	HR Policy that supports achievement of WRC mission and goals and supports and develops staff fully operational
<b>Manage the WRC risk-based strategic, business planning performance culture at all levels of the organisation</b>	Assist in deliberation around and implementation of Board strategy and work programme and roll out via Corporate, Divisional, Unit and personal business plans, measure and take remedial action against risks and report on progress to MC and Board on a regular basis	Throughout 2017	WRC fully operating within coherent strategic and business plan framework
<b>Achieve Customer Brand Recognition</b>	Develop and begin roll out of a communications strategy to project the WRC organisational identity and fully market the range of services on offer	Q117	WRC Brand fixed in stakeholder consciousness – evaluated by a range of mechanisms (customer/general surveys, stakeholder engagement etc.)
<b>Drive Value through technology</b>	Initiate redevelopment of interactive and process-driven website	Q217	Website will provide for deliver clear brand recognition, enhance customer service and deliver considerable process efficiencies
<b>Enhance and inform the policy debate on workplace relations developments</b>	Identify areas of policy concern and input to policy formulation	Throughout 2017	Regular relevant commentaries and reports published
	Publish Regular Commentaries/Data on WRC activities that contain clear and focused data presentation	Throughout 2017	Enhanced understanding of WRC activities and services and of how well positioned workplaces are around compliance and best-practice