



BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2023-24

Rebuilding our Economy through Better Workplaces

April 2023

VISION: To be widely recognised as Northern Ireland’s leading authority in promoting productive working relationships for the benefit of individuals and organisations and to support the creation of a thriving and inclusive economy.

PURPOSE: To improve employment relations, promote best employment practice and resolve workplace disputes through the delivery of quality, impartial and independent services.

VALUES: To achieve our vision and purpose, our values are to be:

Progressive – forward thinking, outward looking, and creative, harnessing all insights to find better ways to support the economy and society;

Ethical – always acting with integrity, impartiality, equity and utmost professionalism, and demonstrating openness and accountability;

Exemplary – challenging ourselves to be the best we can be and a role model in employment relations and equity, diversity and inclusion; and,

Responsive – listening to all our customers and colleagues and adapting to ensure our services meet their needs.

These values underpin all that we do.

FOREWORD

This Business Plan implements the third year of the Labour Relations Agency's Corporate Plan for 2021-25.¹

The two previous years of the Corporate Plan have been hugely successful for the Agency in a difficult operating environment. In 2021-22, the challenge we faced was emerging from the pandemic and supporting economic recovery. In 2022-23, the challenges evolved with the cost of living crisis and consequential impact on industrial relations, with a large number of pay-related disputes and demand for the Agency's collective conciliation services never higher. Nevertheless, our staff responded magnificently and worked tirelessly to work with parties to resolve individual and collective disputes and provide advice and thought-leadership on good employment practice. In addition, we had to manage relocation of our Head Office and, in common with many employers, adapt to new hybrid working arrangements; all achieved without disruption to delivery of our services.

A particular highlight was a major conference for stakeholders in February 2023 to explore the links between good employment practice and economic success, and how this supports the Department for the Economy's 10X Strategy. This has set the agenda for the year ahead in terms of scoping the development of a charter of good employment practice for NI, based on approaches taken elsewhere in the UK. The conference also provided a wealth of material to promote the work of the Agency and highlight good employment practices.

Unfortunately, a number of the key challenges we experienced last year continue into 2023-24. High inflation coupled with an increasingly difficult public expenditure climate are likely to mean continuing industrial unrest, particularly within the public sector. The Agency itself will be affected by reduced public finances and therefore may not have access to additional funding to expand services to meet increased demand. Implementation of a planned transformation programme designed to improve our versatility to respond to customer needs therefore becomes an even more important priority in the year ahead.

We commend this Business Plan to you.



Gordon Milligan
Chairperson



Don Leeson
Chief Executive

¹ Available at: <https://www.lra.org.uk/publications/corporate-plan-2021-25>.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Agency is a publicly funded body established by the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, and continued by the Industrial Relations Order (Northern Ireland) 1992. We are independent of, but accountable to, the Department for the Economy.

Our independent Board, comprising members drawn from business, trade union, employment law and academic backgrounds, establishes the Agency's strategic direction. Board members are public appointments, usually appointed by the Minister for the Economy.

We currently employ the equivalent of 63 full-time staff who operate from two locations – our Head Office in Belfast and a Regional Office in Derry/Londonderry. The Agency's Head Office relocated to James House, which is part of part the Government Estate, in December 2022. New Regional Office accommodation will need to be identified during 2023-24, ahead of the end of its current lease in June 2024.

A formal trial of hybrid working commenced in December 2022. This allows staff to work from the office and remote locations, including home, depending on business need. The outcome of the trial will take place after six months.

This Business Plan has been prepared on the basis that the Agency's budget baseline for 2023-24 remains unchanged (i.e. £4,145k) and funding to support post-EU Exit economic growth continues (£221k). This would mean that the Agency would need to absorb pay and price inflation. Moreover, given a highly challenging public expenditure climate, the Agency's baseline funding is not guaranteed. Therefore, the activities within the Business Plan may need to be prioritised during the year in the event of any funding shortfall.

Services

The Agency provides a range of **advisory services** to promote good employment practice and advise employers and employees on their rights and responsibilities. These services include:

- **Workplace Information Service (WIS)** – this is a confidential information and advice line (telephone number: 03300 555 300) for employers, individuals and their representatives.
- **Briefings, seminars/webinars, and workshops** – these are aimed at disseminating information and promoting good practice on a range of employment issues and enhancing the employment relations skills of line managers.

- **Document Service** – this online service, which launched in 2021-22, allows employers to compile workplace documentation – from written statements of employment particulars through to employee handbooks – with guidance on compliance and good practice.

Growing and improving the Agency’s digital content will be a particular focus in 2023-24 to make better use of the Agency’s advisory resources. This will mean a gradual reduction in in-person seminars and briefings, which are highly labour intensive and consequently limited in reach.

The Agency also provides a range of confidential **dispute resolution** services designed to deal with problems that arise in the workplace. These include:

- **Conciliation** – this service seeks to find a mutually agreeable solution to an employment problem or dispute where an individual could make a claim to a tribunal. There are three aspects to this:
 - **Early Conciliation** – potential tribunal claimants are required to notify the Agency of a dispute and consider conciliation before submitting a tribunal claim;
 - **Post-claim conciliation** – once a tribunal claim has been submitted, the Agency continues to be available to the parties to settle their dispute through conciliation; and,
 - **Employer-led conciliation** – the Agency provides a service to employers who wish to avoid the risk of a tribunal claim by using conciliation to resolve an employment matter.
- **Arbitration** – where a solution to a problem or disagreement to an individual dispute cannot be found, and the parties wish to avoid a tribunal, our arbitration service provides a quick, confidential, non-legalistic process to resolve the matter. Arbitration decisions, and remedies that flow from these, are legally enforceable in the same way as tribunal decisions.

An adjunct to Arbitration is the Independent Appeals Service, which facilitates second stage appeals for a number of public bodies, mainly in the education sector.

- **Mediation** – this is an effective process for restoring positive working relationships, using a mediator to work with those in conflict or dispute to find a mutually agreed resolution to overcome their differences.
- **Collective Conciliation** – this service aims to help employers and trade unions resolve disputes typically affecting larger numbers of employees.

Influencing the employment relations policy agenda

As well as being a service provider, the Agency has a key role in working collaboratively with and providing platforms for representative bodies of employers and employees to facilitate discussion and seek to influence employment relations issues at a strategic level. These bodies include the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Chambers of Commerce, Institute of Directors (IoD), and the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU). We also work across all sectors, including the public, private, education and research, and voluntary and community sectors.

The Agency chairs and facilitates two key fora of stakeholders:

- **The NI Employment Relations Roundtable** – this promotes the strategic importance of strong and equitable employment relationships and industrial relations to economic competitiveness and social wellbeing.
- **The NI Engagement Forum on Covid-19** – established in March 2020 at the request of the NI Executive, the Forum provides advice on Covid-19 matters as they apply to workplaces and the labour market.

A review of these was undertaken during 2022-23 to ensure they continue to meet partner and stakeholder needs. Implementation of the outcome of this review will be a particular priority in 2023-24.

THE PLANNING CONTEXT

Political matters

The current political hiatus caused by the collapse of the Executive in February 2022 has meant that the multi-year Spending Review for the period 2022-25 has not yet concluded. Consequently, the Agency, in common with other public bodies, is continuing to work within the confines of a one-year budget settlement. This has been the position for a number of years and inhibits effective long term planning by placing a reliance on in-year bids to acquire funding to recruit additional staff to respond to increased demand for services.

The ability to secure additional in-year funding is likely to be extremely limited in 2023-24, given the need to recoup an overspend by Government Departments in the prior year.

It is anticipated that a new employment bill will be progressed by DfE once a new Executive is in place. The Agency will provide advice and support to DfE in any future development and implementation of employment relations policies and legislation.

The Windsor Framework² was published in February 2023. This is an agreement in principle between the UK Government and European Union (EU) to address political and trade problems caused by implementation of the NI Protocol, which was put in place as part of the UK's exit from the EU. The UK Government anticipates that changes flowing from this agreement will help enhance NI's economic prospects through dual market access to the UK and EU.

Economic matters

The NI economy continues to be profoundly impacted by global events, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The latter has resulted in surging prices.

Despite these factors, the labour market remains relatively buoyant with the number of people employed at record levels.³

Rising inflation and labour shortages have led to increased pay demands and industrial unrest across the UK. The Agency experienced a substantial increase in demand during 2021-22 and 2022-23 for our collective conciliation service to help resolve pay disputes and we have worked with our sister body Acas on matters pertaining to UK wide disputes. A difficult public expenditure environment has contributed to protracted collective disputes in the public sector.

DfE has developed a Vision for a 10X Economy⁴ and Skills for a 10X Economy.⁵ Critical to the success of the 10X economic vision is addressing NI productivity levels, along with issues relevant to inclusion and innovation. Productivity levels continue to be well below the UK average and Ireland; recent reports suggest this is currently as much as 17%⁶ and 40%⁷ respectively.

In line with the 10X strategy, the Agency commissioned research during 2022-23 to substantiate and articulate the correlation between good employment relations and productivity. The Agency also commissioned research on the cost of conflict to employers. Both research reports will be published in 2023-24.

² See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-windsor-framework>.

³ See: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/labour-market-report-february-2023.pdf>.

⁴ Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/10x-economy-economic-vision>.

⁵ Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/skills-10x-economy-skills-strategy-northern-ireland>.

⁶ See: <https://www.productivity.ac.uk/research/northern-ireland-productivity-dashboard-2022/>.

⁷ See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-63779243>.

The research was showcased at a major employment relations conference, which the Agency organised in February 2023. This conference brought together experts from the UK and Ireland and local stakeholders to discuss how good employment relations can support the 10X economic vision, recognising that work quality is embedded within 10X Inclusivity. This would be based on core criteria developed by the Carnegie Trust,⁸ align with 10X Inclusivity measures of work quality,⁹ and lessons learned from charters developed elsewhere in the UK, for example the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.¹⁰

The Agency continues to play a critical role in supporting economic recovery and growth, particularly the hospitality, care home and manufacturing sectors. The Agency worked in partnership with industry representative bodies during 2022-23.

Societal matters

Social partnerships are expected to continue to feature strongly during 2023-24.

The Employment Relations Roundtable and NI Engagement Forum on Covid-19, both facilitated by the Agency, bring together representatives of employers and employees to discuss workplace issues; the latter focused on pandemic issues, which hopefully now have passed.

A review of the Roundtable and overlaps with the Forum was undertaken with stakeholders in 2022-23. The review's recommendations will be a particular focus for the Agency in 2023-24.

Technological developments

The use of a range of technology platforms has proved successful in allowing the Agency to grow service delivery options and reach our customers in increasingly effective ways. The Agency will continue to build on this success in 2023-24 by expanding our digital presence through increased digital outreach, webinars, podcasts and online clinics.

We will complete a review of the Case Management and Record System (CMRS) in-year against defined business and customer needs to inform future delivery options for what is effectively our core business system.

⁸ See: <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/measuring-good-work-the-final-report-of-the-measuring-job-quality-working-group/>.

⁹ See: <https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/economy-and-labour-market/work-quality-northern-ireland-july-2021-june-2022.html>.

¹⁰ See: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/economy/greater-manchester-good-employment-charter/>.

The bedding-in of hardware and software applications which underpin our hybrid working arrangements will also be a key feature 2023-24.

On-boarding to IT Assist remains a key strategic aim for the Agency and 2023-24 will see completion of this exercise.¹¹

Legal developments

As discussed above, new employment legislation is expected to be developed by DfE, once a new Executive is formed.

A number of key legal cases are affecting the Agency's work. There has been a continued surge in tribunal claims regarding incorrectly calculated holiday pay. Resolution of these tribunal claims had been deferred pending resolution of the case of Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) v Agnew (Alexander) and Others. This case was heard by the Supreme Court in December 2022 and judgement is expected in Spring 2023. This is anticipated to lead to a surge in demand for the Agency to help settle tens of thousands of by large – mostly public sector – employers. Planning for this is at an advanced stage.

Legal developments have continued apace in Great Britain during 2022-23 regarding issues directly relevant to employment law and industrial relations. Several Private Members Bills are working their way through the House of Commons, which have been backed by the UK Government, but pertain only to Great Britain as employment law is a devolved matter in Northern Ireland. Therefore, developments regarding reforms to the law on neonatal leave, tips and gratuities, family-friendly laws are on course to be realised in Great Britain, but not yet in Northern Ireland.

In addition, legislation which could have a fundamental impact on industrial relations-related legislation, is planned to come into effect in 2023-24. The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Retention) Bill and the Strikes (Minimum Service Agreements) Bill are both currently progressing through Westminster. The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Retention) Bill will, if passed, apply to the whole of the UK, whereas the territorial extent of the Strikes (Minimum Service Agreements) Bill is Great Britain only. These are pieces of legislation that may potentially have a significant impact on industrial relations in the foreseeable future throughout the UK.

Environmental matters

Accommodation matters and agile working practices will continue to be a key focus for the Agency in 2023-24 and will support 'greener' working practices.

¹¹ Migration to the IT Assist environment is subject to business case approval by DfE.

With the Agency now firmly established in our new Head Office within James House in central Belfast, the focus will shift to future accommodation options for the Regional Office. The relocation of Head Office to a more energy-efficient building has also facilitated a move to less paper-based ways of working with a significant reduction in paper and print-cartridge consumption. We will continue to encourage a paperless approach in 2023-24.

The Hybrid Working Policy, allowing staff to spend a proportion of their time working from home, will be finalised following completion of the pilot exercise and careful evaluation of the results in Summer 2023. Our primary objective will be to maintain delivery of high quality services to our customers, while allowing our people to achieve a balance that works well for them. Our approach to hybrid working to date is already delivering benefits in reduced commuting and business travel, thus contributing to a lower 'carbon footprint'.

Corporate Plan for 2021-25

This Business Plan operationalises the third year of the Agency's Corporate Plan for 2021-25. The Corporate Plan is underpinned by the five corporate strategies of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, People, Digital, Communications and Business Intelligence. We will refresh our approaches and develop new operational work plans in support of each of these key strategic areas.

A number of reviews of services, including independent appeals and mediation, were ongoing throughout 2022-23. Conclusions from these reviews will be implemented in 2023-24.

These strategies and service reviews are intended to ensure the Agency is optimally positioned to deliver the Corporate Plan.

We will also finalise proposals for a future delivery model in 2023-24 to ensure that our staffing and management structures are fully optimised to deliver on all of our corporate ambitions. We will achieve this in conjunction with staff through the principles of engagement and co-design and develop an organisation that provides more for our customers and for our people.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2023-24

Strategic Theme 1: Improving organisational performance and responding to the needs of individuals through expert employment relations advice and support.

1.1 Provide effective guidance on employment relations issues to individuals and organisations.

Objectives for 2023-24

a) Respond effectively to callers to the Workplace Information Service.

Performance measures:

- Number of enquires received/handled.
- Average waiting time (*target: less than one minute*).
- Lost call rate (*target: less than 10%*).
- Number and % of contacts reporting that information provided helped them to decide what to do next.

b) Focus advisory services to support implementation of the 10X Economic Strategy, and those employers and employees hit hardest by the current cost of living crisis, through the development of delivery partnerships with statutory, employer and industry bodies, and trade unions.

Performance measures:

- Number of active delivery partnerships.
- Number of joint events delivered.
- Stakeholder and customer satisfaction with the quality of the events.
- Number and % of customers reporting greater confidence in dealing with employment relations matters as a result of attendance at events (*target: at least 80%*).

c) Increase digital content through the development and delivery of a programme of good practice seminars/webinars, videos and podcasts to give employers, employees, and their representatives, greater confidence in dealing with employment relations matters.

Performance measures:

- Number of seminars/webinars developed.
- Number of events delivered and recorded webinars viewed.
- Number of participating organisations in webinars.

- % planned events delivered.
- Customer satisfaction with the quality of the events.
- Number and % of customers reporting greater confidence in dealing with employment relations matters as a result of attendance at events (*target: at least 80%*).

- d) Provide managers with practical skills and confidence to create positive and productive working environments through the LRA Certificate in Line Management Practice to encourage employers to adopt good practice in managing employment relations.

Performance measures:

- Number of line managers undertaking the LRA Certificate in Line Management Practice.
- % of line managers achieving the LRA Certificate in Management Practice.
- Customer satisfaction with the quality of the events.
- Number and % of line managers applying learning/skills in the workplace as a result of completing the LRA Certificate in Line Management Practice.

- e) Deliver a programme for employee representatives to provide them with the practical skills and confidence to support the creation of positive and productive working environments by encouraging employers to adopt good practice in managing employment relations.

Performance measures:

- Programme delivered to timetable.

- f) Continue to promote the Agency's online Employment Document Toolkit to support legislative compliance by employers and encourage good practice in employment relations matters.

Performance measures:

- Number of customers using the Toolkit.
- Customer satisfaction with the quality of the Toolkit.
- Number and % of customers reporting greater confidence in applying revised documentation as a result of the Toolkit.

- g) Deliver targeted sectoral-based good practice facilitation services.

Performance measures:

- Number of projects registered.
- Number of collective agreements/policies facilitated.
- % projects completed.
- Customer satisfaction with the quality of the service.
- Number of more effective protocols and policies in place.
- Number and % of customers reporting a more positive employment relations environment and reduced likelihood of disputes occurring.

- h) Continue to provide thought-leadership on contemporary employment issues through the development and promotion of best practice policies and publications and podcasts.

Performance measures:

- Number of policies, publications and podcasts developed and promoted.
- Number of website page views and document downloads.

1.2 Help prevent and resolve individual and collective workplace disputes.

Objectives for 2023-24

- a) Deliver an Early Conciliation service that reduces the number of claims heard by an employment tribunal.

Performance measures:

- Number of employee and employer-led notifications received.
- Number and % of EC notifications settled.
- Customer satisfaction with the service provided.
- Number and % of EC notifications not resulting in a tribunal claim.¹²
- Number and % of cases not proceeding to tribunal hearing (*target: no more than 20%*).
- Number and % of tribunal days saved.

¹² Measured by analysing the number of EC certificates issued in the period ending six months before the current reporting period and the number of tribunal cases received during the current reporting period associated with those certificates.

- b) Contribute effectively to DfE's Year 3 review of Early Conciliation – timetable to be determined by DfE.

Performance measures:

- Partner satisfaction with the quality of the Agency's input.

- c) Respond effectively to demand for conciliation to resolve holiday pay disputes.

Performance measures:

- Number of holiday pay cases received.
- % of cases settled.
- Customer satisfaction with the service provided.
- Number and % of cases not proceeding to tribunal (*target: no more than 20%*).
- Number and % of tribunal days saved.

- d) Support, **from April 2023**, implementation of Judicial Mediation by the Tribunal Service.

Performance measures:

- Partner satisfaction with the quality of the Agency's support.

- e) Deliver an effective collective conciliation service to facilitate the resolution of collective workplace disputes.

Performance measures:

- Number of collective conciliation cases received.
- % collective conciliation cases undertaken.
- % resulting in a settlement to resolve the dispute (*target: 70%*).
- Customer satisfaction with the service provided.
- Number and % of customers reporting higher levels of engagement/trust following collective conciliation.

- f) Publish recommendations emanating from the Agency's Article 86 review of collective bargaining arrangements in the local government sector **by September 2023**.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met;
- Stakeholder satisfaction with the quality of the Agency's input; and,
- Take-up of the Agency's recommendations.

- g) Develop and publish a code of practice on collective bargaining **by December 2023**.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.
- Stakeholder satisfaction with the quality of the code of practice.

- h) Develop, **by March 2024**, a training workshop for employers and trade unionists on effective collective bargaining.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.

- i) Deliver an effective mediation service to facilitate the resolution of interpersonal workplace disputes within the context of devising a future mediation strategy for the Agency based on available resources.

Performance measures:

- Number of requests received.
- % resulting in agreement to resolve the dispute (*target: 80%*).
- % of requests undertaken.
- Customer satisfaction with the service provided.
- Number and % of customers reporting better working relationships following mediation.

- j) Review, **by November 2023**, the Mediation Service and make proposals to ensure the most effective use of Agency resources, in line with customer needs.

Performance Measures:

- Timetable achieved; and
- Efficiencies/process improvements identified.

- k) Deliver an Arbitration and Independent Appeals Service that meets agreed performance standards.

Performance measures:

- Number of arbitration and independent appeals cases received.
- % of arbitration and independent appeals cases completed.
- Customer satisfaction with the service provided.
- Number and % of customers reporting a difference in behaviours/attitudes following an arbitration or independent appeal hearing.

- l) Commence implementation, **from April 2023**, the outcome of the Independent Appeals Service review to ensure the most effective use of Agency resources, in line with customer needs.

Performance Measures:

- Timetable achieved.
- Efficiencies/process improvements achieved.

- m) Work with key delivery partners in line with agreed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs).

Performance measures:

- Partner satisfaction with the quality of the Agency's input.
- MoU with the Office of The Industrial Tribunals and The Fair Employment Tribunal reviewed and updated **by June 2023**.

Strategic Theme 2: Working with stakeholders and delivery partners to evidence and promote the economic and social return from good employment relations and shape public policy.

2.1 Work with strategic partners to facilitate discussion and collaboration on matters relating to employment relations public policy, skills and research.

Objectives for 2023-24

- a) Implement, **by June 2023**, the review of the terms of reference for the NI Employment Relations Roundtable.

Performance measures:

- Stakeholder satisfaction with the Agency's input.

- b) Support DfE with the development of an Employment Rights Bill, in line with timetable agreed with DfE.

Performance measures:

- Partner/stakeholder satisfaction with the Agency's input.

- c) Further develop partnership arrangements to progress collaborative projects with Acas and the Workplace Relations Commission.

Performance measures:

- Stakeholder satisfaction with the Agency's input.

- d) Further develop partnership arrangements to progress work with the Equality Commission and other stakeholders as appropriate.

Performance measures:

- Stakeholder satisfaction with the Agency's input.

2.2 Develop and promote an Employment Relations Model for Northern Ireland.

Objectives for 2023-24

- a) In partnership with DfE and stakeholders, scope development of a good employment charter and associated guidance – timetable to be agreed with DfE.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.
- Stakeholder satisfaction with the Agency's input.

2.3 Evidence the economic and social return from good employment and industrial relations practice.

Objectives for 2023-24

- a) Publish, **by June 2023**, research on the cost of workplace conflict in Northern Ireland.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.
- Stakeholder satisfaction with the Agency's input.

- b) Publish, **by September 2023**, research on the extent to which good employment relations supports improved productivity.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.
- Stakeholder satisfaction with the Agency's input.

Strategic Theme 3: Optimising the contribution of staff and resources to deliver our statutory functions through effective leadership and governance practices.

3.1 Ensure the effective development of Agency staff and systems to deliver our statutory functions.

Objectives for 2023-24

- a) Agree, **by September 2023**, proposals for an organisational transformation programme.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.
- Number and % increase in employee engagement.

- b) Develop, **by June 2023**, an action plan to implement the 2023-24 elements of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for 2021-25 to support 10X Inclusivity and the Agency's development as an exemplary employer.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met for development of action plan.
- Action plan implemented.

- c) Develop, **by June 2023**, an action plan to implement the Year 3 elements of the People Strategy for 2021-25.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met for development of action plan.
- Action plan implemented.

- d) Develop, **by June 2023**, an action plan to implement the Year 3 elements of the Communications Strategy for 2021-25.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met for development of action plan.
- Action plan implemented.

- e) Develop, **by June 2023**, an action plan to implement the Year 3 elements of the Business Intelligence Strategy for 2021-25.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met for development of action plan.
- Action plan implemented.

- f) Develop, **by June 2023**, an action plan to implement the Year 3 elements of the IS Strategy for 2021-25.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met for development of action plan.
- Action plan implemented.

- g) Manage, **by September 2023**, the on-boarding of the Agency's IS Managed Services to IT Assist.¹³

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.

- h) Implement, **by May 2023**, planned enhancements to the web portal and CMRS.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.
- Customer satisfaction with the services provided.

- i) Evaluate, **by September 2023**, the case management and records system (CMRS).

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.

¹³ Migration to the IT Assist environment is subject to business case approval by DfE.

- j) Implement, **by August 2023**, a new intranet.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.
- Number and % increase in employee engagement.

- k) Evaluate the current pilot of the Agency's hybrid working policy and implement the findings **by September 2023**.

Performance measures:

- Level of employee engagement.
- Number and % increase in employee engagement.
- Number and % increase in attendance at work.

- l) Develop, **by December 2023**, proposals for the future accommodation arrangements of the Agency's Regional Office when current lease expires in June 2024.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.

- m) Subject to agreement with the NI Certification Officer and appropriate funding, on-board secretariat support to the Industrial Court, in line with timetable agreed with DfE.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.

3.2 Deliver excellent governance in the management of the Agency's resources in line with the requirements placed on public bodies

Objectives for 2023-24

- a) Ensure the effective quality management of the Agency's resources.

Performance measures:

- Number of internal/external/ISO 27001 audit recommendations implemented.
- Number of Customer Service Excellence Award non-conformities v conformities.

- % of internal/external/ISO 27001 audit recommendations implemented
- ISO 27001 retained.
- Customer Service Excellence Award retained.
- liP Status maintained/improved.
- Internal customer satisfaction with Corporate Services.

b) Achieve a budget outturn (resource and capital) of 99%.

Performance measures:

- Number of invoices paid.
- % of invoices paid within 10 working days (target: 90%) and 30 calendar days (target: 100%).
- % of budget spent.
- Annual report and accounts certified without qualification.

c) Develop, **by March 2024**, a scheme of delegation in preparation for new legislation clarifying the roles of Board and staff members.

Performance measures:

- Timetable achieved.

d) Induct new Board members, in line with timetable agreed with DfE.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.
- Board member satisfaction with induction.

e) Ensure Board effectiveness.

Performance measures:

- Compliance with recommended practice.¹⁴
- Board member satisfaction with their development.

¹⁴ Board Effectiveness – A Good Practice Guide, NIAO, June 2022 (available at: <https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/publications/board-effectiveness-good-practice-guide-june-2022>) and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Effectiveness Checklist, NAO, September 2017 (available at: https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Self_Assessment_Checklist.pdf).

PERFORMANCE SCORECARDS

Advisory Services

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?	HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?
<p><u>Good Practice Seminars/Briefings/Workshops</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of events delivered • Number of participating organisations • Number of line managers undertaking the LRA Certificate in Line Management Practice <p><u>Document Reviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number registered <p><u>Good Employment Practice Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects registered • Number of collective agreements/policies facilitated <p><u>Partnership working</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of partners worked with • Number of joint events held <p><u>Workplace Information Service</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of enquires received/handled 	<p><u>Good Practice Seminars/Briefings/Workshops</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % planned events delivered • % of line managers achieving the LRA Certificate in Management Practice • Customer satisfaction with the quality of the events <p><u>Document Reviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction with the quality of the service <p><u>Good Employment Practice Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % projects completed • Customer satisfaction with the quality of the service <p><u>Partnership working</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % planned events held • Partner satisfaction with the quality of the Agency's input • Customer satisfaction with the quality of the events <p><u>Workplace Information Service</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average waiting time • Lost call rate
<p>IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and % of customers reporting greater confidence in dealing with employment relations matters as a result of attendance at events • Number and % of line managers applying learning/skills in the workplace as a result of completing the LRA Certificate in Line Management Practice • Number and % of customers reporting greater confidence in applying revised documentation as a result of document reviews • Number of more effective policies in place • Number and % of customers reporting a more positive employment relations environment and reduced likelihood of disputes occurring • Number and % of Workplace Information Service contacts reporting information provided helped them to decide what to do next 	

Dispute Resolution Services

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?	HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?
<p><u>Individual Conciliation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of employee-led cases received • Number of employer-led cases received <p><u>Collective Conciliation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of collective conciliation cases received <p><u>Mediation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of requests received <p><u>Arbitration and Independent Appeals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of arbitration and independent appeals cases received 	<p><u>Early Conciliation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of employee-led cases completed • % of employer-led cases completed • Customer satisfaction with the service provided <p><u>Collective Conciliation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % collective conciliations cases undertaken • % resulting in a settlement to resolve the dispute • Customer satisfaction with the service provided <p><u>Mediation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of requests undertaken • % resulting in agreement to resolve the dispute • Customer satisfaction with the service provided <p><u>Arbitration and Independent Appeals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of arbitration and independent appeals cases completed • Customer satisfaction with the service provided
<p style="text-align: center;">IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and % of notifications settled. • Number and % of EC notifications not resulting in a tribunal claim. • Number and % of cases not proceeding to tribunal hearing • Number and % of tribunal days saved • Number and % of customers reporting better working relationships following mediation • Number and % of customers reporting higher levels of engagement/trust following collective conciliation • Number and % of customers reporting a difference in behaviours/attitudes following an arbitration or independent appeal hearing 	

Corporate Services

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?	HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?
<p><u>Human Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of performance reviews conducted on time • Number of days spent on learning and development • Number of return to work interviews conducted within three working days <p><u>Finance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of invoices paid <p><u>Quality Improvement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of internal/external/ISO 27001 audit recommendations implemented • Number of Customer Service Excellence Award non-conformities v conformities <p><u>Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of external events and exhibitions • Number of social media posts • Number of news releases/press statements • Number of pages of new/refreshed web content 	<p><u>Human Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of performance reviews conducted on time • % of days lost through sick absence • % of return to work interviews conducted within three working days • Level of employee engagement <p><u>Finance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of invoices paid within 10 working days and 30 calendar days • % of budget spent • Annual report and accounts certified without qualification <p><u>Quality Improvement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of internal/external/ISO 27001 audit recommendations implemented • ISO 27001 retained • Customer Service Excellence Award achieved/retained • liP Status maintained/improved <p><u>Communications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of engagement with social media • Reach of social media posts • % increase in social media followers • Proportion of coverage • % increase in website usage <p><u>Overall</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal customer satisfaction with Corporate Services
<p style="text-align: center;">IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and % increase in employee engagement • Number and % increase in attendance at work • Number and % increase in public awareness of the Agency and its services 	