

PRESS RELEASE

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COURT SERVICE SETS UP A “ONE STOP SHOP” FOR TRIBUNALS

The first step in the creation of a unified Courts and Tribunals Service in Northern Ireland was taken today.

The Northern Ireland Court Service has assumed responsibility for the administration of a further five tribunals including the Mental Health Review Tribunal and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal.

The Court Service already administers six local tribunals and it is planned all 20 Northern Ireland tribunals will come under its administrative responsibility in the coming months.

Court Service Director, David Lavery, explained the benefits behind the new arrangements and how they have come about:

“This new unified administration will provide a more independent tribunal system which will deliver improved services to the public. It will improve efficiency and offer value for money to the taxpayer.

The Northern Ireland Executive agreed to the creation of a unified administration for tribunals, delivered by the Court Service, and providing benefits for tribunal users. Today sees the first step in the delivery of this strategy.”

Meanwhile Northern Ireland's first Hearing Centre for tribunals opened in Belfast today. The Centre provides a single point of contact for members of the public using tribunals administered by the Court Service and is located at Bedford House, Bedford Street, Belfast.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. The Northern Ireland Executive recently agreed that the Court Service should assume responsibility for the administration of the NI departmental tribunals on a phased basis.
2. The first phase of this transfer took place today when Court Service assumed responsibility for the administration of five NI departmental tribunals - Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (DE tribunal); Mental Health Review Tribunal; Care Tribunal, tribunal established under Schedule 11 of the Health and Personal Social Services (NI) Order 1972 (DHSSPS tribunals) and the Lands Tribunal (DFP). See attached annex for further detail in respect of these tribunals.
3. The Court Service already administers six tribunals and provides support in respect of UK wide tribunals sitting in Northern Ireland, including the tax and vat tribunals; Asylum and Immigration Tribunal and the Information Tribunal.
4. The Hearing Centre in Bedford House also opened today to the public. It provides hearing rooms, a public desk and office space for staff.
5. The Court Service is assuming responsibility for the administration of NI departmental tribunals on the basis of Service Level Agreements under s.28 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This allows a UK department like NI Court Service to exercise functions on behalf of a NI department.

If you have any further queries about this or other court related matters please contact:

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