

## **Launch of the Administrative Court in Cardiff, Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester 21<sup>st</sup> April 2009**

On 21<sup>st</sup> April, four regional centres became fully operational business areas ready to handle Administrative Court work from issue through to hearing.

This development stems from the work of a Judicial Working Group led by Lord Justice May, who has since been appointed President of the Queen's Bench Division, to consider and make recommendations about arrangements for Lords Justices and High Court Judges to hear cases out of London. The Working Group's report, *Justice Outside London*, was published in January 2007 following the Group's visits to, and consultation with, regional stakeholder and user interests. The report's main recommendation was that fully operational offices of the Administrative Court should be established in Cardiff, Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester, and that judges should regularly sit to hear Administrative Court cases in those centres. Bristol is due to become a 5<sup>th</sup> centre in 2010, once their new court building is complete.

Following discussions between the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice, it was agreed to establish a project board to take forward the Working Group's recommendations and to appoint a Project Manager. The Project Board, which includes in its membership the two Queen's Bench liaison judges designate for the regional centres, has met regularly over the past year to draw up the detailed plans. At the same time, as Project Manager, Denise Dolan forged strong links with leading stakeholders who have an interest in this area of practice and procedure and other stakeholder/user representatives to ensure that plans took account of their needs and circumstances.

The critical enabling factor for the regionalisation project was the ability to roll out the Administrative Court's bespoke case management system, known as COINS, to the four centres. This was established as technically possible and funding made available in October 2008. This then enabled the April 2009 start date to be set as a realistic goal.

The four centres are located at:

- *Cardiff Civil Justice Centre* (Lead contact – Simon Jenkins)  
2 Park Street, Cardiff, CF10 1ET
- *Birmingham Civil Justice Centre* (Lead contact – Caroline Price)  
Priory Courts, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 33 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6DS
- *Leeds Combined Court* (Dianne Jackson-Penney)  
1 Oxford Row, Leeds, West Yorkshire. LS1 3BG
- *Manchester Civil Justice Centre*, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor (Lead contact – Rose Shaw)  
1 Bridge Street West, Manchester. M3 3FX

Information on the range of cases that will be able to be dealt with at the local centre's is now provided on the Administrative Court website – <http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/cms/admin.htm>.

The Guidance Note available via this link provides information on the new CPR provisions and the transitional arrangements for existing cases that could transfer, if the parties are agreed, to be heard at the local centre's after 21 April. The Civil Procedure Rules Committee

approved a new Practice Direction to Part 54 which addresses the issue of determination of venue. The new PD was published on 6 April, and is now accessible on the CPR website.

The appointment of The Honourable Mr Justice Beatson and The Honourable Mr Justice Langstaff as Queen's Bench Liaison Judges with special responsibility for the Administrative Court out of London was announced by the Judicial Communications Office in a Press Release issued on 31 March 2009. The Honourable Mr Justice Beatson has responsibility for the Administrative Court on the Wales and Midland circuits. The Honourable Mr Justice Langstaff is responsible for it on the Northern and North-Eastern circuits. They will hear Administrative Court matters whilst on circuit and liaise with Presiding Judges, other nominated Administrative Court judges and Senior Circuit Judges sitting as deputy High Court Judges to ensure that the Administrative Court workload out of London is appropriately managed.

Each Administrative Court centre has a core staff team whose members have undergone intensive training at the Administrative Court Office (ACO) at the Royal Courts of Justice. Additionally each centre has a dedicated lawyer who will, in effect, be an outposted member of the lawyer team at the ACO. The new lawyers, all of whom have been recruited from the Legal Adviser community, attended the ACO for training. It has been difficult to predict the workload that might be carried out at the local centres – the working assumption is that it will be up to 750 cases in the first year – but the COINS system will enable comprehensive monitoring and projection of workload trends to take place and the staffing arrangements are sufficiently flexible to enable adjustments to be made as required. The deployment of the COINS system ensures that checks can be made to ensure that cases are not be issued at multiple locations.

Both individual and joint meetings with stakeholders have taken place over the past year. Key contributors have included the Bar Council, Law Society, Treasury Solicitors, Home Office, UK Border Agency, Legal Services Commission, Administrative Law Bar Association, Immigration Law Practitioners Association, Immigration Advisory Service, Legal Aid Practitioners Group and other interest groups associated with the work of the Administrative Court. Additionally lead representatives from the four centres have met with regional stakeholders to discuss and consolidate their local plans.

Much value has been placed on the contribution that has been made by all stakeholders in this planning phase and the wish to maintain this dialogue as the new arrangements take effect and are refined as necessary. To that end we welcome comments which may be made to Dave Brupbacher, ACO Court Manager, via the following website address: [regionalisation@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:regionalisation@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk)

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