

**Office of the Social
Fund
Commissioner**

**Corporate
Plan**

2010 – 2013

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About the OSFC

The OSFC provides the independent grievance process, by means of a review, for applicants who are dissatisfied with the decision made at the Department for Social Development on their applications to the discretionary part of the Social Fund.

The Social Fund has been in existence since 1988. This is a scheme of one-off payments of grants and loans intended to meet the needs of the poorest in society. As the OSFC operates the grievance process for the Social Fund, we are well placed to monitor the effectiveness of the scheme.

The head of the OSFC is the Social Fund Commissioner who is appointed by the Department for Social Development (“the Department”). The Commissioner's duties include:

- Appointing Social Fund Inspectors, who conduct the reviews, and other staff;
- Monitoring the standards of Inspectors' decisions;
- Giving advice as he thinks fit to improve the standards of Inspectors' decisions;
- Arranging training as he thinks fit for Inspectors;
- Reporting annually in writing to the Department on the standards of Inspectors' decisions.

This Corporate Plan sets out the OSFC strategic aims and objectives for the next three years.

Foreword by the Social Fund Commissioner, Karamjit Singh CBE

The Corporate Plan for 2010 – 2013 sets out how three overarching objectives will be delivered during this period.

These are:

- (a) providing a customer focus throughout all activities so that the decision making service is provided with timeliness, clarity and consistency;
- (b) ensuring that human and financial resources are utilised in the most effective manner and there are appropriate mechanisms to ensure accountability and assess performance;
- (c) to be receptive and responsive to the thinking and actions of external stakeholders; and to contribute towards debate concerning how to tackle poverty, reduce social exclusion and enhance financial inclusion.

It is important that the Corporate Plan reflects aspirations for the future and how these will be translated into tasks which are measurable and clearly defined. As the Social Fund Commissioner I am committed to ensuring that the independent review process provides an exemplary service to our customers who are amongst the poorest and most vulnerable citizens in our society.

Karamjit Singh CBE
Social Fund Commissioner

Business Purpose, Objectives and Values

Business Purpose

To deliver independent reviews of discretionary Social Fund decisions, providing a high quality and accessible service to all those who apply.

Business Objectives

- 1 Deliver impartial decisions to published standards.
- 2 Make continuous improvements in the standard of our work and in doing so, seek and take into account the views of our users.
- 3 Provide advice and information to the public, their advisers and staff of the Department for Social Development (“the Department”) about the Social Fund, the role and work of OSFC and the right of applicants to seek an independent Social Fund review.
- 4 Support the Social Security Agency to improve standards of Social Fund decision-making and operational delivery through regular feedback, training and advice.
- 5 Advise and inform the Minister for Social Development and the Departmental officials on the Welfare Reform Programme and other potential policy changes.
- 6 Commission and undertake research to help improve the operation and development of the Social Fund and its role in wider Assembly objectives.
- 7 Focus business resources to achieve the most effective outcomes and deliver value for money for the taxpayer.

Business Values

Our business values, which we set out below, are the foundation of our approach to work. These values will guide staff in the delivery of their work and will help to recognise the contribution they make. We will:

- place our customers at the centre of all that we do;
- treat all customers, users and colleagues with respect and courtesy;
- respect and accept the differences of others;
- work to improve standards for all customers of the Social Fund;
- promote easy access for customers and potential customers of the fund;
- be receptive and responsive to the external environment and the way it influences and shapes our business future
- be open to learning in our work and use this to make improvements to the service we give;
- recognise and value our people for the contribution each makes to delivering the best services for our customers.

Three-Year Work Programme

1 Review

- Deliver the review at the earliest opportunity and within the published customer service and quality standards.
- Manage and monitor the quality of Social Fund Inspectors' decisions and the service standards to ensure all are met.
- Report to the Department for Social Development ("the Department") annually on the standards of Inspectors' decisions.
- Operate the independent review process in a way that customers can access quickly and easily.
- Ensure customers can participate fully with the review process in the manner best suited to their needs and work in ways that enable them to understand their review.
- Continue to monitor and manage the OSFC direct application process to ensure it is straightforward and quick to use and that the Social Security Agency ("SSA") submits all necessary papers promptly.
- Undertake monitoring of customers to the OSFC to ensure there is equality of treatment and outcome.
- Handle complaints about decisions and service fairly and impartially and resolve them quickly.
- Maintain and improve standards and service by giving appropriate advice and assistance to Inspectors and other staff that is accurate and contemporary.
- Monitor and manage OSFC case and system processes and practices to ensure that customer information is secure and confidential.
- Monitor and workloads and respond to any fluctuation in ways that ensure continuity of a high quality service.

2 Developing and improving standards

- Respond and adapt to any proposed changes to Social Fund legislation and anticipate and prepare for probable developments.
- Conduct customer research and use the findings to shape our business and improve standards of service, communications and information for our customers.

- Monitor the OSFC decision making process to ensure that customers can understand and participate in their review.
- Develop and issue Social Fund Commissioner's advice to Inspectors to improve the standards of their decisions.
- Achieve continuous improvement in the quality standard of Inspectors' decisions by training and personal accountability.
- Develop and deliver high quality training to ensure that all OSFC staff have up-to-date knowledge, expertise and awareness to do their jobs well and sponsor staff.
- Use the feedback from the Independent Review Service ("IRS") Independent External Complaints Panel to inform quality improvements and a high standard of customer service.
- Collate and examine regularly all sources of information and feedback about the standards of decision making and service to inform improvements.
- Keep under review the way the OSFC manages, monitors and improves quality.
- Once a year review existing quality and customer service standards, including customer access, and seek improvements to the standards.
- Monitor developments in Human Rights case law, assess its relevance to the Social Fund and make changes where appropriate.
- Keep abreast of developments in social welfare relevant to the Social Fund and provide suitable advice to staff

3 Awareness

- Deliver workshops and other help and support to both the Department and customers' representatives to improve their knowledge of the Social Fund.
- Share relevant information with interested parties, recognising the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.
- Continue to explore and develop cost-effective ways of raising awareness of the Social Fund; in particular for groups who are under-represented.
- Improve local and national knowledge of the Social Fund and its operation, the right to an Independent Review and direct applications to the OSFC.

4 Improving Front Line Delivery

- Use information from the cases we review to feedback to the SSA to help them achieve improvements in decision-making and service standards for customers.
- Use our expertise to assist and advise the SSA on the delivery and operation of the Social Fund and work with them to provide the necessary programme of training and support for Social Fund staff, including managers, as its business transforms and develops.
- Help SSA officials with the continuous improvement of Social Fund application forms and processes including any necessary quality assurance for new and existing products.
- Exchange information regularly at a senior level between the OSFC and the SSA to inform, advise and seek appropriate improvements.
- Validate the SSA's quality assurance findings against the findings of Social Fund Inspectors' decisions and feed back to the SSA.

5 Social Fund Policy

- Respond to the consultations about the future of the Social Fund and contribute to the ongoing debate on Welfare Reform.
- Provide advice to the Minister for Social Development and Departmental officials on the implications for policy and operations based on evidence from our case work.
- Advise the Minister for Social Development and Departmental officials on other proposed changes to the Social Fund and on issues or impacts arising from existing policy.

6 Research

- Commission, undertake, or contribute to, research to help inform casework and issues relevant to the Social Fund including its role and operation.
- Use the findings from research to promote best practice and improvements in performance and service throughout the administration of the Social Fund.

7 Business Transformation

- Improve the standards of OSFC service and its policies through sharing best practice with other organisations.
- Regularly review our capacity, productivity standards for all staff and forecast workloads to match demand and achieve best value from our resources.

- Keep under review OSFC business resources and operations to ensure they preserve the essential standards of the OSFC review taking account of funding arrangements.

8 Resources

- Manage our budgets efficiently and effectively whilst maintaining a sound financial regime with appropriate controls and financial arrangements in line with Government Accounting principles.
- Identify, analyse and manage risks that may impact on OSFC business delivery and development.
- Manage and monitor the OSFC Case Management System to ensure it delivers what is required both now and in the future, including any appropriate enhancements.
- Take all necessary steps to protect and keep safe OSFC electronic data.
- Monitor the OSFC telephone system to ensure it delivers a good quality service to our customers and make improvements where needed.
- Manage our recruitment and selection procedures carefully to ensure we get the best people for the job.
- Provide a diverse range of training and development that prepares staff to meet today's and future business needs.
- Find ways of improving standards and services whilst maintaining a work life balance strategy which takes into account the needs of staff.
- Maintain and foster positive employee relations, including consultation with staff on all key projects and developments, in order to ensure the effective delivery of OSFC business.

Review

No.	Key Task	Responsibility	Timescale	Accountability Process	Link to business objectives
1	Deliver decisions to the published standards on all requests for a review. Monitor our work to ensure we deliver the review at the earliest opportunity for each case. (predicted workload: 1,900)	Office Manager Inspectors	Throughout the year	Performance Reports Annual Report	1
2	Take account of changes to operating procedures in the Independent Review Service and consider their implementation in OSFC.	Manager	Throughout the year	Report to Social Fund Commissioner ("SFC")	1, 2
3.1	Monitor and manage the Office of the Social Fund Commissioner ("OSFC") direct application process to ensure it is straightforward and quick to use and papers are submitted by the Social Security Agency ("SSA") promptly. Undertake the following tasks:				
3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with SSA to improve the direct application process, including the receipt of all necessary case papers. Take action as appropriate to increase the proportion sent directly to the OSFC. 	CL Admin Team	By 30 Sept 10	Report to Office Manager	1, 2 and 7
3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a review of requests for OSFC reviews which are sent to SSA instead of directly to the OSFC and make any necessary improvements. 	CL Admin Team	By 30 Sept 10	Report to Office Manager	1, 2 and 7
4	Continue to monitor and evaluate the freepost service to ensure it is operating effectively.	Admin Team	Ongoing	Report to Manager	1, 2 and 7
5	Operate the review in a way that gives access for people who find it difficult to engage with the review because of disabilities, language or literacy problems. Provide a translation service as and when required.	Office Manager EC All staff	Review Annually	Report to Office Manager	1 and 7
6	Handle complaints and enquiries consistently, impartially and to the published standards.	Office Manager Inspectors	Throughout the year	Annual Report	1
7	Monitor and analyse our customer base by ethnicity, age, gender and other criteria where appropriate. Use the results	EC	By 31 March 2011	Report to Office Manager	1 and 2

	to identify trends and issues emerging and report on any further action required.			Report to Equality Commission Annual Report	
8	Discharge the Social Fund Commissioner's ("SFC") statutory duty to monitor the standards of Inspectors' decisions by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting a representative sample of the case work in all relevant areas (at least 2 cases per week); • Assessing each case consistently against the agreed standards; • Analyse outcomes with a view to making improvements and feed into the Annual Report to Department for Social Development ("DSD"). 	SFC Office Manager	Throughout the year	Annual Report	1 and 2
9	Continue to monitor and give feedback through Peer Case Reading on 3 cases per month.	SFC CL	To agreed programme	Annual Report	2 and 7
10.1	Produce the Annual Report for DSD, which reports on the standards of Social Fund Inspectors' decisions. The Report will also account for the organisation's performance against objectives and include commentary on the administration of the Social Fund based on casework experience.	SFC Office Manager CR	1 July 2010	Report to DSD	3 and 5
10.2	Launch the Annual Report to a targeted audience to inform interested parties and account publicly for the work of the OSFC.	Office Manager CR	31 October 2010	Report to SFC	1 and 5
11	Monitor Social Fund activity to understand the likely patterns of future workload for the OSFC. In particular, examine any trends which help to identify any likely further growth in 2010/11.	Office Manager	Quarterly analysis	Report to SFC	2 and 7

Developing & Improving Standards

	Key Task	Responsibility	Timescale	Accountability Process	Link to business objectives
12	At least once a year, as part of the OSFC business planning	Office Manager	By 28 February	Report to SFC	2 and 7

	process, review all published quality and service standards. Seek improvements where possible.		2011		
13	Conduct customer surveys throughout the year of 5% (or at least 120) of our direct customers who received a grant or loan decision. Analyse the findings of the survey making appropriate recommendations for improvement.	JD Admin	Report to MTM (Oct 2010) End year report mid-May 2011	Report to Office Manager Annual Report	1,2 and 7
14	Review outcome of External Complaints Panels in IRS and apply learning points in OSFC.	Office Manager All staff	3 Panels per year	Report to SFC	2 and 1
15	Develop ways of obtaining ad-hoc feedback from customers.	JD	By 31 Oct 2010	Report to MTM Report to Office Manager	2, 1 and 7
16.1	Gather and examine information from all relevant sources including customers, case reading and customer survey about the standards of service and decision-making. Using this information:	SFC Office Manager JD	Throughout the year	Case Reading reports Annual Report	2
16.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise staff of the findings in order that they learn from all sources of feedback with the aim of improving the quality of decision-making and service; 	Office Manager	Quarterly	Annual Report	2 and 1
16.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSFC represented at a minimum of 4 Standards Conferences to oversee the quality of decision-making and service within IRS and OSFC. Feedback results to relevant parties when required. Take into account the results of case reading, look at any improvements required to the operation of the Standards Conference. 	Office Manager CL	As required	Annual Report	1 and 2
17.1	Develop new ways of the delivering the Inspector's review in order to maximise efficiency while preserving the fundamental quality of the review.	Office Manager	By 30 September 2010	Report to SFC	2 and 1
17.2	Review all the proposed changes and decide on the appropriate way forward for the OSFC. Implement changes throughout the organisation as required.	Office Manager Inspectors	By 31 March 2011	Report to SFC	2 and 1
18	Commission, as appropriate, research and development to improve the standards of decision making. In particular concentrate on areas identified from case reading and/or recent Social Fund law or process changes.	Office Manager	As agreed for each project plan	Annual Report	2
19	Monitor and circulate changes to Commissioner's Advice	Office Manager	As agreed for	Report to Quality	2

	and Support Notes in response to changes in the legal framework of the Social Fund or as a consequence of issues arising from casework or legal changes.	MF	each project plan	Forum Annual Report	
20	OSFC represented Quality Forums, as required, to discuss and agree new Commissioner's Advice or changes to existing Advice.	Office Manager CL	As required throughout the year	Report to Quality Forum Annual Report	2
21.1	Provide, as appropriate, training for OSFC staff engaged in the review. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specified job training to improve the standards of decision-making. This will be based on issues identified from case examinations, case reading and complaints feedback. 	SFC Office Manager CL	To agreed training plan	Report to SFC	2
21.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 2 tailored awareness sessions that develop and improve staff knowledge of issues relevant to OSFC customers. 	EC	To agreed programme	Report to Manager	2 and 7
21.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional training for people who have development needs. 	SFC Office Manager CL NC	To agreed training plan	Personal Development Plans Report to SFC	2
21.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full programme of training and induction for new members of staff. 	SFC Office Manager CL	To agreed recruitment & induction plan	Report to SFC	2
21.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sessions developed by experts to inform Inspectors' awareness of issues affecting our client groups. 	CL	To agreed training plan	Report to SFC	2
22	Via quality assurance process and other feedback on standards; monitor the extent to which training investment has delivered value for money and whether further investment is needed.	Office Manager CL MF	Training Returns to DSD	Report to Office Manager Annual Report	2 and 7
23	Develop an awareness programme for all front line staff who have direct contact with customers and other staff, as appropriate, to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to deliver the full range of their roles.	Office Manager CL MF	By 31 March 2011	Report to Office Manager	2 and 3
24	Keep abreast of changes that impact on the review including legislative changes and provision of help and support to vulnerable people from other government agencies and	Office Manager	Ongoing	Report to Office Manager	2, 3 and 5

	voluntary organisations.				
25	To ensure seamless delivery of the OSFC review; monitor the programme for SSA business transformation and identify any impact for the OSFC business. Develop solutions and implement them as appropriate.	Office Manager	Ongoing/ to agreed timescales	Report to SFC	2 and 7
26	Hold quarterly best practice forums for SSA Social Fund staff with a view to achieving improvements in decision making and service standards for customers.	AW	To agreed programme	Annual Report Feedback to SSA staff	4
27	Develop an information pack on other organisations to be used by decision makers to sign-post where other help is available. Ensure that information in this pack is kept up to date.	CL Admin	Ongoing	Report to Manager	2

Awareness

	Key Task	Responsibility	Timescale	Accountability Process	Link to business objectives
28.1	Support the improvement of front-line advice, decision-making and general awareness of the Social Fund through a structured programme including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 8 tailored and general workshops per year 	AW, JD	To agreed programme	Office Manager Annual Report	3, 4 and 7
28.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution of self instruction packages, including packages tailored to particular groups 	AW, JD Admin	Ongoing	Annual Report	3 and 7
28.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution of OSFC publications to a range of public bodies and advisor organisations across Northern Ireland 	JD Admin	Ongoing	Annual Report	3 and 7
28.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing information through the OSFC Website and IRS Journal and Digest 	JD NC	Ongoing	Annual Report	3 and 7
28.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at relevant Regional and National Conferences 	Office Manager Inspectors (as appropriate)	Ongoing	Annual Report	3, 6 and 7
28.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing details of OSFC services in external publications, radio broadcasts, external web links and 	SFC Office Manager	Ongoing	Annual Report	3

	focus groups (as appropriate).	Inspectors (as appropriate)			
29	Meet with interested parties to share experience, information and ideas about the Social Fund and related matters. Follow up issues as required.	SFC Office Manager	Throughout the year	Annual Report	3
30	Continue to develop new ways of raising awareness and improving decision-making and advice. Look in particular at awareness requirements of under-represented groups.	SFC Office Manager	To agreed programme	Report to SFC	3 and 4
31	Evaluate the impact of all training and learning interventions with SSA and advisor groups by examining case work, feedback from participants and general demand for OSFC help and support. As necessary, amend OSFC materials, publications or approaches.	AW JD	MTM in July 2010 MTM in January 2011	Report to MTM Report to Office Manager Annual Report	3, 4 and 7
32	Ensure all OSFC training materials, including Self Instruction Packages, are up to date with contemporary examples.	AW JD	MTM in September 2010 MTM in March 2011	Report to MTM Report to Office Manager	3, 4 and 7
33	Manage and monitor the OSFC leaflet programme to provide effective public information for customers and others within designated resources.	JD Admin Team	Throughout the year	Report to Office Manager	3 and 7
34	Review key publications and leaflets to ensure that they are marketed correctly and have the appropriate focus including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering feedback on other publications and leaflets as required. • Ensuring that customers are aware that a Social Fund review request can be made directly to the OSFC. 	JD Admin Team	Throughout the year	Reports to SFC Report to Office Manager	3 and 7

Front Line Delivery

	Key Task	Responsibility	Timescale	Accountability Process	Link to business objectives
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35	Support SSA through their business transformation programme; deliver the appropriate level of assistance or training as necessary.	AW JD	Ongoing	Report to SFC Annual Report	4
36.1	Undertake case examinations on decision-making in Districts to identify Social Fund training needs for individuals and groups of staff. Take into account the needs of under-performing districts when prioritising help and support.	JD AW	To agreed programme	Report to Manager Annual Report	4 and 7
36.2	Based on this provide a programme of training and support for SSA offices. Include training and support for: Managers; Quality checkers/mentors; Review Officers / Decision Makers; and other relevant groups.	JD AW	To agreed programme	Report to Manager Annual Report	4 and 7
36.3	Manage and monitor this work to ensure it delivers what is required. Evaluate the effectiveness of training and support via case examinations and OSFC review outcomes.	JD AW Office Manager	To agreed programme	Annual Report	4 and 7
37	Continue to work with SSA, where appropriate, to develop high quality training materials to help improve the standard of Social Fund decision-making.	Office Manager AW JD	As appropriate	Report to SFC Annual Report	4
38.1	Maintain a continuous dialogue with SSA officials on issues arising from our operational experience, our internal and other research in order to contribute to developments and improvements in policy, administrative and operational areas. In order to achieve this the OSFC will:	SFC Office Manager	Ongoing	Annual Report	4
38.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold regular meetings, as appropriate, with Senior SSA officials. 	SFC Office Manager	To agreed timescales for issues	Annual Report	4
38.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with SSA to resolve issues; meeting as appropriate. 	SFC Office Manager	To agreed timescales for issues	Report to SFC Annual Report	4
38.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback the findings from OSFC casework, operational experiences and any customer contacts as appropriate. 	SFC Office Manager	As appropriate	Report to SFC Annual Report	4
38.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report back on the performance of SSA through the following reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Quarterly District Information Packs; ❖ An annual report for the network. 	PK NC	To agreed timetable	Annual Report	4

38.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review our reporting process and mechanisms to reflect the SSA transformation process. 	Office Manager	As appropriate	Report to SFC Annual Report	4
38.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the relevant managers in SSA as appropriate to report on district achievements, to help them to improve operational performance. Look with them at ways to improve performance including incorporating any Quality Assurance Framework feedback. Undertake other meetings as appropriate. 	SFC Office Manager	To agreed timetable	Annual Report	4
38.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold meetings with a range of welfare rights groups, representatives and advocacy organisation to discuss Social Fund and OSFC issues. 	SFC Office Manager	To agreed timetable	Annual Report	4
39	<p>Train Quality Assurance Framework checkers on the new quality assurance regime for Social Fund decision-making in the SSA. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> training of quality checkers so that they can focus the checking on the appropriate issues; validation of quality checkers' findings; and reporting on the outcomes to SSA managers. 	AW JD	To agreed programme	Report to Manager Annual Report	4 and 7
40	Validate SSA's quality assurance findings against the findings of Social Fund Inspectors' decisions and feed back to SSA as appropriate	AW JD	By 31 March 2011	Report to SFC	4 and 7

Social Fund Policy

	Key Task	Responsibility	Timescale	Accountability Process	Link to business objectives
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41.1	Based on experience obtained from Social Fund reviews, offer advice to the Minister and DSD officials on the future operation and development of the Social Fund, including any proposed legislative changes. This includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to consultations on the Welfare Reform legislation and provide advice on the implications for policy and operational delivery based on evidence from OSFC case work. 	SFC Office Manager	As appropriate	Annual Report	5
41.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comment on proposed changes arising from the Welfare Reform legislation and following implementation, monitor and feedback the impact. 	SFC Office Manager	As appropriate	Annual Report	5
41.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise on other proposed changes to the Social Fund and on issues or impacts arising from existing policy. 	SFC Office Manager	As appropriate	Annual Report	5

Research

	Key Task	Responsibility	Timescale	Accountability Process	Link to business objectives
42	Commission, undertake, or contribute to, research to help inform casework and issues relevant to the Social Fund including its role and operation. Use the findings from research to promote best practice and improvements in performance and service throughout the administration of the Social Fund.	SFC Office Manager	To agreed timescales for each project	Report to SFC Annual Report	6

Resources

	Key Task	Responsibility	Timescale	Accountability Process	Link to business objectives
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43.1	Manage and monitor expenditure so that OSFC business objectives are delivered within agreed allocation funding levels. In particular:	Office Manager PK	Review Monthly budget reports	Report to Office Manager Annual report	7
43.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan expenditure, as appropriate, throughout the financial year. 	Office Manager PK	By 28 Feb 2011 for following year	Report to SFC	7
43.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor resources to ensure they are used in a way that maximises economy, efficiency and effectiveness. 	Office Manager PK	Throughout the year	Report to SFC	7
43.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise as required, any concerns with OSFC resource allocations. 	SFC Office Manager	As appropriate	Report to DSD as appropriate	7
43.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for future years of the Spending Review. 	SFC Office Manager	As appropriate	Report to DSD as appropriate	7
44.1	Review, revise and monitor workloads, grading and resources to ensure that they deliver the required outputs. Ensure that all areas of the OSFC business deliver value for money and seek improvements where appropriate.	Office Manager CL	To agreed timescales for project	Report to SFC	7
44.2	Undertake longer term planning to ensure that OSFC business processes and operations preserve the essential standards of the review but can match any funding constraints.	Office Manager	To agreed timescales for project	Report to SFC Report to DSD as appropriate	7
45.1	Deliver the agreed productivity targets for all case workers. Social Fund Inspectors - 520 cases per annum.(based on full time post)	Inspectors	Ongoing	Report to SFC	7 and 1
45.2	Review targets, as required, with a view to making further efficiencies and in consideration of the resources available.	Office Manager	Ongoing	Report to SFC	7 and 1
46.1	Evaluate policies, projects, process changes and operational performance to identify, analyse and manage risks that may impact on OSFC business delivery and development.	Office Manager CR Inspectors	June 2010, Sept 2010, Dec 2010, March 2011	Report to MTM	7
46.2	Undertake annual assessments of risks facing the OSFC and use action plans to manage and control risks identified.	Office Manager CR Inspectors	By 31 March 2011	Report to SFC	7

46.3	Review and keep contingency plans up to date ensuring effective business delivery. In particular examine the contingency plans for the review.	Office Manager CR	Ongoing	Report to MTM	7 and 1
46.4	Have in place adequate and appropriate Disaster Recovery plans. Review these plans annually to ensure they cover the main risk areas to the infrastructure of the business.	Office Manager CR	By 31 March 2011	Report to MTM	7 and 1
47	Maintain effective links with IRS in Great Britain by sharing best practice, resources and skills.	SFC Office Manager	Throughout the year	Report to SFC	7
48	Where appropriate, recruit new staff to the numbers and grade agreed by the SFC and DSD.	SFC Office Manager	To agreed timetable	Report to SFC (as appropriate)	7
49	Draw the training and development plan from the Corporate Plan to support the effective delivery of business objectives. Evaluate the training provided and seek improvements where required.	CL/MF	Draw plan by 30 April 2010/ Review ongoing	Report to Office Manager	7 and 2
50	Maintain our accreditation to the Investors in People standard and seek continuous improvements. Develop plans and prepare for the IIP re-accreditation.	CL/MF	By 30 September 2010	Report to Office Manager	7
51	Undertake the work required in relation to the OSFC Equality Scheme.	EC	To scheme deadlines	Report to Equality Commission Annual Report	7
52	Keep OSFC security procedures up to date and in line with NICS requirements. Monitor compliance with clear desk policies.	Office Manager MF	Ongoing	Report to Office Manager	7
53	Review need to upgrade the OSFC Case Management System databases to improve performance and customer service.	Office Manager	By 31 March 2011	Report to SFC	2, 6 and 7
54	Maintain the OSFC asset database to include all relevant hardware, software and documentation.	PK	Ongoing	Report to Office Manager	7
55	Ensure the prompt payment of OSFC invoices through Account NI within set targets.	PK	Ongoing	Report to Office Manager	7
56	Continue to look at ways for the OSFC to reduce its carbon footprint and become a more environmentally friendly organisation. In particular look at measures to reduce travel outside the OSFC.	All staff	By 31 March 2011	Report to Monthly Team Meeting ("MTM")	7
57	Keep up to date the OSFC website to ensure it meets OSFC	JD	As appropriate	Report to MTM	7 and 3

	business objectives and provides the required accessibility to OSFC customers. Make recommendations for short term and long term enhancements to the website.	NC			
58	Improve the standards of OSFC service and its policies by sharing best practice with other organisations including the British and Irish Ombudsman Association.	Office Manager	To agreed programme for this project	Report to SFC	7

Customer Service Standards 2010/11

We aim to deliver a high quality decision at the earliest opportunity. Our staff will deliver the following customer service standards.

Overall Customer Service Standards

Standard Cases

We will make a decision on 95% of standard cases within 12 working days of receipt of the papers. Standard cases are all applications to the OSFC, excluding express and complex cases. They form the majority of the work of the OSFC.

Express Cases

We will make a decision on 95% of express cases within 24 hours of receipt of the papers. Express cases are applications for living expenses or other needs where a very urgent decision is required.

Complex Cases

We will make a decision on 90% of complex cases within 21 working days of receipt of the papers. These are applications that need extensive enquiries or investigation or where the nature of the case is exceptionally complex.

Customer Service Standards 2010/11

We aim to deliver a high quality decision at the earliest opportunity. In order to deliver the overall standards, the following internal targets will guide our work.

Administration

- Papers for direct applications will be requested on the day they are received.
- We will work towards obtaining 95% of direct application papers within 4 days.
- Applicants will be informed when their papers remain outstanding from the SSA for more than 10 days.
- Cases will be fully registered on the day they are received.
- Cases will be allocated and passed to the relevant Inspector by the morning of day 2.
- Written responses to papers or to requests for further information will be recorded and passed to a decision maker on the day they are received.

Decision Making

- Any necessary enquiries of the applicant, whether in writing by issuing a full statement or a letter, or by telephone, will be made within 3 working days of receipt of the papers.
- Where no further enquiries are necessary in order to reach a sound decision, it will be issued within 3 working days of receipt of the papers.
- No more than 10% of cases will fall into the Complex Case category.

Enquiries and Complaints

- A full response or update as appropriate will be sent to the applicant within 12 working days of the receipt of an enquiry or complaint.
- A response will be made on express cases within 24 hours. Express cases are applications for living expenses or other needs where a very urgent decision is required.
- ***Where a response has not been made by day 12, it should be sent on all cases within 21 working days.***

Telephone Service

- A telephone service will be provided for customers, at a free phone call rate, between 9.00 am and 4.30 pm, Monday to Friday. An answering service will be available at all other times.

OSFC Quality Standards for the Review

We will deliver Inspectors' reviews that are independent, impartial, fair and legally sound. In each case we will work to increase the applicant's ability to understand and participate fully and effectively in their review.

To achieve this, the review will meet the following quality standards.

Before the decision is made the Inspector will:

- Examine thoroughly all the evidence presented to decide the key issues, establish the relevant facts and identify all necessary enquiries.
- Ask the right questions, in the right way, to enable all the relevant facts to be established.
- Deliver the information to the applicant in such a way that clarifies the key issues the Inspector has to decide, the facts he already knows about those issues and the information he still needs.

In making the decision the Inspector will:

- Take full account of the relevant information provided in the case and reflect that in the decision.
- Correctly interpret and apply the law, including the Department's directions.
- Ensure the rules of natural justice are met: that the applicant knows the case he must answer and has been given a fair opportunity to put his own case; and that there has been no bias.
- Reach an outcome that is reasonable and is right in all the circumstances of the case.
- Tailor each letter and decision to the case ensuring, in particular, that the applicant's level of understanding is respected.
- Explain the law clearly, in a way the applicant can understand, avoiding legal terminology wherever possible.
- Apply the relevant Commissioner's Advice to Inspectors.

In doing this we will deliver the review:

- Promptly and within published Customer Service Standards.