



BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2021-22

Rebuilding our Economy through Better Workplaces

June 2021

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 in seeking better ways to support the economy;

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

Exemplary – challenging ourselves to be the best we can be and a role model in how we conduct employment relations; and,

Responsive – listening to our customers and staff, adapting to ensure our services meet customers’ needs.

These values underpin all that we do.

FOREWORD

This Business Plan implements the first year of the Labour Relations Agency's Corporate Plan for 2021-25. The key priority for these four years is working with partner organisations and stakeholders to support post-Covid economic recovery. We intend to do this by helping employers adopt best employment practices through high quality advice and webinars, delivered in partnership with employer representative bodies. We also achieve this aim by developing the knowledge and skills of managers and representatives, so that they can put in place good employment relations that boost productivity and create better workplaces.

Preparing ourselves for this work will be a particular focus in 2021-22. Key activities will be establishing new delivery partnerships, reviewing current service delivery arrangements and structure, and ensuring additional capacity through recruitment and learning and development. We will develop key strategies to underpin the Corporate Plan covering our people, communications, digital services, and our use of data. We will also prepare to relocate our Head Office in April 2022 to more suitable, modern premises from which to base our operations.

As a result of the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing challenges linked to the holiday pay disputes, the demand for our services is expected to remain high. We are grateful to the Department for the Economy for additional funding in 2021-22 to respond to this demand.

Similar to many organisations, our staff continue to work productively from home. A key challenge ahead, both for the Agency as an employer and service provider, will be building on the lessons of the pandemic as they affect the world of work. In particular, grasping the opportunities afforded by the new working practices that have emerged from the use of technology, including 'hybrid' working and service delivery. Working with others, we intend to play our part in articulating through guidance and examples, how workplaces and working practices can be transformed to increase productivity and quality of life for all.

We commend this Business Plan to you.



Gordon Milligan
Chairperson



Don Leeson
Chief Executive

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, appointed by the Minister for the Economy.

We currently employ the equivalent of approximately 60 full-time staff who operate from two locations – our Head Office in Belfast and a Regional Office in Derry/Londonderry. However, since March 2020, these offices have been closed due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and all staff are working from home. All services are being delivered by telephone and/or videoconference rather than in-person.

The Agency's resource budget for 2021-22 is **£4,910k**. The budget baseline of £3,823k has been supplemented by additional funding to support economic recovery and respond to the impact of the UK's exit from the European Union. Capital funding of £90k has been provided to meet building and IT-related requirements.

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 allows employers to compile workplace documentation – from written statements of employment particulars through to employee handbooks – with guidance on compliance and good practice.

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.
- **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.

THE PLANNING CONTEXT

Political matters

The latest iteration of the draft Programme for Government (PfG) was published for consultation in January 2021.¹ The Agency's work is particularly relevant in delivering the following outcomes:

- *Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon-neutral;*
- *People want to live, work and visit here;*
- *We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment;*
- *We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect; and,*
- *Everyone can reach their potential.*

We anticipate playing an important role in helping shape and deliver a number of the key PfG priorities and underpinning strategies, including 'Better Jobs' which includes a focus on giving employees a voice, and the Vision for a 10x Economy and Skills Strategy (see 'Economic Matters below).

The agreement to restore devolved government to NI in 2020, 'New Decade New Approach',² makes a number of employment-related commitments. These include reforms relating to protecting workers' rights, giving workers greater voice, and specific reforms around zero hours contracts and devolved minimum wage powers.

The Agency will provide advice and support to DfE in any future development and implementation of employment relations policies and legislation.

¹ Available at: <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/programme-government-pfg-2021>.

² Available at: Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deal-to-see-restored-government-in-northern-ireland-tomorrow>.

An anticipated Government multi-year Spending Review was postponed in autumn 2020 because of fiscal uncertainties caused by the pandemic. This means that the Agency, in common with other public bodies, is continuing to work with 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. It is hoped that circumstances will allow the Spending Review to proceed in 2021-22.

Economic matters

The NI economy has been profoundly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. A deep and prolonged economic downturn is forecast.³ The vaccine programme and workplace testing offer hope that public health restrictions affecting economic activity will be eased in 2021.

The aspiration to 'Build Back Better', echoed by leaders across the world, including the UK Prime Minister,⁴ articulates the opportunity to apply learning from the pandemic to create a better, more equal society and more productive and 'greener' economies.

DfE published, in February 2021, the Economic Recovery Action Plan for NI with the strapline, "*Rebuilding a Stronger Economy*".⁵ This references the Agency's work in, "*Providing advice and guidance to NI employers, employees and policy makers on the NI Labour Market, employee relations, best practice and compliance in response to the pandemic and its impact on labour relations.*" Among other actions, the plan identifies a highly skilled and agile workforce as one of the outcomes required for the rebuilding of the NI economy.

DfE has also been consulting on a Vision for a 10x Economy⁶ and a Skills Strategy.⁷

The Agency will have a critical role to play in supporting economic recovery and growth by substantiating and articulating the correlation between good employment relations and productivity. Critical to this will be ensuring the new Skills Strategy highlights the importance of employment relations skills to economic success. At individual employer level, the Agency is focused on disseminating good employment practice to newly established and growing employers, including delivery of employment relations skills in partnership with others such as Invest NI, local

³ 'Rebuilding a stronger economy – the medium term recovery', Department for the Economy, June 2020 (available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/rebuilding-stronger-economy-medium-term-recovery>).

⁴ See, for example, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/biden-boris-johnson-build-back-better-b1613419.html>.

⁵ Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/economic-recovery-action-plan>.

⁶ Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/10x-economy-ni-decade-innovation.pdf>.

⁷ Available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations/skills-strategy-northern-ireland-skills-10x-economy>.

government, and employer and employee representative bodies. Additional funding has been provided to the Agency to support this work in 2021-22.

The anticipated economic impact of the UK's exit from the European Union has been clouded by the pandemic. Nevertheless, the Agency has received funding to support economic growth following the UK's exit from the EU. In addition, the Agency is establishing a partnership with the Equality Commission and NI Human Rights Commission's Dedicated Mechanism Unit (DMU), which has been established to monitor post-EU exit issues. The Agency envisages a role in providing information and expertise to the DMU on employment law matters.

Social matters

Social partnerships are expected to feature strongly during 2021-22. The NI Engagement Forum on Covid-19, facilitated by the Agency, brings together representatives of employers and employees to discuss workplace issues arising from the pandemic. The Forum has proved a useful vehicle in guiding employers through the challenges that the virus has created, including supporting the safe re-opening of our economy through advice to DfE and the Executive. The terms of reference for the Forum will be reviewed during the year to ensure its focus continues to meet stakeholder needs.

The Employment Relations Roundtable resumed meetings in February 2021, following a hiatus of 12 months because of the necessary focus on the work of the Engagement Forum. A programme of work for 2021-22 has been agreed for the Roundtable. This includes promoting effective social partnership between employer and employee representatives, as envisaged in the Employment Relations Model for NI developed by the University of Warwick. This will need to be supported by further research, including evidencing the positive link between effective employee engagement and productivity. A major conference in 2022 will showcase best practice examples of employment relations in workplaces.

Technological developments

Technology will continue to play a critical role in how the Agency delivers services. Our primary focus is on achieving integration and connectivity across our platforms, media and devices. Ensuring stability of the technology environment, and continuity of digital services as we move to a more hybrid and agile delivery model will be important.

We will enable the growth of our digital presence by ensuring a permanent and stable environment for our digital outreach, our webinars, podcasts and online clinics.

Ahead of the Agency's relocation to James House (see below), we are assessing the viability of on boarding the Agency's IT support to IT Assist during 2021-22. If this is not feasible, a new private sector provider will need to be identified to provide hosting and support services.

There is need to procure new support arrangements for the Agency's core case management and records system (CMRS) from August 2021. This will require a review against defined business and customer needs to determine whether CMRS remains fit-for-purpose for longer-term delivery.

Legal developments

DfE is currently progressing new legislation on Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay entitlements. This legislation is currently progressing through the Assembly and is expected to become law in 2022. Thereafter, no further employment legislation is anticipated until after Assembly elections in 2022, with DfE instead focusing on economic recovery.

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. However, a number of organisations are now seeking to settle backdated holiday pay liabilities – the Agency is currently dealing with approximately 20,000 such cases. This is being achieved through the deployment of staff from other service areas, pending the recruitment and training of additional staff.

The Supreme Court decision in February 2021 in respect of Uber v Aslam and others⁸ is expected to have far-reaching ramifications regarding employment status and the so-called 'gig economy'. The Agency will monitor the outworkings, and consider the potential implications of any developments, from this case.

In the meantime, further employment legislation is anticipated in Great Britain covering a range of issues.⁹ This means that employment law differences between Great Britain and NI are likely to further diverge for at least the next 2-3 years. The Agency will need to continue to monitor the differences, so that these can be explained to employers operating in both jurisdictions.¹⁰

⁸ Available at: <https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/uksc-2019-0029.html>.

⁹ See <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/legal/key-employment-law-changes-2021>.

¹⁰ A list of current differences between Great Britain and NI is available at: <https://www.lra.org.uk/resources/toolkit/key-differences-employment-law-between-ni-and-gb-may-2020>.

Environmental matters

Accommodation matters and agile working practices will be a key focus for the Agency in 2021-22 and will support 'greener' working practices.

Our staff continue to work from home. The Agency's offices will re-open when the public health situation allows. This will be on the basis of 'hybrid working' – home working will continue, with staff attending the office to meet customers and colleagues. This will mean less commuting and business travel, thus reducing our 'carbon footprint'.

The Agency's Head Office is scheduled to relocate to new premises in James House in central Belfast in April 2022. Planning for this will be a key priority in the year ahead. James House will be a more energy efficient building. Furthermore, it will be largely paper-free, thereby reducing the Agency's consumption of paper and print cartridges.

Corporate Plan for 2021-25

This Business Plan operationalises the first year of the Agency's Corporate Plan for 2021-25. A particular focus of this first year will be the development of a number of strategies to underpin the Corporate Plan. These will cover our people, digital, communications, and harnessing the data we collect.

A number of reviews of services, including independent appeals and mediation, are also planned.

These strategies and service reviews are intended to ensure the Agency is optimally positioned to deliver the Corporate Plan. A structural review will also take place once these are in place to ensure that our staffing and management structures are fully aligned to deliver the Plan.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2021-22

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 2021-22

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 post-Covid economic recovery and growth through the development of delivery partnerships with statutory bodies, 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 75%*).

c) Develop and deliver a programme of good practice webinars and briefings to give employers, employees, and their representatives greater confidence in dealing with employment relations matters.

Performance measures:

- Number of webinars developed.
- Number of events delivered remotely/recorded webinars viewed.
- Number of participating organisations in webinars.
- % planned events delivered taking account of Covid 19 restrictions.

- Customer satisfaction with the quality of the events where this can be determined remotely.
 - Number and % of customers reporting greater confidence in dealing with employment relations matters as a result of attendance at events where this can be determined remotely (*target: at least 75%*).
- 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) Develop and pilot, **by March 2022**, 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:

- Pilot programme delivered on time.
- f) Achieve, **by March 2022**, academic recognition of the Agency's Certificate in Effective Line Management.

Performance measures:

- Timetable achieved.
- Secure third party support for the Agency's accreditation process.

- g) Develop and deliver an updated online document review service to promote legislative compliance by employers and encourage good practice in employment relations matters **from September 2021**.

Performance measures:

- Online service in place.
- Number of customers using the online service.
- Customer satisfaction with the quality of the service.
- Number and % of customers reporting greater confidence in applying revised documentation as a result of document reviews.

- h) Deliver 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.

- i) In partnership with the Department for the Economy raise awareness of new Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay arrangements in line with a timetable agreed with the Department.

Performance measures:

- Stakeholder satisfaction with the quality of the information, advice and events.
- Customer satisfaction with the informative 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 75%*).

- j) Provide thought-leadership through the development and promotions of best practice employment policies.

Performance measures:

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

1.2 Help prevent and resolve individual and collective workplace disputes.

Objectives for 2021-22

- 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.
- Number and % of cases not proceeding to tribunal hearing (*target: no more than 20%*).
- Number and % of tribunal days saved.

- b) Submit available evaluation data to a review of the first year of operation of Early Conciliation in line with a timetable agreed with the Department for the Economy.

Performance measures:

- Timetable achieved.

- 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) 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.
- e) Deliver an effective mediation service to facilitate the resolution of interpersonal workplace disputes within the greater 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: 70%*).
 - % of requests undertaken.
 - Customer satisfaction with the service provided.
 - Number and % of customers reporting better working relationships following mediation.
- f) Review, **by December 2021**, the Mediation Service and make proposals to ensure the most effective use of resources, in line with customer needs.

Performance Measures:

- Timetable achieved.
 - Efficiencies/process improvements identified.
- g) 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.
- h) Review, **by September 2021**, the Independent Appeals Service and make proposals to ensure the most effective use of resources, in line with customer needs.

Performance Measures:

- Timetable achieved.
- Efficiencies/process improvements identified.

- i) 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 September 2021**.

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 2021-22

- a) Secure secretariat resources for, and facilitate the work, of the NI Employment Relations Roundtable.

Performance measures:

- Stakeholder satisfaction with the Agency's input.

- b) Continue to facilitate any engagement forum as established by the NI Executive, if asked to do so.

Performance measures:

- 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.

Performance measures:

- Stakeholder satisfaction with the Agency's input.

- e) Host, **by March 2022**, a major employment relations conference in partnership with the Department for the Economy and the Employment Relations Roundtable.

Performance measures:

- Timetable achieved.
- Customer satisfaction with the quality of the event.
- Number and % of customers reporting greater confidence in dealing with employment relations matters following attendance at the event.

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

Objectives for 2021-22

- a) Consult key stakeholders, **by June 2021**, on the University of Warwick research recommendations on an Employment Relations Model for NI.

Performance measures:

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

- b) Develop, **by September 2021**, an action plan to deliver the University of Warwick research recommendations regarding the Agency.

Performance measures:

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

- c) Develop, **by December 2021**, best practice advisory projects to build on the University of Warwick research recommendations and the findings from the University of Cardiff research on dispute resolution practices in NI.

Performance measures:

- Number of projects registered.
- Number and % of customers reporting a more positive employment relations environment and reduced likelihood of disputes occurring.

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

Objective for 2021-22

- a) Secure funding for, and commission, research to establish the extent to which good employment relations supports improved productivity **by March 2022.**

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 2021-22

- a) Continue to facilitate effective remote working for all staff during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Performance measures:

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

- b) Continue to implement a programme to support the health and wellbeing of staff during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Performance measures:

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

- c) Implement physical and behavioural safety measures to ensure a Covid-19 secure working environment to enable the phased re-opening of the Agency's offices when the public health advice and NI Executive guidance allow this.

Performance measures:

- Level of employee engagement.
- Number and % increase in employee engagement.

- d) Develop, **by September 2021**, a People Strategy setting out how the Agency will ensure the effective development of staff to enhance capability to underpin delivery of the Corporate Plan for 2021-25.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met for development of Strategy.
- Strategy approved and communicated.

The new People Strategy will determine performance measures as appropriate to the strategic objectives identified, but may include:

- Number of performance reviews conducted on time.
- % 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.
- % of days lost through sick absence.
- % of return to work interviews conducted within three working days.
- Level of employee engagement.
- Number and % increase in employee engagement.
- Number and % increase in attendance at work.

- e) Develop, **by September 2021**, a Digital Strategy setting out how the Agency will leverage digital technology to enhance capability to underpin delivery of the Corporate Plan for 2021-25.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met for development of Strategy
- Strategy approved and communicated
- Other performance measures to be developed in the Strategy.

- f) Develop, **by September 2021**, a Communications Strategy to promote the value of good employment relations and our core services, and deliver information and assistance to our customers and stakeholders, to underpin delivery of the Corporate Plan for 2021-25.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met for development of Strategy
- Strategy approved and communicated
- Other performance measures to be developed in the Strategy.

- g) Develop, **by September 2021**, a Data Strategy to exploit the insights generated by the Agency's data to better target service delivery and communications regarding best employment practices, optimising the impact of the Agency's resources on economic recovery in NI and underpinning delivery of the Corporate Plan for 2021-25.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met for development of Strategy
- Strategy approved and communicated
- Other performance measures to be developed in the Strategy.

- h) In light of the Corporate Plan for 2021-25, and underpinning strategies, review, **by March 2022**, the organisational structure to ensure it is effectively aligned to enable delivery of objectives and, where appropriate, make recommendations for change.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met
- Board approval of recommendations.

- i) Develop, **by September 2021**, an action plan to achieve Investors in People Platinum during the life of the Corporate Plan for 2021-25.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.

- j) Establish, **by June 2021**, a project to ensure the effective relocation of the Agency's Head Office in April 2022.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.
- Project milestones delivered within agreed project tolerances.

- k) Make recommendations, **by March 2022**, regarding Regional Office accommodation requirements post lease break in August 2022.

Performance measures:

- Timetable met
- Board approval of recommendations.

- l) Identify new information systems delivery partners: for the case management and records system (CMRS) **by August 2021**; and IS Managed Services **by December 2021**.

Performance measures:

- Timetables met.

- m) Evaluate, **by August 2021**, the case management and records system (CMRS).

Performance measures:

- Timetable met.

- n) Implement, **by May 2021**, planned enhancements to the web portal.

Performance measures:

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

- o) Implement, **by August 2021**, a new intranet.

Performance measures:

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

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

Objectives for 2021-22

- 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) Become recognised, **by July 2021**, as a provider of official statistics.

Performance measures:

- Timetable achieved.
- Stakeholder satisfaction with the quality of the published data.

- d) Consult on and finalise a Corporate Plan for 2021-25 for Ministerial approval **by July 2021**.

Performance measures:

- Timetable achieved.
- Ministerial approval of the Corporate Plan.

- e) Induct new Board members, in line with agreed induction programme

Performance measures:

- New Board member satisfaction with their induction.

- f) Ensure Board effectiveness.

Performance measures:

- Compliance with recommended practice.¹¹
- Board member satisfaction with their development.

¹¹ Board Effectiveness – A Good Practice Guide, NIAO, November 2016 (available at: <https://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk/sites/niao/files/media-files/Board%20Effectiveness-%20A%20Good%20Practice%20Guide.pdf>) 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).

RISKS

The Agency has comprehensive procedures in place for identifying and managing the risks that might prevent the achievement of the objectives contained in this Business Plan. Our Corporate Risk Register identifies the controls that are in place, and any further action that is being taken, to eliminate or manage down the likelihood of identified risks occurring and/or the impact of those risks should they materialise.

Risk management is incorporated into all of our business planning and decision making processes.

The key corporate risks that cut across the delivery of all of the Agency's Objectives for 2021-22 are:

1. **Relevance** – the Agency fails to adequately influence, or respond to, changes in the NI employment relations environment.
2. **Reputation** – the Agency's reputation for the provision of high quality, independent and impartial employment relations services is undermined.
3. **Funding**– the Agency fails to deliver its key corporate and business objectives due to budgetary constraints.
4. **Infrastructure** – the Agency's infrastructure or systems fail to adequately support effective governance and efficient operations.
5. **Staffing/Board** – the Agency encounters significant skill deficits and/or decrease in capacity among its staff and Board members.
6. **Compliance** – the Agency fails to comply with all relevant legislation and governance requirements, or fails to fulfil its statutory functions.

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 	