

Asylum Support Adjudicators

Business Plan

2001 – 2002

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Mission Statement

The Asylum Support Adjudicators provide an independent appeal mechanism for asylum seekers whose applications for support have been refused or discontinued.

Appeals will be heard in a fair and just manner.

The Asylum Support Adjudicators and all support staff are committed to providing an efficient, professional and accessible service.

ASA BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2001-2002
FOREWORD

This plan marks the second year of the Asylum Support Adjudicators (ASA), a review body which considers appeals against refusals or discontinuance of asylum support.

The ASA are proud to have achieved the Investors in People accreditation against the new and more challenging version of the IiP quality standard during our first operational year. In commenting on the ASA the Investors in People Assessor said, "The organisation has set out a clear planning cycle that seeks to promote an inclusive approach to planning ... There is a very tangible sense of being part of [the] ASA."

Our first year's Business Plan attempted to lay out clear and measurable targets and service standards. It is a measure of the commitment of the operational staff and adjudicators that we have achieved a success rate of over 95% in all but three of the 29 targets we set ourselves. A full breakdown of our achievement against last year's targets is set out in our Annual Report (2000-2001), but we have also included a brief summary in this document.

The purpose of this new Business Plan is to review and set out our targets for the next year. We want to build on our achievements so far, ensuring that we consolidate and maintain our areas of good practice. Where more work needs to be done we intend this plan to set out practical steps which will enable us to move towards clear goals.

We are confident that our revised service standards and targets for this year are honest, achievable and maintain an accessible framework within which all our users can expect a consistent quality of decision making.

Gill Carter
Deputy Chief
Asylum Support Adjudicator

Mick Robins
Centre Manager (Operational Support Staff)

1 Introduction

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 established new support arrangements for asylum seekers and their dependants, replacing their previous entitlement to social security and other benefits.

Section 103 of and Schedule 10 to the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 provides for a system of appeal against decisions taken by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to refuse or discontinue claims for support made by asylum seekers and their families. The Asylum Support Adjudicators were appointed from 1 April 2000 to hear these appeals. Adjudicators do not constitute a formal body, but are expected to work collectively under the direction of a Chief Asylum Support Adjudicator (CASA), or in her absence, the Deputy Chief Asylum Support Adjudicator (DCASA). The Asylum Support Adjudicators do not deal with asylum claims, or any other immigration matters, they can only consider appeals against a refusal or discontinuance of support by NASS. The ASA are independent of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) and NASS, reporting direct to the Secretary of State. The ASA fall under the supervision of the Council on Tribunals.

The ASA support staff are a separate and distinct team of Home Office seconded employees. They provide the administrative background to this appeals structure within the context of Home Office Aim 6, subsection 5 which is 'to provide support, whilst their applications are being dealt with, to those asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute'.

The Asylum Support Adjudicators are expected to hear and determine appeals within tight time limits set by delegated legislation and are responsible, on a collective basis, for delivering a just, accessible and efficient appeal mechanism.

The adjudicator may:

- Require the Secretary of State to reconsider the matter;
- Substitute his or her decision for the decision appealed against;
- Dismiss the appeal.

There is no right of appeal against decisions made by the ASA, the only mechanism for challenge being by way of judicial review.

2 Organisation

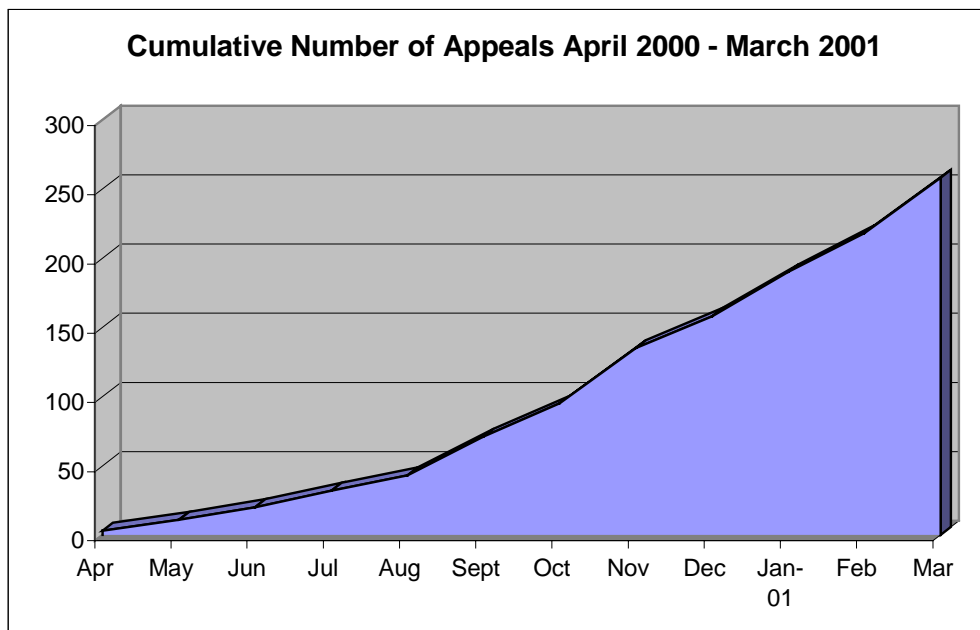
The present adjudication team consists of a chief adjudicator, a deputy chief adjudicator, three part-time and two sessional adjudicators. The operations team consists of a centre manager, a team leader, three executive officers, two ushers and two secretarial staff. They deliver a wide range of services including case preparation, arranging interpretation services, sending out notices and orders for directions and ushering, together with all the day-to-day administrative functions involved in processing appeals.

The ASA is located at Christopher Wren House, 113 High Street, Croydon CR0 1QG. There is provision for four hearings to run simultaneously at this site. The site has disabled access (including wheelchair accessibility) and induction loops for the benefit of those with hearing difficulties are available in all hearing rooms.

3 Workload

The ASA became operational on the 3rd April 2000 and deals solely with appeals against NASS decisions to refuse or discontinue support arrangements for asylum seekers. There was a slow lead in process for the new arrangements and the national assessment process was not applied nation wide until September 2000. The Home Office had originally estimated a workload of about 2,000 appeals. Unfortunately the NASS were unable to produce any further projections of numbers of appeals during the year.

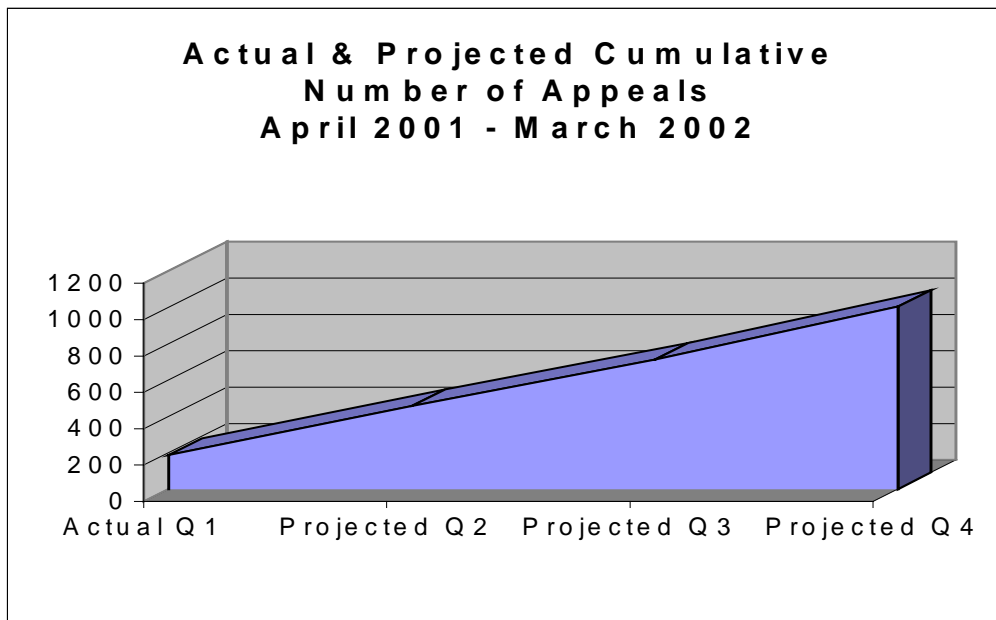
The ASA received 70 appeals between April and September (just over 11 per month). However from September to March 2001 this had increased to 185 (just over 30 per month). The following table details on a monthly basis the cumulative number of cases received for the year. By March 2001, the end of its first year in operation, the ASA had received a total of 255 appeals (an average of 21 appeals per month).



Projections for 2001 - 02

It has been very difficult to prepare accurate projections of the number of appeals likely to be made during 2001/02. NASS have again informed us that they are unable to provide any projections at the moment although they have stated that there will be a “significant increase” in the number of appeals this year. Discussions with NASS, the Home Office’s Integrated Casework Directorate (appeals section) and the Immigration Research and Statistics Service concerning the definition and accuracy of the statistics provided by IND continue. However we have asked NASS to inform us of any new initiative they may take which could impact on our workflow.

The ASA have received 188 appeals during the first quarter of 2001 (April – June). The monthly average continues to rise and now stands at 63. This would suggest a total workload of approximately 750+ appeals for the year. Because the average monthly workflow continues to increase and the NASS statement that there could be a “significant increase” this year we have prepared our budget estimates on the basis of about 1,000 appeals this year.



4 Financial Year 2001/02

Budget Allocation

The budget allocation for the ASA is arranged via the Finance and Planning Team of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate. This totalled £1,333,000 for 2001/02 financial year. A total of £718,000 is allocated to the cost of staff remuneration and £615,000 for the day to day running cost of the ASA.

Budget Management and Reporting

The ASA are governed by the principles of Government Accounting and use BASS (the Business and Accounting Strategic System) and Excel as its main financial tools. The ASA are responsible for the processing and payment of running cost invoices (i.e. interpreters' fees, translations, stationery etc).

The Centre Manager provides a monthly budget profile to the Finance & Planning Team (FPT) as part of the Financial Information System (FIS) timetable. This report details costs incurred to date and includes a profile of expenditure for the remainder of the year. Any discrepancies or problems are dealt with directly between the ASA and the FPT.

The Centre Manager is also responsible for the preparation of a monthly internal ASA Finance Report. This report details expenditure to date and estimated out turns (this forms the basis of the monthly return to the FPT).

The Centre Manager and the DCASA undertake a detailed formal review of the budget on a quarterly basis and report to the Chief Asylum Support Adjudicator. This review is based on a quarterly report that details expenditure to date and the cost of proposals and options for future initiatives. These reports enable the Centre Manager and the DCASA to monitor and ensure the effective management of the ASA budget.

Budgets for 2001 – 02

The following paragraphs and table detail the ASA budget allocation for the 2001/02 financial year.

Remuneration

The Remuneration budget of £718K has been split with £400K for adjudicators and £318K for support staff. The profile of the support staff remains uncertain and this will be reviewed shortly. The situation is unclear and is likely to remain so until NASS are able to produce some meaningful workflow estimates.

Non Pay Running Costs

The majority of budgets have been set in line with expenditure last year. The main items of expenditure for the ASA are the cost of interpreters and translations (which are directly affected by the workflow rate) and stationery and printing.

Interpreters

The ASA pay interpreters a flat fee of £85 per morning or afternoon session. We estimate that 95% of oral hearings will require an interpreter (about 95% of appeals are oral hearings). This represents a requirement for about 900 interpreters at a total cost of about £85K.

Translations

The ASA translates all its information leaflets into the 20 most used languages and is considering extending this to a range of appeal forms. At the end of every appeal the adjudicator prepares a Reason Statement detailing their determination. A translated version of the Reason Statement in the appellant's first language will also be issued. It costs about £250 to translate each Reason Statement. We estimate that the total cost of all translations this year (Reason Statements and information leaflets) will be about £255K.

Stationery & Printing

The ASA is responsible for purchasing its own office supplies and arranging the printing of documents such as the Annual Report, Business Plan, information leaflets about the ASA and the Training and Development Strategy etc. We are also exploring the possibility of publishing a report detailing key decisions. We have allocated a total of £90,000 for these costs this year.

Training

The ASA intends to continue its financial commitment to the development and training of the adjudicators and the support staff and we have allocated £15,000 for these costs this year. It will build on the firm foundations that enabled it to obtain Investors in People accreditation in its first year of operation. We plan to hold dedicated equal opportunities, management and website training this year. This is in addition to development opportunities offered by visits to other hearing centres and those organisations involved in the support of asylum seekers.

Publicity

The ASA website should be established by the end of July 2001 and the cost (about £50K) will fall this year. The ASA is considering the publication of an information video about the hearing centre that will be designed for asylum seekers. The ASA has allocated £45K for this following an initial estimate provided by the Central Office of Information. This project is currently under consideration.

ASA BUDGET ALLOCATION 2001 – 2002

Budget	£
Remuneration	
Adjudicators	400,000
Support Staff	318,000
Total	718,000
Non Paying Running Costs	
Travel & Subsistence	25,000
Training	15,000
Stationery	40,000
Publications (HMSO)	5,000
Publications (Publishers)	5,000
Photocopiers R/C	3,000
Office Machinery R/C	7,000
Printing	50,000
Translations	255,000
Interpreters	85,000
Refreshments	2,000
Advertising & Recruitment	15,000
Royal Mail	5,000
Courier Services	3,000
Publicity	45,000
Website	50,000
Subscriptions to Professional Organisations	5,000
TOTAL PAY SPEND	718,000
TOTAL NPRC SPEND	615,000
TOTAL BUDGET	1,333,000

5 Training

The ASA's Investors in People Assessor spoke of 'Excellent examples of training and development activities that have impacted on the performance of the individual and organisation'.

The ASA has a strong commitment to the training and development of each member of the team and this is published to all in our Training and Development Strategy. Operational staff and adjudicators know that there is a nominated Training and Development Co-ordinator.

The Chief and Deputy Chief Adjudicator and the Centre Manager use the performance review systems to identify and review training needs on a regular basis. This structure ensures that training is targeted specifically to areas that will support team members in delivering the objectives of the ASA and assist them in their own career development. To ensure that no training needs are overlooked we draw up an Annual Training Plan in June or July of each year and review its delivery on a quarterly basis.

We want to ensure that our training represents good value for money and we follow up each training event with an evaluation exercise, targeting areas such as how the information will be shared amongst the team. Cost effectiveness is one of the areas highlighted in our quarterly reviews of training.

Time spent on training

202 days have been committed to training in our first year. This is an average of over one day per month for each team member.

Some examples of our training priorities

Our first quarter's training concentrated on building and refining the skills necessary to get the ASA up and running. We developed practical skills in areas such as information technology and we spent some time familiarising ourselves with the law and processes of our new jurisdiction. We invested in some initial team building days.

In our second quarter we focused on our clients. Operational staff undertook customer care training which was specifically tailored for us. Staff and adjudicators observed procedures at other tribunals. Everyone extended their experience by first hand knowledge gained on visits to ports of entry, detention centres and emergency accommodation.

In our last two quarters we have prioritised training on the provisions of the Human Rights Act as they might impact upon the work of the ASA. Adjudicators and operational staff have benefited from working together on these issues. We have not only undertaken generalised training but have also purchased training specifically targeted to the work of the ASA. We have reinforced our commitment to team development by ensuring that support staff have full training on performance and appraisal development schemes.

In the year ahead, we would expect to require a lesser amount of general training but to focus on more specific areas requiring development. We hope to support those in a managerial role by identifying management training specifically for them, to build on our Human Rights Act expertise and to spend some time focusing on equal treatment training specific to the ASA. This work has already begun with race awareness training for operational staff and equal treatment training for adjudicators.

6 ASA Performance Review: 2000/2001

Our performance targets for last year were grouped into five strategic aims. The full detailed breakdown of our performance against our target standards is given in the Chief Adjudicators Annual Report for that year. The following is intended as a summary on our overall performance:

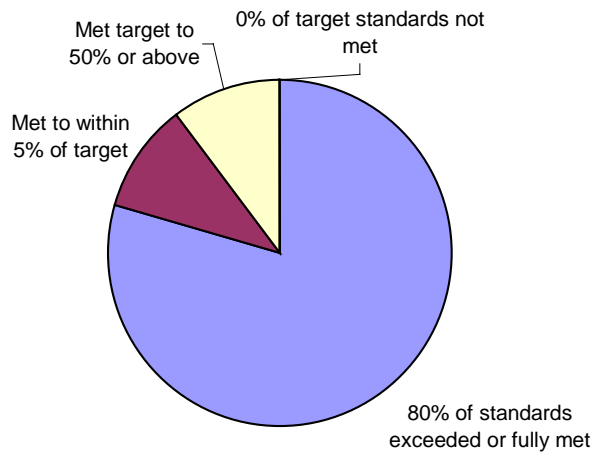
Strategic Aim		Number of Target Standards	Fully Met or Exceeded target	Met to within 5% of Target	Partly Met to 50% or above	Not Met (below 50%)
1	Compliance with strategic targets of delegated legislation	4	2	2	0	0
2	Efficiency and Professionalism through respectful and innovative practices	7	7	0	0	0
3	Timeliness	3	3	0	0	0
4	Fairness and Independence	8	4	1	3	0
5	Accessibility and Sensitivity	7	7	0	0	0

Comment on Areas where Achievement against Target was below 95%

Fairness and Independence

- Target - 80% support staff weekly team meetings take place and are minuted.
54% took place since it was strategically more useful to hold meetings on a two weekly basis.
- Target 85% quarterly team meetings jointly with support staff and adjudicators take place and are minuted.
75% took place. We held 3 team events.
- Target 100% adjudicators and support staff to have equalities training by December 2000. We met this to 50% by December 2000 and 100% by February 2001 due to external constraints in booking courses.

ASA Performance Standards 2000 - 01



7 Customer Feedback

(1) *Compliments and Complaints*

We have had no complaints in our first year. We have received two written compliments on specific areas of our service.

(2) *User Group Feedback*

We have received an enthusiastic response to the three user group meetings that we have held. Positive suggestions in relation to our service delivery have been received and we are actively following through on some of these ideas, such as a freephone service. We were pleased that the Director of Policy and Public Affairs for the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux said in a recent letter that our approach to user panels compares favourably with other such user panels in this area. Other written comment from user group attendees has included praise for the accessibility and design of our tribunal room facilities.

(3) *The Council on Tribunals*

We have received one visit from the Council on Tribunals this year and look forward to a return visit shortly. The attending representative was able to meet some adjudicators and to sit in on at least one hearing. Generally, the service we provide to our users was felt to be of a good standard, although concerns remain as to the restrictions that are necessarily imposed by our tight legislative timetable.

(4) *Judicial Reviews*

Six challenges to decisions made in our first year have been mounted, of these, four were lodged by the Secretary of State and two by appellants. To date, two of these have been withdrawn by agreement, leaving four currently proceeding.

We had anticipated and to some degree welcome challenges by way of judicial review, particularly bearing in mind that we are a new jurisdiction and that the coming into force of the Human Rights Act has generated new areas of argument in the field of asylum support. We take an active and direct interest in any judicial review mounted and we look forward to reporting any decisions in our next Annual Report.

8 Performance Analysis – Strengths and Constraints – 2000/01

Introduction

Reviewing our performance to date is not only intended to be a vehicle for self-congratulation! It also provides a valuable opportunity to analyse the service we are providing and the feedback and statistical information we have gathered in order to highlight opportunities for further development and improvement. The Deputy Chief Adjudicator and the Centre Manager meet quarterly to review the ASA's performance against its Business Plan targets and report this information back to the Chief Adjudicator. Discussion and feedback on our performance takes place at the adjudicators' team meeting and the operational staff team meeting on a quarterly basis. In addition there are biannual meetings of the whole unit to look in more detail at our performance.

Aim

1 and 3

Strengths

- The timescale targets set for appeal hearings by the Asylum Support Appeals (Procedure) Rules 2000 are exceedingly tight. The appellant has two days from receiving the notice of their decision from NASS to lodge an appeal. The ASA must then notify NASS either on receipt of the appeal or as soon as possible on the following day that a notice of appeal has been received and NASS must send back the appeal bundle to the adjudicator the day after. Once the appeal bundle has been provided an adjudicator must consider the appeal no later than the next day after the bundle was received. If there is to be an oral hearing this must be listed no later than four days thereafter and for written cases the matter may be decided by the adjudicator on the day of consideration or, if not, then in any event not more than four days later. If there is an oral hearing the adjudicator must decide the case and give his or her determination on the day of the hearing. The Reasons Statement setting out the rationale for the decision is sent out in written

Constraints

- There have been some instances in which we have been unable to comply with the time limits for hearings set by delegated legislation. In all cases if directions to postpone or adjourn hearings have been given, these have been as a result of representations that the appellant would be prejudiced if the time limits were adhered to. The adjudicator has a difficult decision to make since in a majority of cases the appellant remains without support from the NASS in the interim whilst waiting for their appeal to be decided. Inevitably, however, there will be some circumstances where 100% adherence to legislative targets would not be in the interests of justice and adjudicators have directed accordingly.

Aim

Strengths

Constraints

cases on the day of determination and in oral cases no later than two days after the appeal hearing was determined.

These targets have been adhered to by the ASA in 96% of cases. In those rare cases where the targets have not been met it has been because an adjournment has been granted at the appellant's request to give sufficient time to prepare their case.

- Over the past year we have found that the information we need to record has required regular review. This change has sometimes occurred as a response to external requests for additional information and sometimes as a response to our own analysis as we have monitored both our workload and our work processes. This has meant that we have improved our databases on a continuous basis and that our statistics for the year to come will have improved in both accuracy and content.

2

- We have demonstrated a strong commitment to the development and training of support staff and adjudicators. The Investors in People quality standard was achieved within one year of creation of the service (in advance of our target standard). We have used a planning mechanism that involves everyone in reviewing our performance against our strategic objectives and invites direct input into the formulation of our objectives for the year ahead. All staff and adjudicators have had the benefit of a formal appraisal and development process
- The impossibility of predicting workloads in our first year has meant that we have been able to offer no work to our sessional adjudicators and our full-time and part-time adjudicators have found their listings subject to huge peaks and troughs in demand. The potential number of appeals is entirely dependant upon the refusal or termination rate of NASS and there is therefore a potential for the lack of direct control to lower the morale of staff and adjudicators and to result in poor work planning.

Aim

Strengths

and we have a mechanism which ensures that training needs are identified on a regular basis and incorporated into a training plan which is regularly reviewed.

Constraints

We recognise that we will always be an essentially reactive service but we have taken steps in the past year to improve the way in which we deal with this situation. Much of the impact of this fluctuating workflow on the ASA team can be moderated by the provision of accurate information. We have begun to take steps to improve our communication structure with NASS so that we can plan in advance for the effect of NASS initiatives. If, for example, we know that the NASS policy on dispersal is to be strictly implemented from a certain date, we can forecast that there is likely to be a sharp increase in appeals over the two weeks after that date. In the forthcoming year we shall take further steps to improve this provision of information and we will be meeting with officers from NASS to discuss what statistics and forecasts they are able to provide to us. As more potential users and their representatives become aware of the appeals mechanism it may be that there will be an increased take-up of the right to appeal. This would have some effect in regularising our workload.

4 and 5

- We have set up a detailed complaints procedure and a scheme to monitor customer feedback. To date the only feedback has been positive and we have had no complaints about our service.
- We have recorded all of our decisions in a publicly
- Although we are pleased that the majority of our feedback has been positive, we are mindful of the need to ensure that this is not simply because our service users either do not know how to complain or give criticism or do not feel enabled to make such comments. This is an area which we have

Aims

Strengths

available register and have additionally produced decisions on disk for ease of access. We are working on the production of our own website, which should be operational by end July 2001.

- We have prioritised the openness and accessibility of our service by providing information on the hearing centre in a variety of different languages and proactively mailing it to outlets likely to be used by appellants. We have also set up user group meetings that take place once a quarter and we have publicised these to a wide variety of potential users and their representatives. Attendance to date has been good. We have ensured that our telephone number can be easily found by users and where we require a response (for example on an out of time appeal) we send stamped envelopes to appellants.
- We have sent out English versions of the Reasons Statements within the statutory timescale in every case and in the majority of cases an own language version will be sent to the appellant within a week thereafter.

Constraints

highlighted for further work with our user groups and which we will keep under review. We have recently commenced sending out our leaflet on how to complain with the initial information that appellants receive from us.

- One of the difficulties of being an entirely new service was to create a meaningful culture and structure against a backdrop of an initially low workload. The NASS support system was rolled out slowly during the summer of 2000 with the result that it was not possible to have any real feel for the appeals workload until the latter part of the October-December quarter.

We originally planned a communications structure based on weekly meetings for the adjudicators, weekly meetings for the operational staff, quarterly joint meetings and weekly reviews between the Deputy Chief Asylum Support Adjudicator and the Centre Manager. The adjudicators have met weekly, which has both developed a culture of shared learning and provoked some lively discussion. The work of the operational staff is largely hands-on and they have found it more productive to meet on a two-weekly basis, particularly so that any procedural changes required reflect the workload position at the time. We have held three joint team events during the year which were both enjoyable and very productive.

Aim

Strengths

Constraints

Communication meetings between the Deputy Chief and the Centre Manager have tended to take place on an 'as required' basis with a minimum of one meeting per fortnight.

We have therefore tried to reach a balance between keeping to a minimum number of meetings so that team communication is not lost and ensuring that meetings have a useful purpose and content and do not simply become an interruption which is resented. Since the appointment system for adjudicators and the secondment system for support staff are entirely separate, the support staff and adjudicators essentially function as two separate and independent teams. Communication between us is therefore the key to the success of the ASA, keeping us all focused on joint aims and service delivery. The frequency of this communication and the format for it is an issue to which we will pay particular attention in the next year.

- It is clear to us from our discussions with users that only a small percentage of those entitled to appeal actually do so. It is difficult for us to produce anything other than anecdotal information as to why this may be the case. The ASA needs to do further work with users and potential users to ensure that everyone who wishes to exercise their right of appeal has the information available that enables them to do so. We are mindful that many appellants will

Aim

Strengths

Constraints

have been evicted from their accommodation as soon as the decision to terminate support is made. We are looking into the possibility of a user video which will reassure those attending the hearing centre as to our procedures and an easily accessible website, which will explain who we are and make provision for a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section. We will explore the possibility of translation of the most frequently used of our forms into the most commonly used languages and we are exploring the possibility of a freephone number.

- The vast majority of our appellants are unrepresented. We try to deliver our Reasons Statements in a manner which is readily accessible but we are mindful that the majority of our appellants speak little or no English. During our first year we have begun work on the provision of translated Reasons Statements for each appellant but there remain some difficulties with this, given the large array of languages and dialects which are required. We are experiencing difficulty in procuring translation into some languages and we need to monitor the length of time the translation takes. We will do further work on information provision in the year to come.
- We recognise that coming to our building can be a nerve-wracking experience and we would like to continue work with user groups on the creation of a

Constraints

more welcoming reception space. We are constrained by both space and staffing as far as facilities for children are concerned.

2001 – 2002

Service Standards

In line with our Mission Statement, adjudicators and support staff aim to be:

- **Compliant with strategic targets of delegated legislation**
- **Efficient and Professional**
- **Just and Independent**
- **Responsive and Sensitive to users needs**
- **Proactive**

Service Standards 2001 – 2002:

10 Implementation and Monitoring

We want to make sure that our service standards are translated into real actions. In this our second Business Plan we have tried to retain and build on the most useful of last year's targets and to review or add targets in areas where we feel we could make improvements. The following paragraphs give a brief introduction to the aims we have set ourselves in each area of our service standards. A full breakdown of our targets and how we intend to measure them can be found in tabular format at Annex 1.

Compliance with strategic targets of delegated legislation

We have essentially retained the targets of our first year, together with our method of achieving these. This is because our own monitoring exercise and the feedback we have received indicates that we are performing well in this area and that the statistics that we keep and report on are useful.

Efficiency and Professionalism

We have retained all the aspects of our planning cycle, including the setting of a training plan, which operational staff and adjudicators have reported as useful in setting up a team culture that has clear objectives. We have added some additional methods of monitoring, evaluation and development for our support staff and adjudicators and have tried to focus these on areas that are likely to have the most impact for our service users.

Justice and Independence

We have adjusted targets for our internal communication meetings to reflect the methods we have found most useful throughout our first year. We have maintained our standards of response to any complaints received and we have developed additional methods to classify our decisions, in order to assist adjudicators to be consistent in high quality decision making. We have aimed to gather additional information that will help both those representing the appellant and the respondent to review the effectiveness of the appeal process.

Responsiveness and Sensitivity

We have added the need to be responsive to our service standards for this year in order to highlight our commitment not only to being sensitive to the needs of our various service users but also to respond where action is required. Whereas last year our targets focused on the setting up of systems which enhanced our accessibility, this year we are concentrating on targets which will help to publicise our willingness to receive and act on user feedback. We have maintained and enhanced our attention to the interpretation services which we use and have set new targets which we hope will add to our commitment to provide equality of treatment to all users.

Proactivity

We have added proactivity as a new service standard. We feel that this confirms our commitment to look for ways of continuous improvement. We are proud of some of the innovations that we have instituted over the past year and particularly that these suggestions for improved service delivery have emanated from a variety of different team members, both operational staff and adjudicators. The targets we have set ourselves in this section aim to ensure that we continue with some of the innovatory work we have already started. We hope to show ourselves to be open to new ideas and to welcome all suggestions for improvement.

11 Reporting

Information

The ASA performance indicators and the quality of our service delivery, measured against our targets, will be published in our Annual Report. Our targets are reviewed in our annual Business Plan. In addition we will hold regular and open discussions with user groups and other interested parties to cover all aspects of our service delivery. We hold a public register of all our decisions, which are also available on disk and we are keen to encourage access to these. At the moment our decisions are also published on the ein website: www.ein.org.uk. By the end of this business year we intend to have our own website, containing not only our record of decisions but useful and easily accessible information on our service. Our budget allocation is managed by the Centre Manager and will be open to scrutiny as part of our business plan, with our budget performance being reported in our Annual Report.

Conduct:

Our adjudicators commit to a code that governs their conduct and ensures professionalism. The Chief Adjudicator reports to the Secretary of State on an annual basis as to the performance of the adjudicators. The performance of our support staff is regularly reviewed and is subject to written report in accordance with the guidance of their seconding department. Details of any criticism and praise we receive will be published in our Annual Report and reflected in the target standards of our Business Plan. We will benchmark our progress by quarterly monitoring. We will seek for year on year improvements, developing and reviewing our delivery targets as our work expands and as our contact with users and other professional groups becomes more representative.

Annexes

KEY OBJECTIVES**Strategic Aim 1: Compliance with strategic targets of delegated legislation**

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
<p>1 List hearings within statutory timescale of no later than 4 days from ‘Consideration Day’. (Consideration Day is a maximum of 2 days after appeal received.)</p> <p>2 To ensure internal procedure enables compliance with target set in (1) above.</p>	<p>1 Measure volume of appeals received.</p> <p>2 Produce statistics on number of Notices of Hearing sent within statutory timescale.</p> <p>3 Review internal procedures on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>4 Supervisory action if deficiencies highlighted.</p>	<p>100% of notices sent within timescale.</p>	<p>Possible constraints:</p> <p>(i) Appeals lodged out of time.</p> <p>(ii) Appeals out of jurisdiction.</p> <p>(iii) Late delivery of Secretary of State’s appeal bundle.</p>
<p>3 Hear cases and deliver adjudication within 4 days from ‘Consideration Day’ (see (1) above).</p>	<p>1 Produce statistics on number of oral hearings completed within statutory timescale.</p> <p>2 Produce statistics on number of written hearings completed within statutory timescale and when written decisions sent out.</p> <p>3 Monitor results in meetings with adjudicators and support staff.</p>	<p>100% of oral hearings completed within timescale.</p> <p>100% of written hearings completed within timescale.</p>	<p>Constraints as (i) – (iii) above and applications to postpone or adjourn granted in the interests of justice and fairness.</p>

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
4 Send out Statements of Reasons not later than 2 days after date of oral hearings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Produce statistics on Statements of Reasons sent within statutory timescale. 2 Monitor results with adjudicators on a regular basis. 	100% of Statements of Reasons sent within timescale.	
5 Report annually to all users on our performance.	Annual Report to contain figures reporting on our compliance with legislative targets.	100% of statistical information on these targets to be published annually.	

Strategic Aim: 2 Efficiency and Professionalism

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
1 Maintain and operate a planning cycle for strategic objectives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Discuss future aims with support staff at regular team events and with adjudicators at regular meetings with the CASA/DCASA. 2 To produce Business Plan. 3 To produce Annual Report. 	<p>100% of objectives set in present Business Plan to be reviewed every quarter.</p> <p>100% of results of quarterly review of objectives to be reported to adjudicators and support staff with remedial action recommended where appropriate.</p> <p>100% of performance against Business Plan targets to be monitored and published in Annual Report.</p>	
2 Provide information to our supervisory body, the Council on Tribunals, on a half-yearly basis.	Half-yearly paper return.	100% of returns submitted on time.	
3 Highlight support needs at an early stage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Monitor and report on sickness absences on a quarterly basis. 2 Monitor and report on unauthorised absence on a quarterly basis. 3 Supervisory action to be taken at an early stage in accordance with notified procedures. 	<p>95% of support staff attendance compliant with guidelines.</p> <p>95% of support staff absence monitoring reports completed on time and supervisory action for support staff completed [with a view to reducing the level of sick absence by 5% this year].</p> <p>95% of adjudicators' absence reported and monitored and supervisory action taken where appropriate.</p>	

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
4 CASA to monitor quality and consistency of adjudications and Reasons Statements.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Paper review of cases determined and attendance at some hearings for review purposes. 2 Reviews are proportionate to the sitting times of each adjudicator and are discussed with them in review sessions. 3 Reviews are confirmed in writing and reflect the targets set in appraisal and development sessions. 	<p>Minimum 10% of oral determinations are subject to quality monitoring.</p> <p>Minimum 30% Reasons Statements are subject to quality monitoring.</p> <p>100% of twice yearly review meetings and reports take place.</p>	<p>Possible constraints:</p> <p>Absence of Adjudicators on leave or through illness.</p> <p>Low level of listings or withdrawals prior to booked reviews.</p>
5 Ensure support staff and adjudicators are highly motivated and committed to the aims of the ASA.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Annually update objectives in performance review for adjudicators. 2 Annually update objectives in performance monitoring procedures for support staff. 	<p>90% of support staff to have received Appraisal and Development meetings by March 2002.</p> <p>90% of adjudicators to have received review meetings by March 2002.</p>	<p>Possible constraints:</p> <p>Unavoidable staff absences.</p> <p>Low workload at point of monitoring.</p>
6 Ensure that all support staff and adjudicators involved in appeal hearings demonstrate respect for users.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Objectives for adjudicators to include a review of appropriacy of conduct in court. 2 All performance monitoring procedures for support staff involved in appeal hearings to include a review of performance in the court setting. 	<p>90% of adjudicators to have written and verbal feedback on court conduct by March 2002.</p> <p>90% of support staff to have received feedback on court conduct in appraisal and development meetings by March 2002.</p>	

Objective	1 Method	Target Standard	Comments
7 Demonstrate commitment to training.	2 Set up yearly training plan in consultation with all support staff and adjudicators to reflect Business Plan objectives. 3 Keep recording system of training uptake. 4 Maintain continuous training evaluation.	80% training courses to have written evaluation. 75% of highlighted training needs to be reflected in a Training Plan by June/July 2002. 100% quarterly monitoring meetings evaluating training to take place.	
8 Work towards IiP Accreditation renewal in Autumn/Winter 2002.	1 Quarterly reviews to maintain IiP standards. 2 Action on all points for further work highlighted in IiP Assessment.	100% quarterly monitoring meetings to take place.	

Strategic Aim 3: Justice and Independence

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
1 Monitor complaints.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Maintain database to record nature of complaints and timescale of response. 2 Reports from Complaints procedure to be reviewed on a quarterly basis with the CASA and DCASA. 3 Results of monitoring meeting to be cascaded to staff and adjudicators and published in Annual Report. 	<p>90% of complaints to be acknowledged within five working days.</p> <p>80% of complaints to receive a substantive response within 20 working days.</p>	<p>Constraints: Low use of complaints procedure</p>
2 Develop a culture of fairness and independence.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Maintain regular team meetings and circulate information to those not in attendance. 2 Programme in regular liaison meetings between adjudicators and support staff. 3 Fortnightly communication meetings between DCASA and Centre Manager. 	<p>80% of fortnightly team meetings for support staff take place and are minuted.</p> <p>80% of weekly team meetings for adjudicators take place and are minuted.</p> <p>85% of 6 monthly team meetings to review performance jointly with adjudicators and support staff take place and are minuted.</p> <p>80% of communication meetings between DCASA and Centre Manager take place.</p>	

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
3 Publicise key decisions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Public register to be maintained. 2 External publication to be developed for starred decisions. 3 Website to be developed. 	<p>100% decisions included in public register.</p> <p>100% decisions available on disk.</p> <p>60% information to be recorded on ASA website by October 2001.</p> <p>100% information to be provided for ein website by July 2001.</p>	<p>Constraints:</p> <p>Viability of external publication is to some degree constrained by volume of determinations.</p>
4 Develop Human Rights expertise.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Cascade training to continue through circulation of relevant caselaw. 2 Discussion at adjudicators' meetings on a regular basis. 	<p>80% files annotated to monitor and record the raising of Human Rights issues.</p> <p>80% weekly trawl and dissemination of relevant caselaw takes place.</p>	
5 Review the effectiveness and outcome of the appeal process.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Record and report on statistics where NASS decision is withdrawn post service of appeal but prior to appeal hearing. 2 Record and report on statistics about outcome of hearings. 	<p>90% of relevant statistics reviewed on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>100% of relevant statistics reported publicly in Annual Report.</p>	
6 Consistent and qualitative decision making.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Update the ASA Best Practice manual on an annual basis. 2 Maintain on a subject by subject basis a decision making index for the use of adjudicators in order to facilitate public and in-house knowledge of previous decisions. 	<p>90% compliance with updating Best Practice Manual reviewed by year end.</p> <p>85% decisions to be recorded within legal precedent index within one month of determination.</p>	

Strategic Aim 4: Responsiveness and Sensitivity

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
1 Monitor user comment procedure.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Comment cards to be available at reception. 2 System in place to record verbal comments. 3 Monitoring system in place to record and respond to any special needs. 4 User group meeting to discuss user feedback procedure on regular basis. 	<p>90% of comments received to be assessed and actioned within 20 days.</p> <p>100% user group meetings to note, report on and action any customer feedback.</p>	
2 Publicise complaints procedure.	Make available leaflets giving details of complaints procedure.	<p>90% of complaints acknowledged within 5 working days.</p> <p>80% of complaints to receive substantive response within 20 working days.</p>	
3 Disseminate complaints procedure.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Regular mail outs of complaints procedure to potential users. 2 Regular monitoring of feedback via user group meetings. 3 Further publication of complaints procedure with the assistance of user groups. 	<p>80% of appellants to have existence of complaints procedure brought to their attention within five working days of their valid appeal being lodged.</p> <p>100% of user group meetings to include a report on user perception of the service.</p>	

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
4 Disseminate information on the Hearing Centre.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Consider additional methods of making information accessible e.g. website/video footage/photographic aids/tapes. 2 Consider translation of additional leaflets. 	<p>80% of information leaflets to be distributed to user representatives on a six monthly basis.</p> <p>100% of appellants to have been sent user information within two days of a valid appeal notice.</p>	
5 Use of high quality interpretation services and monitoring of service standards on a continuous basis.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Disseminate information setting out ASA expectations of interpreters. 2 Keep statistics on attendance by interpreters. 3 Oral hearings to be attended for purpose of monitoring quality of interpretation services. 4 Maintain database to develop ASA record of interpreters. 5 Review use of Central Interpreters Unit with a view to increasing use of interpreters holding professional qualifications. 6 Survey interpreters' experience of working for the ASA. 	<p>Timely attendance by interpreter at 90% of oral hearings maintained.</p> <p>Quality monitoring sheet completed on 90% of oral hearings.</p> <p>90% of interpreters receive letter from ASA outlining expected standards and conduct.</p> <p>85% of interpreters to be sent annual questionnaire.</p>	

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
6 Equalities Training.	1 The ASA to consolidate equal treatment training so far conducted and focus on equalities issues specific to our service. 2 Monitor equalities issues arising at hearings.	100% adjudicators and support staff to have participated in ASA based equal treatment training by October 2001. 100% of equalities issues noted to be reported to the Centre Manager/Team Leader and CASA/DCASA for action.	

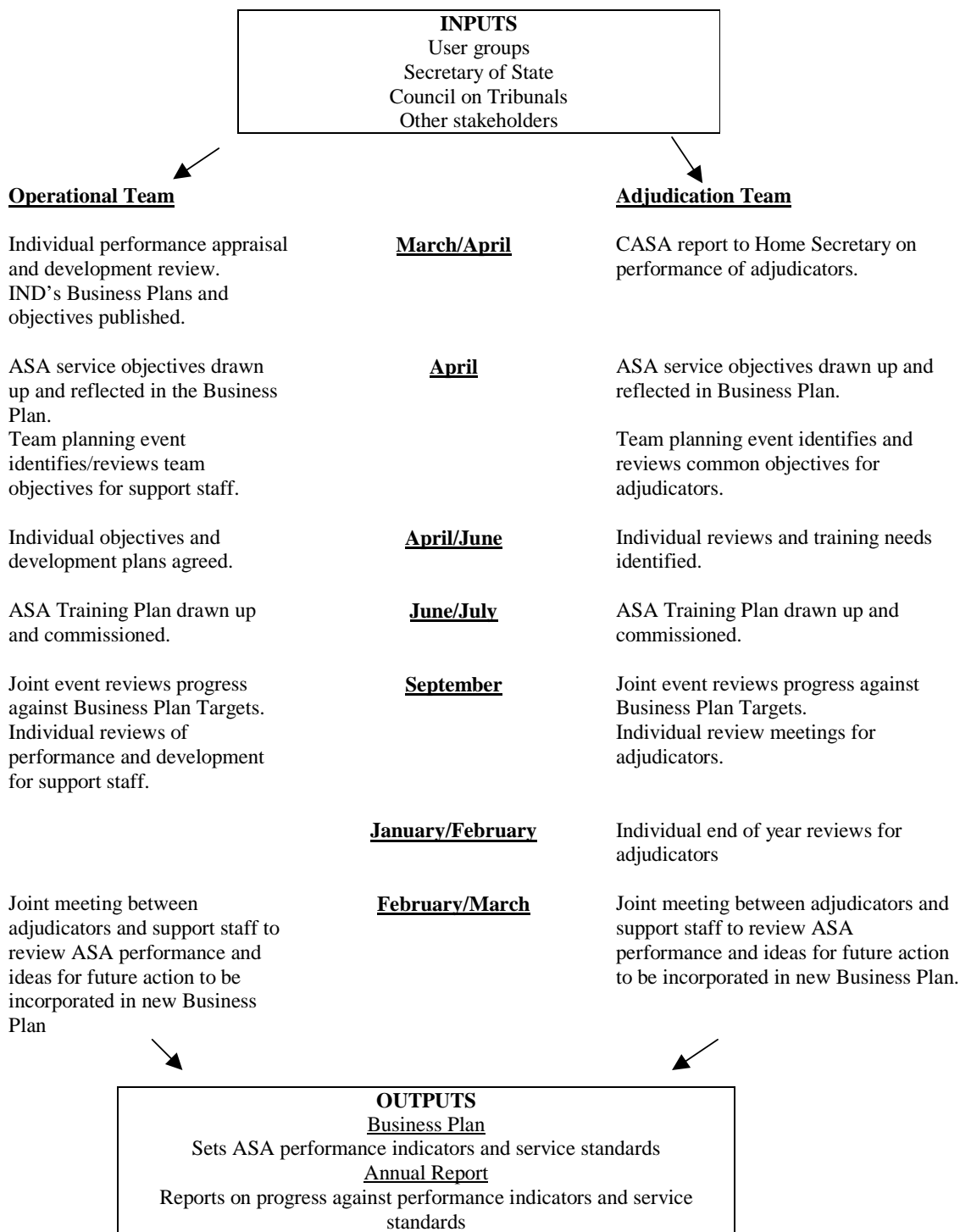
Strategic Aim 5: Proactivity

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
1 Run user group meetings on a quarterly basis.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Maintain and update stakeholder list. 2 Hold regular meetings and distribute minutes to all interested parties including those not attending. 	90% of quarterly meetings take place on time and are minuted.	
2 Provide monitoring information which informs not only the statutory deadlines for the service but also its context.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Continual review of database information and reporting to ensure meaningful statistics are produced. 2 Respond to stakeholder requests by working on database reports to attempt to record figures of attendance and representation at hearings and/or at the preparation stage. 	85% of appeal files to be flagged with information as to representation for and attendance by the appellants.	<p>Constraints:</p> <p>Difficulties arise in the definition of 'represented' since appellants often list the professional who may be representing them in their immigration matter, but who does not have instructions in relation to asylum support.</p> <p>Need to distinguish between representation by advocacy at hearings and representation by way of preparation.</p>

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
<p>3 Continue to work on producing website and improve website design in response to consultation.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ensure a regular procedure is set up for taking comments on website design as it develops. 2 Once website is established, set up an internal procedure for keeping it up to date. 3 Ensure that details of the complaints and feedback procedure are available to potential users via the web site. 	<p>60% information to be recorded on ASA website by October 2001.</p> <p>100% by March 2002.</p>	
<p>4 Use database information on case tracking to effect change where needed.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Several different databases used to produce meaningful records. 2 Quarterly monitoring of progress against target standards to be conducted by DCASA and Centre Manager. 3 Ensure that reports are both accurate and representative. 4 Results of reporting to be publicised to all support staff and adjudicators on a regular basis. 5 Performance information to be publicised as a minimum in the annual report and at each user group meeting and to be available to other stakeholders on request. 	<p>85% compliance with monitoring meetings.</p> <p>100% performance information to be published in annual report by March 2001.</p> <p>85% provision of management information to quarterly user group meetings.</p>	

Objective	Method	Target Standard	Comments
5 Value for money.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Quarterly accounting meetings to take place between DCASA and Centre Manager and to report to CASA. 2 Information on the financial position of the ASA to be published in the Annual Report. 	<p>80% compliance with monitoring meetings.</p> <p>90% financial information available in the Annual Report.</p>	
6 Ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness where change is required.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Take steps to fully publicise Business Plan setting out yearly targets and Annual Report reporting on performance against the same. 2 Ensure that a mechanism exists at user group meetings where action required is minuted and a follow-up given at the next quarterly meeting. 3 Arrange for an annual survey of users/user groups to gain feedback on our service. 	<p>90% user group meetings to be minuted and agenda to contain a summary of action taken since the last meeting.</p> <p>90% user group participants to have been consulted by way of written survey by December 2001.</p>	

ASA Planning Cycle



OUTPUTS

Business Plan

Sets ASA performance indicators and service standards

Annual Report

Reports on progress against performance indicators and service standards