

Independence

Integrity

Professionalism

Impartiality

Accountability

Transparency

Corporate Plan 2008-11

June 2008

Vision, purpose, aims & values

Our vision is to enhance confidence in the criminal justice system, to give hope and bring justice to those wrongly convicted, and based on our experience to contribute to reform of and improvements in the law.

Our purpose is to review possible miscarriages of justice in the criminal courts of England, Wales and Northern Ireland and refer appropriate cases to the appeal courts.

Our overall aims are to:

- investigate cases as quickly as possible and with thoroughness and care
- work constructively with our stakeholders and to the highest standards of quality
- treat applicants, and anyone affected by our work, with courtesy, respect and consideration
- promote public understanding of the Commission's role

We will realise our overall aims by the achievement of key strategic aims.

Our values

- independence
- integrity
- impartiality
- professionalism
- accountability
- transparency

Background

Legal framework

The Criminal Cases Review Commission is the independent statutory body that investigates alleged miscarriages of justice in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The organisation was established as a body corporate on 1st January 1997 by the Criminal Appeal Act 1995, and took over responsibility for reviewing possible miscarriages of justice from the Home Office and the Northern Ireland Office from 31st March 1997.

The Commission's rôle

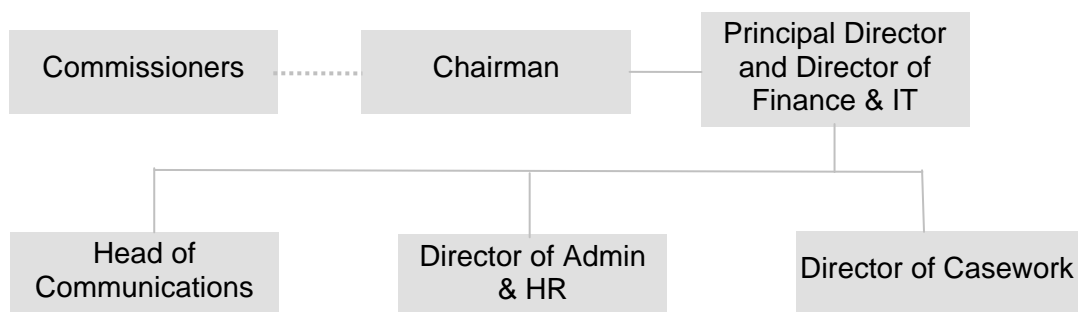
The Commission is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body ("NDPB") funded by the Office for Criminal Justice Reform through the Ministry of Justice, and contributes to the delivery of the overall aims and objectives for the Criminal Justice System. The ways in which the activities of the Commission contribute to the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets of the Criminal Justice System as set out in the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review are set out in the table below:

Criminal Justice System	
Justice for All PSA	
Indicator 1 Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the CJS in bringing offences to justice	The Commission contributes to improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system by helping to ensure that unsafe convictions are identified and safe convictions are reaffirmed.
Indicator 2 Improving public confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the CJS	The function of the Commission in referring cases to the Court of Appeal in circumstances where there is a real possibility that the Court will quash a conviction or reduce a sentence helps build confidence in the criminal justice system and helps to ensure that all parties, including the accused, are dealt with fairly; and gives reassurance to the public that justice has not miscarried in the vast majority of cases.

The organisation

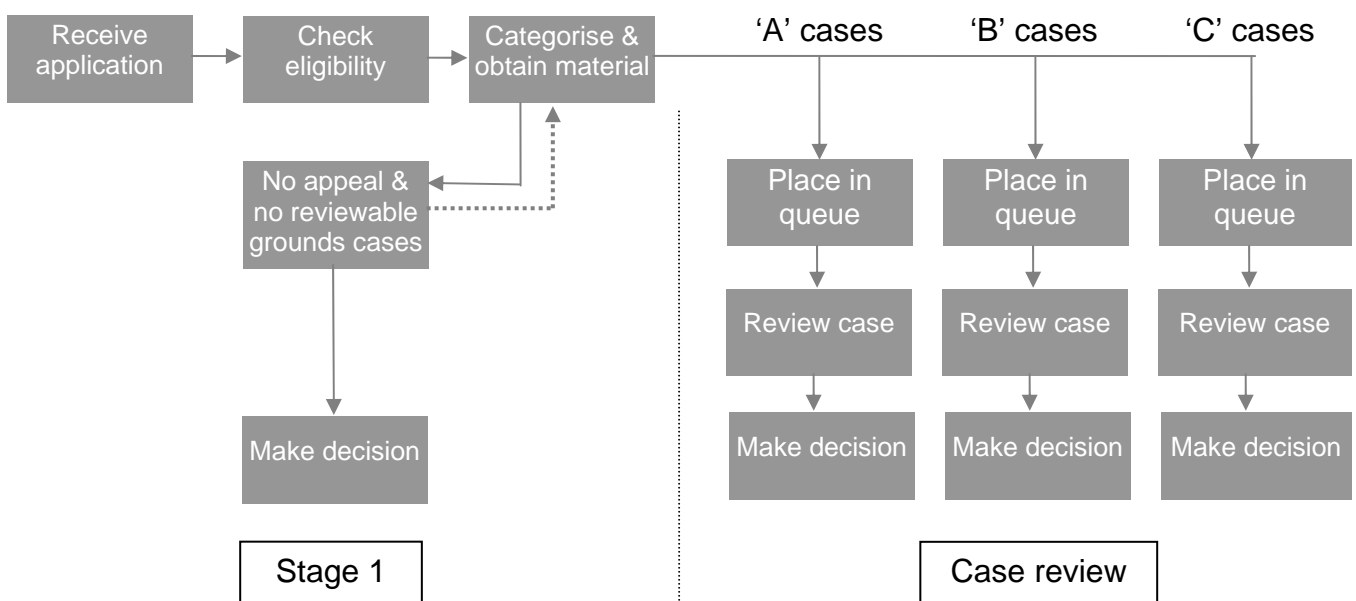
The Commission has 11 Commissioners who are appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. The Commission employs about 95 staff and is located in offices in Birmingham.

An appropriate organisational structure has been established to ensure that casework is properly managed within a framework of the provision of adequate support services and proper internal control and risk management. Executive management is entrusted to three directors. The Director of Finance & IT is designated as the Principal Director and is also the Accounting Officer:



The Commission is committed to high standards of corporate governance and follows established practice and appropriate guidance. It has five standing committees: finance, audit, HR, casework operations and remuneration, and three advisory groups: IS, legal guidance and training.

Casework is executed by a team of about 45 case reviewers supported by casework administration staff and four Legal and Investigations Advisors. The casework process has been designed to ensure the highest standards and consistency in the conduct of reviews:



Strategy

This section sets out our strategic aims, our method of delivery and timescales, the influencing factors that could potentially affect the achievement of our aims, and presents the rationale behind our strategic focus.

Focus

The focus of the Commission's strategy over the period of this plan is summarised as follows:

- **Attempt to maintain the casework position in the face of reducing budgets**
The indicative budgets on which this plan is based include a year-on-year reduction of £100,000 per annum. This is a reduction in money terms; taking inflation into account means that the real terms decrease is in the region of £300,000 each year over the period of the plan. This must have a major impact on our staffing levels. The waiting times for cases are currently at a record low following changes to our processes nearly two years ago, and it will be a significant challenge for us to prevent these budget reductions from returning the waiting times to their former unacceptable levels. To do this will represent a further substantial productivity gain, as we will need to do more with less resource, but this will only be done whilst maintaining the quality and thoroughness of the reviews.
- **Strive to reduce the time taken to complete cases**
Although we have reduced the waiting times for cases before they are allocated for review by a substantial margin over the past 18 months, we are still finding that some cases are taking too long to complete. We will concentrate our efforts over the next few years to further improve our processes and monitoring so that cases are brought to the decision stage as early as possible consistent with a thorough review.

This focus is reflected in the detailed strategic aims within each of the main business areas.

The strategy for the plan period is driven largely by the indicative reductions of budget of £100k each year in money terms. As stated above, we estimate that this is equivalent to about £300k each year in real terms (ie taking into account the increase in budget we would otherwise need for normal inflationary cost increases). The nature of the Commission's operations means that these savings have to be achieved mainly through staff reductions, and this will necessarily have an impact on the number of case reviews we can conduct, and therefore on waiting times.

A strategy of not replacing staff that leave unless absolutely necessary has been in place for a while, and this is enabling us to keep within budget in the first year. A relatively small saving is required in the second year which should be achieved with natural wastage and overhead cost savings. However, we are faced with a major challenge in the last year of the plan. This is discussed in full in the section on influencing factors on page 11.

Strategic aims

① Casework

“To review cases efficiently and effectively, and with the minimum of delay consistent with the circumstances of individual cases.”

This aim will be achieved by:

- increasing the efficiency of the casework process by the adoption of a policy of continuous improvement, and specifically by:
 - identifying and removing bottlenecks in our processes
 - keeping case reviewer portfolios under review
 - investigating the causes of long-running cases
 - listening to applicants and their representatives so that we can improve on the service we deliver
- developing links with other criminal justice agencies through the work of Criminal Justice IT to facilitate the electronic exchange of documentation
- improving the effectiveness of the decision-making process by the continuing development and implementation of best practice
- improving the management information available by exploiting and developing the existing case tracking system, in particular to provide more information of the progress of cases during the main review stage
- keeping legislative changes under review, and in particular making preparations for the expansion of the Commission’s remit to cover courts-martial during this plan period
- developing knowledge management systems to assist in casework and to help identify issues of law, practice and procedure of importance to the Criminal Justice system, and to pass these to the appropriate bodies

② Resources

“To ensure that the core activities of the Commission are supported by the appropriate use of available resources, and that value for money is delivered.”

This aim will be achieved by:

- ensuring staff are retained by offering appropriate rewards and a good working environment
- ensuring high quality case reviews by providing staff with appropriate training and development
- implementing an appropriate staff management and appraisal system
- optimising the ratio of caseworking to support staff by eliminating waste and duplication
- providing appropriate IT tools to assist in the caseworking process

- ensuring IT systems are provided in the most cost-effective manner, in particular by employing the most appropriate technology when the next major refresh of our IT systems is carried out during the plan period
- exploring ways of exploiting technology to improve casework processes
- the continued provision of good office accommodation, including reviewing options for reducing costs as we approach the break points in our leases
- ensuring that financial resources are properly controlled and appropriately targeted to help achieve the other strategic aims in this plan
- reviewing and monitoring our risk management framework

③ Corporate matters

“To ensure that the Commission’s activities are properly planned and monitored, that it achieves an appropriate public profile, and that a positive contribution to the criminal justice system is made.”

This aim will be achieved by:

- developing a robust casework business model that will have strong predictive value in terms of both future caseloads and resource requirements
- continuously monitoring performance against the business plan objectives
- effectively communicating the business plan objectives to staff, and relating those objectives to their work
- continuing to monitor performance using the management information reporting package, including key performance indicators
- continuing to develop a mutually beneficial and trusting relationship with the Commission’s sponsor at all levels
- continuing the prison awareness campaign to increase recognition of the Commission’s work among potential applicants
- developing relations with our partners within the criminal justice system, with our counterpart organisations in other jurisdictions and with other interested parties at home and overseas
- exploring opportunities for research on the casework data held by the Commission, either by directly commissioning work or allowing access by independent researchers

Delivery

It is the intention to deliver all of the actions set out under the strategic aims above within the period of this plan.

The detailed business plans for each year covering the period of this corporate plan will set out specific measurable objectives linked to each of the strategic aims. Performance against these objectives, and progress towards the strategic aims, will be reported in each year's annual report.

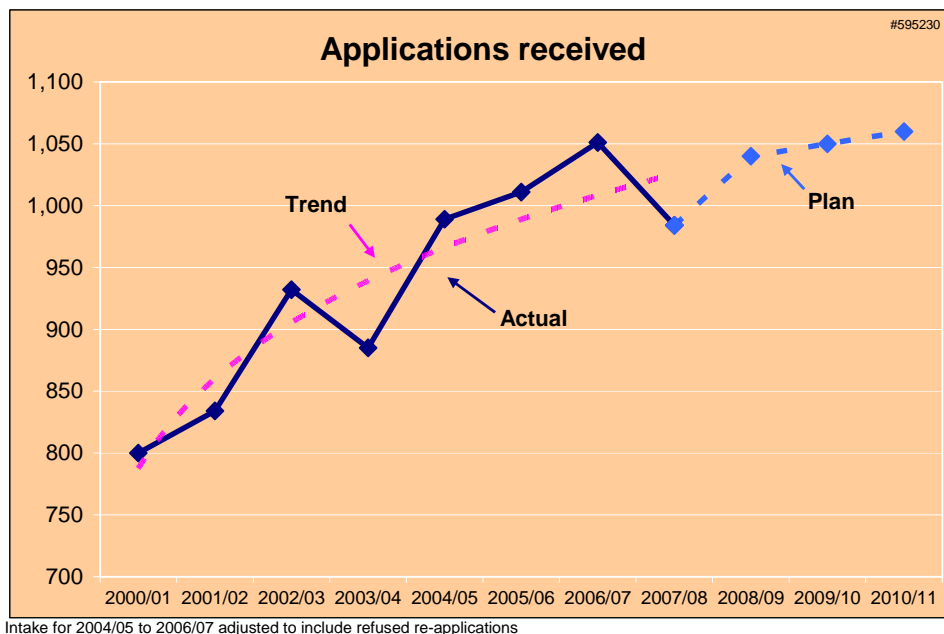
Influencing factors

Strategic aim ① - Casework

Case intake

The Commission is a demand-led organisation, and the number of applications received each year has an important bearing on our ability to process those cases within an acceptable timeframe.

The number of applications received in 2007/08 was lower than expected, but lean years have been experienced before (eg 2003/04) which have not interrupted the general trend. Projections have therefore been made based on the long-term trend:



The number of directions by the Court of Appeal which the Commission deals with under section 15 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 has now settled into a pattern, and we are forecasting a modest increase over the period of the plan.

Projections of case intake have therefore been made as follows:

#1141311

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
New applications	1,028	1,036	1,045
Section 15 directions	12	14	15
Total	1,040	1,050	1,060

Casework flows

Casework flows have been projected forward for the plan period based on the case intake projections and current staffing levels. No account has been taken of the impact that would result from any measures taken during the plan period to make the budget savings needed in 2009/10 and 2010/11. This is discussed further below on page 13. The projections are based on historic rates of case closure, and assume that the mix of case categories will remain unchanged from recent experience. Because of this, the projections carry a degree of uncertainty, particularly in the later years of the plan. The fact that measures will need to be taken for us to remain within budget means that these projections cannot be realised.

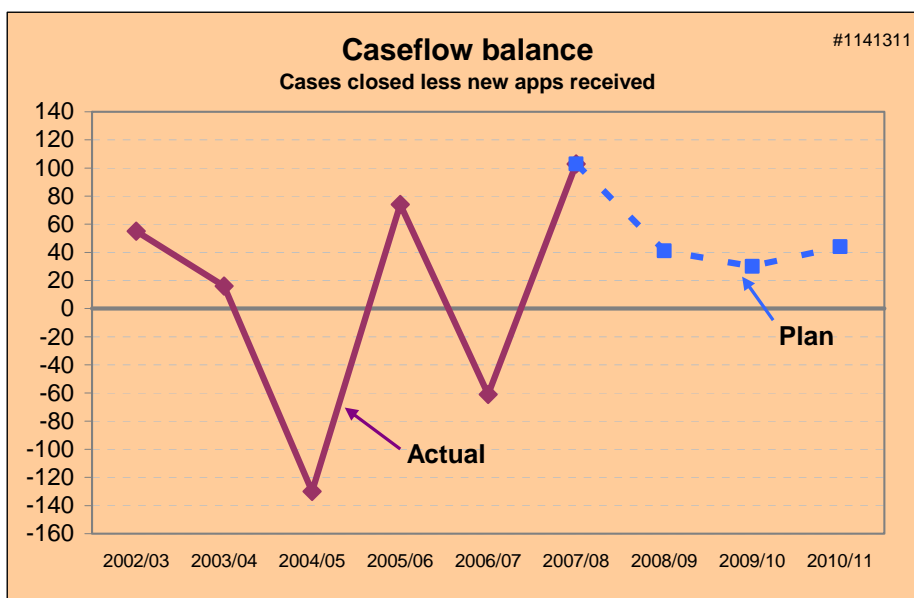
#1141311

		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Stage 1/Categorisation				
Cases in queue/in progress b/f	+	205	215	215
Case intake	+	1,040	1,050	1,060
Cases closed	-	664	673	685
Categorised for review / section 15	-	366	377	390
Cases in queue/in progress c/f	=	215	215	200
Category A review				
Cases waiting & under review b/f	+	161	151	147
Passed from Categorisation	+	220	224	224
Cases closed	-	230	228	231
Cases waiting & under review c/f	=	151	147	140
Category B review				
Cases waiting & under review b/f	+	162	142	130
Passed from Categorisation	+	103	106	106
Cases closed	-	123	118	129
Cases waiting & under review c/f	=	142	130	107
Category C review				
Cases waiting & under review b/f	+	115	95	80
Passed from Categorisation	+	32	33	33
Cases closed	-	52	48	46
Cases waiting & under review c/f	=	95	80	67
Section 15 directions				
Cases waiting & under review b/f	+	1	1	1
Passed from Categorisation	+	12	13	13
Cases closed	-	12	13	13
Cases waiting & under review c/f	=	1	1	1
TOTAL				
Intake		1,040	1,050	1,060
Cases closed		1,081	1,080	1,104

Projections have been made on the assumption that Stage 1 and Categorisation is kept as up to date as possible. This means that there will be a minimal number of cases waiting and in progress, consistent with the time taken to prepare cases and obtain material from third parties. Further assumptions are that efforts will be made to reduce the number of Category B and C cases waiting, but not at the expense of allowing Category A cases to fall behind.

It should be noted that Section 15 directions are dealt with as a priority, as they relate to cases already before the Court of Appeal. Consequently, any increase in such directions will absorb resource that would otherwise be used to review normal applications.

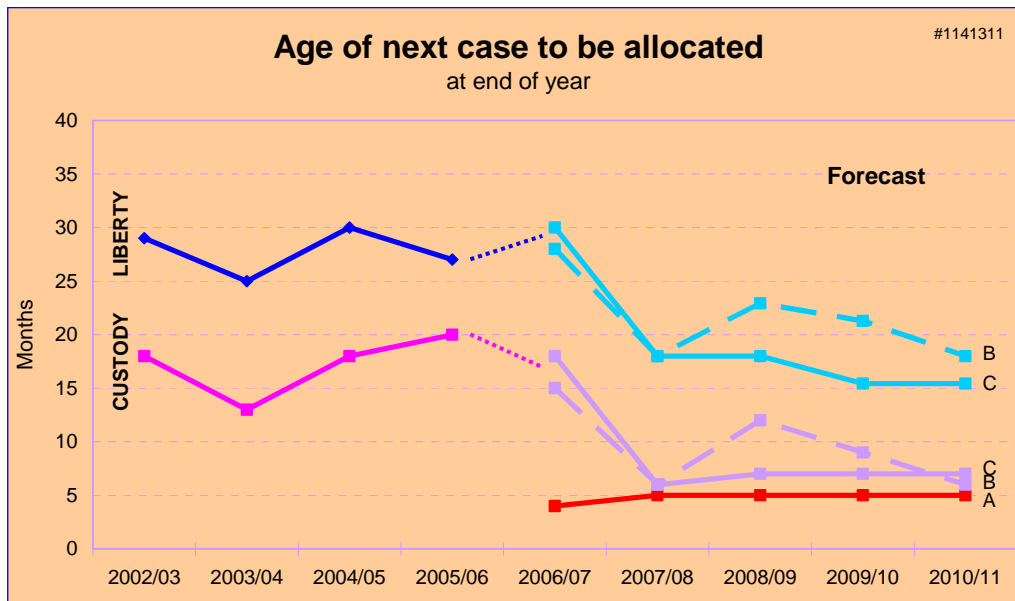
A key indicator of the Commission’s performance is that it should close at least as many cases as it receives as new applications. This is measured using ‘casework balance’, which is the number of cases closed less new applications. The objective should be to keep this measure positive. The projections show that this would be achieved in all three years of the plan if we did not have to take measures to reduce our expenditure:



Another important indicator is the age of the next case to be allocated for review for each category. This is of special interest to applicants, and is arguably more important than the number of cases waiting. Projecting the age of cases waiting is difficult because the effect of prioritising certain cases is to make cases in the queues older than one might expect from simply looking at the throughput in each category. A modelling technique has been developed to take this effect into account, although the result can only be approximate. Our projections show that over the period of the plan, waiting times would fluctuate a little, but generally would show only minor changes from the position at the start of the plan if no budget reduction measures were taken.

These projections are based, however, on current staffing levels. It will not be possible to maintain these with the budgets provided, and so actual performance will be below the projected values.

Casework projections based on current staffing



Although the plan projections indicate that we would close more cases than we receive each year of the plan if our staffing levels were to remain the same, this would have a minimal impact on our waiting times. However, budgetary reductions mean that waiting times will inevitably increase over the period of the plan.

Strategic aim 2 - Resources

The financial resources available from the Commission's sponsor department determine the particular mix of human resources the Commission may deploy, and the extent to which it may invest in systems. Some investment is necessary each year for updating and renewing equipment and software, and major investment is required periodically for technology refresh programmes.

At the time of compiling this plan, the Commission had been provided with an indicative budget for 2008/09. For subsequent years, the Commission will be subject to efficiency savings, which involves its resource budget being reduced in money terms by £100,000 each year for the remainder of the plan period. It is understood that similar reductions are being experienced throughout the public sector. This reduction is equivalent to a real-terms reduction of £296,000 in the near-cash budget for 2008/09 (almost 4½%). The Commission has realised a number of efficiencies and economies over the past three years, and it is now difficult to see how further savings can be made other than by reducing staff numbers. Nevertheless, every effort will be made to maintain our caseworking capacity.

The following tables show the Commission's costs for the plan period, and how these relate to the indicative budgets allocated to it. The extent to which expenditure is forecast to exceed budget is shown as an overspend pending the formulation of an appropriate strategy to reduce expenditure.

Table A - expenditure

[£k]	#1119647		
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Pay costs	4,605	4,637	4,765
Non-pay costs	1,941	1,974	2,026
Under/(over)-spend	115	(50)	(330)
Total near-cash costs	6,661	6,561	6,461
Depreciation	186	183	180
Cost of capital	(159)	(184)	(205)
BBA pension provision	356	366	376
Dllapidations provision	26	27	27
Under/(over)-spend	104	121	135
Total non-cash costs	513	513	513
Total resource budget	7,174	7,074	6,974
Capital expenditure	100	237	373
Under/(over)-spend	-	(237)	(373)
Total capital costs	100	-	-
TOTAL	7,274	7,074	6,974

Expenditure forecasts have been prepared assuming current staff numbers are maintained throughout the period of the plan.

Our Financial Memorandum states that the Commission shall ensure that the creation of any additional staff posts does not incur forward commitments which will exceed its ability to pay for them. Therefore, in anticipation of reduced budgets, a policy of keeping vacancies unfilled unless deemed absolutely necessary was adopted towards the end of 2006. This policy has resulted in fewer staff in post in 2008/09 than is desirable, and potentially generates a near-cash underspend of £115k. For 2009/10 there is a small overspend, but the situation becomes serious in 2010/11 with a forecast overspend of £330k. There is bound to be some natural wastage during the period, and other economies may be found (although the scope for this is believed to be limited). This will probably be enough to resolve the small forecast overspend for 2009/10, but substantial additional savings will be required to avoid a significant overspend in the last year of the plan.

There are plans to utilise the budget underspend in 2008/09 to augment our caseworking capability on a short-term basis, and to complete projects which will improve our effectiveness in future years.

The Commission has formed a Budget Strategy Group to examine where and how savings can be made. It has already made some preliminary recommendations which are being implemented during 2008/09, but further work is planned during the year to formulate a strategy to deliver the savings or income generation required to ensure the Commission operates within budget for the whole of the plan period. It is difficult to envisage how the savings can be achieved other than through reductions in staff numbers. Natural wastage and opportunities for

early retirement will be considered, but other action to achieve the necessary reductions cannot be ruled out.

Non-cash costs show consistent underspends throughout the period which are unavoidable.

The indicative budget for 2008/09 provides for capital expenditure at our planned level. However, there will be a requirement for major renewal of our IT assets in the latter part of the plan period as our existing equipment becomes obsolescent and we need to upgrade from software versions which are no longer supported. We have not as yet been assured of any capital funding in the second and third years of the plan period, but funding will be critical to the Commission being able to maintain its IT infrastructure and comply with government security standards. This funding gap is shown in the table above as a capital overspend in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Projected staff numbers, which assume current staffing levels over the plan period, are given in Table B below.

Table B – staff numbers

#1119647

	2008/09			2009/10			2010/11		
	Start	Finish	Average	Start	Finish	Average	Start	Finish	Average
Commissioners									
Number (headcount)	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
FTE	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2
CRMs and Caseworkers									
Number (headcount)	47	45	45.6	45	45	45	45	45	45
FTE	42.9	40.9	41.5	40.9	40.9	40.9	40.9	40.9	40.9
Casework admin staff									
Number (headcount)	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
FTE	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7
Other casework staff									
Number (headcount)	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
FTE	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2	10.2
Total casework staff									
Number (headcount)	86	84	84.6	84	84	84.0	84	84	84.0
FTE	79.0	77.0	77.6	77.0	77.0	77.0	77.0	77.0	77.0
Admin and executive staff									
Number (headcount)	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
FTE	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1
TOTAL									
Number (headcount)	104	102	102.6	102	102	102.0	102	102	102.0
FTE	95.1	93.1	93.7	93.1	93.1	93.1	93.1	93.1	93.1

As explained above, it will not be possible to sustain these staff numbers and keep expenditure within our indicative budgets for the plan period. Any reductions in staff numbers that are achieved as a result of adopting a costs reduction strategy will impact on the case review capacity of the Commission, and will inevitably result in a build-up of cases waiting to be allocated for review, and a lengthening of waiting times.

Strategic focus

Reductions in our budget each year over the period of the plan pose a major challenge to the Commission. Although steps already taken to reduce staff numbers and make other savings mean that we are comfortably within budget in the first year, and will probably be able to remain within budget in year two, major adjustments will be required to avoid a substantial overspend in 2010/11. Work will be progressed during 2008/09 to formulate an appropriate strategy to ensure that the Commission's expenditure can be reduced by 2010/11.

The reduced level of funding available over the plan period means that our staffing level has been reduced, and our case review capability correspondingly compromised. This is particularly disappointing as significant improvements arising from casework process improvements begun in 2006 were apparent at the end of 2007/08, with waiting times reduced across the board by about 12 months. These improvements will now almost certainly be reversed.

Also of concern is the fact that we are unable to properly plan the replacement of IT assets which form the basis of the way in which we work. We already extract as much service from these assets as possible, but the need to ensure that third party support is available, and that we can comply with government security standards, means that we must begin to upgrade our facilities during the plan period. Failure to provide the necessary capital budgets will mean that this planning cannot begin, and the capability of the Commission to continue to review cases placed in jeopardy.

Despite the budgetary difficulties, we will strive as far as possible to maintain the waiting times at their current levels by continuing to improve efficiency in the case review process whilst maintaining the quality of our reviews. We will also focus on reducing the time taken to close more complex cases by addressing bottlenecks and delays introduced by external sources. We shall also continue to build on our planning, budgeting and financial control systems to ensure that we are able to exploit all opportunities to maximise value for money.