

Press release: Record numbers of working people bringing employment disputes

- Since the introduction of Employment Tribunal fees, record numbers have brought forward disputes
- Thousands more to benefit from extended scheme to waive fees for lowest paid
- Government committed to making sure people from all backgrounds can access justice

More than 92,000 people brought forward workplace disputes last year – the highest number since employment tribunal fees were introduced.

A government review, published today (31 January 2017), has found that the introduction of tribunal fees, as well as free mediation services, have dramatically changed how workplace disputes are resolved.

Since fees were introduced in 2013, a record number of people have sought to resolve disputes either through tribunals or conciliation.

Ministers are committed to making sure people from all backgrounds can access justice, and have today published proposals to expand the 'Help with Fees' scheme which waives fees for the lowest paid.

That would see the monthly threshold for full fee remission increase from £1,085 to £1,250 – broadly the equivalent of someone earning the National Living Wage. There are additional allowances for people living as couples and those with children.

Justice Minister Sir Oliver Heald said:

It is right that those who can afford to should contribute to the cost of Employment Tribunals.

Under our reforms, record numbers are bringing forward disputes in tribunals or through the ACAS conciliation service.

Costs should not prevent anyone bringing claims, so we are extending our Help with Fees Scheme and will introduce a Green Paper on further legal support measures.

The Prison and Courts Bill will also bring more people online, making it even simpler and easier to access justice.

Under the extended Help with Fees scheme, more people would not pay a fee and others would contribute less than under current arrangements. The extended

scheme would benefit the disabled, women, BAME individuals, and the young, who all feature disproportionately among low income groups.

We have also decided to exempt from fees a small number of proceedings related to payments made from the National Insurance Fund, as in most cases the applicant is unable to conciliate or recover fees.

While many have chosen not to bring employment tribunal claims, the review found nothing to suggest they have been prevented from doing so, and that higher numbers turning to ACAS is a “positive outcome”. It also found:

- in 2015/16 there were more than 92,000 workplace disputes notified to Acas – the highest number since Employment Tribunal fees were introduced
- tribunal users are contributing up to £9 million a year in fee income, in line with expectations

The review found evidence that some have found fees off-putting – even if affordable or if they may have qualified for fee waivers.

Our consultation, launched today alongside the review, seeks to raise awareness of the Help with Fees scheme, and highlight how thousands more would qualify for help.

The government is investing more than £700 million to modernise courts and tribunals, and over £270 million more in the criminal justice system.

Ministers will bring forward further plans to improve legal support in a Green Paper by early 2018, while the Prison and Courts Bill, due to be published shortly, will make it simpler to access justice and enable thousands more people to bring cases online.

Notes to editors

- Fees were introduced for proceedings in the Employment Tribunals and the Employment Appeal Tribunal in July 2013.
- The review has undertaken a detailed, thorough analysis of the evidence. We have concluded that fees have been generally successful in meeting the original objectives.
- Employment Tribunals are at the forefront of our vision for a modernised, reformed justice system. Specific proposals for employment tribunal reform were recently set out in a consultation, published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on 5 December. The government will bring forward our plans in due course.
- The review into employment tribunal fees has today been published here – <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-the-introduction-of-fees-in-the-employment-tribunals>.
- The consultation document, which runs until 14 March 2017, has also been published.
- For more information call the MOJ press office on 020 3334 3503 or 020

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