

Acas business plan 2020 to 2021

24 June 2020

Introduction from the chief executive

Acas is trusted and impartial, working with millions of employers and employees every year to make working life better in Britain. We use our knowledge and experience to help people deal with problems they have at work and we guide and advise employers to build workplaces that are good to work in. We know that we make a difference to our customers and we want to do more of that work in the coming year.

I am pleased to introduce our plan for the year ahead which sets out how we'll continue to work with employers and employees across Britain. We are ambitious to extend our reach and our impact as we face together the effects of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The landscape that we operate in has changed. The pandemic has caused uncertainty for workforces throughout the country, and demand for our help and guidance is higher than ever. We plan to respond to that demand by using our knowledge and expertise to support more people and resolve more problems, making a bigger difference to more workplaces than ever before.

We'll work with our partners to help the business sectors hit hardest by coronavirus and we'll continue to respond to and lead the agenda on developing businesses which are productive and great places to work.

Behind these written ambitions is a fabulous team of people, who have worked tirelessly and with resilience and innovation to help customers during recent months. Our ambitions are underpinned by both a strong appetite and practical actions to be a responsive organisation and for Acas to be a great place to work for our people.

I am proud of the positive difference we make to workplace relationships and the economy and look forward to the opportunities ahead.

Susan Clews

Acas Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Our vision

The Acas vision is to make working life better for everyone in Britain.

We deliver on that vision by:

- promoting good practice in the workplace
- resolving workplace disputes
- helping employers to be compliant with regulation
- advising employees and workers about their rights
- using insight to inform policy

This business plan sets out how we will:

- shape that work over the year ahead
- focus our efforts where they are needed most
- support businesses and employers to meet their challenges in the workplace from the coronavirus pandemic

Strategic aims

We are Britain's workplace experts, and our work is delivered through 3 strategic aims:

1. We advise on good practice in everyday working life.
2. We resolve disputes and manage conflict at work.
3. We influence employment policy and debate.

Our ambitions for 2020 to 2021

We have ambitions for the year ahead which will help us to deliver our vision.

They are:

1. We will increase our impact, so that we make positive and lasting change to working life.
2. We will extend our reach, so that we inform and support more workplaces across Britain.
3. We will be more responsive, so that we are adding value when and where it's most needed.
4. We will be a high performing organisation that is sustainable, makes best use of our resources, and makes Acas a great place to work.

This business plan describes what we'll do in 2020 to 2021 to deliver these ambitions. It highlights the key goals that we expect to achieve, and it describes the volumes of our core work which we expect to handle in the year.

We also include the key performance indicators (KPIs) for our services, which show what we as a business will report on and how we'll measure success.

1. We will increase our impact, so that we make positive and lasting change to working life

Acas makes a positive impact on British workplaces and working lives. We are good value for the taxpayer, resolving disputes without the need for costly employment tribunal hearings and helping tens of thousands of workplaces avoid conflict and solve problems.

In 2020 to 2021 we'll increase the impact of our work. We'll direct our knowledge and expertise to helping industries, sectors, places and people where there is particular need.

Our goals are to:

- establish a more sustainable individual dispute resolution service which delivers higher settlement rates for the future
- deliver a data and insights strategy which drives evidence-based decisions, so that our work has greater impact on workplaces and working lives
- focus products and services on sectors where we know there is particular need

Dispute resolution

We forecast an increasingly high demand for our conciliation services as the impact of the coronavirus pandemic bites.

In individual dispute resolution, we are making changes to streamline how we manage our service, and we'll continue to develop our case management system to enhance our ability to meet service demands.

In our collective dispute resolution service, we'll develop the use of remote technology, which we have begun during the coronavirus pandemic, so that we can offer a fully flexible and resilient service.

Sectors and place

We'll focus our advice, guidance and collaboration on 3 sectors in particular, where we know that Acas support is needed, and where the coronavirus crisis has had a singularly high impact. They are:

- hospitality and tourism
- health and social care
- retail

We'll use our network of experts across Britain to work closely with local partners, widening our influence and increasing the opportunity for our best practice expertise to be shared and promoted in more workplaces, and we'll have closer engagement with mayoral and local authorities.

Data and insight

Acas helps and supports millions of customers each year, giving us a unique opportunity to understand the issues which matter in the world of work. We want to make better use of what we learn from those customers.

We'll develop a data and insights strategy which turns anecdote into evidence so that we can tailor our services more effectively to what employers and employees want.

We'll also use our insight to influence and inform policy debate at local and national levels so that our contributions make a lasting impact in British workplaces.

2. We will extend our reach, so that we inform and support more workplaces across Britain

We support and advise employees and employers of all sizes and sectors and work with trusted third parties to engage more widely. In 2020 to 2021 we plan to reach more people and more workplaces, using digital channels to help us, focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Our goals are to:

- extend our reach to 10% more customers in this financial year
- reach 25% more small and medium sized enterprises through digital channels

Service development

We are going to develop new products and services in response to customer demand, focusing on SMEs and expanding our delivery through digital channels.

We know there are some organisations which can be hard to reach and where our help is particularly needed. They often have:

- poor compliance with employment law
- limited understanding of rights
- no employee representation

We'll use our experts to develop products and services so that we support more workplaces across Britain.

Helpline

We'll make changes to how we deliver our telephone helpline advice service so that we can provide our expert advice to more callers. We'll explore how we can meet the needs of vulnerable users and individuals who do not use the service and better meet the needs of employers. We'll identify barriers to reaching a greater proportion of workplaces than ever before.

Webinars

We plan to expand our webinar service, increasing the range of topics that we cover. We'll work with partners in different sectors, regionally and nationally, so that our webinars meet specific needs in specific areas.

Good practice services

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on how we deliver our face-to-face training to employers. In 2020 to 2021 we'll gradually rebuild that service and will develop and introduce digital alternatives alongside our face-to-face training.

We plan to continue development of our e-learning training suite, and we'll introduce training on new and emerging topics, reaching employers who have not used us before.

3. We will be more responsive, so that we are adding value when and where it's most needed

We know that our digital and online channels, including our website and webinars, allow us to respond very quickly to customer demand. We have seen that during the coronavirus crisis when millions of new customers turned to the coronavirus advice on our web pages. In 2020 to 2021 we'll deliver more advice and guidance this way.

We'll adapt to the needs of different customers, focusing on those who need us most, such as small businesses and vulnerable workers. In the year ahead we'll flex our resources to meet changing customer demand on emerging issues and needs.

Our goals are to:

- ensure that everything we publish meets new government accessibility standards for online content
- complete the transition of content from our previous website, and continue to expand and update our online information and advice

Digital channels

We'll provide accessible online information quickly, in response to customer needs. Our website transition will be completed, so that we have a single point of access for online services that provides relevant and engaging content.

New workplace regulation will be clearly explained on our web pages and we'll publish guidance that is clear and supports new regulation and emerging workplace issues. We'll create user friendly customer journeys which work across channels and devices.

We'll strengthen our partnerships with stakeholders and across government so that our guidance and advice is linked with theirs, achieving more than we could on our own. We'll collaborate with the Employment Tribunals Service to explore the electronic transfer of data, so that we are more efficient in supporting our customers.

Accessibility of publications

We'll make changes to our digital publications across all channels so that they comply with new accessibility regulations. This means that we enable more users to be able to understand our advice in a format suited for them so that no one is disadvantaged.

Coronavirus response

We'll undertake a lessons learnt review of our response to the coronavirus crisis so that we can improve our effectiveness still further. We'll respond to the challenges and opportunities of the coronavirus crisis with a programme of work which will make sure that we react quickly and positively to the changes which the pandemic has brought.

4. We will be a high performing organisation that is sustainable, makes best use of our resources, and makes Acas a great place to work.

Our people are the heart of Acas. They deliver our services, they innovate and they share insight to make working life better for everyone in Britain. In 2020 to 2021, our internal priorities are to enhance the skills, knowledge and expertise of our people.

In line with the carbon neutral agenda, we'll reduce the impact we have on the environment and we'll manage our finances to make good decisions to enable us to deliver on all our ambitions.

Our goals are to:

- increase staff engagement
- set out a green plan that identifies how we'll reduce our environmental impact
- deliver better value for money to the taxpayer

People strategy

We'll launch a new people strategy so that we recruit, train and retain a skilled workforce. Our people strategy covers:

- learning and development
- health and wellbeing
- diversity and inclusion
- management and leadership

We'll invest in these areas, maintaining and growing skills so that we continue to perform at our best.

People and places programme

We'll support the government's Places for Growth agenda and make changes to how we approach decisions on office and staff locations, so that we support flexible work locations and respond to our customer needs at local and national levels.

Office moves

We'll complete office moves in London, Eastern, North West, and West Midlands regions, securing more sustainable office environments which enable more flexible working and meet our future estates needs.

Green plan

We'll become a more sustainable business and will reduce our environmental impacts, supporting the government's goal of being carbon neutral by 2050.

Change and risk management

We'll enhance our capability and capacity for project, change and risk management, developing a greater awareness and understanding of change and risk. This will help us to make effective business decisions so that we mitigate issues before they arise enhancing the quality of our services.

Resourcing

We'll make good use of public money, prioritising its allocation to meet customer need, and seek value for money in all we do. We'll be transparent in what we do and how we use public money. We'll publish full accounts in our annual report and accounts. We'll publish an economic impact assessment so that we can demonstrate the benefit Acas brings to the economy.

Key performance indicators 2020 to 2021

These tables show our performance targets for the financial year April 2020 to March 2021.

1. Conciliation in collective disputes		Target
1.1 Promotion of a settlement in disputes in which Acas is involved		85%
2. Individual disputes referred for conciliation		Target
2.1 Percentage of early conciliation notifications which result in a conciliated settlement between parties		18%
2.2 Percentage of early conciliation notifications which result in a conciliated settlement between parties or other positive outcome		26%
2.3 Percentage of employment tribunal cases which result in a conciliated settlement disregarding any which have been struck out by the courts		55%
2.4 Percentage of employment tribunal cases which are positively resolved following Acas conciliation		70%
3. Acas training services		Target
3.1 Percentage of open access customers reporting they were satisfied with the course		97%
3.2 Percentage of workplace training customers reporting they were satisfied with the course		97%
3.3 Percentage of open access customers reporting that the training met their learning needs		90%
3.4 Percentage of webinar customers reporting they were satisfied with the session		90%
4. Telephone helpline advice on workplace problems		Target

4.1 The percentage of users who were able to take clear action following their call to the Acas helpline	85%
5. Digital advice on workplace problems	Target
5.1 Percentage of individuals who have engaged with digital advice before proceeding with their online notification	80%
5.2 Percentage of positive engagement of users from the website (where an individual stays longer than 10 seconds on an advice page)	85%

Service volumes 2020 to 2021

Tables showing the volumes of service we expect to provide in the financial year April 2020 to March 2021.

Advice and training services	Volumes	Income
Web visits (user sessions)	12 million	n/a
Digital advice visits (user sessions)	8 million	n/a
Helpline calls	800,000	n/a
Helpline online enquiry sessions	250,000	n/a
Helpline webchat sessions	2,000	n/a
In-depth advice (employer call backs)	6,050	n/a
E-learning sessions	40,000	n/a
Webinars	20	n/a
Webinar delegates	25,000	n/a
Workplace projects (delivery days)	120	£90,000
Workplace training events	1,200	£1.5 million
Open access training events	660	£1.1 million
Open access training delegates	5,900	n/a
Conferences and talks	10	£35,000
Collective conciliation and arbitration	Volumes	Income
Collective conciliation requests	470	n/a
Arbitration and mediation requests	20	n/a
Joint working projects (delivery days)	110	n/a
Individual dispute resolution	Volumes	Income

Early conciliation notifications	170,000	n/a
Conciliation in employment tribunal cases	48,000	n/a
Mediations in individual disputes	190	£185,000
Shaping and informing employment relations	Volumes	Income
Written papers (for example, research reports, published articles)	25	n/a
Round tables, breakfast briefings, and speaking engagements	30	n/a

Financial allocation

Table showing the amount of money allocated to Acas by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for the financial year April 2020 to March 2021.

2020 to 2021 funding allocation	Amount
Capital (general)	£1.77 million
Total capital	£1.77 million
Programme (non-ringfenced)	£43.42 million*
Programme (ringfenced)	£3.1 million
Total programme resource	£46.52 million
Administration (non-ringfenced)	£7.93 million
Administration (ringfenced)	£0
Total administration resource	£7.93 million
Annual managed expenditure (AME) (ringfenced)	£18,000
Total AME	£18,000

* Of which £3.7 million is specifically ringfenced to be spent on early conciliation. Acas is authorised to overspend up to a maximum limit of £1 million in 2020 to 2021.