



Chapter 4

ICE performance

The following table describes our overall intake and output during the year.

| Action taken on cases during 2000/01 | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|--|-------|
| Intake | | Clearance | |
| Cases brought forward at 31.3.2000 | 389 | Not accepted; not appropriate to this office | 122 |
| Received during 2000/01 | 1,488 | Not accepted; not dealt with at Agency Chief Executive level | 601 |
| | | Withdrawn | 24 |
| | | Cleared by resolution | 307 |
| | | Cleared by full report | 288 |
| | | Total dealt with | 1,342 |
| | | Cases carried forward at 31.3.2001 | 535 |
| Total work on hand | 1,877 | Total | 1,877 |

It is clear from this overview that our output has not kept pace with intake and thus we have more cases on hand in March 2001, than we had at the start of the year.

Three major factors served to create this situation.

- Intake levels rose dramatically in the third quarter of the year and were significantly higher than previous years in the final quarter.
- The number of cases cleared was lower than last year.
- Improved signposting to the Independent Case Examiner in the final letters from the Agency Chief Executives.

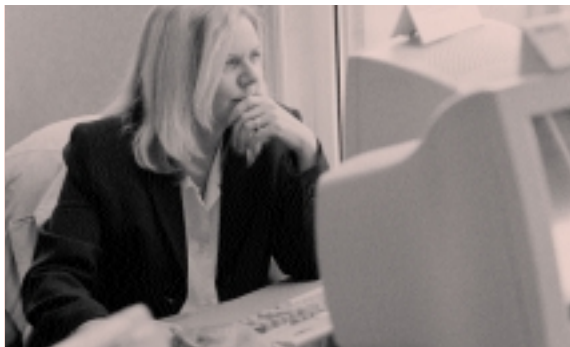
Intake levels

During the past year we received 262 (21 per cent) more complaints than we did in 1999/2000.

| Number of complaints received by the Independent Case Examiner | | |
|--|-----------|---------|
| 1998/99 | 1999/2000 | 2000/01 |
| 1,536 | 1,226 | 1,488 |

More significantly many more of the cases we received were eligible for investigation (i.e. 31 per cent more in 2000/01).

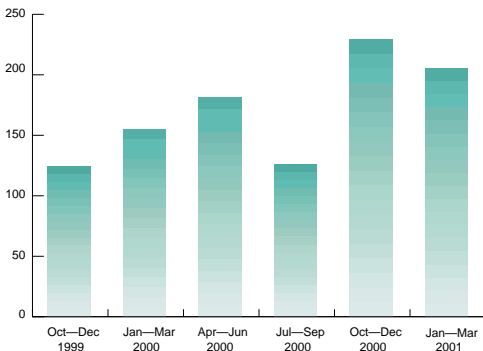
| Cases accepted for investigation | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1998/99 | 1999/2000 | 2000/01 |
| 704 (46%) | 584 (48%) | 765 (51%) |



The following graph shows the rise in the third and last quarter of 2000/01. (Further details can be found at Table 7 in Annex A.)

Rising levels of intake

Cases accepted during past periods



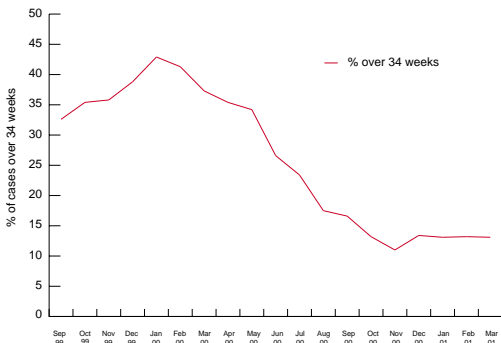
Action to reduce the age of the ICE caseload

In her last annual report the Independent Case Examiner recognised that changes to working practices within her office had created a build-up of older, more complex cases. This situation was addressed in January of last year. Cases are now investigated in strict date order and we placed considerable emphasis on completing action on our oldest cases first. Our initial aim was to reduce the number of cases already over our clearance target of 34 weeks.

Cases over ICE clearance target

The following graph shows the result of our efforts.

ICE cases over 34 weeks old

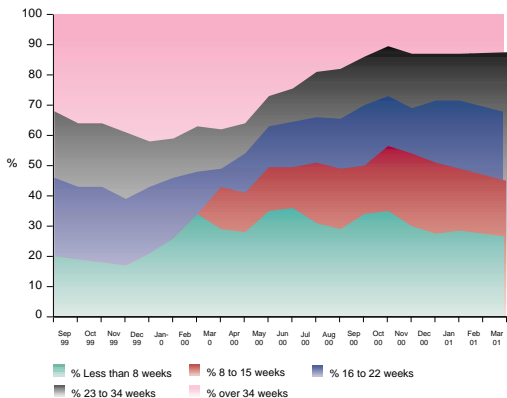


ICE Office Manager Phil Latus in discussion with ICE Operations Manager Elspeth Cooper

Age profile of ICE cases

This success was not achieved at the expense of the rest of the caseload as is demonstrated by the following graph showing the age profile of the whole caseload.

Age of ICE case load



Output

The overall number of cases cleared in the last business year does not, on initial inspection, compare favourably with the previous year as we cleared 11 per cent fewer. However, during the last year we cleared 30 per cent more cases by investigation, which is a more time-consuming process.

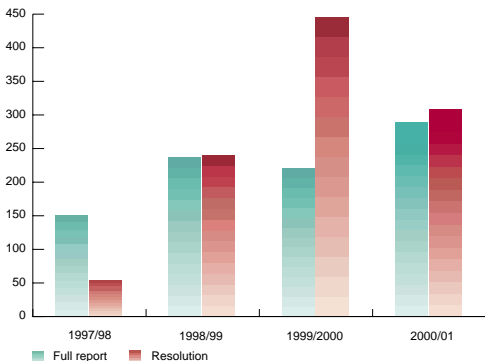
| Total cases cleared | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | 1998/99 | 1999/2000 | 2000/01 |
| Total cleared | 474* | 665* | 595* |
| Cleared by resolution | 239 (51%) | 445 (67%) | 307(52%) |
| Cleared by full report | 235 (49%) | 220 (33%) | 288(48%) |
| No. outstanding at the year end | 497 | 389 | 535 |

*figures do not include cases withdrawn

The increase in the number of cases requiring investigation is a direct consequence of the decision to concentrate on the older cases. The older cases were those where we had asked for evidence because the issues involved were complex and not appropriate for resolution. As the age profile of the caseload reduces, the number of cases requiring full investigation is likely to reduce and thus release investigative resources and increase productivity.

Resolution v full report

The chart below shows the cases cleared by this office using the resolution and full report process. (See Table 8 at Annex A for further details.)



Clearance times

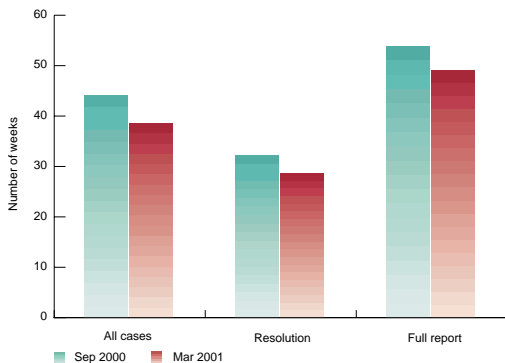
Our target for clearing cases is 'within an average of 34 weeks'. This was achieved in previous years but the build-up of cases and an ageing caseload meant that we were unable to achieve that goal during the last business year. It is, however, pleasing to report that we have achieved our target in the last two months of the business year. The age profile of our caseload should enable us to sustain this service during the 2001/02 year.

| Average clearance times 2000/01 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Apr | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar |
| 41.1 | 44.8 | 46.8 | 46.2 | 44.4 | 39.1 | 39.9 | 32.8 | 31.5 | 34.7 | 32.2 | 32.5 |

Resolution and full report times

The following graph describes the marked difference in the time it takes to clear cases using the resolution and the full report approach. (Tables 9a and 9b at Annex A provides further details.)

Average weekly age of cases at closure



Investigative capacity

A high staff turnover and an increasing caseload has meant that we needed to undertake regular training and recruitment programmes, but inexperience impacts on productivity. In September the CSA responded positively to a request from the Independent Case Examiner for additional investigative resources. We were authorised to take on an additional five Investigation Officers. In February the Agency authorised a further increase to enable us to recruit 13 more Investigation Officers to address the significant rise in intake and to facilitate a reduction in clearance times. It will be some months before all the new staff are trained and in place, but as their experience grows the service we are able to offer our clients will improve still further.