

# **Office of the Attorney General**

## **Client & Customer Charters**

**2008 - 2010**

## **Background & Context**

These revised Charters have been developed on the basis of an extensive consultation process which included:

- (i) Facilitated focus group workshops with client and customer ‘panels’
- (ii) Internal interviews with personnel in different functions across the Office
- (iii) Telephone interviews with a sample of key clients
- (iv) Follow-up client and customer satisfaction surveys which considered performance against benchmarks which were established in 2004.

The Office has carefully considered the views, experiences and inputs which were provided by our clients and customers. The feedback process helped us to refine and improve our service standards and will provide clients and customers with enhanced levels of service quality over the period covered by the Charters. The Office will endeavour to provide this enhanced level of service quality to clients and customers in the context of existing resources, increasing demands on the Office for services and the difficult fiscal situation. The clients and customers to which these Charters apply are the Government, Government Departments and Offices and, administratively, our customers and suppliers.

## **Advisory Counsel and Administration Client & Customer Charter**

### **Office of the Attorney General**

#### **Office of the Attorney General Mission Statement**

*To provide the highest standard of professional legal services to Government, Departments and Offices as economically and efficiently as possible.*

#### **Goal – Advisory Counsel**

*To provide high quality specialist legal advice and support to the Attorney General in carrying out the duties of his office and to client Departments and Offices in a responsive, efficient and effective manner in areas of law of importance to Government.*

#### **Goal – Administration**

*To provide modern and professional corporate and business support services that deliver the highest quality service to internal and external clients and customers.*

#### **Service Standards**

*In all our dealings with clients and customers, we will:*

- Acknowledge initial correspondence within 3 working days and advise you of who has been assigned to deal with your case/query/request.
- In the case of requests for advice, where requested, respond within 7 working days of receiving your initial correspondence with a view, if possible, to agreeing an expected completion date, taking account of other Government priorities and the complexity of the issues raised.

- Be accessible to our clients and ensure sufficient contact to provide for efficiency and quality in the completion of work undertaken on your behalf.
- Encourage open communications and insofar as is possible, provide advance notice of court decisions or advice which might impact upon your ability to achieve your policy, legislative or related objectives.
- Keep you informed of the progress of your case/query/request and any issues which are likely to affect mutually agreed timescales.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for periodic review meetings<sup>1</sup> to further develop an understanding of mutual requirements.
- Demonstrate a high level of responsiveness in respect of urgent and routine issues which will be prioritised on the basis of overall Government requirements.
- Respond to any written request for information regarding the progress of work within 10 days.
- Where possible, ensure that mutually agreed deadlines are monitored on an ongoing basis and that, insofar as is possible, they are met.
- Ensure that, so far as possible, outputs emanating from the Office are clear, considered, comprehensive and consistent.
- Give independent and impartial advice.
- Where possible, work with you to identify feasible legal options which will support you in addressing your organisation's legislative or related requirements.
- Give reasons for our views and recommendations as required.

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<sup>1</sup> Which may take place in conjunction with other meetings between the Office and Departments.

- Be courteous, professional and helpful at all times.
- Adopt a team-based approach and be committed to helping you achieve your objectives.

**To facilitate delivery of our services to you -**

- **We request that you**

- Where correspondence is sent to the Office by email, copy all such email correspondence (with our reference number where known) to our Registry at [INFO@ag.irlgov.ie](mailto:INFO@ag.irlgov.ie)
- Ensure full compliance with the Cabinet Handbook guidelines, particularly as regards the time for obtaining observations for Government Memoranda.
- Ensure full compliance with the guidelines for seeking legal advice from this Office - see minute, dated October 2005, from the Director General attached to the Charter and on our website [www.attorneygeneral.ie](http://www.attorneygeneral.ie)
- Keep us informed of any issues which may impact upon the case or issue under review.
- Be sufficiently clear in respect of the policy objectives of your Department or Office.
- Be familiar with, and aware of, legislation which applies to your Department or Office.
- Give instructions and respond to queries in a timely manner, bearing in mind any agreed deadlines.
- Be aware of, and provide the Office with sufficient notice of forthcoming EU directives and associated legislative requirements.

- Secretaries General and their equivalents in Departments and Offices are requested to:
  - Identify (at least annually) key priorities.
  - Consider the particular resource and competency requirements of those who will be responsible for policy development and the coordination of any other activities with the Office.
  - Encourage and promote effective management of files/cases.

In order to ensure the most efficient delivery of our services, we are available to discuss and agree related requirements with clients.

### **Suggestions & Feedback**

In striving to improve the quality of service which we provide to our clients and customers, we are anxious to receive your feedback in the form of comments, suggestions and/or complaints. All feedback will be considered comprehensively and will be used to enhance the level of service which we offer.

Your suggestions and feedback should be addressed, in the first instance to: The QCS Officer, Mr. Paul Gibney, Office of the Attorney General, Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2. Phone: 01 6314103, Fax 01 6761806, email: paul\_gibney@ag.irlgov.ie. Once received, feedback will be considered and/or investigated by a nominated member of the Office who will revert to you within 10 working days.

## **GUIDELINES FOR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS OR OFFICES SEEKING LEGAL ADVICE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

These guidelines are intended to assist officers of Government Departments or Offices who have occasion to seek legal advice from the Office of the Attorney General.

In the context of proposals for Government (proposals for legislation or otherwise) in accordance with the requirements of Chapters 3 and 4 of the Cabinet Handbook legal advice should be sought in advance and reflected in the draft memorandum for Government when circulated for observations.

The aim is to ensure that requests for advice are accompanied by all necessary information so as to eliminate unnecessary requests for further information from the Office of the Attorney General which may delay the provision of the advice sought.

1. When advice is being sought on a particular matter, previous relevant advices should be consulted by the Department in advance and should be referred to in the request for advice.
2. A request for advice about a law or statutory instrument which the Department is responsible for administering should, where appropriate, include relevant information about the Department's experience in such administration and the Department's views on the point raised and its reasons for those views.
3. A request for advice should include details of all relevant legislation, primary or secondary, domestic or E.U. and Treaties or Conventions of which the Department is aware. The Department should refer where appropriate to relevant provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. A copy of the relevant legislation or Treaty, etc., with the exception of Acts of the Oireachtas and E.U. Treaties, should be attached. The Department should also refer to any relevant court judgments or decisions of which they are aware particularly if these are unreported or unlikely to be contained in any legal databases.
4. Requests should be as specific and precise as possible. The more specific a request is, the faster it can be dealt with.

Office of the Attorney General,  
October 2005

**Parliamentary Counsel Client Charter**  
**Office of the Attorney General**

**Office of the Attorney General Mission Statement**

*To provide the highest standard of professional legal services to Government, Departments and Offices as economically and efficiently as possible.*

**Goal – Parliamentary Counsel**

*To provide a high quality professional, specialist and efficient legislative drafting service to Government.*

**Service Standards**

*In all our dealings with clients, we will:*

- Acknowledge initial correspondence within 5 working days of its receipt and advise you of the group or Parliamentary Counsel who has been assigned to deal with your correspondence.
- Work with you in agreeing a reasonable completion date for your legislation, taking into account its length, complexity and Government priorities as indicated by the Government Legislation Committee.
- Be accessible to our clients during normal business hours and at other times by arrangement.

- Encourage open communications and insofar as is possible, provide advance notice of court decisions or advice which might impact upon your ability to achieve your policy, legislative or related objectives.
- Convene meetings, where appropriate, and keep you informed of the progress of your legislation and any issues which are likely to affect mutually agreed timescales.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for periodic meetings to further develop an understanding of mutual requirements.
- Demonstrate an appropriate level of responsiveness in respect of both urgent and routine issues which will be prioritised on the basis of overall Government requirements.
- Respond to written requests for information regarding the progress of work within 5 working days.
- Continue to monitor progress in relation to agreed deadlines in conjunction with the Government Legislation Committee and through our existing internal arrangements.
- Draft your legislation in a manner that is constitutionally and legally sound, clear, comprehensive and responsive to your requirements.
- Draft your amendments to Bills for tabling in Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.
- Address your queries, identify feasible options and adopt a ‘solutions based’ approach in working with you to give legislative expression to your policy requirements.
- Be courteous, professional and helpful at all times.
- Adopt a team-based approach with the Department and be committed to helping you achieve your objectives.

**To facilitate delivery of our services to you –**

- **we request that you**
  - Consult with the Government Legislation Committee to agree a completion date for your Bills.
  - Be sufficiently clear in respect of the policy objectives of your Department or Office and finalise the policy before seeking Government approval to draft a Bill.
  - Ensure full compliance with the Cabinet Handbook.
  - Be familiar with, and aware of, legislation which applies to your Department or Office.
  - Keep us informed of any issues which may affect the drafting of your legislation.
  - Give drafting instructions and respond to queries in a timely manner, bearing in mind any agreed deadlines or completion dates.
  - Inform us as soon as possible if you will require amendments to Bills for tabling in Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.
  - Be aware of, and provide the Office with sufficient notice of forthcoming EU legislation and associated legislative requirements.
- Secretaries General and their equivalents in Offices are requested to:
  - Identify (at least annually) legislative, drafting and related priorities.

- Consider the particular resource and competency requirements of those who will be responsible for policy development and the coordination of drafting instructions to the OPC.
- Encourage and promote effective management of files/cases.

In order to ensure the most efficient delivery of the Government's Legislation Programme, we are available to discuss and agree related requirements with clients.

### **Suggestions & Feedback**

In striving to improve the quality of service which we provide to our clients, we welcome your feedback in the form of comments, suggestions and/or complaints. All feedback will be considered comprehensively and will be used to enhance the level of service which we offer.

Your suggestions and feedback should be addressed, in the first instance to: The QCS Officer, Mr. Paul Gibney, Office of the Attorney General, Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2. Phone (01) 631 4103, fax (01) 676 1806 or e-mail: paul\_gibney@ag.irlgov.ie . Once received, feedback will be considered and/or investigated by a nominated member of the Office who will revert to you within 10 working days.