



Office of the
Public Guardian



OPG business plan

2017/18

Promoting and upholding the principles of
the Mental Capacity Act 2005

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Alan Eccles
Public Guardian and chief executive

Introduction by the Public Guardian and chief executive

The Ministry of Justice celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, as does the Mental Capacity Act 2005 which established the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) in 2007.

Over the past decade we have transformed our services and how we work. This is set to continue as we look to the next 3 years and the priorities in this plan.

During 2016 to 2017 we've again seen record numbers of people applying for lasting powers of attorney (LPA), reaching the milestone of 2 million LPAs on the register in October.

We're continuing to transform the business to manage the rise in demand, and are delighted to have met or exceeded some exacting customer service targets.

As an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) our plans for the coming year align with MOJ's strategic aims of transforming the department and providing continued support for vulnerable adults.

These are supported by our own strategic themes, set out later in this document and in OPG's 10 year strategy.

Our focus this year will include:

- promoting our services more widely - looking to reach those who may think that LPAs are not for them
- improving our digital tools – extending our case management system to include supervision and investigation staff, and bringing online reporting to public authority deputies
- continued emphasis on safeguarding - working with partners who have a duty to protect adults at risk
- developing our people – through our first-ever people strategy and action plan.

Following our report to parliament back in 2014, we will also be looking at whether the changes we made following the supervision review have delivered the benefits we anticipated.

Finally, as we enter this 10th anniversary year, we'll celebrate what we've achieved and look forward to the opportunity to promote awareness of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the principles enshrined within it.



Alan Eccles
Public Guardian and chief executive

About OPG

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) supports the Public Guardian in carrying out the legal functions of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The Act protects people in England and Wales who may not have the mental capacity to make certain decisions for themselves, such as about their health and financial affairs.

We also help people plan ahead for someone to make certain important decisions for them, should they become unable to do so because they lack mental capacity.

We're responsible for:

- **Registering** lasting and enduring powers of attorney (LPAs and EPAs) so that people can choose who they want to make certain decisions on their behalf, should they lose capacity to make those decisions themselves.
- **Maintaining** the public register of attorneys and deputies appointed by the Court of Protection.
- **Supervising** deputies appointed by the Court of Protection, making sure they carry out their responsibilities in the best interests of their clients and in line with the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- **Carrying out** investigations and taking action where there are concerns about an attorney or deputy.

Mission

To support decision making by promoting and upholding the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Vision

OPG is recognised for excellence, innovation and care, with our users at the heart of everything we do.

Purpose

To work to promote decision making and the right to choose. Where people lack capacity we support those who act on their behalf to make good decisions. We create the culture and conditions for our staff to provide high quality services that are accessible and affordable.

Strategic themes

Our strategy sets out OPG's direction for the next 5 to 10 years

It has 5 main themes which serve as the main drivers for our business plan. These themes also clearly link to MOJ's strategic aims of transforming the department and providing continued support for vulnerable adults.

Within each theme we have detailed our goals over the course of the next 3 years and how we'll know if we've been successful. We then set out what we'll do in this business year to contribute to these goals.

The strategic themes are:

Raising awareness and driving uptake

Ensuring that people are aware of our services, know the benefits of planning for the future, and can make an active decision on taking out an LPA.

Improving services for our users

Ensuring that OPG services are centred on the user and that change is driven by user need and based on evidence.

Safeguarding

Ensuring that OPG safeguards its users and, where concerns are raised, investigates quickly and professionally.

Working more effectively

Ensuring that OPG services are delivered in the most efficient and effective way possible, with the user at the heart of all we do.

Our people

Ensuring that OPG lives by its values and provides a workplace that allows its staff to work to their full potential.

The UK's population is ageing and this brings with it particular challenges, not least the increasing numbers of people living with conditions such as dementia. There are also those living with other conditions that affect mental capacity, such as learning difficulties, acquired brain injuries and mental health issues.

It's clear that demand for OPG's services will increase over the coming years and we must make sure we're in a position to manage this.

We must also make sure more people know who we are and what we do, so that they can make informed decisions about planning for the future. In the year ahead we'll continue our work to better understand the people who use our services.

This includes understanding the trigger points that lead people to take out an LPA or apply for a deputyship. We'll improve our understanding of what stops certain demographic groups planning ahead, including the barriers they face, and use this insight to better target those who are currently underrepresented in our customer base.

Demand

Since OPG's launch in 2007, demand for our services has grown steadily. We expect this trend to continue and have produced demand forecasts for lasting powers of attorney that project continued growth over the course of a number of years.

Demand for other areas of OPG's business is also increasing. The number of court-appointed deputies requiring supervision is growing, as is the number of investigations we carry out. These still represent a low percentage compared with our total caseload.

Change and continuous improvement

User feedback is important for all areas of the business and is used to drive a programme of change and continuous improvement across OPG.

User feedback also guides the incremental improvements made to our LPA digital service. We've also improved our internal processes for registering LPAs, significantly reducing the time it takes to register an LPA – a considerable achievement against the backdrop of ever-increasing workloads. User feedback will drive further user-focused improvements during 2017 to 2018.

Estate

We've made a commitment to retain our presence in Nottingham until at least 2020 and have recently moved to new premises to allow for the potential expansion of our workforce. Our future estates strategy will be determined alongside the wider MOJ national initiative.

Raising awareness and driving uptake

Ensuring that people are aware of our services, know the benefits of planning for the future, and can make an active decision on taking out an LPA

Raising awareness and driving uptake

We're committed to raising awareness so that people who would benefit from an LPA are able to do so.

Within 3 years we will

- reduce the average donor age from 73 to 65 and ensure that our customer base represents a more diverse spectrum of society.

We will know we have been successful if

- the average age of new donors has fallen to 65 and there has been a 50% increase in applications from currently under represented socio-economic groups.

In this business year we will

- develop a marketing strategy aimed at encouraging people from under represented socio-economic groups to take out LPAs, and for people to plan ahead at a younger age.

To do this

We will, by August 2017

- implement a marketing strategy based on insight from our current customer base
- gain information from potential new customer groups and use this to build a further marketing strategy aimed at driving LPA uptake with these groups.

We will, by January 2018

- have a fully costed marketing strategy setting out which customer groups we are targeting and how we'll do it
- begin to implement this additional strategy.

Improving services for our users

Ensuring that OPG services are centered on the user and that change is driven by user need and based on evidence

Digital delivery of services

We'll continue to improve our digital tools to make it easier for users to access our services and provide us with the information we need in a way that suits them.

Within 3 years we will

- be able to offer an enhanced suite of digital tools.

We will know we have been successful if

- customers are able to interact digitally with OPG and have online access to the services they need, such as submitting their deputyship report
- an increasing percentage of LPAs are made using the online tool and 80% of deputies are submitting their reports online.

In this business year, we will

- continue to work towards defining a fully digital LPA that will meet customers' needs and engage with stakeholders to help develop proposals
- complete initial delivery and release of our digital deputy reporting service to lay and public authority deputies.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- complete the 'discovery' phase to establish what customers want from digital search and what is permissible within legislation
- pilot the Sirius case management tool for supervision and investigations teams
- design and pilot the automated processing of 'perfect' LPA applications
- achieve our target of 30% of new LPAs being created using the online tool.

A lifelong LPA

Within 3 years we will

- have an evidence-based proposal for legislation for a lifelong LPA that is flexible and amendable.

We will know we have been successful if

- we have drafted an approved proposal.

In this business year, we will

- define what a lifelong LPA looks like to best suit our customers' needs.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- assimilate and review available data sources and research in order to inform our discovery
- conduct or commission further research specifically around the future format of the LPA
- define the future format of the LPA and begin the task of creating it.

Welsh language solutions

Within 3 years we will

- deliver a Welsh language solution for our main digital tools.

We will know we have been successful if

- our main digital tools are available in the Welsh language or a non-digital, evidence based and appropriate solution is in place.

In this business year, we will

- set out a plan of action and start work on the highest priority solutions.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- define our customers' requirements for the Welsh language within our current services
- ensure that any tools we offer in the future are built to accommodate the Welsh language, should the need exist.

Missing persons

Within 3 years we will

- create a new area of OPG's business to meet the needs of missing persons, should the relevant legislation be put in place.

We will know we have been successful if

- court appointed guardians managing the property and financial affairs of missing people are being supervised by, and report to, the Public Guardian.

In this business year, we will

- fully engage in the process of missing persons primary and secondary legislation, conduct the appropriate research and draw up implementation plans should the primary legislation complete its parliamentary passage.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- create a project plan
- engage with stakeholders and ensure their input informs the project
- propose a fully costed solution and prepare for legislation.

Supervision - post implementation review

Within 3 years we will

- review the benefits achieved from our new model for supervising court-appointed deputies.

We will know we have been successful if

- we have completed the review and reported to the Minister on the benefits realised.

In this business year, we will

- create a project plan and start to review the different elements of the new model, allowing time for any changes to be fully implemented.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- decide on ways to measure the benefits of the new model and protection provided
- start to carry out the reviews.

Customer focused case management

Within 3 years we will

- implement a case management approach which our customers tell us meets their expectations.

We will know we have been successful if

- we achieve 95% accuracy in LPA processing, deliver services which our customers tell us provides value for money and see satisfaction levels exceed 80%
- we have a single point of contact for our customers.

In this business year, we will

- revise the way we work so that our ways of working are directly linked to the service our customers tell us they want.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- gather feedback to support service improvements and deliver customer satisfaction levels that are higher than our 2016/17 results
- identify the online needs of our customer by linking into our work on digital customer journey mapping
- obtain comparable data for our paper-based applications through our customer satisfaction surveys review processes to ensure we're aligned to our customers' needs.

Customer service

Within 3 years we will

- ensure that all customer interactions with OPG are easy and meet their needs.

We will know we have been successful if

- customer satisfaction has improved, failure demand has been eliminated, avoidable contact has reduced and we receive fewer complaints.

In this business year, we will

- have a process in place to record and analyse customer feedback from a variety of sources and use this feedback to make measurable improvements.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- use all types of feedback to form a collective customer voice that can be used to inform the design and implementation of OPG policy, products and services
- use the results of our insight to make measurable improvements.

Safeguarding

Ensuring that OPG safeguards its users and where concerns are raised investigates matters quickly and professionally

Safeguarding study

Within 3 years we will

- have a published strategy, agreed by ministers and partner agencies which positions the Public Guardian within the multi-agency safeguarding landscape.

We will know we have been successful if

- the safeguarding strategy has been agreed by ministers and implementation has started.

In this business year, we will

- conclude our safeguarding study and use the outputs to define our strategy.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- use the results of our insight to make measurable improvements
- have fully reviewed our safeguarding model to ensure that the ethos of safeguarding is embedded OPG wide
- define a stakeholder implementation plan with timeframes, actions and measurable benefits, to be agreed with our partner agencies.

The powers of the Public Guardian

Within 3 years we will

- have a body of evidence that shows whether the Public Guardian needs additional powers to effectively carry out his/her statutory duties, within one cohesive strategy.

We will know we have been successful if

- we've made evidence based decisions on the additional powers to be sought through legislative change.

In this business year, we will

- establish a database of evidence, including court decisions, to investigate the case for increasing the Public Guardian's powers.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- create an evidence base to help establish if any additional powers are appropriate and to prepare us for future submission.

Court of Protection visitors' solution

Within 3 years we will

- develop a solution that will give Court of Protection (COP) visitors the access they need to OPG systems, improving their ability both to safeguard vulnerable clients and support users.

We will know we have been successful if

- COP visitors are receiving the case documents they need through access to OPG systems and we're sharing information more intelligently and efficiently.

In this business year, we will

- define the case management access that COP visitors need, decide on how to provide it and develop a business case to secure capital funding.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- identify the main internal stakeholders to deliver this work
- work with stakeholders to establish the access that COP visitors need
- consult on information assurance to identify and resolve any risks or blockers
- identify resource to build the functionality required and monitor costs.

Working more effectively

Ensuring that OPG services are delivered in the most efficient and effective way possible, with the user at the heart of all we do

MOJ IT infrastructure

Within 3 years we will

- have the technology to support fully flexible staff working, taking into account working patterns, home working and remote team management. This will also allow us to simply and seamlessly deliver service with partners and external providers.

We will know we have been successful if

- all staff in OPG have the appropriate technology to work flexibly, as appropriate.

In this business year, we will

- ensure that OPG is ready for the implementation of the MOJ Transforming Technology Programme across the business
- harness the capability of new collaborative tools such as SharePoint and corporate Skype.

To do this

We will, by August 2017

- prepare, be ready for, and fully engage with wider MOJ programmes to implement the MOJ Transforming Technology Programme in late 2017
- ensure all staff are fully trained to maximise use of new digital, collaborative tools as they become available

- ensure that the OPG estate is prepared and ready for implementation
- conduct an assessment of OPG's needs from the programme, and ensure it meets our needs as far as we are able.

OPG funding model

Within 3 years we will

- have a sustainable and transparent funding model which will ensure the continued delivery of business and allow for investment to develop better services to our customers
- this will be reviewed at least annually and linked to the governance of appropriate fee orders and other legislation.

We will know we have been successful if

- OPG has a sustainable fee structure that allows for the delivery of our business and the continued transformation of our services.

In this business year we will

- review OPG's funding mechanism to enable an annual fees order to be put into place

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- review the OPG cost structure and support the fee review led by MOJ policy, with the objective of having appropriate fees in place for all our services

- undertake analysis to understand the correlation between the volume and longevity of LPA and deputyship caseloads
- establish how this may impact on future OPG costs and future funding models including exemption and remission policy.

Shared services/functional leadership

Within 3 years we will

- have in place an established and effective shared services and functional leadership model that supports delivery of our services, is able to flex to meet current and future demand and fits clearly with MOJ's strategy.

We will know we have been successful if

- a sustainable provision is in place to deliver services to OPG efficiently and effectively, enabling us to meet our customers' expectations.

In this business year, we will

- set out parameter of services and ensure current need is supported.

To do this

We will, by April 2018

- play our part in ensuring that functional leadership is a success

- establish and communicate OPG needs for services including digital, HR, finance, communications and other shared services, ensuring that our needs are met.

Data driven demand models

Within 3 years we will

- have a full suite of data driven demand models including LPA registration, deputyships and investigations
- have a better understanding of how links between demand models and digital channel shift affect demand
- ensure the demand models contain demographic and geographical analysis which, together with our existing customer insight, will inform OPG's services and our future business model.

We will know we have been successful if

- OPG has models that can predict future workloads for all areas of its business which can be used to drive the delivery of that business.

In this business year we will

- ensure that we have access to the correct resource and skills through MOJ analytical services to support analytic projects.

Begin to develop

- a long term forecasting model for deputyships

- a long term investigations forecast with a geographical breakdown
- an improved short term LPA forecasting model.

To do this

We will, by October 2017

- develop an improved short term forecast for LPAs to better understand in-year performance, including seasonality.

We will, by November 2017

- continue to extend the range of long term LPA forecasting models to inform business planning and understand where uptake may have increased.

We will, by April 2018

- build an initial long term demand forecast for supervision, including geographic and demographic analysis, to inform improvements to customer service and business planning
- build an initial long term demand forecast for investigations, including geographic and demographic analysis.

Our people

Ensuring that OPG lives by its values and provides a workplace that allows its staff to work to their full potential

Our people

Within 3 years we will

Develop and implement a People Plan which will

- deliver a modern employment proposition, improve staff retention and reduce turnover
- deliver professionalised workforce training and accreditation
- develop proportionate diversity across staff of all grades
- support all staff to work in a flexible and agile manner at a location suited to the tasks being performed.

We will know we have been successful if

- OPG can both recruit and retain the workforce necessary to deliver its business and ensure the workforce reflects the diversity of the general population.

In this business year we will

- scope out our requirements and create an action plan to develop a professional and qualified workforce
- initiate a programme of culture change to make the workforce ready for alternative (flexible) working, where appropriate
- draft the OPG People Plan and begin to implement it

To do this

We will, by June 2017

- roll out learning pathways for staff
- scope out the business critical roles and produce a skills matrix
- identify the current demographic across all grades.

We will, by August 2017

- implement training for managers to identify and support rising stars
- scope out a long term strategy for the recruitment of new staff and for the retention of current staff

We will, by September 2017

- recruit at least 40 apprentices under the operational delivery apprenticeship scheme and agree a programme for increasing those numbers over the period of the spending review
- have a programme in place to extend apprenticeships across the whole agency.

We will, by April 2018

- identify the first set of professional qualifications for OPG and implement a process for enrolling students
- create personas and job roles that represent a flexible workforce
- identify an alternative working definition
- review the first year of the People Plan, report on benefits and plan for the year ahead.

Performance indicators 2017/18

No.	Description	Aim
1	Average actual clearance time for powers of attorney	40 working days
2	Average time taken to reply to requests for tier 1 searches of the register	5 working days
3a	Deputy first contact support within 35 working days	85%
3bi	Average time taken to obtain annual report	40 working days
3bii	Average time taken to review annual report	15 working days
3c	33% of professional/local authority deputies reviewed	
4a	Risk assessments within 2 working days	95%
4b	Average time taken for investigations to formally reach a decision signed off by the Public Guardian	70 working days
4ci	Average time taken to implement OPG owned actions within Public Guardian recommendations, where court action has been deemed necessary	35 working days
4cii	Average time taken to implement OPG owned actions within Public Guardian recommendations, where court action has not been deemed necessary	25 working days

Customer service indicators 2017/18

Number	Description	Aim
1	Customer contact centre average call wait time	<60 seconds
2	Complaints fully responded to within deadline (deadline ambition of 10 working days)	90%
3	Customer correspondence responded to within 10 working days	90%
4	Customer satisfaction survey % very or fairly satisfied with OPG services	80%
4b	Customer satisfaction survey % very or fairly satisfied with OPG digital services	80%
5	Customers choosing to submit their LPA applications digitally	30%

Annex 1 - Status and governance

Status within the Ministry of Justice (MOJ)

OPG is an executive agency of MOJ. Our Chief Executive is responsible to the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice for the effective operation of the agency.

The government ministers responsible for OPG are:

- Rt Hon David Lidington, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice
- Dr Phillip Lee, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, minister for victims, youth and family justice.

Funding arrangements

At March 2017, OPG's financial objective is to meet the full cost of its business, excluding remissions and exemptions.

OPG achieves this through charging fees for its services. Fees are prescribed by statutory instrument and derived mainly from:

- power of attorney applications (LPA and EPA)
- deputyship set-up and annual supervision charges.

The fee for registering powers of attorney was reduced to £82 in April 2017. We are committed to making deputyships financially accessible and will review its fee structure during 2017/18.

Location and staffing

OPG is located across sites in London, Nottingham and Birmingham. At March 2017 there are 1372 staff in post (1294.49 full-time equivalents).

Our board and governance

The role of the OPG board is to ensure we meet our business plan objectives. It does this by overseeing the direction of the MOJ/OPG governance framework. Its members take decisions collectively and not as representatives of the business areas which they may lead.

The board provides strategic direction, agrees business aims and objectives and sets targets. It also monitors performance, oversees operations and manages risk. The board supports a strong working relationship between OPG and its partner organisations.

It is the role of the board to ensure that the planning, performance and financial management of OPG is carried out efficiently, effectively and transparently. It also approves our annual business plan.

OPG's Board comprises the following members:

- Alan Eccles, Public Guardian and Chief Executive (chair)
- Chris Jones, head of strategy and business development
- Angela Johnson, head of practice and compliance

- Ria Baxendale, head of supervision and investigations
- Iain Dougall, head of operations
- Karen Morley, head of corporate services
- Elizabeth Gibby, deputy director family justice division, MOJ representative
- Dean Parker, non-executive director and chair Audit and Risk Committee
- Shaun Gallagher, non-executive director
- Alison Sansome, non-executive director
- Professor Anthony Shapira, non-executive director

Risk management

OPG's risk assurance framework is maintained in accordance with the guidance in the Treasury's 'Managing Public Money and Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts'. It is consistent with MOJ's Risk Management Policy and the Office of Government Commerce's guidance on Management of Risk (MoR), escalating risks as necessary.

OPG's risk management process identifies, monitors, manages and reports risks or threats to the achievement of its objectives. This includes the escalation of risks to the MOJ Corporate Risk Register if necessary.

Annex 2 - Fee rates

Fee rates

EPA and LPA fees from 1 April 2017 Amount

Lasting power of attorney (LPA) application to register	£82
Enduring power of attorney (EPA) application to register	£82
LPA repeat application to register	£41
Office copy of an LPA	£35
Office copy of an EPA	£25

All fees are payable upon application and are not refundable (even if the power of attorney is not subsequently registered).

A separate fee is payable for applications to register property and financial affairs, and health and welfare LPAs.

Application to register fees are payable from the donor's (the person making the power of attorney) estate/funds.

Office copy fees are payable by the person requesting the document. There is no remission or exemption.

Deputyship fees from 1 October 2011 Amount

Deputyship assessment fee	£100
Supervision fee	£320
Minimal supervision fee	£35

All deputyship fees are payable from the client's (i.e. the person for whom the deputy is appointed) estate/funds.

The deputy assessment fee is due when OPG has received the order from the Court, assessed and set up the deputyship with the relevant supervision team.

The annual supervision and minimal supervision fees are payable annually in March. Fees are paid in arrears and will be calculated on a pro-rata basis if there are any changes within the year.

Annex 3 - Our strategy

Our strategic action plan sets out our direction for the next 5 to 10 years.

It's underpinned by 5 strategic themes which will direct our efforts to ensure we provide the best possible service for our users and the right environment for our staff.

Our strategic themes

1. Raising awareness and driving uptake

Ensuring that people are aware of our services, know the benefits of planning for the future, and can make an active decision on taking out an LPA.

2. Improving services for our users

Ensuring that OPG services are centred on the user and that change is driven by user need and based on evidence.

3. Safeguarding

Ensuring that OPG safeguards its users and, where concerns are raised, investigates quickly and professionally.

4. Working more effectively

Ensuring that OPG services are delivered in the most efficient and effective way possible, with the user at the heart of all we do.

5. Our people

Ensuring that OPG lives by its values and provides a workplace that allows its staff to work to their full potential.

Our 5 strategic themes are reflected in the detailed action plans which can be found in OPG's business plans.

1. Raising awareness and driving uptake

While OPG has seen sustained growth in the number of LPAs being registered, there's still more to do.

We're committed to raising awareness so that people who would benefit from an LPA are able to do so.

There are compelling arguments for taking out an LPA. You get to choose who'll be in charge of making decisions which affect you and it makes things easier for your relatives and other loved ones should you ever lose capacity.

The fact that you choose someone you trust to act on your behalf means that the decisions they make are more likely to be in your best interests.

Broadening our user base

Currently, our service users are predominately elderly with just over 10% of LPA registrations coming from people below the age of 60.

The majority of LPAs are registered when the donor is aged 71 or over.

We're committed to reaching people outside this user base, so they're aware of the benefits of putting an LPA in place and can choose to actively plan for the future.

We'll be targeting future communications activity on more difficult to reach groups and use data, evidence and research to identify the best ways to do this.

We're also part way through a programme of work that will help us do this.

Highlights

We will:

- open new channels of communication to help us reach all those who need to plan ahead and use the potential of social media to make people aware of our services
- optimise our digital services to ensure people find us quickly and easily online
- make it possible for people to search our register of LPAs and deputyship orders safely and securely, and to do this for themselves
- develop links with other government departments and intermediaries to encourage uptake of LPAs and make citizens more aware of the consequences of not preparing for the future
- run pilots aimed at engaging harder to reach groups to see which approaches work best
- target difficult to reach groups where we currently have low take-up of LPAs and also increase general awareness of the MCA to raise awareness of OPG services
- develop even closer links with the National Mental Capacity Forum to improve the implementation of the MCA for the benefit of citizens

2. Improving services for our users

OPG is committed to putting users at the heart of all we do.

As part of this commitment, we'll continue to improve and extend our existing services, making sure they meet our users' needs.

We'll explore new ways for users to interact with us in ways that suit them best.

We'll also offer existing channels, such as paper-based LPAs, for as long as they're of value.

Highlights

We will:

- deliver new technology to improve the quality of our processes so that we can better interact with users, for example by providing online help
- use online identity assurance to allow users to register for and use our services
- improve our data, analysis and research capability so that we can evidence the needs of our users both now and in the future to help deliver better outcomes for them
- work with third sector providers to help them further develop the services they offer our users
- deliver new digital channels to make it easier for our users to access our services and provide us with the information we need in a way that suits them
- have better provision for Welsh speaking citizens and offer Welsh language services wherever and whenever we can

Measuring how our products meet user needs and improving user satisfaction

Our customer relationship management team provides evidence and insight to inform our approach through carefully targeted qualitative and quantitative research.

We'll continue to use focused research to help us fully understand our users and to provide evidence to drive further process improvements in all areas of OPG.

Customer experience and research work will focus on factors that drive user satisfaction.

We'll use new technologies to build user satisfaction measures into our services, allowing us to make improvements quickly, where necessary.

Improving accessibility and ensuring ease of use

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement we'll review the accessibility of our products and services.

We're making more of our services available online, as well as through existing formats, as we keep pace with digital advances.

Our commitment to improving and increasing our digital services is in line with our published digital strategy.

We already support people who find it difficult to use the internet, through assisted digital services.

We'll work with users, partners and stakeholders to better understand their needs, while keeping them informed of and involved in the improvements we make.

3. Safeguarding

OPG has a duty to safeguard adults at risk by working proactively with attorneys, deputies, partners and others to minimise the risk of abuse.

We also have a duty to take prompt, effective action where concerns are raised.

Highlights

We will:

- continually review and seek additional Public Guardian powers, where necessary, to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose and allow the Public Guardian to carry out his or her duties effectively
- strengthen our working relationship with our partners across safeguarding networks
- develop a risk assessment tool to highlight clients and donors most likely to be at risk of abuse
- promote the whistle blowing hotline so people know how they can raise an alarm or highlight a safeguarding concern
- develop e-learning packages for attorneys and deputies to better educate and support them in their role

Supporting a strong safeguarding network for adults vulnerable to abuse

We'll continue to raise awareness of OPG's safeguarding role and increase our profile as an active and supportive organisation.

Where appropriate we'll set up data sharing and joint working arrangements with other organisations in the safeguarding arena.

Minimising potential for abuse of vulnerable users

Improved support for attorneys, deputies and others will help minimise the potential for financial, physical or emotional abuse of our vulnerable users.

We'll increase awareness of our whistle blowing hotline, where anyone can raise concerns.

Where we don't have the powers to deal with safeguarding concerns, we'll make sure we can efficiently signpost people to the appropriate agencies or partners.

4. Working more effectively

Our strategy focuses both on what we aim to deliver and on how we will go about it.

Partners will play an important part in achieving our goals, but we'll also look at further improvements within OPG to

make sure we deliver a quality service that represents value for money.

We'll further improve our planning and forecasting to make sure we have the right staff in place to deliver an effective, efficient and economical service.

Highlights

We will:

- Implement the principles embedded in the Cabinet Office initiative to transform the workplace in the civil service, making it more flexible, agile and mobile
- enable users to make financial transactions through digital channels so that they can claim remissions and pay fees in a way that is most convenient for them
- use a development programme to ensure we have the right staff and skills to deliver this strategy and improve service for our users
- develop strong links with the Court of Protection to make sure deputies and their clients have the best possible service
- deliver more of our services digitally and exploit the opportunities of new technology making digital the channel of choice

Using technology and new digital services to improve efficiency and quality

OPG is a leading digital organisation in government, committed to offering 'digital first' services, tailored to user needs.

We are continuing to build internal and external digital services and to work with our partners to promote these services.

We'll develop a more flexible way of procuring the technology and skills needed to deliver our strategic objectives.

Favouring and promoting digital channels using digital first principles

To achieve our goal of being more efficient, we'll increase our digital focus, eliminating paper wherever possible.

We'll reach out to a broader age range, helping more users to benefit from using our digital services, supporting them through the process.

We'll build on our successful assisted digital initiatives to further improve the support available to those who want to use digital services but need help in doing so.

Working with the Court of Protection to provide a seamless user journey

We'll work with the Court of Protection to ensure our users get the best possible end-to-end service.

This includes making sure that anyone who makes an application to the court to become a deputy understands what is involved and is aware of OPG's role in supervising and supporting deputies.

We'll also look at opportunities for joint technology to ensure that we know as quickly as possible when a court order is made.

5. Our people

Our staff are passionate about what they do and OPG's success to date can be attributed to their commitment and loyalty.

However, we must nurture and further develop our people if we are to create the culture and conditions for our staff to provide high quality services.

We need to make sure staff are equipped to deal with changes in working practices and to make best use of the new technology that will be introduced over the coming years.

This commitment to developing our people will mean they are able to deliver an excellent user-focused service.

Highlights

We will:

- explore options for improving ways to help us retain the people and skills we need to deliver an excellent service
- develop expertise by extending the number of loans and secondments with partner organisations outside the MOJ, learning from their experience
- develop a volunteering programme to help staff to see the value of their work and better understand the needs of people using our services
- improve our service by developing work environments that encourage better collaboration between teams
- develop a digital learning library for staff to access training materials and guidance to improve how they do their work
- develop our existing culture to reward and recognise behaviour that reflects our core values

Empowering our staff, valuing each other and working together

We'll empower staff, from senior leadership down, to do more to build a positive culture in OPG.

This means that staff at all levels will work together to achieve our strategic objectives.

We'll encourage collaborative working across OPG and give staff the training and skills they need to be self-sufficient.

User stories will be used to help staff improve their knowledge and understanding of our users' experiences.

Providing and encouraging a good working environment

Our senior leadership team will play a critical role in building our desired culture.

We'll exploit techniques and incentives used by other government departments as well as other organisations known to consistently create an excellent working environment for their people.

We aim to improve the overall wellbeing of our staff through consulting with them and consistently implementing our own policies in this area.

We'll adapt to modern family models and responsibilities, applying family friendly policies to help staff to manage their work life balance.

Glossary

Attorney

An attorney is the person chosen to act for someone else on an enduring or lasting power of attorney.

Best interests

Any decisions made, or actions taken, on behalf of someone who has lost capacity must be in their best interests.

There are standard minimum steps to follow when deciding on someone's best interests. These are set out in section 2 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 or in the Mental Capacity Act code of practice.

Capacity

Capacity is the ability to make a specific decision at the time that the decision needs to be made.

You can find a legal definition of capacity in section 2 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Client

This is the word OPG uses to refer to the person you have been appointed to act on behalf of. This person is sometimes known as 'P'.

Deputy

This is someone appointed by the Court of Protection to make decisions on behalf of someone who has lost the capacity to make certain decisions themselves.

A deputy is appointed if someone loses capacity and doesn't have a lasting power of attorney in place.

Donor

A donor is someone who has appointed an attorney to act on their behalf under an enduring or lasting power of attorney.

Enduring power of attorney (EPA)

EPAs were replaced by lasting powers of attorney (LPA) in October 2007.

Like an LPA, it is a legal document used to appoint someone to make decisions on your behalf should you lose capacity.

EPAs signed and dated before 1 October 2007 are still valid and can be registered with OPG when the donor starts to lose, or has lost, mental capacity.

Lasting power of attorney (LPA)

An LPA is a legal document which is used to appoint someone to make decisions on your behalf should you lose the capacity to make certain decisions yourself.

There are two types of LPA: health and welfare, and property and financial affairs. Both types of LPA must be registered with OPG before they can be used.

User

A user refers to anyone who makes use of OPG services. This could be directly (LPA/ EPA donors, attorneys, deputies, clients) or indirectly (partners, intermediaries). It also covers internal staff using OPG systems.

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