

Welcome to the Spring 2021 OISC Newsletter which includes details of our Adviser Conference, Compliance Review and an upcoming television appearance.

## **OISC Newsletter: Autumn 2021**

### **Message from the Commissioner**

As we return from the summer break, I look forward to a busy but exciting time for the OISC. Since I started my role as Commissioner in July 2019, we have been working on reshaping the OISC to deliver our new vision which places more emphasis on the advice seeker and what they need from our services.

We have now reached a critical time in this and will be sharing more with you about our vision and development in the coming months, including at our first online conference which will now take place in November. There are more details about the conference below, but it will be the first opportunity for us to talk to you about how our plans have progressed and to get your feedback.

Alongside our work on OISC development, we continue to work with our advisers and applicants to make sure the standards of OISC immigration advisers remains high. This means those seeking advice get the right advice for them and people know that OISC regulated advisers are trusted advisers. At the beginning of the summer we changed the application process for Level 1, bringing it in line with Level 2 and Level 3 application process. The changes have been well received and working well with 311 new advisers approved since April this year.

We've also had two successful prosecutions in the last few months with Yasser Mahmood of Heywood Street, Manchester, convicted in June. Mr Mahmood was given a six-month prison sentence, suspended for 18 months, 20 days Rehabilitation Activity Requirement, 100 hours unpaid work and ordered to pay £480 compensation on 8 June. In August Mr Winston Leachman of Farmway, Dagenham, Essex, was sentenced to 20 months imprisonment for fraud and 20 months imprisonment for providing unqualified immigration advice, to run concurrently. Securing these prosecutions is a great result helping to protect vulnerable communities as well as highlighting the damage that can be done by using a non-regulated person for immigration advice.

# OISC Annual Report 2020/21

In July, we published our Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21.

During 2020/21 we achieved our business plan objectives in spite of the challenges we faced throughout the year due to the pandemic. This was due mainly to a successful move to home working for all staff and the introduction of online audits and competence assessments which were brought in in response to the pandemic. The move to online has helped us deliver a more efficient service so these new processes will continue to be used as we return to office working again. We also continued our enforcement work, prosecuting a number of high profile cases in the year and leading to the recovery of over £25,000 in client fees.

Please visit the OISC website to read the full report. [OISC Annual Report and Accounts: 2020 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94422/oisc-annual-report-and-accounts-2020-21.pdf)

## Transforming the OISC: Adviser Conference 2021

Last year we published our three year Corporate Plan (2020 – 2023) which set out a new vision for the OISC and immigration advice and services which places the advice seeker at the heart of everything we do. Over the last 18 months we have been working on a Development Programme to change how we work to best meet their needs, but also provides more effective support to our advisers and improves how we engage and communicate with everyone.

The major shift for the organisation will be a move away from one central office in London to a business model which brings together the best of national support with a stronger regional presence. To achieve this, we are planning on changing our structure so the majority of our regulatory, enforcement and engagement work is achieved through three regional teams - north team (including Scotland and Northern Ireland), midlands team and south team and our other work including applications delivered nationally.

This will be a significant change to how we work, how we support all our advisers and how we engage and collaborate with our partners and stakeholders.

We will be holding an online conference for OISC advisers on **Tuesday 9 November 2021** where we will be sharing more about our vision and the changes we are making.

Invitations and more information about the Development Programme will be sent out in the coming weeks but until then please save the date.

## **Amendments to the Immigration Rules**

Advisers should be aware of amendments to the Immigration Rules that will take effect in early October which were announced by the Home Office on the 10 September.

Details of the amendments can be found at [HC 617 Statement Of Changes In Immigration Rules \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97424/hc617-statement-of-changes-in-immigration-rules.pdf).

More recently the Home Office have confirmed that the existing Temporary Worker route will be used to address short term shortages in relation to HJV drivers and poultry workers through the Seasonal Workers route framework

## **Compliance Reviews**

Over the coming months the OISC continues its thematic review of compliance as well as a remote/premises audit programme for regulated organisations.

The reviews are planned during 2021/22, the first being a Thematic Review on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) which began in September.

The review will look at how organisations and advisers are meeting the requirements of the revised CPD scheme.

Organisations will be chosen at random and informed by email at the start of the review what information you will need to send to the OISC.

Further guidance on the revised requirements for CPD can be found here:

[CPD Guidelines for OISC Regulated Advisers.pdf.\(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97424/cpd-guidelines-for-oisc-regulated-advisers.pdf)

The next Thematic Review will focus on organisations' client care letters which we hope to begin in the Autumn, while in early 2022 we will be piloting a compliance review around self-assessment.

## **Defenders UK: OISC on BBC morning TV**

The work of the OISC will be featured on a BBC morning TV programme

**Defenders UK** highlights the work of lesser-known enforcement or regulatory agencies devoted to safeguarding people across the UK.

On Friday 8 October at 10am, the OISC will be featured for the first time.

Viewers will have the opportunity to see how the OISC investigates complaints leading to charges and prosecution. A victim of unlawful immigration advice will also speak about the impact it has had on her life.

## **New Appointments**

Over the last few months we have welcomed two new members of staff to the OISC team.

Mary Sunderland has joined us as Programme Director for the Development Programme. Mary will be responsible for delivering the comprehensive two year programme which will change how we are structured and how we work.

Steve Barham has joined the OISC as its new Head of IT. An important part of successfully delivering the Development Programme is ensuring our IT is in a good state to support regional and remote working. Steve is responsible for overseeing an IT improvement project as well as providing continued IT support to OISC staff.

In addition to Mary and Steve joining the OISC, Edmond Birigwa, a caseworker within the Compliance and Complaints Team, has been seconded as the new policy officer. Edmond is responsible for ensuring that OISC regulatory policy reflects the OISC vision and immigration policy changes and is understood by our advisers stakeholders. This will include a review of our Codes of Standards and Guidance on Competence.