



People Management

Tribunals struggle as backlog of cases reaches highest level since fee abolition

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The number of outstanding employment tribunal cases has reached its highest level since the scrapping of tribunal fees in July 2017 and is likely to rise further given the pressures on the system, according to new analysis.

There were 23,700 outstanding cases in the system from July to September 2018 – the last quarter for which figures were available – which represented an increase of 77 per cent on the same period in 2017, said GQ|Littler's analysis.

The research, based on HM Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS) records, also found tribunals received 36,900 single claims in the year ending September 2018, an 88 per cent increase from 19,600 the year before.

Previously released figures from the Ministry of Justice suggested the number of cases had been rising consistently ever since fees were abolished.

GQ|Littler said tribunals did not have the resources to deal with the growing number of claims since fees were abolished, due to falling staff numbers – including both judges and administrative staff.

The coalition government introduced employment tribunal fees in 2013, which it said would reduce the number of weak or vexatious cases in the court system. But the Supreme Court ruled fees were illegal in 2017, forcing the government to abolish them.

GQ|Littler found the number of staff employed by HMCTS has fallen 17 per cent from the point fees were introduced in 2013. HMCTS employed 15,990 staff in October 2018, down from 19,200 in July 2013.

Staff costs have also been cut from £41.2 million to £38.5 million over the same period.

Sophie Vanhegan, partner at GQ|Littler, said tribunals had been effective in working with a tight budget, but they were struggling to deal with the “deluge” of claims since fees were abolished.

You can read the full article [here](#).