

Department of Social and Family Affairs: A Caring Statement of Strategy 2003-2005
Ain Kōwhiri Mōhiohio Kaitiaki Takekōwhiri Kaitiaki Takekōwhiri Kaitiaki Takekōwhiri



Promoting a Caring Society

Statement of Strategy 2003-2005



Department of Social & Family Affairs

Statement of Strategy 2003-2005

Promoting a Caring Society

“Our mission is to promote a caring society through ensuring access to income support and related services, enabling active participation, promoting social inclusion and supporting families.”



Department of Social & Family Affairs

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Foreword from the Minister



I welcome the publication of this Strategy Statement, *'Promoting a Caring Society'*, which I have agreed with the Secretary General of the Department in accordance with the terms of the Public Service Management Act, 1997. This is the first Strategy Statement published under this Government's term of office and the fourth Strategy Statement for the Department.

This Government is committed to improving the welfare of every Irish citizen. Our Programme for Government has set ambitious targets for tackling poverty – particularly child poverty – and social exclusion. It contains commitments to implementing a coordinated programme of measures for older people, including pensions and carers, and to a new benchmark level of €150 (in 2002 terms) for social welfare payments.

I believe that this new Strategy Statement provides a comprehensive framework for the Department to progress and develop its services over the next three years. It is fully reflective of Government policy, as articulated in the Programme for Government, the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and with Government priorities for better delivery of public services.

The Department provides essential supports to many people. The delivery of those services has to be of the highest standard to meet the legitimate needs and expectations of citizens. I look forward, as Minister for Social and Family Affairs to delivering on the improvements outlined in this strategy for people depending on the social welfare system, and for families.

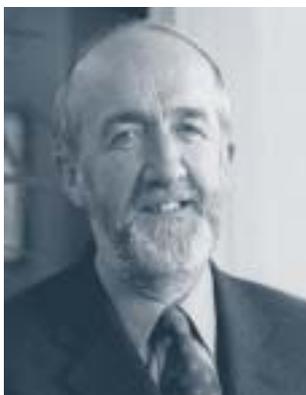
I want to acknowledge the energy and hard work of all the staff in the Department who make all of this possible. The scale of our business is enormous and it is a tribute to the dedication and commitment of all that we stand in the position to confidently move forward.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Coughlan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Coughlan, T.D.

Minister for Social and Family Affairs

Foreword from the Secretary-General



This strategy builds on our experience and our achievements in delivering on previous strategies. While many of the actions outlined here echo those in previous strategies, we have taken the opportunity to restate our mission and our priorities in the light of our new remit and the changing environment in which we operate.

Over the next three years we face many challenges. There is the challenge, first of all, of responding effectively to the needs of our diverse range of customers. We must continue to provide our services to the highest standards and in a way which delivers value for money for contributors and taxpayers. The changed economic climate poses a challenge to us in terms of the increased demands on our services and the changed environment for the public finances.

The changes which are taking place in our working environment bring renewed challenges for the relationship between the organisation and its people. The degree to which we create effective team working, maintain trust in each other, foster good communication, encourage individuals and build good performance, will determine our success. We have as a guiding principle that we work in partnership and move ahead in a framework of trust and mutual respect.

The process of preparing this strategy involved many people throughout the Department. I would like to thank everybody who helped in this. It is important now that everybody in the Department sees the link between the strategy and their own role and that the strategy be a working document which drives what we do and becomes a 'living strategy' to be used, built on and, if necessary, revised as we move forward.

I look forward to working together, under the guidance of our Minister, and with the agencies under our aegis and other Departments and agencies, to deliver on the significant programme of development which is outlined here.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Hynes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Hynes

Secretary-General

Our Mission and Mandate

“Our mission is to promote a caring society through ensuring access to income support and related services, enabling active participation, promoting social inclusion and supporting families.”

Our Main Functions

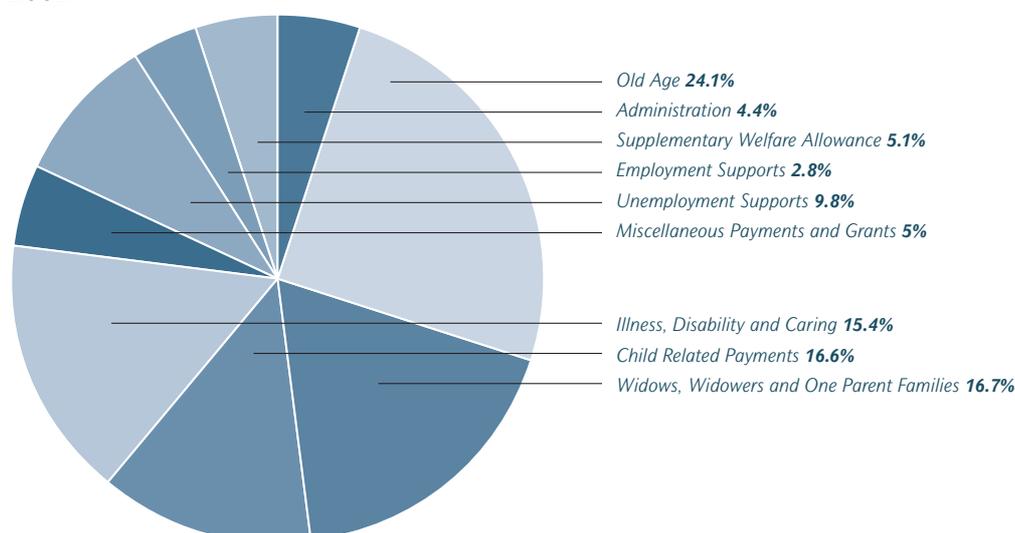
The Department supports the Minister for Social and Family Affairs in the discharge of governmental, parliamentary and departmental duties. Our main functions are:

- to formulate appropriate social protection policies;
- to administer and manage the delivery of statutory and non-statutory social and family schemes and services; and
- to work with other Departments and agencies in the delivery of Government priorities.

Our Business

The traditional business of the Department was the provision of a range of income supports, comprising insurance (PRSI)-based payments, social assistance (means-tested) payments, associated secondary benefits and Child Benefit. Over the past twenty years, however, the role of the Department has expanded into other areas, including supports for people to return to work, support for voluntary and community activity and activities to combat poverty. More recently, the Department has been given responsibility for family support. The establishment of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has brought about a re-alignment of responsibilities in the area of support for voluntary and community activity. The income support role remains, by far, the largest element of the Department's business.

Expenditure on Social Welfare by Programme 2002



Scale of our Business

Our income support work impacts on the lives of almost every person in the State. Payments are made to over 938,000 people each week and, on an annual basis, 1.7 million (*) claims are processed. The gross estimated expenditure for 2003 is €10.2 billion. In 2002, a target of over 340,000 reviews was set. Savings from our control activities were nearly €283 million in 2002.

Organisation of the Department

The Department is structured on Aireacht/ Executive lines and has a total of approximately 4,850 staff (of which over 900 are worksharing, equating to about 4,400 full-time posts).

Our Headquarters Offices are located in Dublin, Dundalk, Letterkenny, Longford, Sligo and Waterford.

Our local delivery of services is structured on a 10-region basis with regional offices in Cork, Dundalk, Galway, Limerick, Longford, Sligo, Waterford and three in the Dublin area. There is a network of 58 Social Welfare Local Offices (SWLOs) and 69 Branch Offices (SWBOs). Local Office staff administer the Unemployment and Farm Assist schemes, process medical certificates for Disability Benefit and applications for the Personal Public Service number, and provide information and other services to the public. In addition, there are over 400 locally based social welfare inspectors who carry out a range of investigative duties (including employer inspections, means assessment for schemes and services, review of entitlements and fraud investigation). Also, at local level, there are 38 Jobs Facilitators who assist people to return to work, training or education.

Social Welfare Appeals Office

The Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) is an independent Office responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Statutory Agencies

The following Offices come under the aegis of the Department:

- **Combat Poverty Agency**, which has responsibilities in the areas of advice to the Minister, research, action programmes and information in relation to poverty in Ireland;
- **Pensions Board**, which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Pensions Act which concerns the security and development of occupational pensions, and for the development of occupational pensions coverage;
- **Comhairle**, which incorporates the former National Social Services Board (NSSB) and certain functions of the National Rehabilitation Board (NRB). Comhairle has responsibility for supporting the provision of independent information, advice and advocacy services for all citizens throughout the country; and
- **Family Support Agency**, which is responsible for the provision of a family mediation service, the support, promotion and development of marriage and relationship counselling and other family supports, and the Family and Community Services Resource programme. The Agency's responsibilities also include undertaking research, providing and disseminating information about parenting and family issues and providing advice to the Minister on matters relating to families.

* 2002 figures.



The Environment We Face

The Environment We Face

1. Introduction

As only a relatively short time has elapsed (i.e. November 2001) since the publication of our last Statement of Strategy ('People, Policies, Services) 2001-2004', many of the issues raised in that document remain central to the Department's plans over the next three year period. Some of the parameters, in particular those related to the economic environment, have, however, changed over the course of the year.

The outline of the Environmental Analysis is as follows: first, in keeping with the analysis carried out for the previous strategy, **demographic** and **economic** factors are identified which are already affecting or may in the future impact on the work of the Department. The **social and political context** in which the Department operates is then outlined at national, EU and international levels. The **internal environment** and issues arising are also referred to, including the modernisation and change agenda of the civil service, the customer agenda, technology and issues relating to developing the capacity of the Department and its people. Finally, from amongst these issues, we highlight those which, following a consultation process, we have identified as priorities.

2. Demographic and Economic Factors

The following demographic and economic factors will influence the content and outcome of this Strategy Statement:

- Population growth will continue, mainly through continued immigration. The CSO in its projections, conclude that the recent growth in fertility, which followed a significant decline, is unlikely to be maintained and that the long-term decline can be expected to resume but at a more moderate rate. This raises long term concerns in relation to population ageing and population decline.
- The numbers of people in two of the Department's key customer groups – children and the elderly – will not increase appreciably over the period of the strategy and dependency ratios will continue to decrease.
- Although dependency ratios will decrease over the three years of the strategy, policy will need to take account of the longer-term increase in the elderly population; this has implications for pension expenditure and for long-term care.
- In the short term, economic growth will be much lower than in recent years. The annual average growth rate (in real GNP terms) for the years 1998 to 2002 was 6.9 per cent. The most recent Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Medium Term Review, published in September 2001, forecasts average growth of 4.1 per cent for the years 2003-2005.
- The deterioration in the public finances will impact on the resources available for social transfers and for new initiatives in the social policy area, which require additional expenditure.



- Inward migration is likely to be significant. The likely increase in immigration of non-nationals, particularly non-EEA nationals, will change the profile of customers of some schemes. This poses the challenge of taking into account cultural and religious differences, both in dealing with customers and in the structure of schemes.
- The labour market environment will be considerably less buoyant than in recent years. The growth rate of the labour force will slow over the period of the Strategy due to the decline in the natural rate of increase and slower growth in participation rates.
- There is likely to be more 'churning' in the labour market, with a higher level of short-term unemployment than in the past. Strategies may be required to prevent people drifting into long-term unemployment.
- The growth in 'non-standard' employment, e.g. part-time work, fixed term contracts, etc. will continue. Over the period 1994 to 2001 part-time employment grew by an annual average rate of close to 11 per cent compared to a growth rate of just over 4 per cent for full-time employment. This poses challenges for social welfare systems based on the norm of full-time employment.
- Higher employment rates in recent times have contributed to a rapid growth in the insured population. While this will slow down in the short term, the insured population is likely to continue at a high level. A consequence of this is increased potential claimant levels for various social welfare schemes.
- Given the continued trend of increases in births outside marriage and the increasing levels of marriage breakdown, the number of one parent households is likely to rise and the issue of support for one-parent families and children of divorced parents is likely to feature strongly.
- Population increase is being accompanied by a rapid increase in household formation due to the age structure and the rate of marital breakdown. This is creating unprecedented demand for housing. Taken together with the rate of house price inflation, this suggests significant increases in demands for social housing and other housing supports.
- The growth in female participation in the work force is likely to continue and will keep on the agenda issues of equality in the labour market and reconciling work and family life. The increasing participation of women in the labour market also raises issues related to child care and elder care.
- The increase in diverse family forms in Irish society raises issues in relation to the current structure of social welfare payments.
- The rate of consistent poverty has continued to drop, exceeding the targets in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS). At the same time, relative poverty has increased, one contributory factor being the relationship between social welfare rates and after-tax earnings. Tackling poverty and social inclusion will continue to be major determinants of policy in the social welfare area.

3. The Social and Political Context

The key changes in the political context affecting the Department's strategy are the new Programme for Government launched in June 2002 and the new Social Partnership Agreement "Sustaining Progress".

The key areas around which policies and programmes will need to be developed are:

- Combating poverty and social exclusion and building an inclusive society. The Programme for Government and “Sustaining Progress”, particularly refer in this context to tackling child poverty.
- Policies for older people. In this regard the Programme for Government and “Sustaining Progress” contain a commitment to implementing a co-ordinated programme of measures with regard to older people, including pensions and care services.
- Provision of services and payments for people with disabilities and carers.
- Equality/diversity issues arising from equality legislation and the recognition that Ireland is becoming a more diverse society with different groups having different needs and priorities.
- Childcare and balancing work and family life and the need for social welfare systems and payments to support them.
- Employee/family friendly policies.
- The need to ensure value for money in State services.
- Customer-centred delivery of services.
- Promotion of the Information Society.
- The greater use of social indicators and better quality information to ensure that policies developed are soundly based and continuously reviewed.
- Renewal of local government including the establishment of City/County Development Boards.
- Recognition of citizenship rights and responsibilities. In this regard the issue of social rights and how these are given expression and honoured is likely to have a significant impact on the development of social protection systems in the future.

- North/South and East/West co-operation. We will continue to work with our partner Departments and agencies in Northern Ireland and the UK on issues of mutual benefit.
- Recognition of the spatial dimension to economic and social planning for which the National Spatial Strategy provides a framework.

4. EU and International Developments

The European Union, the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the OECD are the international organisations whose activities impact most on the social policy agenda. The most significant influence will arise from EU initiatives. In this regard giving effect to the ambitious goal set by heads of Government at the Lisbon Council in 2002 to make Europe by 2010 the *“most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with better jobs and greater social cohesion”* (the Lisbon Agenda) will require action particularly in the employment and social inclusion areas. There is strong recognition of the need for greater balance between the economic, employment and social dimensions if the EU is to be seen by its citizens as credible and relevant.

The particular issues which we need to address in this context include:

- Reduction of persistent poverty and progress in using the open co-ordination method of policy development adopted at EU level.
- Benchmarking of policies against EU trends.
- The development of a programme for the Irish Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2004.
- Challenges and opportunities presented by EU expansion.

5. Modernisation of the Civil Service

The Civil Service Modernisation Programme which has been in place since 1994 has had a significant impact on all Government departments over that period. Over the time-frame of this strategy, the aim will be to continue to develop a high quality Civil Service, which will be efficient, effective and transparent. In the light of an evaluation of the Civil Service Modernisation programme the following key issues affecting the Department's business in the period ahead will be addressed:

- the full impact of the implementation of the new Performance Management and Development System;
- improved external and internal Customer Service;
- a range of initiatives in the Human Resources area;
- the deepening of the Partnership process;
- developments in e-Government;
- Financial Management, Programme Evaluation and Regulatory Reform.

Applying these aspects of change to the way we carry out our work is a key priority for us and critical to the provision of a service responsive to change.

6. Meeting Customer Needs

As a Department we have a very wide and diverse customer base. Complex customer needs arise because many people who seek income support have requirements which must be supplied by other state services. As unemployment has declined, many of those who remain out of employment require specific tailored interventions to assist them. This also applies to some lone parents and people with disabilities. For some young people, a range of personal and family

circumstances is preventing their entry to the labour market. Early intervention with this group may obviate the need for more serious intervention later on.

There has been considerable policy and institutional change, in recent years, in the area of services for people with disabilities with the aim of improving their quality of life. Disability will continue to be a major issue from both a policy development and service delivery perspective. The area of care provision will also require policy development and service improvements because of the ageing of the population, changes in family structures and the enhanced awareness in society of the role of the carer.

In line with the Civil Service-wide Quality Customer Service Principles* and the Official Languages Equality Bill (2002), the Department will also provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

As a means of informing our service delivery approach, customer surveys, customer panels and comment cards have for the last number of years been a key feature of the Department's Customer Service Programme. The main consultation methods have included:

- Sample surveys undertaken by independent market consultants.
- Customer panels, i.e. informal meetings between officers of the Department and randomly selected customers from different customer groups.
- A new formal Comments and Complaints system, introduced in May 2002.

* These principles relate to: Quality Service Standards, Equality/Diversity, Physical Access, Information, Timeliness and Courtesy, Complaints, Appeals, Consultation and Evaluation, Choice, Official Languages Equality, Better co-ordination and the Internal Customer. See also Appendix 2.

The key findings from these consultation processes have been:

- Generally there is a high level of satisfaction. For example, the results of the last major independent customer survey, published in May 2001, showed that:
 - 84% were satisfied with the service received.
 - 74% found it easy to complete our forms.
 - 90% were satisfied with the information they received.
 - 96% were satisfied with the payment method.
- The new Comments and Complaints system which was put into operation in May 2002 under the Customer Service Programme has yielded the following results to date:
 - The majority of complaints arose from the time taken to process payments; the majority of these related to the time taken to implement changes in claims as distinct from new claims.
 - Other complaints which were relatively few in number, related to the time people had to queue, the overall level of service, the manner in which people were treated by staff and the lack of privacy at reception areas.

7. Supporting Families

The Department will continue to play a central role in the development of policies for the support of children and families. This will be achieved in co-operation with other departments and agencies who have responsibilities in this area. The National Children's Strategy sets out a number of national goals and objectives in the area of support for children. The need for the financial supports to eliminate child poverty and the need for children to have the opportunities to experience the qualities of family life are objectives which have particular relevance in the context of the Department's responsibilities and which will influence our policies and programmes.

Recent research on the needs of families and family members including the Review of the One Parent Family Payment have identified issues to be addressed including administrative responses to family welfare. These include factors such as child poverty, marital breakdown and the multi-dimensional effects of combining work outside the home with family life. Ongoing research is required to ensure relevant information on family welfare is available to inform policy making and implementation.

8. Using Technology

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems are critical to the efficient operation of the Department and have immediate implications for the management and organisation of our business. Business and technological planning processes will continue to be integrated and the need for a high level of proficiency in new technologies for all staff will be a key issue as the pace of technological change and our reliance on technology, continues to increase.

There are three aspects of the technology environment, which have particular relevance:

- The trend in recent years towards the development and 'de facto' standardisation of internet technologies creates an imperative for us to adopt these technologies and position ourselves to avail of the benefits and opportunities which this trend has opened up.
- There is a need at national and EU level to push ahead with the development of the Information Society. Our priorities in this area are to progress on-line delivery of services and the integration of services generally. We are in a unique position in view of our central information databases and can therefore fill two roles in this area – that of 'customer data repository' and that of 'service supplier'.
- Bearing in mind our remit in relation to social inclusion, we have a role in supporting measures to address the 'digital divide'.

9. Developing the Department and its People

All Government departments have had to meet the challenge of major change over recent years. Responding to the change agenda has required changes in organisation structures, reporting arrangements and in the allocation of responsibilities within and between Departments. The changing environment has also presented challenges for the people who work in Departments who have had to respond to the changes arising from the public service modernisation programme as well as new ways of working, for example a greater emphasis on cross-departmental teams. The continuing agenda of change, together with the tighter budgetary situation, will impose further challenges on Departments and staff in meeting the needs of their customers in the future.

Within the Civil Service, key functions such as recruitment, pay and conditions of service are determined centrally. Recruitment of appropriately qualified staff has been a challenge centrally for the civil service in the competitive labour market of recent years while retention of skilled staff has also been a challenge. A slower economic environment is likely to have an impact on this in the immediate future.

This Department employs approximately 4,850 staff and is one of the largest employers in the Civil Service. Staff turnover is significant. In 2001, a total of 582 people (12 per cent of the workforce) came into the Department by way of open recruitment, transfer from other Departments/offices and return from career break or secondment. In that same year a total of 413 employees (9 per cent of the workforce) left the organisation. With the general slowdown of the economy, this level of turnover may decline. A slower turnover increases the importance of maintaining staff motivation and updating skills to face new challenges.

Another significant feature is the age profile of staff. More than half our staff (58 per cent) are in the 35-50 age range, with 28 per cent under 35 years and 13 per cent over 50 years of age. This age profile has implications for a number of areas including training and development programmes, promotion policy and manpower planning.

Employee and Family Friendly Working Arrangements have been drawn up in response to growing demands for greater flexibility in work patterns. The four day week worksharing option was introduced in early 2002. At the end of 2002 approximately 910 employees were worksharing, 249 were on career breaks and over 3,400 were on flexible working hours. In addition, 304 employees availed of Term-Time leave during summer 2002.

A safe working environment which meets the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989 is a basic right of all staff. We must make provision for these requirements for both staff and customers. It is also essential to ensure a work environment in which the behaviour of all staff is conducive to a positive work experience for all and there are specific civil service wide policies in that regard. Recent equality legislation has also brought with it both rights and responsibilities which we recognise and must apply to all employees.

These challenges require discussion and agreement between staff and management. Our partnership structures and internal customer strategy will play a key role here and give a voice to all staff countrywide. The Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) presents both challenges and opportunities for all staff. Through training and agreed role-setting the Department will become a more staff-centred work-place. The new Human Resource (HR) Strategy for the Department (recently published) sets out a comprehensive programme of measures to improve the working environment for staff during 2003-2005.

10. Priorities

While all of the issues referred to above will impact on the work of the Department over the next three years, in our internal consultation process we attempted to identify the key challenges, strengths and weaknesses. The key points identified were as follows:

- The most significant challenge identified was that arising from the deterioration in the public finances and the disimproving economic situation. The decline in the public finances will put pressure on the Department while at the same time the number of customers (particularly on the Live Register) is likely to rise.
- Other significant challenges identified for the next few years are demographic trends, the increased number of one-parent families, greater diversity in our customer base and a heightened emphasis on a rights-based approach.
- In looking at how well-placed the Department is to meet these challenges, the level of adaptability and flexibility which has been shown in adapting to change in recent years is seen as a major strength. The tighter budgetary situation will, however, present particular challenges and good management practice will be essential. With regard to staff, managers strongly recognise the commitment and enthusiasm of staff generally. Well-motivated staff are central to the Department achieving its objectives. The development and implementation of an innovative HR strategy is crucial to enable the Department maximise the very considerable resources and potential at its disposal. Continued implementation of the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) is a critical and integral element of this HR strategy.

- Other internal issues which we will seek to address over the term of this strategy are the complex organisation/structure of the Department, the issue of internal communications and inter-agency relationships.

11. Conclusion

In carrying out the Environmental Analysis we have attempted to identify and agree on the major issues facing the Department in the period 2003-2005, as well as our strengths and weaknesses in meeting these challenges. The rapidly changing economic climate of the past number of years highlights the need for the Department as an organisation to remain flexible in responding to changes as they arise. This is seen to have been one of our strengths as a Department in the past highlighted, for example, through our evolving role from passive income maintenance to a more proactive approach in which we seek to address the underlying causes of poverty and social exclusion. Central to this responsiveness has been the willingness and ability of our staff to adapt and change. Continuing to adapt to political priorities and changing customer needs, in the less favourable financial environment now facing us, is perhaps, the key challenge which this strategy needs to address.



Our Values and Guiding Principles

Our Values and Guiding Principles

The services for which the Department is responsible provide essential supports to people who have recourse to them. The delivery of those services has to be of a high standard in order to meet the legitimate needs of customers.

We recognise the importance of the shared values which we bring to the delivery of our business. In carrying out our work we seek to be guided by the following key values and principles:

Service

We are conscious of our role as a public service organisation, of the particular importance of the services we provide and of the need for those services to be provided to the highest standard.

We give expression to this by:

- providing high quality, well researched proposals for initiatives in the areas of social and family policy and clear explanation of our policies;
- providing a quality, reliable and caring service to the public, assisting them in establishing their rights, anticipating their needs where possible, and taking full account of their views;
- seeking ways to improve the effectiveness of our service, working with other agencies, where necessary, to achieve this; and
- ensuring that the staff who deliver our service receive quality support from other areas of the Department to enable them to do so.

Fairness and Respect

We recognise the need for fairness and mutual respect.

We give expression to this by:

- treating customers and each other in accordance with fair procedures;
- providing our customers with all necessary information regarding our decisions and our services, responding promptly to their concerns and being prepared to review our decisions where appropriate;
- recognising the contribution, input and views of the people who work with us;
- ensuring a fair application of internal rules and procedures, having regard to the requirements of the work and the need for an equitable sharing of rights and responsibilities; and
- having an independent adjudication system for those who disagree with our decisions on their entitlements and their insurability.

Openness

We are open to change.

We give expression to this by:

- carrying out objective analysis and continuous review of our activities and being concerned to continually learn from our experience; and
- encouraging and facilitating within the Department the open expression of views and a participative approach.

Professionalism

We aim to apply the highest professional standards in every aspect of our work.

We give expression to this by:

- maintaining an environment of trust and shared understanding where people are inspired to excellence and have an opportunity, as individuals or team members, to develop and grow;
- expecting the highest standard of job performance possible from every person who works in the Department;
- supporting each other in delivering a quality service recognising the constraints which apply;
- ensuring clear definitions of ownership and responsibilities;
- ensuring through the effective use of PMDS, and otherwise, that people in the Department have clarity of purpose, commitment to achieving results and the opportunity to develop their skills and abilities;
- deploying resources and supports to underpin good performance across the Department; and
- ensuring that our financial management systems are of a high standard and that achieving value for money is an integral part of management practice.

Flexibility and Responsiveness

We pride ourselves on our ability to respond to challenges in a flexible and creative manner.

We give expression to this by:

- taking a practical approach to challenges which arise;
- being flexible in addressing particular needs when these are required;
- responding with initiative and creativity, with any other interests involved, when major projects, challenges or crises present themselves; and
- utilising the opportunities offered by new technology to improve services, performance and the working environment.

Partnership and Consultation

We recognise that effective delivery of our services and management of our work requires a partnership approach with staff and staff unions and associations. We believe in continuous and effective communication built on trust and mutual respect.

We give expression to this by:

- operating, as far as possible, a consultative approach to decision-making within the Department; and
- ensuring transparency in the decision-making process in the interests of wider ownership and inclusiveness.



Our High Level Goals

Our High Level Goals

We are committed to providing a quality service for all of our customers and our stakeholders, to ensuring the well-being and development of our staff who provide the service and to delivering value for money for the contributors and taxpayers who finance it, by meeting these goals:

Income Support

Promoting the development of adequate, secure and sustainable income support and related services and delivering appropriate services to the highest standards, in co-operation with other relevant agencies, and responsive to people's changing needs and entitlements, taking account of our responsibilities to contributors and tax-payers.

Support to Work

Facilitating return to work or participation in training or further education by people in the active age groups dependent on State income supports, through a range of supportive measures, including referral to other agencies as necessary.

Families

Supporting families in caring for children and other dependent family members, ensuring specific supports for disadvantaged families, families in conflict, one-parent families and families on low incomes and working with other agencies to identify and develop responses to key family issues.

Poverty and Social Exclusion

Provide relevant and effective supports to those affected by poverty and social exclusion and co-ordinate the development and implementation of the Government's strategy in this area, in co-operation with other statutory and voluntary agencies.

e-Government Agenda

Promoting the use and development of integrated services in line with the development of the e-Government agenda.

The Department and its Staff

Developing an effective, adaptable and capable organisation and a culture of pride, innovation and performance with a high level of involvement and participation by people at all levels and a climate which fosters personal and career development.

A blurred, light blue-tinted photograph of a family consisting of two adults and a child, standing together. The image is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page.

Goal 1: Income Support

Promoting the development of adequate, secure and sustainable income support and related services and delivering appropriate services to the highest standards, in co-operation with other relevant agencies, and responsive to people's changing needs and entitlements, taking account of our responsibilities to contributors and tax-payers.

Goal 1: Income Support

The largest element of the work of the Department is the provision of income support through the range of social insurance and social assistance schemes, as well as universal child benefit. These schemes are provided for in legislation. The Department is also responsible for a range of additional services which benefit certain categories of income support recipients.

The Irish social welfare system is contingency-based in that there is a wide variety of schemes each geared to meeting contingencies such as unemployment, sickness, old age, etc.

It is the Department's responsibility to identify income support needs and the degree to which these are currently being met, bring forward proposals where necessary to address unmet needs and, when Government decides on the course of action to be followed, ensure delivery of schemes and programmes or changes to these programmes as appropriate.

The objectives which we have set in this area in this strategy are, in some cases, common to all schemes and in other cases, specific to a particular customer group or scheme.

Objective 1

To meet effectively the income support and associated needs of defined customer groups.

We are a customer-centred organisation. Our aim is to deliver a service of the highest quality that takes account of best practice and the standards of leading customer service organisations.

Actions

- Timeliness and accuracy – We will deliver payments and associated supports accurately and in a timely manner.

- Personalised service – We will make every effort to ensure that customers are made aware of their full entitlements. We will be proactive in our dealings with our customers and will respond to their individual needs.
- Minimise Customer Effort – We will aim to provide the fullest possible service at the first point of contact and core data will be captured only once.
- Openness – We will foster a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services.
- Stewardship – We will balance our commitment to customer service with our stewardship of public monies through effective and efficient management of our services and a comprehensive Control Strategy.
- Payment options – We will provide a range of payment options that are responsive to customer needs and responsive to technology and other relevant developments.

Objective 2

To continually improve and update our system of service delivery.

The need for continuous improvement is driven by certain environmental factors, specifically:

- Customer expectations for modern and efficient service delivery.
- The priority given to better customer service in the Public Service Modernisation Programme.
- The commitment to electronic access to public services in the Government's Action Plan for the Information Society.
- The need to ensure value for money in the use of resources through improved efficiency and integration of services.

- The need for an improved working environment for staff who provide the service to customers.

Actions

- Implement the principles of quality customer service endorsed by the Government and as set out in our Customer Action Plan 2001-2004.
- Extend the implementation of the new Service Delivery Model, including technological organisational and business process change, which has been implemented for the child benefit system, progressively to other schemes.
- Provide customers with expanded options for services that are broad in terms of the time, place, mode of access, payment method and language.
- Implement, in the context of the new Service Delivery Model and otherwise, a customer-centred approval by introducing new ways of working by empowered, motivated and trained staff using appropriate technology.
- Localise the delivery of a wider range of services through the local office network.
- Develop in consultation with the Department of Health and Children and Health Boards, proposals to improve the delivery of supplementary welfare allowance, including the assignment of a substantial level of direct responsibility to this Department for the delivery of the scheme.
- Ensure that staff are fully informed, trained and supported in delivering our information services.
- Participate in consultative fora and customer panels designed to further improve the quality of information leaflets, claim forms and communications generally.
- Develop the delivery of information services through a wider range of outlets and in particular at a local level.
- Develop our links with other information providers and with community and voluntary groups and provide supports for the development and promotion of information and welfare rights.
- Maximise the use of new and emerging technologies in information provision including the use of the Department's website and other appropriate means.
- Publish an Information Services Strategy which will articulate a vision for the future development of information provision and dissemination for the next three years.
- Ensure that customers are made aware of all of their entitlements and responsibilities when they make a claim under one of our services and schemes.
- Ensure changes and improvements in our services and schemes are publicised to customers as they occur.

Objective 3

To provide comprehensive and accurate information in a clear and easily accessible manner to customers, employers, staff and external partners.

Actions

- Deliver a comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information service to all customers, other departments and agencies, and the voluntary and community sector, using appropriate media.

Objective 4

To ensure that any person who is dissatisfied with the decision made on his/her social welfare entitlements is provided with the means to have such decisions reviewed.

APPEALS/REDRESS

The Department is committed to the maintenance of a formalised, accessible and transparent system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions on entitlements.

Actions

- Improve our systems to ensure that any decision will be reviewed in the light of further information brought to our notice. All customers who receive an adverse decision will be advised of their right to have their claim reviewed.
- Improve the system of appeal against decisions on entitlements in co-operation with the Social Welfare Appeals Office and in the light of, inter alia, the management review of the Office.

Objective 5

To ensure our income support programmes and associated supports are relevant, adequate, efficient, effective, recognising the needs of diverse customer groups and effectively address poverty and social exclusion.

Actions

- Ensure that well prepared policies are available in good time in response to Government and Ministerial commitments and priorities.
- Bring forward proposals in a budgetary context for appropriate increases in social welfare payments, having particular regard to the commitments in the Government Programme and the new Partnership Agreement, “Sustaining Progress” to a new benchmark level of €150 (in 2002 terms) for social welfare payments, an increase in the basic state pension to at least €200 by 2007, improvements in the Widow’s/ Widower’s pension and a personal entitlement for spouses of pensioners who are in receipt of the qualified adult allowance, set at the level of a full non-contributory pension.
- Bring forward proposals in a budgetary context for appropriate increases in Child Benefit rates having regard to the commitment in “Sustaining Progress” to complete the final phase of the planned multi-annual increases in Child Benefit rates in 2004 and 2005.
- Examine Child Income support arrangements including, for example, merging the Child Dependant Allowance (CDA) with the Family Income Supplement (FIS) in the context of addressing Child Poverty.
- Ensure accurate, logical, comprehensive analysis of issues and presentation of useful and relevant options for changes in schemes in a simple and clear way.
- Consult with stakeholders in relation to the development of policies. Develop participative structures where customers, representative organisations and stakeholders generally can express views, provide feedback on services delivered and input into policy making.
- Identify and disseminate good practice at international level and feed into the policy process.
- Undertake a planned programme of reviews of schemes and programmes under the Expenditure Review Programme and implement changes to schemes in light of the outcome of reviews.
- Develop proposals for the achievement of the income adequacy targets in the NAPS.
- Bring forward proposals to simplify and standardise qualifying conditions for income maintenance schemes.
- In accordance with the Programme for Government and “Sustaining Progress”, the new Social Partnership Agreement, implement a full range of policies aimed at supporting older people including delivering decent pensions and greatly improved care services.
- Work with the appropriate authorities to put in place an All-Ireland free travel scheme for pensioners as outlined in the Programme for Government.
- Bring forward proposals to improve income support provisions for carers as provided for in the Programme for Government.

SOCIAL INSURANCE

Social insurance guarantees basic pensions in retirement, invalidity and widowhood, as well as providing a range of payments during working life if and when the need arises: unemployment, illness, maternity and treatment benefits. To be effective the system must be comprehensive, as well as financially secure.

Objective 6

To promote the provision of social protection through the social insurance system in accordance with Government policy by extending coverage where appropriate and adapting benefits to meet emerging needs, while ensuring the financial stability of the Social Insurance Fund.

Actions

- Develop proposals, in the context of changing social and work patterns, to adapt the social insurance system to address:
 - The needs of groups not currently covered by the system.
 - New and emerging contingencies and those not at present covered by the scope of the system.
 - Changing patterns of work and, in particular, the increasing trend towards combining work and family responsibilities.
- Review the current legislative framework applicable to the social insurance classification of employees and the self-employed in the light of emerging employment arrangements and relevant social welfare appeals and judicial findings.
- Provide continuing and relevant support to employers in the operation of the PRSI contribution system.

- Ensure that policy measures take account of the medium and longer-term financial viability of the Social Insurance Fund.
- Work to ensure that social insurance contribution income is adequate in the light of the long run liabilities of the Social Insurance Fund, and having regard to the requirements of a competitive economy.

Objective 7

Development of a comprehensive pensions system (to include both State and supplementary arrangements) taking account of and finding a balance between the following (sometimes competing) factors of adequacy, sustainability and modernisation.

Actions

- Full implementation of the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002 and analysis of its effects.
- Analysis of supplementary pension coverage rates.
- Monitoring of current supplementary pension arrangements and, in particular, the Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs). This will be undertaken in consultation with the Pensions Board.
- In accordance with the Programme for Government, establish a group to report on options for lower income groups to ensure they can have an earnings related pension when they retire.
- Participate in the Government-sponsored information and awareness campaign to promote and encourage supplementary pensions provision amongst workers, which is being undertaken by the Pensions Board.
- Development of strategies in relation to the financing of long-term care support in consultation with the Department of Health and Children.

CONTROL PROGRAMME

An effective control programme sits alongside the provision of the highest quality service to our customers. We have a broad-ranging and comprehensive control strategy, which aims to keep fraud and abuse to a minimum. Our emphasis, therefore, is to minimise risks of fraud and eliminate incorrect payments. This involves checks at point of claiming, reviews of means, verification that the conditions for entitlement continue to be met, medical reviews, inspection of employers for compliance, arrangements for debt recovery and prosecution of offenders.

The development of information technology has played a major role in the evolution of our control policy. The use of a common identifier, standard methods of capturing and validating data and adherence to principles of data integrity are all aimed to ensure that data is up to date, accurate and readily accessible.

We recognise the adverse impact that abuse of the social welfare system can have in the area of fair competition in the labour market and the importance for our customers and society generally of maintaining an effective control regime.

Objective 8

To implement controls on a cost-effective basis to ensure that error, fraud and abuse are prevented, detected and deterred and any monies incorrectly paid are recovered.

Actions

- Continually review our systems and processes to minimise opportunities for fraud and incorrect payments.
- Review the effectiveness of existing deterrents, including carrying out a risk analysis of schemes in relation to fraud and error.
- Maximise the use of information technology in fraud and error detection and data analysis.

- Conduct an ongoing control awareness campaign for both the public and staff.
- Place a particular emphasis on identity fraud and the development and implementation of effective methods to detect and combat this method of abuse.
- Highlight the importance of debt recovery among staff and debtors in respect of monies overpaid, fraudulently or otherwise, and the Department's obligations and determination to pursue defaulters and to effect recoupment.
- Advance, in conjunction with the relevant sections/areas, the planning and design of the new central overpayments and debt management computer system with a view to its implementation in 2004.
- Co-ordinate employer inspections with the Revenue Commissioners to ensure both organisations derive maximum benefit from this activity.
- Enhance the ongoing development of co-operation, to the optimum degree, on a national and local basis with other State agencies, the Health Boards, and Local Authorities.
- Conduct research into best practice in other jurisdictions and comparable organisations and apply, as appropriate.
- Co-operate with other jurisdictions, having regard to relevant legislation.
- Liaise with external organisations including employer groups and trade unions.
- Enhance mechanisms for feedback from frontline staff on the effectiveness of the control programme.
- Ensure that an effective prosecution policy is implemented in the Department and by Health Boards.
- Publish the revised Control Strategy for the Department and draw up a control strategy and procedures for each scheme.



Goal 2: Support to Work

Facilitating return to work or participation in training or further education by people in the active age groups dependent on State income supports, through a range of supportive measures, including referral to other agencies as necessary.

Goal 2: Support to Work

Facilitating and encouraging people in receipt of income supports to return to the active labour market, has become a very important element of the overall work of the Department over recent years. This activation role is part of the overall objective of ensuring that the labour market and social protection systems bring the best from each other.

The objective of activation is that the social security system should be a springboard to active participation, while recognising that this will not be possible for everybody. This approach has been applied in many other countries and has been promoted at EU level in various policy statements and initiatives.

The activation role requires close co-operation with a number of other agencies.

We share responsibility for this area with, in particular, the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and Education and Science, FÁS and the Local Employment Service and a range of other organisations at local level. The activities of the agencies are mutually complementary.

Our objectives in this area are framed in the context of the Government's employment objectives, as set out in the Employment Action Plan (EAP), as follows:

- *“To promote employment growth and employment for all who seek it.*
- *To mobilise labour supply.*
- *To enhance labour quality through education, training and lifelong learning.*
- *To promote the economic and social inclusion of excluded persons, eliminate long-term unemployment and prevent future drift into long-term unemployment.”*

Objective 1

To actively support customers in their efforts to access the labour market.

Actions

- We will make all of our unemployed customers aware on a regular basis of their obligations to seek work and we will actively support them in doing so.
- We will take specific steps to encourage those who have been out of the labour market to avail of appropriate pre-employment training and development and education opportunities.
- Where appropriate we will source training programmes in co-operation and consultation with training agencies in both the public and private sector.
- We will build on the findings of the survey of unemployed customers in Galway and Waterford with a view to, inter alia, piloting the use of profiling as a customer management and activation tool.
- We will maximise the use of an individualised case management approach in order to identify the needs and requirements of our customers, including the long-term unemployed, one parent families, people with disabilities and the long-term ill and we will liaise with the appropriate agencies in this regard.
- We will identify and address aspects of our income support programmes which might discourage customers from returning to work, education or training.
- We will have a specific focus on people who have been out of work for five years or more, in the application of Back-to-Work Allowance and related supports.

- Through our localised Employment Support Services we will play an active part in identifying opportunities for our customers and take appropriate initiatives, in co-operation with other relevant agencies, to ensure that they can avail of them.

Objective 2

To assist in the implementation of the Employment Action Plan (EAP).

Actions

- We will work closely with FÁS in the implementation of the EAP and develop programmes for those who do not find an appropriate opportunity under that programme.
- We will focus in particular on assisting customers who are deemed 'not progression ready'.
- In accordance with the Programme for Government, we will extend the EAP to all customers on the Live Register for longer than six months.
- We will examine the potential for enhanced data-sharing to improve the operation of the EAP.
- We will examine the scope for rationalisation in the respective roles of the Employment Support Service, FÁS placement service and aspects of the Family Services project.
- We will support where appropriate any relevant recommendations arising from the review of the National Employment Service (FÁS and the Local Employment Service).
- We will work in an intensive way with persons identified as non-progression ready under the EAP through the High Supports Process.

Objective 3

To facilitate and improve access to education, training and labour market programmes for people with disabilities.

Actions

- Identify an appropriate range of options (including schemes already available through other Departments/agencies) to assist people with disabilities who are in receipt of social welfare payments, to take up employment.
- Review the application of the rules for continuing entitlement to sickness and disability payments, to ensure that they are appropriate to the needs of customers in a changing labour market.
- Pilot specific employment initiatives for people with disabilities, initially people in the 16 to 25 age group who qualify for long-term disability payments.
- Review the application of the Back-to-Work Allowance scheme and related supports to people with disabilities and bring forward proposals for any necessary changes.

Objective 4

To facilitate and encourage lone parents to access employment.

Actions

- Review the application of the rules of entitlement to social welfare and other payments to lone parents from the point of view of their effectiveness in promoting return to work.
- Further develop linkages between our various support areas (Employment Support Services, Family Services Project and line management sections/regions) to assist lone parents accessing and returning to work.

Objective 5

To facilitate and support older people to remain in or access employment and participate in the provision of local services.

Actions

- In accordance with the Programme for Government, review ways in which older people can be encouraged, where they so wish, to extend their working lives without financial penalty and in conditions which suit their personal lifestyle wishes. We will bring forward proposals to remove the requirement on people between 65 and 66 to retire in order to qualify for pensions and to remove other financial disincentives for people of pension age who want to consider some form of employment.
- Work with older unemployed customers in identifying appropriate re-skilling opportunities to assist them enter or re-enter the labour market.
- Develop new programmes as new needs emerge in this area.
- Seek to meet the needs of those who are severely disadvantaged in the open labour market and for whom active Labour Market Programme participation is inappropriate and who may not benefit from enhanced intervention under the High Supports Process.

Objective 6

To promote greater self reliance through active measures which lead to education, training, rehabilitation and work experience.

Actions

- Work with other agencies in implementing recommendations of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning.
- Work with the Prison Service in providing advice and support to offenders in integrating/reintegrating the labour market.



Goal 3: Families

Supporting families in caring for children and other dependent family members, ensuring specific supports for disadvantaged families, families in conflict, one-parent families and families on low incomes and working with other agencies to identify and develop responses to key family issues.

Goal 3: Families

Changes which have occurred in family structures and family formation are among the most significant social changes in recent years. Overall, the shift has been towards a greater diversity of family types. Also the rapid economic growth that has taken place over the past decade has had an impact on society and on family life. The NESC, for example, in its 2002 Strategy Report – *An Investment in Quality: Services, Inclusion and Enterprise* – has noted that the pressure on the family through long commuting times and shortages of childcare must be addressed. The much greater prevalence of two-earner families will have far reaching effects in the future. At the same time a wide range of public policies and programmes impact on families and a number of Government departments and agencies have responsibilities which touch on families directly or indirectly. It is against the background of a dynamic social environment, as well as the diversity in modern family life and the range of policies which are relevant, that the Department must identify how best to contribute to supporting the family and to the achievement of Government objectives in this area.

The main challenges include:

- How families can be helped in discharging their caring role.
- Changing relationships and responsibilities among family members.
- Child poverty and the risk of social exclusion faced by children living in families experiencing poverty.
- Increasing levels of family breakdown and its consequences.

- Growth in lone parenthood.
- The issue of balancing work and family life.
- The need for responsive and integrated public services affecting families.

Many of the commitments outlined elsewhere in this strategy, e.g. in relation to social protection coverage, are relevant in addressing some of these issues. In addition, however, we will pursue the objectives outlined below which specifically address family issues.

Objective 1

To contribute to the development and implementation of appropriate policies and actions to promote family welfare generally.

Actions

- Provide greater knowledge about the changes in family structures and family life and the implications of this for state supports for families through the development and promotion of high quality research.
- Undertake, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Children and the National Children's Office, the National Longitudinal Study of Children as a major source of quality information on children and families.
- Contribute to relevant international fora relating to family issues such as the Council of Europe Forum for Children and identify best practice internationally.

- In the light of the various measures, programmes and policies impacting on families, and of the societal changes affecting families, seek to develop a coherent framework of family policy.
- Seek to identify the appropriate balance between formal and informal care of children, the elderly and other dependent family members so that state support in this area is effective and well targeted.
- Support the development of locally-based family resource centres.
- Develop the provision and dissemination of information about family services and programmes, parenting information and information relevant to reconciling work and family responsibilities.
- Contribute to the development of policies and measures to assist families in balancing their work and caring responsibilities.
- In the context of the Programme of Expenditure Reviews, examine the impact of social welfare schemes and related services on different types of families, and develop appropriate responses.
- Review the contribution being made by the Department's income support system to people in reconciling work and family life.
- In the context of our Family Service project, enhance the information services at local offices with particular reference to the needs of families and implement an enhanced referral service for families in need of other services.
- Review the operation of income support arrangements for lone parents in the light of reports and emerging analysis in this area.
- Work towards the localisation of the process of one-parent family payments in order to provide a more efficient service and to facilitate a more systematic matching of customers to available interventions.

Objective 2

To ensure that the social welfare system responds effectively to the needs of different family situations.

Actions

- Develop appropriate policies, having regard to relevant studies and reports, to address the income needs of families, particularly families on low incomes, lone parent families, so as to help families in need to break out of poverty and dependence.
- Ensure that the arrangements for payment of social welfare benefits, pensions and allowances respect the needs and preferences of different family members.

Objective 3

To put in place programmes and supportive measures to help families in conflict and to address the effects of separation and divorce on families.

Actions

- Promote and support, in conjunction with the Family Support Agency, the provision of marriage and relationship counselling services.
- Promote family mediation as a non-adversarial approach to the resolution of issues which arise on marital breakdown and parental separation.
- Prepare, in consultation with relevant interests, a national programme focusing specifically on the development of family policy and supports to mark the 10th anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

Objective 4

To work with other Departments and agencies in delivering support to families.

Actions

- Build on the projects undertaken in conjunction with the International Initiative for Children, Youth and Families on ways of working that deliver better results for children and young families.
- Work with the Family Support Agency in the delivery of its responsibilities.
- Work with the National Children's Office in the implementation of the National Children's Strategy with particular reference to the commitments for which the Department has been assigned lead responsibility within that strategy.

Objective 5

To ensure insofar as possible that people meet their obligations to support their family.

Actions

- We will promote non-adversarial family support arrangements, where appropriate, through family mediation.
- We will review the arrangements in place to determine the future direction of maintenance support and recovery.
- In the implementation of the one-parent family payment scheme we will ensure that the requirement to seek maintenance from a separated spouse or partner is implemented effectively.
- We will enforce as effectively as possible the requirement on spouses of recipients of one-parent family payments to contribute to the cost of those payments.



Goal 4: Poverty and Social Exclusion

Provide relevant and effective supports to those affected by poverty and social exclusion and co-ordinate the development and implementation of the Government's strategy in this area, in co-operation with other statutory and voluntary agencies.

Goal 4: Poverty and Social Exclusion

National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)

Through our income support services and other programmes we have an important role in promoting and developing social inclusion and solidarity and contributing to the objective stated in the Programme for Government of achieving real and sustained social progress. We have a co-ordinating role in advancing the social inclusion agenda across Government services, through implementing the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy (Building an Inclusive Society, 2002).

The Programme for Government reiterated the key objective of the revised NAPS which is to reduce consistent poverty to below 2 per cent and tackle child poverty as a core element of the work. The targets contained in the strategy are framed around the themes of income adequacy, employment and unemployment, education, health, and housing and accommodation. Specific regard is had to the position of those groups who are vulnerable to poverty, including children and young people; women, older people, travellers, people with disabilities, migrants and members of minority ethnic groups, people experiencing urban poverty, and people experiencing rural disadvantage.

Objective 1

To take a leading role in driving forward the implementation of the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy in co-operation with the other agencies and organisations involved.

Actions

- Ensure that the new Office for Social Inclusion can deliver effectively on its role under the revised strategy.
- Co-ordinate the production of regular reports on progress in implementing the strategy for the Government, relevant Oireachtas Committees and other bodies.
- Participate in the programme of data gathering on social indicators, including consistent poverty and social capital, as outlined in the Programme for Government and the new Social Partnership Agreement, “Sustaining Progress” to ensure that policies are developed on the basis of sound information.
- Monitor and report on the delivery of targets for the reduction of consistent poverty and other targets under the revised NAPS, with particular reference to the related commitments in the Programme for Government and “Sustaining Progress”.
- Review, in consultation with the Combat Poverty Agency, the appropriate role of the Agency in the context of the new strategy and new institutional structures and implement any changes which may arise from this review.
- Develop a more effective poverty proofing process and ensure that it is appropriately operationalised in all relevant Government Departments.
- Support the extension of the NAPS programme to local authorities.
- Contribute to and co-ordinate the setting of explicit social objectives in the anti-poverty area and appropriate performance indicators.

Objective 2

To develop a greater understanding of the causes of poverty and exclusion and the strategies to address it.

Actions

- Develop a comprehensive data strategy to underpin the effective targeting of policy actions and to ensure that the attainment of targets established under the revised NAPS may be accurately measured and evaluated.
- Implement, in association with other key actors (e.g. Combat Poverty Agency, ESRI), a research programme aimed at informing the policy response to poverty and social inclusion issues.
- Promote the involvement of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in policy decisions that affect them.
- Develop a strong communications strategy which will enhance knowledge and awareness of the NAPS.

Objective 3

In line with agreed EU guidelines, to co-ordinate the preparation and submission of Ireland's National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPincl) and support other EU initiatives in this area.

Actions

- Prepare the biennial National Action Plans for submission to EU. The next Plan is due by July 2003.
- Participate in the range of actions envisaged under the EU Social Exclusion Programme, designed to support the implementation of the NAPincl process.

Objective 4

In the context of the development of policies for and the delivery of social welfare and related services, ensure that the particular interests of groups affected by or vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion are addressed and protected.

Actions

- Work with other appropriate Departments and agencies with responsibility for services to vulnerable groups to ensure a co-ordinated and effective response to the needs of those groups.
- Deliver on the commitments outlined in the Principles of Quality Customer Service under the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) with particular reference to the principle of Equality/Diversity.
- Assist in the provision of opportunities for vulnerable members of society to gain employment and access to training and life-long learning.
- Co-ordinate with other Departments and agencies in the development of a strong infrastructure of rights/entitlements in the context of the NAPS and to inform the future development of social inclusion policy.
- As provided for in the Programme for Government, establish a new targeted scheme of school meals for disadvantaged pupils which will combine existing schemes and integrate them within other initiatives for schools in areas with high levels of disadvantage.

Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

The MABS operates nationwide through 52 local projects. The service is designed to target families and individuals identified as having problems with debt and money lending. Each local project is an independent information and service provider. Management Committees are drawn from local voluntary and statutory services and community groups.

Objective 5

To support through a nationwide service, families and individuals identified as having problems with debt and money lending.

Actions

- Develop further the organisational structure of MABS in the light of the review of the service.
- Support the provision of training through Comhairle for money advisors and management committees of MABS projects.
- Support the development of best practice and the funding of information guides on money management and debt counselling.
- Work closely with statutory agencies, commercial bodies, voluntary and community groups and the Credit Union Movement for the benefit of people with debt problems.

Objective 6

To support, where appropriate, initiatives at local level which encourage self-help and empowerment.

Actions

- Work closely with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in supporting local community and anti-poverty activities.
- Contribute, through County/City Development Boards and otherwise to local economic, social and cultural strategy development and policy formulation.
- Ensure that the Office of Social Inclusion is informed as to issues arising in light of the Department's involvement in inter-agency and consultative fora and that these issues are fed into the policy making process.



Goal 5: e-Government Agenda

*Promoting the use and development of integrated services in line
with the development of the e-Government Agenda.*

Goal 5: e-Government Agenda

“The development of e-Government is also central to shaping how we evolve as an Information Society. Aside from the objectives of improved service delivery and internal efficiencies, Government business processes clearly serve as stimulus to wider engagement with ICTs – both within the business community, and among the general public.

Given its key infrastructural significance, progress with e-Government is increasingly seen internationally as a key indicator of wider Information Society development, and a key determinant of national competitiveness.

Building on the work that is being progressed in delivering integrated services through the Public Services Broker, there is growing acceptance of the need for a greater internal e-government focus on streamlining background processes, facilitating cross-organisational collaboration, continuing to develop an organisational culture with a user-centric focus, and achieving the full benefits from the substantial investments in technology across the public service.”

New Connections: Government Information Society Action Plan, March 2002

‘New Connections’ identifies e-Government as a key infrastructure and the e-Inclusion programme as a key supporting framework. The Department’s aim is to support the development of these through the Reach agency and by undertaking the delivery of a number of complementary programmes. As noted in the Programme for Government, the aim is to ensure that the public will be able to access most key Government services electronically and that all public services capable of electronic delivery are available through a single point of contact.

The Reach Agency (see Appendix 1)

Reach was established by Government decision in 1999 and, in May of 2000, was mandated by Government to build or procure the Public Services Broker. Since then, Reach has been defining the architectures and principles underlying the operation of the Broker and is now poised to start its development. The mission statement, goals and objectives of Reach are set out in Appendix 1.

Department Programmes

In addition to its commitment to the Reach Agency and its programme of work, the Department is also progressing a number of significant programmes that address the Information Society agenda.

These include:

- Delivery of services based on the Personal Public Service (PPS) number and the other Public Service Identity (PSI) data.
- Delivery of information services.
- Civil Registration Modernisation Programme – ‘GRO Project’.
- Development of its internal systems to facilitate external delivery.

Objective 1

To deliver identity services to support the provision of public services.

The PPS number was introduced in the 1998 Social Welfare Act as the unique customer identity for transactions between individuals and Government departments and other public service providers specified in legislation. It replaced the Revenue and Social Insurance (RSI) number. Since 1998 the number of public bodies entitled to use the PPS number has been extended which has resulted in the wider use of the number as a Public Service access key.

The PPS number provides the customer with a unique reference for dealing with public services and is the foundation for the provision of a more efficient customer centred public services with less form filling. The PSI data, in turn, is the minimum set of data needed to support the issue of the PPS number.

Actions:

- Develop the PPS number as the key component of the link between an individual and his/her data.
- Develop the strategy for provision of services based on the use of the PSI.
- Ensure that the appropriate services are implemented in conjunction with the relevant Departments and public services agencies.
- Work with Reach to develop the use of the PSI data for registration and authentication services for the Public Service Broker.
- Define and promote standards to ensure integrity of data on the PSI.
- Develop, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, the legislative changes required for use of the PPS number and the PSI services.

Objective 2

To support the provision of, and internet-based access to, information about public services.

The Department recognises that the provision of information is, in itself, a key step in providing services. It aims to provide on its own website both the necessary information about its services and the ability to apply for appropriate services.

It supports, as part of its role in relation to Comhairle, the OASIS website (www.oasis.gov.ie), launched in April 2001, which provides an integrated online resource of public service information based around citizen-centred life events.

It will also provide support to services from other third parties (e.g. drawing on support from this Department, Muintir na Tíre has built a portal website that facilitates easy creation of online content by local member branches).

Actions

- Provide information on the Department's own website.
- Provide access to the Department's information for the OASIS and BASIS projects.
- Support the provision of information through other agencies as appropriate.

Objective 3

To implement the Civil Registration Modernisation Programme – 'GRO Project'.

The modernisation of the Civil Registration Service is a major project involving the introduction of new systems, procedures and legislation for a service that has remained largely unchanged for 150 years. The modernisation project is a joint programme of work between the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Department of Health and Children, with the former having the lead role.

Apart from the primary need to modernise the service to reflect changes in society, utilise modern technology and deliver a quality customer service, this programme is a key building block underpinning the integration of public service delivery and the e-Government objectives of providing more convenient access to services.

The focus in the initial phase of the project was on the design of the new computer system to enable the electronic registration of life events – births, deaths, etc. and the electronic production of certificates, the development of the business and legislative framework for the future registration of life events and consultation as appropriate with representative bodies and organisations.

In addition, the new system will facilitate the allocation of a PPS number for a child as part of the birth registration process and the capture of PPS numbers when registering all life events.

Actions

- Implement the new registration system, procedures and processes.
- Support the capture/quality assurance of paper-based records in electronic format.
- Develop interfaces to registration system.
- Develop access to data and service via the internet.
- Progress reform of marriage law.

Objective 4

To develop its internal systems so that they will support electronic delivery of service to its clients.

The introductory excerpt from 'New Connections' points out the importance of "*streamlining background processes, facilitating cross-organisational collaboration, continuing to develop an organisational culture with a user-centric focus*". In addition, prior to the publication of 'New Connections', the Department had engaged in a process of examining its service delivery capability and had embarked on an ambitious programme of development, on both the business and technical front, with the same set of aims. The Department believes that most existing application systems, developed for internal use, are not suitable as a basis for external use. It has developed a new approach to systems provision with not only a 'user-centric' but also a 'staff-centric' focus. It is currently implementing the first phase of the programme.

Actions

In developing its internal systems, the Department will:

- Identify the services to be provided through the Public Service Broker.
- Design and acquire the necessary infrastructure to provide the services.
- Initiate appropriate Departmental activities based on the automated receipt of data from other agencies (e.g. GRO).
- Develop appropriate on-line services in accordance with European and national information society programmes.
- Ensure that these services can be accessed from the Internet (e.g. through the Public Service Broker, through the Department's own website).
- Develop and implement legislative changes required to make these services available.



Goal 6:

The Department and its Staff

Developing an effective, adaptable and capable organisation and a culture of pride, innovation and performance with a high level of involvement and participation by people at all levels and a climate which fosters personal and career development.

Goal 6: The Department and its Staff

The achievement of the business goals which are set out in this strategy is dependent on the development of the capacity of the organisation to achieve these goals. There are a number of important requirements in this regard:

- Maintaining a culture of quality service and high performance in all aspects of our business and a capacity for continuous improvement and innovation.
- Harnessing technology to support our staff and to enable our customers and stakeholders to conduct their business with us in an efficient way.
- Developing the capacity of the Department to deliver on our goals and meet the challenges we face.
- Putting in place a strategy for staff development and involvement which gives recognition to the unique importance of the personal input of the people who work in the Department.
- Ensuring effective and efficient management and control of resources, sound financial management and management information systems.

QUALITY SERVICE

Objective 1

To promote and develop a strong customer service culture throughout the Department and the agencies under its aegis and to deliver continuous improvement in quality customer service by placing the customer at the centre of the process.

We are committed to implementing the Principles of Quality Customer Service endorsed by the Government. We have set out how we intend to achieve this in our Customer Action Plan 2001-2004 (Appendix 2 sets out the main elements of our

Customer Service Programme). The main focus of the Plan is continuous improvement in the quality of the delivery of our services. To this end, we have made three key commitments.

Actions

- We recognise that a key requirement of our customer service programme is the delivery of accurate payments and services to customers with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay and we will strive to achieve this aim.
- We are committed to maintaining a climate of mutual respect between staff and customer.
- We recognise the need to balance our commitment to customer service with our stewardship of public monies through effective and efficient management of our services and a comprehensive control strategy (see Objective 8 under Goal 1, page 26).

Objective 2

To develop the capacity for high quality support to the political process, the maintenance of a high standard of policy development and support for continuous improvement of our business and for innovation.

Actions

- We recognise the importance of providing an open, courteous and quality service to public representatives, Oireachtas Committees and related bodies and we will seek to provide this service to the highest standards.
- We will maintain a high standard of policy making capacity in the organisation and involve all areas of the Department in inputting to the policy making process.

- We will develop our capacity to review our business processes and promote this approach throughout the Department.
- We will continue to actively promote the Input and Fiuntas – Employee Recognition Award schemes.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Objective 3

To provide secure, reliable and robust ICT systems in support of current policy, service delivery and administrative objectives and to develop new ICT capabilities in line with the Department's strategic direction.

The Department's ICT systems are an integral part of its business in that they are needed to process claims and payments, provide information and to enable collaboration throughout the business and with external stakeholders. The level of dependency on these systems is such that it is impossible to envisage normal operation of the Department in their absence. The primary requirement, therefore, is that these systems be available at all relevant times to the business. In order to ensure this, the applications and infrastructure on which they run must be maintained and extended, as appropriate, to support changes in the Department's functional requirements.

Actions

- Operate and maintain the Department's production environment.
- Maintain production applications.
- Ensure that the production environment is robust and secure.
- Develop the production environment by tracking developments in the ICT industry and applying the necessary changes to ensure that the environment remains viable.

- Develop the application portfolio to reflect changes in the Department's functional requirements.
- Develop and publish an Information Systems Strategy.

Objective 4

To refine and progress the Service Delivery Model (SDM) as part of the Modernisation Action Programme. To develop organisational structures and work processes to support implementation, and benefits realisation, of the Service Delivery Model.

As noted elsewhere in this document, the Department's requirements of its ICT systems is changing to reflect changes in its environment, the need to provide more agile systems, the requirement to provide more productive systems for its staff, systems with a greater customer focus and systems that facilitate the delivery of services through new channels such as the Internet. It is the Department's view that such systems need not evolve from the current production systems and a new approach is needed. In view of this, the Department has embarked on an ambitious programme of development of a new type of system, based on a new production environment and implementation of these systems along with appropriate organisational and procedural change. Its strategy, in the period of this document and beyond, is to introduce these systems throughout the Department on a phased basis.

Actions

- Review implementation of Phase 1 of the SDM project.
- Implement the necessary changes to enable Phase 1 to interface efficiently with the GRO project being conducted with the Department of Health and Children.
- Implement further phases of the project with particular emphasis on the long term scheme areas.

- Further develop the capacity of the systems to inter-operate and to respond to external events (e.g. those notified through the Public Service Broker) and agencies.

INFORMATION SECURITY

Information security risks are increasing as a result of the deployment of new, more sophisticated and complex technologies and greater connectivity with the outside world. The ongoing commitment to e-Government initiatives, including Reach and GRO, is a key driver for these developments; internal initiatives such as SDM have important security implications; there are increasing business demands for disclosure and sharing of information with external organisations; the challenges of complying with legislation governing the management of information technology, the protection of information assets and the disclosure of personal information are increasingly onerous.

It is therefore timely and imperative for the Department to establish a clearly defined basis for ensuring that its Information Security risks are addressed in an effective and coherent manner. The Department has produced an Information Security Architecture and will continue to develop its capability in this area and in the area of risk management.

Objective 5

To increase the Department's capacity to manage the security of its information in line with best practice and legal obligations.

Actions

- Develop and issue an overall policy in this area.
- Define and implement appropriate structures, roles and procedures to co-ordinate the Department's information security.

- Monitor best practices/emerging risks and adjust the Department's Information Security Architecture accordingly.
- Review existing policies and practices and supplement/update these as required.

STRUCTURES

Objective 6

To ensure the structure of the Department is optimal to achieve the tasks which must be undertaken.

Actions

- The current Aireacht/Executive agency model will be examined in comparison with other organisational models to see how well it meets the needs of the organisation in the context of delivery on its current responsibilities.
- The potential for increased localisation of services will also be examined in the interests of providing comprehensive service locally and, in the context of such examination, the implications arising for existing decentralised offices and further decentralisation will be considered.

Objective 7

To ensure the optimal relationship between the Department and the agencies with which it does business.

Actions

- Ensure that the relationships between the Department and its reporting agencies – Combat Poverty Agency, Comhairle, the Family Support Agency and the Pensions Board – are optimal for the delivery of the service in question.

- Have in place and regularly implement and review Service Level Agreements with agencies and other service providers (for example, An Post, banking services, Branch Managers, the Office of Public Works, IT suppliers, etc.).

Objective 8

To develop the role of the manager as the key facilitator in implementing change and improvement. To ensure management processes which foster open and participative management, effective communications, clear setting of tasks and priorities, timely and logical decision making and which encourage decision making and ownership of problems at the appropriate level of management.

Actions

- We will ensure clarity in assignment of roles and appropriate delegation of responsibilities.
- We will use the PMDS system to ensure that managers through training and other supports, have the skills necessary for their role.
- We will ensure that management processes are in place to allow key decisions to be made in a timely, informed and accepted manner.
- We will ensure that effective communication flows exist to support the achievement of our strategic objectives.
- We will implement in consultation with managers, a phased programme for devolution of responsibility, authority and responsibility for day-to-day HR matters to line management.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The recent publication of our HR Strategy 2003-2005, which involved an extensive consultation process throughout the Department, and this Strategy Statement underlines the importance of the people dimension in the work of the Department. The delivery of the services for which the Department is responsible requires a considerable personal input by many people and a person-centred approach is a major element of our customer service culture. In the same way we recognise the importance of a people-centred approach within the Department, of supporting each other and maintaining an environment in which the contribution of every member is valued and acknowledged.

Our HR Strategy outlines a range of specific actions in the following areas:

- Achieving our strategic and business objectives.
- Ensuring a positive working environment.
- Reaching our potential.
- Creating a new human resource management environment.
- Strengthening partnership, consultation and involvement.

Aligned to the HR Strategy we will also publish a Departmental Training and Development Strategy which will set out the objectives, actions and performance indicators of the training function in the period 2003-2005. The purpose of the Training and Development Strategy will be two-fold, firstly to encourage all staff to maximise their potential and secondly, to enable each individual to fulfil their role as identified through the PMDS.

Objective 9

To implement our Human Resource Strategy 2003-2005 in the context of delivering on the commitments outlined in this Strategy Statement.

Actions

The following key actions will be pursued in this context:

- We will promote our HR Strategy throughout the Department and progress on its implementation will be reviewed and reported on a regular basis.
- We will ensure that HR issues are considered as an essential element of all aspects of our work and that the HR dimension is integral to organisational change.
- We will promote discussion of our values as an organisation and acknowledge and reward examples of good practice in living up to those values.
- We will review and develop policies on manpower planning, succession planning, recruitment, placement, mobility and retention, promotion, attendance and absenteeism for discussion and implementation.
- We will continue to promote equality of opportunity for all employees of the Department in line with equality legislation (i.e. the Employment Equality Act, 1998, and the Equal Status Act, 2000. The Employment Equality Act outlaws harassment and discrimination in employment on nine grounds – gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the traveller community), and increase awareness of equality issues. We will implement the Department's Gender Equality Action Plan.
- We will ensure that the Department's HR practices are in line with Civil Service policy on diversity and we will continue to implement and monitor the Civil Service anti-harassment, sexual harassment and bullying policy.
- We will continue to foster good industrial and employee relations throughout the Department.
- We will implement employee friendly and flexible working arrangements to the maximum extent possible consistent with our service delivery responsibilities and in line with central agreements.
- We will continuously develop and improve our training programmes in the light of, inter alia, PMDS requirements and aim to provide an environment of continuous learning and improvement.
- We will develop an integrated and effective training structure to meet the needs of staff, whether based regionally or in headquarter locations.
- We will develop a coherent, consistent approach to the induction process, including both formal and on the job training.
- We will continue to implement PMDS fully across the Department in order to enhance organisational, team and individual performance and personal and career development.
- We will implement a new HR management system involving devolution of greater responsibility, authority and responsibility to line managers and the restructuring of Personnel Branch to have a strategic and advisory role.
- We will agree and implement appropriate changes in the Department's relationships and arrangements with the Department of Finance and the office of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission in the light of forthcoming legislative change in the HR area.
- We will extend and strengthen partnership structures at national, regional and local level with the aim of achieving common ownership of our goals and to progress their implementation together.
- We will promote greater communication, involvement and staff participation including regular staff surveys.

- We will provide and maintain accommodation to a standard acceptable to all those who use it, both internal and external customers, assist staff and management in implementing best practice in Health and Safety as set out on our safety statement and ensure the optimum standards of care for staff and customers on our premises.
- We will adopt an effective and strategic approach to any further decentralisation of the Department's staff and services as part of the overall Civil Service decentralisation programme.

MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF RESOURCES

The effective management and control of resources will be a key priority for the Department over the period of this strategy, having regard in particular to the tight resource environment which we now face. The challenge of delivering a high quality service and improving our systems within an environment of constrained resources will require good management and a high level of co-operation and teamwork. The foundations which have been laid through the developments of recent years, not least in the improvement of systems and the investment in communications and participative structures will help to sustain the organisation to meet the challenges ahead.

Objective 10

Resources will be allocated for the effective and efficient implementation of our objectives as outlined in this Strategy Statement.

The distribution of resources, which encompasses staff, information and communications technology, training and infrastructure facilities, will be managed in accordance with the status of the goals and objectives involved. Our ability to deliver these objectives through the appropriate distribution of resources will be examined on an ongoing basis over the duration of this Strategy Statement.

Actions

- All business objectives as outlined in this Strategy Statement and related Business Plans will be prioritised and resources will be allocated in accordance with these priorities.
- Resource implications will be systematically considered as part of the evaluation process for new initiatives and other service improvements.
- The resource requirements for critical business areas will be reassessed on a regular basis to ensure they are adequate to realise stated objectives.

Objective 11

To operate Financial Management systems of the highest quality.

Actions

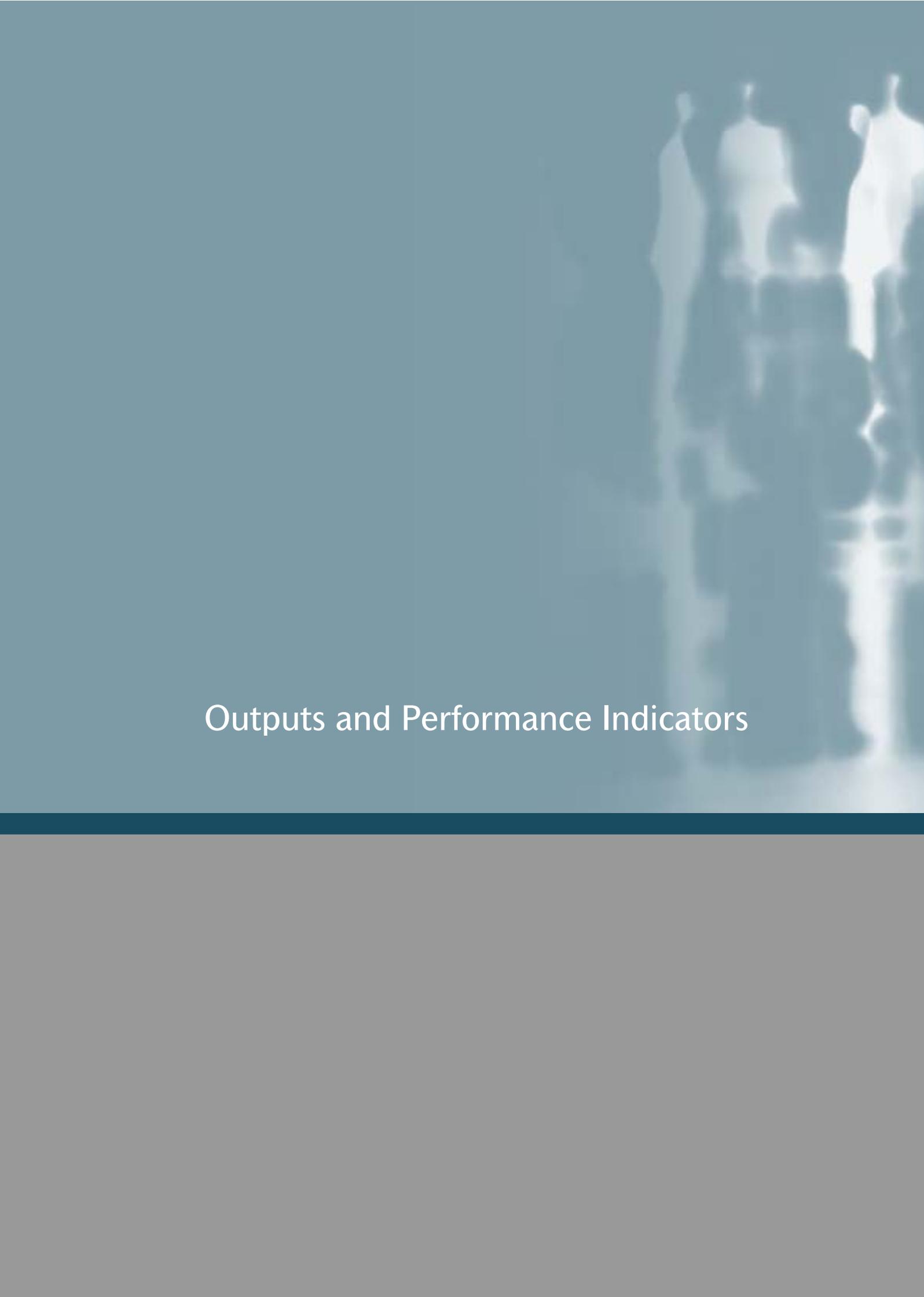
- Identify the financial resources necessary to meet programme and administrative needs.
- Support the management system by providing appropriate internal financial reporting and by ensuring accountability and control of delegated responsibility.
- Facilitate structured resource allocation procedures for both capital and non-capital expenditure.
- Be flexible so as to meet the demands of future financial management. Particular attention will be given to the financial data analysis and reporting needs of strategic management processes and appropriate skills will be developed.
- Evaluate Financial Management systems against performance criteria designed to measure flexibility, effectiveness and the value of information provided to users.

Objective 12

To ensure Value for Money in all of the activities of the Department.

Actions

- Ensure value for money is recognised as an integral part of management practice.
- Identify areas within our various schemes and administrative functions in which value for money reviews may be applied.
- Develop and carry out a programme of ongoing value for money reviews.
- Provide training in value for money principles and review processes.
- Liaise with the Office of Comptroller and Auditor General and other bodies to ensure that approaches to value for money are in line with current best practices.
- Develop performance indicators and targets against which value for money management and control will be evaluated.



Outputs and Performance Indicators

Outputs and Performance Indicators

This Strategy Statement outlines a range of objectives and actions under each of the six high level goals which have been identified. These actions include a range of specific outputs, the achievement of which will be monitored and reported on annually. These actions will also be reflected in business plans for the different areas of the Department and in the performance management and development process.

High quality information on all of the important aspects of the Department's business is an essential pre-requisite for reporting or monitoring the delivery of our objectives.

The Department is currently engaged in a major project to develop a **Management Information Framework (MIF)**, in the context of the public service modernisation programme and, in particular, to underpin a results-driven approach appropriate to the needs of a modern public service. Extended financial management systems, need to be developed to embrace not only accounting systems for recording and reporting transactions, but also the wider financial management process for planning resource allocation, programme evaluation, management control (including budgeting), day-to-day financial reporting, assessing performance and demonstrating value for money.

The project in the Department will develop a comprehensive Management Information System integrated with output and outcome measurement which, when operating in tandem with the Department's existing accounting and financial reporting systems, will enhance performance measurement and accountability and encourage value for money in line with the overall SMI vision and with the Department's objectives as set out in this Statement of Strategy.

The new Management Information Framework will improve the quality of resource allocation and decision-making by managers through four strands:

- Support for current and future financial reporting.
- Introduction of management accounting reporting.
- Provision of cost allocation frameworks.
- Development of non-financial performance reporting reflecting value for money objectives (economy, efficiency and effectiveness).

In order to effectively measure the achievement of benefits, specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) incorporating non financial data need to be developed and used for departmental work programmes. They are a standard and practical means of measuring the achievement or realisation of benefits.

The project recognises that KPIs are needed in the following categories:

- Current levels of performance (Baseline).
- Required or desirable levels of performance (Future state).
- Actual achieved levels of performance (Current state).

Key Performance Indicators will be developed further over the lifetime of this Strategy Statement in the context of the Management Information Framework and other initiatives.

A considerable amount of work has been done to date in the Department on the MIF. We have completed work on the methodology to be used and have drawn up a new reporting structure for the Department. This reporting structure envisages three key levels of reporting – strategic, tactical and operational. At the strategic level a balanced scorecard is being developed for quarterly reporting of progress at strategic level. Improved reporting systems for the business areas of the Department are also being developed.

The balanced score card involves the identification of key headings for reporting on the Department's business. The headings which have been adopted are:

- Stakeholder – how we meet our commitments to our stakeholder, including customers of services, the contributors and tax payers and government.
- VFM – how we deliver value for money for the resources made available to us.
- Internal – the efficiency of our internal work processes.
- Knowledge and Learning – how we provide a good working environment and an effective organisation.

Appropriate measures of performance in these areas are being developed.

During the lifetime of the Strategy Statement the Department will implement the MIF throughout the Department.

Pending development of more refined performance indicators under the Management Information Framework the main indicators which we will use to assess progress under our high level goals are set out below.

Goal 1: Promoting the development of adequate, secure and sustainable income support and related services and delivering appropriate services to the highest standards, in co-operation with other relevant agencies and responsive to people's needs and entitlements, and taking account of our responsibilities to contributors and taxpayers.

We will measure our performance on this goal through the measures set out below.

- We have developed a series of standards for claim processing times. The standards for 2001 are set out in Appendix 3. These are currently under review in the context of the Management Information Framework. These are monitored on a monthly basis. The results will continue to be published in our Annual Report.
- Meeting of the Control Targets as set out in our annual Business Plan.
- Improvement in our customer satisfaction rating, as measured by regular customer surveys. The initial target is to improve from our latest (2001) measure of 84 per cent to regain the level of 90 per cent achieved in 1996.
- Publication of an Information Services Strategy and meeting the commitments and targets set out in that strategy.
- Continued implementation of the Customer Action Plan.
- Implementation of the Control Programme.
- Completion of the series of Programme Evaluations, as provided under the Expenditure Review Programme; as a measure of quality, all reviews will be evaluated and approved by the Department's Expenditure Review Steering Group.

Goal 2: Facilitating return to work or participation in training or further education by people in the active age groups dependent on State income supports, through a range of supportive measures, including referral to other agencies as necessary.

We will assess our performance under this heading using the following indicators:

- Numbers of interventions resulting in pre-employment training and development.
- Numbers of customers case managed.
- Numbers of customers referred for training, etc.
- The results of the pilot programme planned for certain people on Disability Allowance.

Goal 3: Supporting families in caring for children and other dependent family members, ensuring specific supports for disadvantaged families, families in conflict, one-parent families and families with low incomes and working with other agencies to identify and develop responses to key family issues.

The outputs and performance measures for this goal are:

- Establishment of the Family Support Agency.
- The production of a series of high quality research studies.

In addition we have commenced work on the development of measurements of outcomes of activities in support of families and this work will be developed further during the period of the strategy.

Goal 4: Provide relevant and effective supports to those affected by poverty and social exclusion and co-ordinate the development and implementation of the Government's strategy in this area, in co-operation with other statutory and voluntary agencies.

Overall success in this regard will be measured by achievement or otherwise of the key targets in the Review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. The key targets are as follows:

- To reduce the number of those who are 'consistently poor' below 2 per cent and, if possible, eliminate consistent poverty.
- To achieve a rate of €150 per week in 2002 terms for the lowest rate of social welfare to be met by 2007.
- To eliminate long-term unemployment as soon as circumstances permit but in any event not later than 2007.

Other, more detailed targets for the strategy are set out in Appendix 4.

It must be recognised, however, that factors outside the Department's control will also impact on the achievement of the high-level NAPS targets. It is useful, therefore, to supplement these with lower-level measures of the Department's contribution to the overall targets, such as:

- The setting up of the new Office for Social Inclusion.
- The setting up of a formal NAPS data and research strategy.
- The second National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (NAPIncl) to be completed, on foot of a process of consultation with all interested parties, and submitted to the EU by July 2003.

Goal 5: Promoting the use and development of integrated services in line with the development of the e-Government Agenda.

We will measure our performance under each objective as follows:

Public Service Identity (PSI)

- PSI Strategy developed.
- PSI standards implemented.
- Standards published to ensure integrity of PSI data.

Information

- Provision of up-to-date information on the website.
- Compliance with accessibility guidelines.
- E-mail access to all areas of the Department.

GRO

- New Civil Registration system developed and implemented.
- System integrated with Departmental systems.
- On-line public access to the Civil Registration system.

Internal Department of Social and Family Affairs systems

- On-line services provided to external users.

Goal 6: Developing an effective, adaptable and capable organisation and a culture of pride, innovation and performance with a high level of involvement and participation by people at all levels and a climate which fosters personal and career development.

We will assess our performance under this heading through:

- Measurements of staff satisfaction, innovation and participation measured through surveys and other methods.
- Evaluation and development of Partnership.
- Achievement of the objectives set out in the Human Resources Strategy.
- Publication of a separate Training and Development Strategy and implementation of its objectives.
- Implementation of the Performance Management and Development System.
- Implementation of the new Service Delivery Model.
- Ongoing development of the Management Information Framework.



Cross-Departmental Issues

Cross Departmental Issues

Effective cross-Departmental co-operation is necessary for the achievement of many of the goals, objectives and strategies identified in earlier sections of this Strategy. In some cases, such as the National Anti-Poverty Strategy or the REACH project we have the central co-ordinating role. In others cases we do not have the driving role but co-operate with other Departments to ensure that overall cross-Departmental policies (such as

the Employment Action Plan or the National Children's Strategy) are delivered. We have regard also to the commitments in the Programme for Government to ensure that all state agencies prioritise integrated work in areas of significant disadvantage and that public activity supports the development of social capital, particularly on a local community level. Here we set out the main areas for Cross-Departmental action.

Issue	Lead Department	Other Depts/ Agencies	Action by D/SFA
National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)	D/SFA	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and support the Office for Social Inclusion. Support Social Inclusion Units and NAPS liaison officers in other Departments. Develop a more effective poverty proofing process. Continue process of extending NAPS initiative to local government. Develop a NAPS data strategy.
Support to Work	D/ETE FÁS	D/SFA D/E&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage maximum take-up of customers. With D/ETE and FÁS, continue roll-out of EAP. Work to improve data flows between Departments/Agencies. On a pilot basis, identify suitable work/training or education opportunities for customers with disabilities. Review effectiveness of labour market interventions.
e-Government	D/Taoiseach	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the REACH project, provide co-ordination and leadership across the public service in the management and deployment of the Public Service Broker and related services. (For more detail in the REACH project, see Appendix 1)
	D/SFA	D/H&C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conjunction with the Dept of Health and Children, implement the Civil Registration Modernisation Programme.

Issue	Lead Department	Other Depts/ Agencies	Action by D/SFA
Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA)	D/SFA	D/H&C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop in consultation with the Department of Health and Children and the Health Boards, proposals to improve the delivery of SWA, including the assignment of a substantial level of direct responsibility to the D/SFA for the delivery of the scheme.
Expenditure Reviews	D/F	Other Departments as necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to involve other Departments in our expenditure reviews, wherever overlaps (or potential overlaps) of objectives or responsibilities arise.
National Children's Strategy	D/H&C	D/SFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work towards achievement of the objectives in the National Children's Strategy, particularly by addressing child poverty through the NAPS and through our range of income supports. Work with D/H&C to develop the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland. Through the Family Support Agency, continue to support families in caring for their children through a range of measures, including family mediation and family resource centres. D/SFA will be engaged at local level on childcare committees.
People with disabilities	D/H&C	D/SFA D/JELR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conjunction with other agencies ensure that appropriate policies are considered and that supports and services are enhanced for people with disabilities. Participate in a range of interdepartmental committees examining disability issues, such as the PPF working group on the feasibility of a cost of disability payment.
Financing of long-term care	D/H&C	D/SFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine proposals to address personal long-term care funding.
Insurability of employment	D/SFA	D/ETE, Revenue Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult on an ongoing basis to achieve higher levels of consistency in determination of employed and self-employed status through promoting greater harmonisation of the relevant legislation and procedures.

Issue	Lead Department	Other Depts/ Agencies	Action by D/SFA
Grants to voluntary and community groups	D/CRGA	D/SFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the recent transfer of this scheme from D/SFA, we will agree arrangements for appropriate involvement of local and regional staff in this work.
Treatment Benefits	D/SFA	D/H&C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to liaise with D/H&C to ensure the scheme of social insurance cover for dental, optical and hearing aid benefits continues to remain compatible with similar services provided by the Health Boards.
Involvement in local development activities	D/CRGA	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D/SFA will be appropriately engaged at local, area and national level in County and City Development Boards, Local Partnership Committees and RAPID/CLAR Programmes.
Education support for children	D/E&S	D/SFA D/H&C Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the school meals scheme and back to school clothing and footwear scheme as part of our series of programme evaluations.
Equality/ Diversity	D/JE&LR	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through staff training and awareness raising we will ensure that our services are provided in a manner that all of our customers find accessible, acceptable and culturally appropriate. Participate in the Government's KNOW RACISM campaign and in the National Action Plan Against Racism. Continue to work with the Health Boards to provide supports and advice to asylum seekers, refugees and other non-nationals granted the right to remain in the State. Work with the Reception and Integration Agency in providing services to asylum seekers and refugees.
Fuel Poverty and Climate Change	D/ELG	D/SFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in National Climate Change Team led by the Department of the Environment and Local Government and work with Sustainable Energy Ireland in developing measures to address the causes of fuel poverty.

Issue	Lead Department	Other Depts/ Agencies	Action by D/SFA
Housing	D/ELG	D/SFA, Local Authorities Health Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in the Housing Forum and work with the Department of the Environment and Local Government. Local Authorities, Health Boards and other agencies on measures to meet the housing and other needs of homeless people and others on low incomes.
Prisoners	D/JELR	D/SFA, IPS P&WS Health Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Probation and Welfare Service, the Irish Prisons Service, Health Boards and other agencies to develop more responsive social welfare services to meet the needs of ex-prisoners.
Travellers	D/JELR	D/SFA, Health Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of the Environment and Local Government, health boards and other agencies to ensure that our services are provided in a manner that is appropriate to the needs of travellers.

Acronym	Full Title of Department/Organisation
D/CRGA	Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
D/ELG	Department of Environment and Local Government
D/E&S	Department of Education and Science
D/ETE	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
D/F	Department of Finance
D/H&C	Department of Health and Children
D/JELR	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
D/SFA	Department of Social and Family Affairs
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saotháir
IPS	Irish Prison Service
P&WS	Probation and Welfare Service



Better Regulation

Better Regulation

Regulatory reform is one of the pillars of the civil service modernisation programme and is critical to the development and strengthening of a customer-oriented and citizen-welfare focus in our services. Preparing and applying legislation is a key function of this Department and the main vehicle for giving effect to policy changes. In general, our income support schemes have a statutory basis contained in the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 1993, as amended.

The quality and quantity of the legislation we enact impacts directly on our operating environment and is fundamental to the efficient, effective and transparent conduct of our business. As such, our objective in this area is framed in the context of the Government's 'Better Regulation' process, namely *to ensure that a firm legislative basis exists for social protection schemes and that the legislation is easily accessible to those who apply it and our customers.*

To ensure that our future legislative programme fully accords with this objective, we will ensure that:

- all relevant stakeholders are consulted appropriately and that their views are reflected, where possible, in the preparation of legislation – for example, the Department convenes an annual pre-Budget forum, comprising key representative groups, to discuss Budget proposals for social welfare;
- the design of our legislative proposals reflects the requirements of the Government's National Policy Statement on Better Regulation and those of the Regulatory Impact Analysis, when developed;
- all legislation is clear and accessible. The Department's Decisions Advisory Office provides guidelines, advice and training for Deciding Officers on making and notifying decisions in accordance with the legislation. Legislative skills courses are available to staff as is an internal electronic directory of all legislation. In addition, our body of legislation may be accessed on our website – www.welfare.ie;
- the consolidation process is being progressed with a new Social Welfare (Consolidation) Bill, incorporating all legislative changes from 1993 to date. We are also embarking on a programme of consolidation for our secondary legislation;
- our current legislative programme is continued which, in addition to the annual Social Welfare Bill, also includes:
 - a Civil Registration Bill which will replace existing births, deaths and marriages legislation from 1863 to 2002 and provide a new legal framework for the registration of life events in the State, and;
 - a Public Services Broker Bill which will provide for the establishment and operation of the Public Services Broker, consolidating existing legislation governing the Personal Public Service (PPS) number, the Public Service Card and the sharing of customer data between Government agencies.



Reporting on the Progress
of our Statement of Strategy

Reporting on the Progress of our Statement of Strategy

In this Statement of Strategy, we have set out, at a high level, the role, direction and priorities of this Department over the next three years. Our six thematic and high-level goals each contain corporate objectives, actions and performance indicators which set out what is required to achieve these goals.

The Statement of Strategy is designed to be both flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. In order to ensure that it remains contemporaneous and relevant, we have put in place a number of procedures against which we will report our progress. Some of these are now well-established, having been developed against the background of our previous Statements of Strategy and in line with the requirements of the Public Service Management Act 1997. Others are more recent initiatives reflecting ongoing progress under the Modernisation Programme.

The Department's Annual Report details the progress achieved over the year on the Statement of Strategy. This is in line with the provisions of the Public Service Management Act, 1997. Building on this, a more recent Government decision of 20 March 2002 also requires Ministers to review progress on the implementation of the Strategy Statement at least twice yearly and in advance of bilateral meetings with the Taoiseach. Building on our existing reporting arrangements and to ensure that progress remains on-track, we will also conduct formal half-yearly reviews of developments in line with the commitments in the Strategy.

Underpinning this process is the annual preparation, at divisional level, of business plans which follow from a consultation process between management and staff. This also informs, and is inextricably linked to, the implementation of the Performance Management and Development System for all staff. The business plans contain specific targets for each business area to achieve in the given year. The commitments are based on the content and direction of the Statement of Strategy and also include the specific targets we have set out in relation to the provision of services to our customers in the published Customer Action Plan and Internal Customer Service Plan. Progress on the business plans is monitored on a monthly basis and reported to our Management Advisory Committee and Top Management Team.

Finally, as indicated on pages 51-55 (Outputs and Performance Indicators), we have also set service standards which, again, are monitored on a monthly basis and include indicators on claim processing, customer satisfaction and control. These ensure that our procedures and systems remain of the highest quality.



Appendices

Appendix 1: REACH

Reach Mission Statement:

To radically improve the quality of service to personal and business customers of Government and to develop and deploy the Public Services Broker to help agencies achieve that improvement.

[In particular Reach is to develop and implement an integrated set of processes, systems and procedures to provide a standard means of access to public services, to be known as the Public Services Broker.]

Goals

1. To provide the infrastructure to integrate public services to customers across access channels, across related services and over time.
2. To support the wider e-Government programme by providing essential infrastructure in the form of the Public Services Broker.

Objectives

- To provide co-ordination and leadership across the public service in the management and deployment of the Public Services Broker and related services.
- To develop Standards and Legislation to apply across the public service in relation to interoperability, information security, privacy, and customer service in so far as they relate to the deployment of the Public Services Broker.
- To develop the high level business and technical architectures of the Broker and to implement and operate the Broker and its related services.

Analysis of the Environment

- The customers of the Broker include all sections of the community and as such have greatly varying needs and abilities in terms of being able to access public services.
- The complex nature of many public services requires mediated or assisted access.
- The issues arising in attempting to design and deliver services across agency boundaries.
- The issues involved in implementing an effective governance process for the implementation of a cross-agency programme.

Actions

- Develop a programme to engage with Public Service agencies to ensure raised awareness, co-ordination and joint planning in the development and deployment of Broker-enabled services.
- Develop a programme of communications aimed at all the stakeholders and users of the Broker (including personal and business customers) to raise awareness and encourage usage and uptake of Broker services.

- Develop a framework setting out policies and standards to regulate the inter-operation of public service agencies with the Broker at the business, technology, service and data levels.
- Develop a framework setting out the overall and specific information security policies to protect customer and operational data across the Broker and agency systems.
- Develop a privacy framework to incorporate Data Protection best practice and principles in the handling of customer data by the Broker and connected agencies.
- Develop a Customer Service Charter to set out quality of service principles governing the provision of services by the Broker to customers and connected agencies.
- Develop and propose the necessary legislative and regulatory framework necessary to implement the interoperability, security and privacy frameworks, and to provide the necessary structures for the operation and management of the Broker systems.
- Definition and publication of the business and technical architectures of the Broker and related services.
- Engage an external partner to assist in building and deploying the Broker and its related systems.
- Operation of services to support the user of the Broker.
- Establish Reach as an adequately resourced agency to oversee the ongoing operation, development and support of the Broker.

Appendix 2: Quality Customer Service Commitments

The Elements of our Customer Service Programme

Our commitments to a quality customer service can be summarised under the following headings:

Consultation

- Further develop the consultative process so that customers can express opinions, give feedback and become involved with the setting of challenging service standards.

Information

- Maintain a proactive approach to the provision of, and ease of access to, quality information and advice.

Employers

- Help employers, as major stakeholders in the social insurance system, to fulfil their obligations in respect of the operation of PRSI.

Equality/Diversity

- Ensure that the service we provide is equitable, non-discriminatory and takes account of increasing cultural diversity. A key focus in this regard is staff training and awareness raising.

Choice

- Promote choice, where feasible, in all aspects of service delivery.

Payment Methods

- Ensure that the most modern and the widest possible range of payment methods is available and provide access, where possible, to new payment services and facilities so that customers can choose the option that best suits their personal preferences.

Information and Communications Technology

- Ensure that the potential offered by Information and Communications Technology is fully availed of.

Accommodation and Access

- Modernise the standard of accommodation in our offices through our building programme, with particular emphasis on privacy and access for people with disabilities. The Department supports the National Heritage Plan.

Appeals/Redress

- Maintain a formalised, accessible and transparent system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions on entitlements.

Comments and Complaints

- Continue to promote the well-publicised and accessible system for dealing with comments and complaints about the quality of service provided.

Official Languages Equality

- Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

Co-ordination and Integration

- Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to the delivery of services.

Customer Focused

- Further promote and develop a strong customer service culture throughout the Department.

Training and Development

- Support and encourage staff to fulfil customer service objectives by developing appropriate skills and awareness of customer needs.

Staff Consultation

- Promote internal consultation at all levels in the Department so that the opinions of, and feedback from, staff are taken into account in improving customer service.

Monitoring of Quality

- Identify, through the development and monitoring of customer service quality standards, those areas where improvement is warranted.

Appendix 3: Organisational Targets (Current)

Activity	Standards	
	Clearance Time ¹	Volume Context ³
New Claims		
Old Age Contributory Pension	55% in 6 weeks	14,000
Retirement Pension	80% in 5 weeks	14,000
Widow(er)s Contributory Pension	80% in 5 weeks	8,500
Old Age Non-Contributory Pension	65% in 8 weeks	11,500
Blind Person's Pension	65% in 8 weeks	220
Widow(er) Non-Contributory Pension	75% in 8 weeks	1,300
One-Parent Family Payment (Widow)	75% in 8 weeks	600
One-Parent Family Payment (Unmarried)	55% in 8 weeks	13,560
One-Parent Family Payment (Separated Spouse)	65% in 13 weeks	6,440
Carers Allowance	70% in 9 weeks	6,000
Free Electricity/Gas Allowance	70% in 7 weeks	39,000
Free Telephone Allowance	70% in 7 weeks	49,000
Free Travel – new pass	90% in 4 weeks	16,000
Free Travel – replacement pass	90% in 2 weeks	10,000
Unemployment Benefit	85% in 2 weeks	120,000
Unemployment Assistance	70% in 2 weeks	120,000
Disability Benefit	90% in 1 week	200,000
Occupational Injury Benefit	80% in 4 weeks	18,000
Treatment Benefit ²	90% in 2 weeks	684,000
Child Benefit	90% in 1 week	168,000
Maternity Benefit (before start of Benefit period)	80%	28,000
Family Income Supplement	70% in 3 weeks	18,000
Invalidity Pension	70% in 9 weeks	7,500
Disability Allowance	70% in 9 weeks	12,000
Telephone Service	90% of calls to be answered within 10 seconds	
Replies to Public Representatives	80% within 3 working weeks	
Issue of Contribution Records to customers	60% in 5 days	
Customer Satisfaction	90% overall satisfaction with service delivery	
Arrears		
PSO	80% within 3 weeks of claim being put in payment	54,000
Longford	80% within 3 weeks of claim being put in payment	24,000

¹ Clearance time: Elapsed time from date of receipt of claim to date of decision.

² This relates to all optical claims and 40% of dental claims where pre-treatment claims are submitted.

³ Volume context: Annual Claim Volume.

2002 Control Outturn (Total €282.7m)

	Savings Achieved €m	Reviews
Schemes		
Unemployment	118.5	90,400
Illness	50.1	167,100
Pensions	89.3	42,500
Child Benefit	7.1	25,500
FIS	0.4	14,500
SWA	0.5	N/A
Carers	2.2	1,300
PAYE/PRSI	14.5	8,800
Overall Total:	282.7	350,100
Employer Inspections		
All categories		8,800
General Inspections		6,700
SIU/JIU		2,100

Appendix 4: Review of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy

KEY TARGETS

Employment and Unemployment

- eliminating long-term unemployment as soon as circumstances permit but in any event not later than 2007.
- reducing the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the national average by 2007.
- achieving the objectives set out in the National Employment Action Plan to increase employment rates.

Education

- to halve the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties by 2006
- to reduce the proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy to below 10 to 20 per cent by 2007 (restricted literacy being defined as falling **below** 200-225 on the IALS scale or equivalent)
- to reduce the number of young people who leave the school system early, so that the percentage of those who complete upper second level or equivalent will reach 85 per cent by 2003 and 90 per cent by 2006.

Health

- The gap in premature mortality between the lowest and highest socio-economic groups will be reduced by at least 10 per cent for circulatory diseases, for cancers and for injuries and poisoning by 2007.

Housing and Accommodation

- to ensure that housing supply is brought more into line with demand and that the housing requirements set out in the NDP (500,000 new units between 2000-2010) are achieved in a planned and coherent way
- to deliver 41,500 local authority housing unit starts (including acquisitions) between 2000 and 2006
- to deliver an appropriate mix of social and affordable housing measures which meets the needs of different types of households
- to analyse the information gathered in the next statutory assessment of housing needs (which took place in March 2003) and to establish appropriate targets in relation to access to housing
- by end 2004, sufficient and appropriate emergency accommodation to be available to rough sleepers, in conjunction with appropriate outreach services to enable them to access it. This target is to apply to each local authority and health board area. At end 2003, progress in meeting the target will be reviewed and, if necessary revised mechanisms put in place to achieve it.

Given the absence of up to date baseline data it would not be credible to establish quantitative targets on access to accommodation at this stage. Local authorities have already put in place housing strategies under the Planning and Development Act 2000. These will be reviewed in the light of information gathered in the next statutory assessment of housing needs, which took place in March 2003, and the full range of affordable social housing measures available. This would allow for the establishment of appropriate targets in relation to access to housing and any necessary reallocation and refocusing of existing resources required to meet those targets.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Children and Young People

- Over the period to 2007, the Strategy will aim at reducing the numbers of children who are 'consistently poor' below 2%, and, if possible, eliminating consistent poverty, under the current definition of consistent poverty.
- Reduce the gap in low birth weight rates between children from the lowest and highest socio-economic group by 10 per cent from the current level, by 2007.*

Women

- Over the period to 2007, the Strategy will aim at reducing the numbers of women who are 'consistently poor' below 2%, and, if possible, eliminating consistent poverty, under the current definition of consistent poverty.
- Increase the employment participation rate of women to an average of more than 60 per cent in 2010, as envisaged under the National Employment Action Plan 2001.

Older People

- Over the period to 2007, the Strategy will aim at reducing the numbers of older people who are 'consistently poor' below 2%, and, if possible, eliminating consistent poverty, under the current definition of consistent poverty.
- By 2003, national guidelines will be put in place for the provision of respite care services to carers of older people.
- Access to orthopaedic services will be improved so that no one is waiting longer than 12 months for a hip replacement. This is an initial short-term action to improve quality of life for older people and it will be reviewed in 2003.
- By end 2007 adequate heating systems will be available in all local authority rented dwellings provided for older people.

Travellers

- The gap in life expectancy between the Travelling Community and the whole population will be reduced by at least 10 per cent by 2007.
- Age appropriate placement of all Travellers in primary school will be achieved by 2003.
- The transfer rate of Travellers to post-primary schools will be increased to 95% by 2004.
- Each third level institution will double the participation by mature disadvantaged students, including Travellers and Refugees by 2006 (within the 15 per cent quota).
- All Travellers' families identified in the local authority five-year Traveller accommodation programme process as being in need of accommodation will be appropriately accommodated by end 2004.

People with Disabilities

Few specific targets have been set at this time for people with disabilities. This is largely because of the lack of available baseline data for this group. A key objective therefore over the period of the NAPS will be to develop appropriate data as part of the Data Strategy emanating from the NAPS Review. Once this is available, consideration will be given to the development of a range of appropriate measures for this group.

Meanwhile the following specific targets have been set:

- Increased participation by students with disabilities at third level to 1.35 per cent by 2003 and 1.8 per cent by 2006.
- Improvements to be made in access to planned respite care for carers of disabled people by 2003.

* Reducing the gap in low birth weight rates between different socio-economic groups depends on wide social, economic and environmental action as well as the provision of accessible public services. Action is required across the full range of NAPS health targets outlined in the Framework Document.

Migrants and Members of Ethnic Minority Groups

Very little quantitative information is available about the socio-economic situation of foreign-born residents in Ireland. It is not possible, therefore, to define specific targets for this group as a whole or for a particular ethnic group at this stage.

Overall policy approach

The overall policy approach is to tackle barriers to the integration of ethnic minority residents, and in particular:

- tackling racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance;
- developing a new immigration legislative framework within which fair and sensible immigration policies to meet the changing needs of Irish society can be developed and implemented. Such legislation will be developed following widespread consultation and will be based on best practice elsewhere;
- providing the resources for an efficient, fair, independent and transparent procedure for processing asylum applications with the target of deciding on applications within 6 months; and
- commitment by the State, An Garda Síochána, statutory organisations and the social partners to ensuring the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation and to accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality irrespective of race, religion or belief, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

Urban Poverty

- Over the period to 2007, the Strategy will aim at reducing the number of urban dwellers who are 'consistently poor' below 2%, and, if possible, eliminating consistent poverty, under the current definition of consistent poverty.
- To significantly reduce the harm caused to individuals and the community by the misuse of illicit drugs through a concerted focus on supply reduction, prevention, treatment, and research.
- To foster public safety and prevent crime through better detection, use of approved youth diversion programmes and restorative schemes, optimum use of community based sanctions and reducing the level of re-offending.
- To ensure that the basic needs of all families, especially young parents, lone parents, older people, and ethnic minorities are met through enhanced and better co-ordinated State support services.

Rural Disadvantage

- Over the period to 2007, the Strategy will aim at reducing the number of farm and non-farm rural dwellers who are 'consistently poor' below 2%, and, if possible, eliminating consistent poverty, under the current definition of consistent poverty.
- To improve transport services to rural dwellers through a combination of State support and community-based provision.
- To improve access to employment, health, education and housing services for rural dwellers.

Appendix 5: Glossary of Terms

Aireacht	responsible for the overall management of the Department, formulation of social protection policies to meet the changing needs of Irish society and for the provision of support and advice to the Minister and Government.
BASIS	Business Access to State Information and Services – delivering electronic information and services based around the ‘life events’ of a business, e.g. business start-up and development, paying taxes and employing staff (www.basis.ie).
CLÁR	Ceantar Laga Árd-Riachtanais – targeted investment programme for disadvantaged rural areas progressed by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
County & City Development Boards	established during 2000 in each county and county borough. These are representative of local government, the state agencies, local development bodies and social partners to oversee a county/city strategy for economic, social and cultural development.
CSO	Central Statistics Office (www.cso.ie).
EAP	Government’s Employment Action Plan.
EEA	European Economic Area (EU Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute (www.esri.ie).
EU	European Union (www.europa.eu.int).
Family Services Project	pilot projects in three locations (Finglas, Dublin; Cork and Waterford) to enhance information services for families.
Fiúntas	Employee Recognition Award scheme – see also Input.
GRO	General Register Office, responsible for the administration of the Civil Registration Service in Ireland. The GRO Project addresses the modernisation of the Civil Registration Service – a joint programme between this Department and the Department of Health and Children.
High Supports Process	targeted at customers disengaged from the labour market, it involves the Department’s Jobs Facilitators – see below. It arises from the PPF Committee on the Labour Market and focuses on two customer groups on specified urban areas – i.e. long-term FÁS Job Initiative customers and those categorised as ‘not progression ready’, under the terms of the EAP (see above). A multi-agency approach is envisaged to address the issues faced by these customers.
HR	Human Resources.
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey.
ICT	Information and Communications Technology – see for example ‘New Connections’, the Government’s Information Society Action Plan.
Input	This scheme facilitates the submission of suggestions, from civil servants, which increase administrative efficiency, reduce costs and improve services to the public – see also Fiúntas.

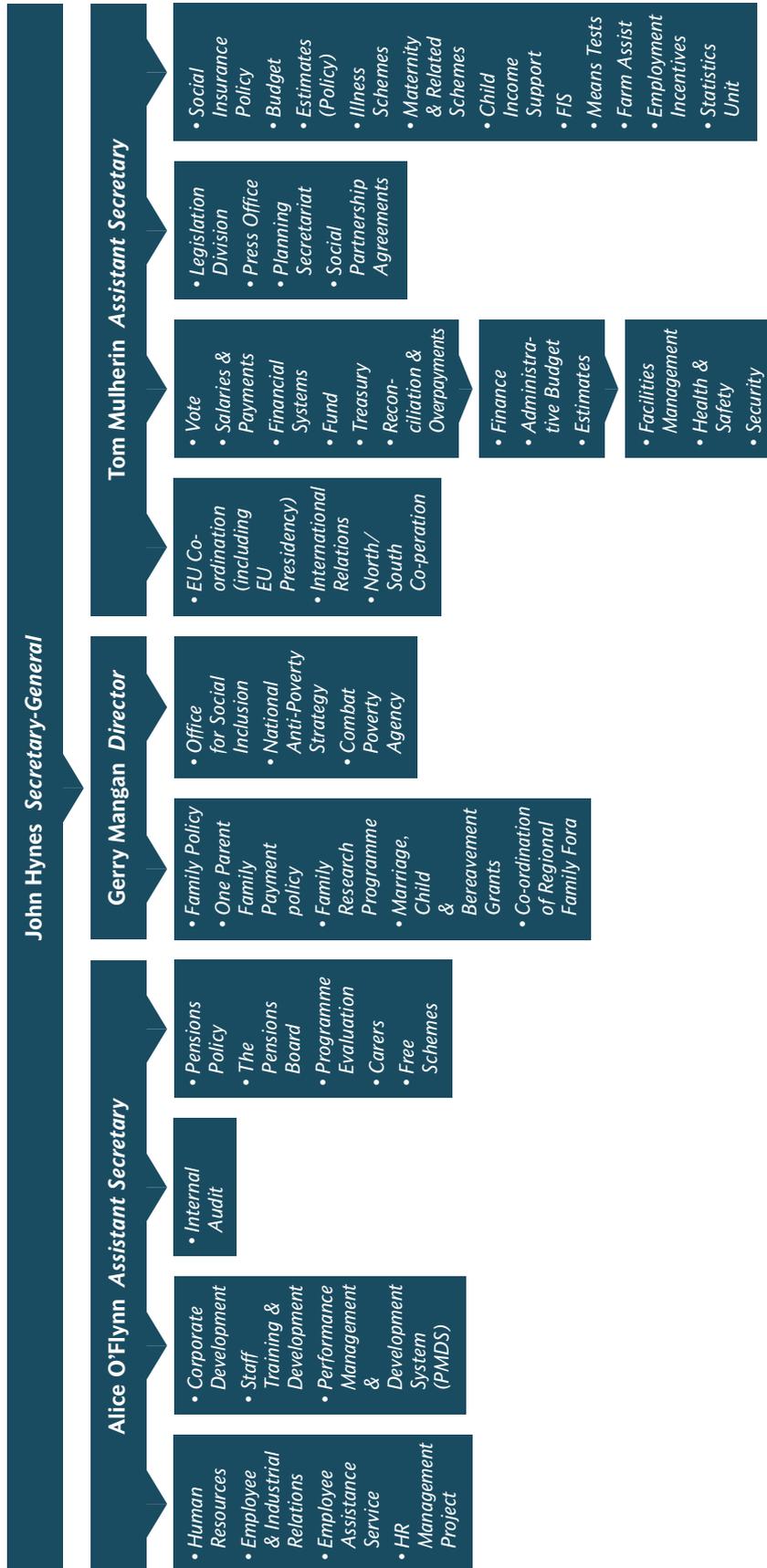
IT	Information Technology.
Jobs Facilitators	staff of the Department's Employment Support Service who assist our customers in availing of the wide range of work and educational options available from the Department and other agencies such as FÁS. These officers may be contacted at Social Welfare Local Offices.
KNOW RACISM	Government initiative to promote anti-racism and awareness of increasing cultural diversity.
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators.
MABS	Money Advice and Budgeting Service.
MIF	Management Information Framework.
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy: launched in 1997 to ensure that social inclusion is central to policy formulation and implementation.
NAPSincl	National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion – prepared by each EU Member State on a biennial basis.
National Children's Strategy	This strategy "Our Children – Their lives" was launched in 2000 and is a 10-year plan of action which calls on statutory agencies, the voluntary sector and local communities to work together to improve the quality of all children's lives. The strategy recognises the central role of families in rearing children.
National Longitudinal Study	Study which, it is planned, will monitor the development of 18,000 children from different backgrounds (10,000 from birth and 8,000 nine year olds) through to adulthood. It will follow these children from birth and nine years to adulthood, yielding important information about each significant transition throughout their young lives. It will seek to identify the circumstances which allow children to thrive and those which hinder children's development.
National Spatial Strategy	Launched by the Government in November 2002, this strategy is a 20-year planning framework designed to deliver more balanced social, economic and physical development between regions.
OASIS	integrated online resource of public service information based around citizen-centred life events (www.oasis.gov.ie).
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (www.oecd.org).
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System.
PPF	Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.
PPSN	Personal Public Service Number.
PRSA	Personal Retirement Savings Account – vehicle to facilitate increased savings for pensions and extend supplementary pensions coverage overall, especially to people who have no such cover at present.
PRSI	Pay Related Social Insurance.
PSI	Public Service Identity.

RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development – Government initiative targeted at areas suffering high concentrations of deprivation.
REACH	cross-Departmental agency established by the Government in 1999 to build or procure the Public Services Broker – a single, multi-channel gateway to government – and to develop a framework for the integration of public services (www.reach.ie).
SDM	Service Delivery Model – modernising the way in which we deliver our services to our customers. It is underpinned by new computer systems and a parallel programme of organisational change. Child Benefit is the first scheme in the Department to apply the SDM.
SIF	Social Insurance Fund.
SMI	Strategic Management Initiative – the Public Service Modernisation Programme, launched in 1994.
SWAO	independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.
SWBOs	Social Welfare Branch Offices.
SWLOs	Social Welfare Local Offices.
SWS	Social Welfare Services – the executive office of the Department which is responsible for the day-to-day administration and management of social welfare schemes and services through a network of local, regional and decentralised (HQ) offices.
VFM	Value for Money.

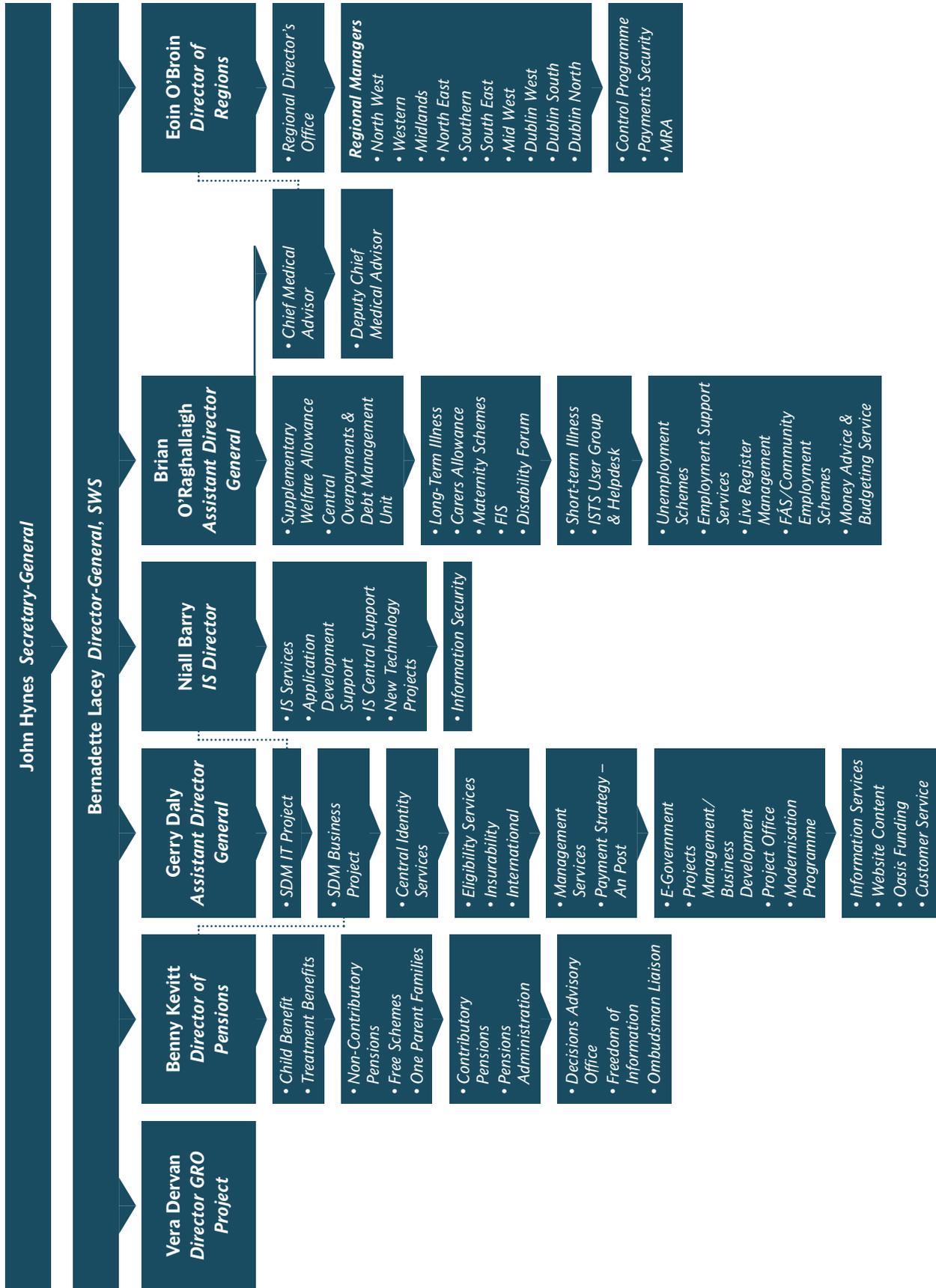
For further information on social welfare schemes and services, please see the ‘Guide to Social Welfare Services’ (SW4) which is published by our Information Services. Contact details are:

Information Services
 Department of Social and Family Affairs
 Áras Mhic Dhiarmada
 Store Street
 Dublin 1
www.welfare.ie

Appendix 6: Organisational Structure – Aireacht



Appendix 6: Organisational Structure – Social Welfare Services





Department of
Social & Family Affairs

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