Statement of Strategy 2008 – 2010

Department of Social and Family Affairs

Our mission is to promote a caring society through income and other support services, enabling active participation in society, promoting social inclusion and supporting families

Department of Social and Family Affairs
An Roinn Gnóthaí Sóisialacha agus Teaghlaigh
www.welfare.ie

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Foreword from the Minister

I welcome this Statement of Strategy which I have agreed with the Secretary General of the Department. It is a framework for the delivery of a wide range of initiatives which identifies our high-level goals and defines the strategic objectives and actions we will pursue over the period 2008 to 2010 in order to achieve them.

The work of the Department impacts on almost every person in the State. It administers some 50 different schemes and services with over 1.5 million people benefiting from weekly payments and over 580,000 families receiving child benefit in respect of 1.1 million children each month. In addition to our income support responsibilities, we are also actively engaged, in co-operation with a range of other Departments and Agencies, in supporting those who are unemployed, lone parents and people with a disability to avail of opportunities to get back to work, education or training in order to assist them in participating fully in society.

This Statement of Strategy sets out our ambitious programme of work for the next three years and is fully reflective of Government policy as outlined in the *Agreed Programme for Government*, *Towards 2016*, the *National Development Plan* and the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*. I look forward to working with the staff of the Department to ensure that together we build on what has already been accomplished and to achieve our mission to *promote a caring society through income and other support services, enabling active participation in society, promoting social inclusion and supporting families.*

Oireann an seanfhocal "Ní neart go cur le chéile" don Roinn seo agus, le chéile, oibreoimid ar son phobal na tíre.

Mary Hanafin T.D.
Minister for Social and Family Affairs

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Preface from the Secretary General

This is the Department of Social and Family Affairs' seventh Statement of Strategy. In drawing up this document we have built on our previous Statements of Strategy, taken account of developments as reflected in our annual reports and have had regard to the changes in the social and economic environment in which we work. We have engaged also in a consultation process involving both our staff and our stakeholders.

This *Statement of Strategy 2008 – 2010* has been informed by the *Agreed Programme for Government*, *Towards 2016* - the Social Partnership Agreement, the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016* and the *National Development Plan 2007-2013*. It describes the mission, high-level goals and key strategies and actions which we will pursue in delivering the policies and priorities as set down by the Minister and the Government. It sets out the approach, based around the lifecycle, we will adopt in supporting our diverse customer groups through a range of income supports and in facilitating them to maximise their participation in society.

The environment in which we operate is changing at a fast pace and over the next three years economic, social and demographic changes will place new and increased demands on our services. The decentralisation programme and the transfer of certain functions from the Department of Health/HSE to this Department pose significant human and operational challenges for us.

In this Statement of Strategy we have set out an ambitious agenda which will enable us to respond in creative and innovative ways to these challenges. Over the coming years we will review our organisational structure, enhance our governance and accelerate our modernisation programme to ensure we continue to deliver our policies and services efficiently and effectively and to the highest standards.

In recent years, with the support and co-operation of our staff, we made significant progress in enhancing services to our customers through a comprehensive programme of change and modernisation. I look forward to working with the Minister, Mary Hanafin T.D. and with all the staff in the Department in delivering the challenging agenda set out in this Statement of Strategy.

Bernadette Lacey
Secretary General

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Our mission and mandate

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Our mission statement

Our mission is to promote a caring society through income and other support services, enabling active participation in society, 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 and social inclusion policies;
- to administer and manage the delivery of statutory and non-statutory social protection schemes and services; and
- to work with other Departments and Agencies in the delivery of Government policies.

Scale of our business

Our income and support services impact on the lives of almost every person in the State. Over 1 million people each week claim a social welfare payment and, when qualified adults and children are included, a total of more than 1.5 million people benefit from weekly payments. Over 580,000 families (1.1 million children) receive child benefit payments each month. The total expenditure by the Department in 2008 will be just under €17 billion.

We administer some 50 separate welfare schemes and services. This activity involves a considerable level of interaction between our staff and the public and with their representatives. In any given year these interactions include:

- 2 million applications;
- 6.5 million telephone calls;
- 68 million payments;
- 360,000 assignments conducted by our inspectors;
- the promotion and distribution countrywide of 87 different information booklets/ leaflets and a wide range of forms; and
- publishing our main information booklet (SW4) in 10 languages (Irish, English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian and Spanish).

Meeting the needs of an ever increasing and diverse customer base requires a high-level of skill, flexibility and training.

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Organisation of the Department

The Department has 4,840 staff (4,400 full-time equivalent posts) and is structured on Aireacht/Executive lines. The organisation structure is set out in **Appendix 1**. Our headquarter offices are located in Carrick-on-Shannon, Dublin, Dundalk, Letterkenny, Longford, Sligo and Waterford. The local delivery of our services is structured on a regional basis with offices in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, Limerick, Sligo and Waterford. There is a nationwide network of 60 Social Welfare Local Offices and 65 Social Welfare Branch Offices.

The **Social Welfare Appeals Office** is an office of the Department independently responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements, insurability of employment issues and certain decisions made by the Health Service Executive under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Schemes (web address: - **www.socialwelfareappeals.ie**).

The **Office for Social Inclusion**, positioned in the Department, works with Government Departments, and in consultation with the social partners and other stakeholders, in monitoring the implementation of the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, 2007-2016* and the Social Inclusion chapter of the *National Development Plan, 2007-2013* (web address:-**www.socialinclusion.ie**).

The **General Register Office** is the central civil repository for records relating to births, deaths and marriages in the State. The Office transferred to our Department from the Department of Health and Children with effect from 1st January 2008 (web address:- **www.groireland.ie**).

A number of Agencies, listed below, operate under the aegis of the Department:

- **The Citizens Information Board** provides information, advice and advocacy services in relation to social services (web address:-**www. citizensinformationboard.ie**);

- **The Combat Poverty Agency** has responsibilities in the areas of advice to the Minister, project support and innovation, research and public education in relation to poverty in Ireland (web address:- **www.cpa.ie**);

- **The Family Support Agency** is responsible for the Family and Community Services Resource Programme, the support, promotion and development of marriage and relationship counselling and other family supports and the provision of a family mediation service. 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 (web address**:- www.fsa.ie**);

- **The Pensions Board** is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Pensions Act which concerns the regulation of occupational pensions and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts. The Board also advises the Minister in relation to pensions policy (web address: - **www.pensionsboard.ie**);

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- **The Office of the Pensions Ombudsman** investigates complaints of financial losses due to maladministration, disputes of fact or law, in relation to occupational pension schemes and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts. The Pensions Ombudsman is a statutory officer and exercises his functions independently (web address:- **www.pensionsombudsman.ie**).

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) provides assistance to people on low income who are over-indebted and need help and advice in coping with debt problems (web address :- **www.mabs.ie**).

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Our values and guiding principles

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In carrying out our work we are 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.

Fairness and respect

We recognise the need for fairness and mutual respect.

Openness

We are open to change and encourage and facilitate the open expression of views.

Professionalism

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

Flexibility and responsiveness

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

Partnership and consultation

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

We are also committed to engaging with the Social Partners and interest groups in the achievement of our mission.

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Environmental analysis

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This Statement of Strategy has been framed in the context of the environmental analysis which follows.

Political context

The key developments in the political context, which inform our strategy, include a number of important social policy commitments contained in the following: -

Agreed Programme for Government A Blueprint for Ireland's Future 2007-2012

The *Agreed Programme for Government* sets out a wide range of social policy commitments that relate to the Department in the areas below.

Children and families	People of working age
› Child income support	› Welfare and welfare reform
› Tackling childhood disadvantage	› A fair tax system
› Childcare	› Family farmers
› Lone parents	› Coverage for farm spouses
› Family support	› Carers
	› Rent supplement scheme
	› Disability

Retired and older people	Other
› Pensions	› Money Advice and Budgeting Service
› Improving income and employment conditions for older people	› Ensuring value for money
› Maximising independence	› Public sector management
› Irish abroad/Free travel	› Decentralisation
	› Broadband

Appendix 2 identifies those elements most relevant to this Department and which inform this Statement of Strategy.

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Social partnership agreement *Towards 2016*

The current social partnership agreement provides a strategic framework to meet the economic and social challenges facing the country over the next ten years and addresses them within a lifecycle approach. Where this Department is concerned this focuses on the needs of children and families, people of working age, retired and older people and people with disabilities.

National Development Plan 2007-2013 Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All

Investment in social priorities is central to the *National Development Plan* which contains a specific chapter on Social Inclusion and the investment of €49.6 billion in a range of activities contained therein. These activities include supporting the provision of programmes and services for children, people with disabilities, retired and older people as well as providing education and participation programmes for people of working age.

Other areas of the Plan are also significant from a poverty and social inclusion perspective. Key areas in the Social Infrastructure chapter include investment in social, affordable and voluntary housing schemes, health infrastructure and schools development. The Human Capital chapter includes investment for targeted training and supports to groups outside the labour market such as people who are unemployed, people with disabilities and lone parents, as well as supporting the increased participation in the workforce of women, older workers, part-time workers and migrants.

National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 Building an Inclusive Society

The Government, in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*, has identified a number of strategic goals in certain key priority areas in order to achieve the overall objective of reducing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012 and ultimately eliminating it by 2016. These targeted goals focus on:

- ensuring children reach their true potential;
- supporting working age people and people with disabilities, through activation measures and the provision of services to increase employment and participation;
- providing the type of supports that enable older people to maintain a comfortable and high quality standard of living; and
- building viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital.

These high-level goals are supported by over 150 targets and interventions across the various lifecycle stages and cover all relevant policy areas including income support, employment, training, education, health, and housing.

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Government decision on the Core Functions Transfer Programme

The Government decided to implement the recommendations of the Core Functions of the Health Service Report. The recommendations which affect us include:

- the transfer of the General Register Office from the Department of Health and Children to this Department;
- the transfer of income support and maintenance schemes (Domiciliary Care Allowance and Respite Care Grant, Mobility Allowance, Blind Welfare Allowance and Infectious Diseases Maintenance Allowance) from the Health Service Executive to this Department;
- the transfer of the Community Welfare Service (which currently administers the Supplementary Welfare Service on our behalf) personnel from the Health Service Executive to this Department; and
- the transfer of the Dental Treatment Benefit Scheme and Aural and Ophthalmic services from this Department to the Health Sector.

The Core Functions Transfer Programme represents transformational change with significant implications for our organisation. The Programme will involve major change in the Department's business, will have implications across our existing services and will require careful planning and execution. It will require significant and committed input over a sustained period following the transfer and will have to be adequately resourced through an effective organisational change and transition management process.

The Transfer Programme involves significant organisational, human resource and service delivery issues for all of the stakeholders involved in the process. To this end, a Communication and Consultation Strategy has been devised to allow for ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders associated with the programme.

The transfer of functions presents fundamental reform and developmental opportunities for a fully integrated and enhanced income support system, including the restructuring and integration of income and wider support services within one entity. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for us in delivering a service to a customer base who are most disadvantaged in society.

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EU and international developments

The activities of the European Union, the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development impact on the development of the social policy agenda. The most significant influence arises from EU initiatives. The European Council in 2000 launched the Lisbon Strategy to achieve the ambitious goal of making Europe by 2010 *"the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".* The European Council also invited Member States and the Commission to take steps "*to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010"* and this objective was reaffirmed at subsequent Councils. It is clear that this requires balanced strategic action in the economic, employment and social policy spheres. In the wake of the 2005 review of the Lisbon Strategy, there is a particular focus on growth and jobs while an open method of co-ordination is applied to social protection and social inclusion. The key themes covered by this process are social inclusion, pensions, healthcare and long-term care. As part of this process, Member States are required to produce, at three-year intervals, national strategy reports covering all of these themes and these are jointly assessed by the EU Commission and the EU Council against the agreed common objectives.

The issues facing pensions systems arising from ageing of populations have been high on the agenda of EU policy makers for some time. The Laeken European Council of December 2001 endorsed common objectives of pension adequacy, financial sustainability, adaptability, and a working method for monitoring developments and reforms.

The EU has also introduced Directives in relation to occupational pensions which provide a regulatory framework for the operation and supervision of pension schemes, facilitate the mobility of workers, the operation of cross border schemes and provide for equal treatment of workers in pension provision.

On the administrative front, new EU regulations on the co-ordination of social security systems for migrant workers will have administrative implications for our Department, particularly in relation to electronic transmission of data between Member States.

In 2008, Member States will produce their second National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion – these will be fully synchronised with the three-year cycle already established for the National Reform Strategies of Member States which address the economic and employment dimensions of the Lisbon Strategy.

The development of cross border activities is crucially important, whether within the context of the formal programme set out by the North South Ministerial Council or through ongoing informal bi-lateral contact and co-operation on issues of mutual interest.

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Economic, demographic and social context

The changing economic, demographic and social environment continues to pose challenges for the development of appropriate social policy responses.

The main developments which inform these responses include the following:

- It is expected that the economy will continue to expand but at a slower rate in the coming years which will increase demand for services while at the same time placing restrictions on available resources. The Department of Finance anticipates growth rates of 0.5% in 2008, 2.25% in 2009 and a return to trend growth of about 4% by 2010.

- The main Lisbon employment target of 70% participation in the labour market has almost been reached with an overall employment rate of 68.6%. The unemployment rate continues to remain at a low level of 4.6%. Labour market participation is particularly low for lone parents, people with disabilities and retired and older people.

- Children make up about one quarter of the Irish population at just over one million, which is a high proportion compared with other European countries.

- Almost two-thirds of people in consistent poverty lived in households with children in 2006. Lone parent households have a particularly high consistent poverty rate at over 27%.

- People with disabilities form 9.3% of the population as measured in 2006. People with a chronic illness or disability are over twice as likely to be in consistent poverty as those without such conditions.

- Retired and older people currently constitute about 11% of the population but this is predicted to significantly increase in the medium term. This shift will have a major impact particularly on pensions, health and care services.

- Retired and older people are currently heavily dependent on social welfare. It is estimated that 68% of people aged 65 and over do not have an occupational pension. At present, about 55% of people in employment are contributing to a pension scheme. Workers in certain sectors such as part-time workers and employees of small companies have particularly low coverage and this needs to be increased.

- The share of non-Irish in the overall population has increased to 10% in the 2006 Census compared to 5.9% in 2002. This has implications for scheme administration, service delivery and expenditure.

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Policy developments

In a rapidly changing environment it is increasingly important that we build a strong social policy capacity to meet the challenges ahead. We will, in particular, pursue policy development to support our customers through the key lifecycle stages.

Children and families

Income support makes a major contribution to the well-being of families and children. Child Benefit is available in respect of almost all children, irrespective of their parents' incomes, and has grown substantially in recent years.

The continued reform of more targeted supports such as the refocusing of Family Income Supplement in favour of larger families, increasing Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance and expanding the School Meals Programme is a more selective approach to targeting children in poorer households while at the same time seeking to avoid the employment disincentives associated with the Qualified Child Increase.

In *Towards 2016* and the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*, we have a number of commitments in the area of child income support, namely maintaining the combined value of child income support measures at 33-35% of the minimum adult social welfare payment rate and progressing, as a priority, further work aimed at assisting children in families on low incomes. Also, child income supports which avoid employment disincentives will be reviewed by the Department as a priority and this work will be informed by the National Economic and Social Council study on a second tier child income support.

We remain committed to maintaining the balance between ensuring that child income support programmes are developed in ways that are sufficiently responsive to need while providing opportunities to assist people to become less welfare dependent.

People of working age

We are committed to a range of initiatives to ensure that all people of working age have sufficient income and opportunity to participate as fully as possible in economic and social life. These initiatives include activation and the identification and removal of both disincentives and barriers to employment.

Activation in a social welfare context is defined as being an engagement with customers of the Department, and their families, with progression (to employment, training, education and development opportunities) as the desired outcome. This approach involves engaging with all people of working age in a similar way, whether they are unemployed, lone parents, people with a disability or in some other category. The aim is to facilitate progression regardless of the circumstances that led the person to require income maintenance in the first instance.

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The Social and Economic Participation Programme is being introduced under the *National Development Plan* as part of an active case management service for social welfare customers of working age. This service will build on our existing experience and will involve active engagement with our customers and close collaboration with other Agencies such as Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), Vocational Education Committees, the Health sector and local service providers. This places activation on a level with service delivery and control as a central part of our core business.

At a policy level, a number of measures are in place to remove disincentives to taking up employment and to assist in the transition from welfare to work. This balanced approach includes the provision of earnings disregards with tapered withdrawal of social welfare payments, a wide range of active labour market programmes and in-work income support to low-income families with the objective of encouraging participation in the workforce as an alternative to social welfare dependency.

A specific policy focus will be on progressing the Government Discussion Paper, *Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents*. Proposals include the expanded availability of education and training opportunities, the extension of the *National Employment Action Plan*, the focused provision of childcare, improved information services and the introduction of a new social assistance payment for low income families with young children.

Supporting care in the community to the maximum extent possible continues to be the key influence on the development of income supports for working age and older carers (Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit and Respite Care Grant) and we are committed to the further development of these supports. In this context we are committed to working with other Departments in the development of a National Carers Strategy which will focus on supporting informal and family carers in the community.

Retired and older people

The *Agreed Programme for Government* contains significant initiatives to enhance the financial position of older people in society including a commitment to increase the State pension, by around 50%, to at least €300 per week by 2012.

The pension system aims to provide adequate and sustainable pensions for older people which will allow them to maintain a reasonable standard of living on retirement. The overall target in the *Agreed Programme for Government* is to secure a pension income, from all sources, of 50% of pre-retirement earnings, with social welfare and occupational/private pensions providing the bulk of this income. An important element in achieving this target is to increase the take-up of occupational and private pensions from the current level of 62%, for those aged 30 and over, to 70% and to further increase the overall rate currently at 55%.

The *Green Paper on Pensions* outlines the major policy choices and challenges in this area with a view to ensuring the pensions system continues to meet the needs of current and future pensioners in the context of societal changes and a flexible labour market.

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The Government is committed to responding to the *Green Paper on Pensions* consultation process by developing a framework for comprehensively addressing the pensions agenda over the longer term. The promotion of the broadest possible consensus regarding pension policies and reforms is an important objective in this regard.

People with disabilities

Research shows that people with disabilities have a low rate of participation in the workforce and in education. Social life outside the home is more restricted and lack of transport and an inaccessible physical environment adds to the difficulties experienced in participating in everyday life in the community.

We have a pivotal role in providing income and other supports for people with disabilities who may not be in a position to provide for themselves. Our *Disability Sectoral Plan*, in line with the *National Disability Strategy* and *Towards 2016*, aims to give people with disabilities financial security and encourage maximum participation in society by delivering supports which reduce their risk of dependence.

It will also allow them to meet their income needs to a far greater extent from employment as well as achieving other social outcomes, such as further education and developing life skills. In implementing the Plan, we will progress a number of key strategic initiatives including:

- the transfer of the income maintenance payments (Domiciliary Care Allowance, Mobility Allowance, Blind Welfare Allowance and Infectious Diseases Maintenance Allowance) from the Health Service Executive to this Department;
- implementing the recommendations of the review of the Medical Assessment system;
- making a range of employment and other supports available (including the Social and Economic Participation Programme);
- enhancing accessibility to departmental schemes and services; and
- through the Citizens Information Board, the development of a personal advocacy service.

We recognise that meeting these initiatives presents major challenges. People with disabilities are not a homogenous group and therefore require a range of interventions tailored to the person's particular needs. In addition, an effective, integrated, cross-agency approach is necessary to deliver on the range of supports and services required.

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Poverty and social inclusion

The Government's key objective is to build an inclusive society in which everybody has the opportunity and the incentive to participate and share in the benefits of economic and social development. The key instrument in this regard is the cross-cutting interdepartmental *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*.

The **Office for Social Inclusion**, in addition to its responsibilities for monitoring implementation of the Plan and the Social Inclusion chapter of the *National Development Plan,* will:

- coordinate the report to the EU on progress made in implementing the social inclusion priorities set for the period 2006 to 2008, and on the priorities to be set for the period 2008 to 2011;
- roll out poverty impact assessment to Government Departments and Agencies;
- further develop its central support functions relating to data strategies, research and communications; and
- coordinate the initial planning for the European Year, proposed by the EU Commission for 2010, for combating poverty and social exclusion.

The **Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)** plays a key role in supporting people on low income with debt problems or at risk of indebtedness and in promoting financial inclusion. MABS has grown significantly and developing it to meet the challenges posed by the changing nature of indebtedness will be a key priority during the period of this strategy.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance is a non-contingency based statutory scheme which has a particular role in addressing poverty. It is subject to a means test and there is an element of discretion in making payments. The scheme ensures that no person has to suffer hardship for want of a minimum income.

The scheme has a number of functions. It provides a minimum income, allows for immediate and once-off payments to meet urgent or exceptional needs and it provides short term mortgage and rent support to people who are unable to provide these from their own resources.

A recent review of the scheme has concluded that it has, over the years, met its objective of guaranteeing that every person in the State has a minimum level of income sufficient to meet their basic day to day needs but now plays a more extensive role than was originally intended.

The main recommendations arising include:

- a unified system of income support delivered at local level and complemented by a range of activation supports;

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- vigorous support of the Rental Accommodation Scheme to address housing needs of people in long-term rent supplementation; and
- a continued role for the Community Welfare Service in delivering a flexible and immediate response to those most in need.

The review will provide a working template for the future delivery of an integrated income support service particularly in the context of the Core Functions Transfer Programme.

Operational capabilities and modernisation

We are committed to ensuring that a quality service is provided to our customers. This requires us to continuously develop our operational capabilities and modernise our structures and procedures.

The Department's Modernisation Action Plan

Our Modernisation Action Plan was agreed, within the context of *Towards 2016*, at the end of 2006. The Plan builds on the programme of change and modernisation which our Department undertook under the previous agreement *Sustaining Progress*.

Each Department has flexibility in determining its modernisation priorities within the framework of *Towards 2016.* Our Plan has over 60 actions which were agreed with staff and union representatives through our partnership structures.

Some of the key priorities are:

- the project to implement the Government decision to transfer non-core health functions from the Health Service Executive to this Department;
- the further development of the Service Delivery Modernisation Programme which is an integrated system providing enhanced customer centered services;
- completion of the programme of localisation of One-Parent Family Payment claims;
- building on the Management Information Framework system and the further development of the Annual Output Statement;
- implementation of the social and economic participation measures as set out in *Towards 2016* including the provision of active outcome-focused individual case management of all social welfare customers of working age who are not progressing into employment, accessing training or employment opportunities;
- implementation of the Department's *Disability Sectoral Plan*; and
- increasing the percentage of internal promotions by competitive merit.

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As with its predecessor *Sustaining Progress*, pay increases under *Towards 2016* are dependent on stable industrial relations and on staff co-operation with modernisation initiatives.

Human resource management

The Department is one of the largest employers in the Civil Service with 4,840 people (4,400 full time equivalent posts), the profiles of which are shown in the table below.

Age Profile	Percentage	Gender	Percentage	Flexible Working	Percentage
Under 25	3%	Male	32%	Flexible working hours	74%
25-34	16%	Female	68%	Worksharing	22%
35-44	29%			Term Time	10%
45-54	39%				
Over 55	13%				

Ours is a skilled and committed staff complement working in a challenging environment. The organisation is a geographically dispersed one with a very extensive office network and our staff work in a variety of roles. We aim to provide an improved level of service delivery in an ever expanding business while operating within limited staff resources.

We operate within a wider and unified civil service environment. Many of the key human resources issues are negotiated and decided centrally and are regulated by the Department of Finance. These include the:

- Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2005;
- revised Civil Service Disciplinary Code;
- revised Civil Service Anti-Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy: *A Positive Working Environment;*
- Civil Service policies on Equality of Opportunity and Gender Equality; and
- integration of the Performance Management and Development System with human resources practices and procedures.

In addition, we have developed a range of initiatives to assist us in realising a performance culture and a positive working environment. These include our:

- Training and Development Strategy 2005-2008;

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- *Disability Sectoral Plan*;
- Attendance Management Policy; and
- Health Promotion Strategy.

We are currently preparing a new Human Resources Strategy which will build on the achievements of our previous strategy and the initiatives mentioned above.

Meeting customer interests and needs

We are committed to delivering a quality customer service and in this regard are currently developing our new Customer Action Plan and Customer Charter. The new Customer Charter will be a statement of our commitments regarding the service that customers can expect in dealing with us. It will build on previous plans and provide a framework for progressing and reporting on the development of these customer services.

As a means of informing our customer service delivery programme, customer surveys undertaken by independent market consultants and customer consultation fora, where we meet with representatives of different customer groups, are key features of our customer service approach. Our consultation processes show a rate of satisfaction in excess of 80% with our services. We also provide and promote a formal comment and complaint system whereby customers can offer feedback on their experiences with us.

We are conscious of the increasing number of social welfare customers requiring access to services for whom English is not their first language or whose English is not of a high standard. Every effort is made to facilitate these customers by arranging an interpretation service where necessary. Also, the main Guide to Social Welfare Services (SW4) is available on our website in a number of different languages.

We are also committed to facilitating people with disabilities. Services, such as a sign language interpreter, as well as information in alternative formats such as Braille, large print or audio, are provided where requested.

In line with the principles of quality customer service, we will continue to give our customers a personalised, responsive service, facilitate our staff in their dealings with our customers and employ modern technology to provide more streamlined and efficient service delivery.

Decentralisation

As part of the Government's decentralisation programme, we will decentralise over 1,300 people to six locations – Buncrana, Carrickmacross, Carrick-on-Shannon, Donegal, Drogheda and Sligo. When completed the Department will cease to have a headquarter presence in Dublin.

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The decentralisation programme has fundamental implications for the entire Department. We are an already decentralised Department with offices situated in a number of locations. The current decentralisation programme presents a unique challenge for us in the retention of corporate knowledge.

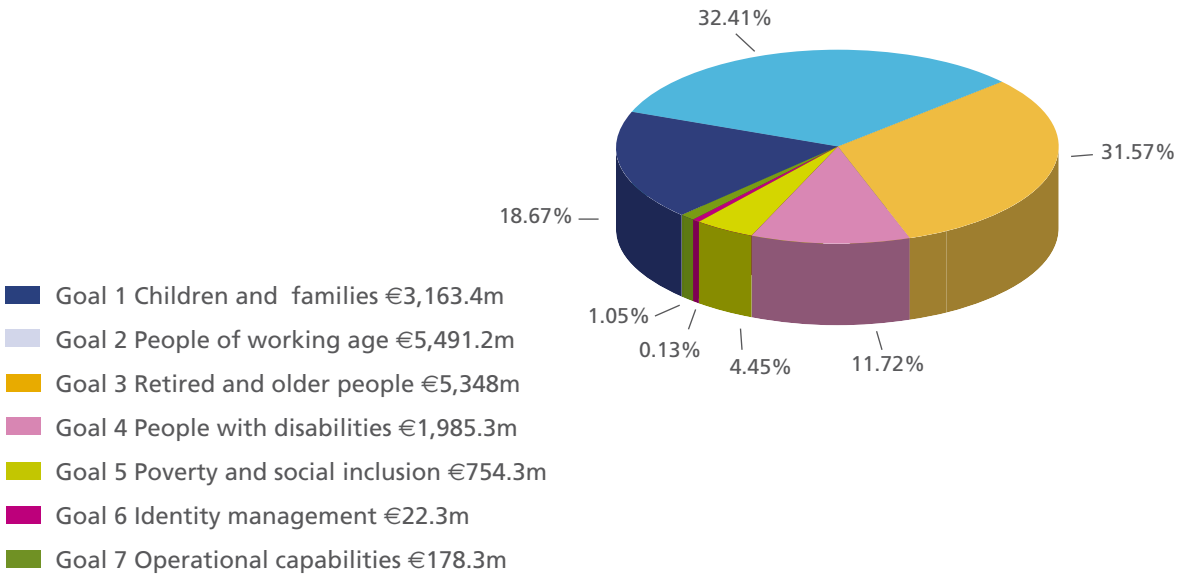
By early June 2008, 208 staff had decentralised to an expanded decentralised office in Sligo and to new headquarter offices in Carrick-on-Shannon. Since commencing the programme, there have been 644 staff movements in the organisation, including 182 transfers into the Department, 232 transfers of staff to other Departments and 230 internal moves as part of the overall decentralisation programme. Currently, 60% of our staff work outside the Dublin area and a notable feature of our current decentralisation programme is the fact that a significant number of staff, from this and other Departments, opting for decentralisation, are already located outside Dublin which has complicated the logistics of the process.

The decentralisation process is being managed on a systematic, project-planned basis with the emphasis on staff training, prudent risk management and minimal disruption to customer service. Our key business objectives are maintaining business continuity and customer service standards throughout the decentralisation process. The opportunity is also being taken to evaluate the business and to make improvements where necessary.

Financial resource allocation

Expenditure on schemes and services provided by this Department account for nearly one third of gross voted current Government expenditure. In 2008, €16.9 billion has been allocated to the Department. The distribution of expenditure across the high-level goals in this Statement of Strategy can be illustrated by reference to the 2008 estimates as follows:

2008 estimates by high-level goal



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In recent years the role of the Social Insurance Fund has become more prominent reflecting the rapid growth of the Irish economy and the expansion of social insurance coverage generally. A significant challenge for the Department during the period of this strategy will be delivering on the commitment in the *Agreed Programme for Government* in relation to PRSI and other rates.

There is a clear responsibility on us to ensure that robust systems and procedures are in place to estimate, monitor and manage expenditure and Social Insurance Fund income and deliver value for money. We will continue to participate fully in the Value For Money and Policy Review Initiative and implement the outcome of these reviews during the period of the Statement of Strategy within the context of Government policy.

We will continue to develop and enhance our financial management, business data, internal control and corporate governance environment including the progressive roll-out of the Management Information Framework and the further development of the Annual Output Statement.

Identity management and secure access to services

The overall Government strategy is to realise the potential of the Information Society through innovation and modernisation of public services. Key aspects are to ensure that the customer data is managed under strict conformance to data protection principles, that the correct customer is being dealt with and that the customer does not have to re-establish credentials again for every service sought.

In the effective management of a wide range of schemes, we have built up expertise in centralised identity management. As a result, we are in a position to provide identity related services to other Agencies in accordance with legislation.

Over the past few years, we have supported other Agencies in the use of the Personal Public Service Number and our focus on customer data quality initiatives for our own services has also been of value to these Agencies. In addition to this continuing programme of work, we have developed on-line services to support Public Service Identity use by Agencies such as the Revenue Commissioners. We will continue to develop these services in the context of the Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) programme. This programme, which is being led by the Department of Finance, aims to take an integrated view of overall Public Service Identity management by defining and implementing appropriate governance and organisational structures as well as business processes. Specific priorities include customer registration procedures and the future issue of Public Service Cards.

Revenue's 'PAYE On-Line' servies are successfully delivered via the Public Service Broker. Following the recent transfer of the Broker's operations to the Department of Finance we will continue to support the PPS number component of the identity management service as required.

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Data strategies

Robust, comprehensive and reliable data is the basic building block of the formulation of evidence based policies and is also fundamental to the effective operation of our business and the efficient administration of that business. The lack of appropriate data is a barrier to the effective monitoring and evaluation of policy objectives, policy outcomes and hampers the operation and administration of the business.

Recognising that we are both a user and producer of data and statistics our Data and Statistics Strategies set out the principles, policies and high-level standards in relation to the approved management of data across the Department and its agents. Further, they define departmental standards of good practice for information security which is based on best international practice and is being implemented on an ongoing basis. In 2008, we will begin to develop a framework for the inter-operability of these strategies.

In addition, the Office for Social Inclusion, as part of its responsibility for data and technical supports necessary for developing, monitoring and evaluating the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* and social inclusion measures in other national strategies, will include a specific focus on developing the type of data required to underpin the lifecycle approach.

Better regulation

The quality and quantity of the legislation we enact impacts directly on our operating environment and are fundamental to the efficient, effective and transparent conduct of our business. Amendments and extensions to the social welfare code, occupational and private pensions and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs) legislation are prepared and enacted in line with the Government's Better Regulation process.

Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) is applied to all relevant primary legislation and significant statutory instruments, with details published in the Department's Annual Report. As part of the RIA process, legislative proposals will also be subject to Poverty Impact Assessment to evaluate their effects on persons in poverty or at risk of falling into poverty.

An Equality Review of the social welfare code is being undertaken to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Equal Status Act, 2000 (as amended) and other relevant legislation.

The Department's Decisions Advisory Office provides guidelines, advice and training for deciding officers on making and notifying decisions in accordance with the legislation.

Our body of legislation in relation to the social welfare code, occupational and private pensions and PRSAs may be accessed on our website **www.welfare.ie**. Guidance relating to pensions is also available on the websites of the Pensions Board and the Pensions Ombudsman.

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Cross departmental co-operation

Effective cross-Departmental co-operation is necessary for the achievement of many of the goals and objectives identified in this Statement of Strategy. In some cases, such as the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* we have the central co-ordinating role through the Office for Social Inclusion. In other cases, such as the *National Disability Strategy*, we do not have the driving role but co-operate with other Departments to ensure that overall cross-departmental policies are delivered.

Effective implementation of the goals and strategic objectives set out in this Statement of Strategy will require active collaboration with other Departments and Agencies. These key linkages are outlined in **Appendix 3**.

We will continue to liaise with the Agencies under our remit in the formulation and implementation of their strategies which is critical to achieving our mutual objectives.

Conclusion

One of our strengths is our ability to adapt to change and to meet the needs of our customers. This is evidenced by, for example, the evolution of our role from passive income maintenance to one of activation and a more proactive engagement with our customers.

Continuing to adapt to political priorities, the evolving policy agenda and changing customer needs are the key challenges which this Statement of Strategy seeks to address.

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Our high level goals

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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 seven thematic and high-level goals, listed across, each contain strategic objectives/actions and performance indicators which set out what is required to achieve these goals. The first four high-level goals follow the lifecycle approach of children and families, people of working age, retired and older people and people with disabilities. The other three goals focus on poverty and social inclusion, identity management and secure access to services and operational capabilities and modernisation.

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Goal 1: Children and families

To contribute to the well-being of children and families through income and other supports and facilitate participation in employment

Goal 2: People of working age

To provide income and other supports to people of working age and to facilitate them in taking up employment, training, education or development opportunities

Goal 3: Retired and older people

To provide and promote adequate, secure and sustainable pensions and other appropriate supports for retired and older people

Goal 4: People with disabilities

To provide income and other supports to people with disabilities and to facilitate them in taking up employment, training, education or development opportunities

Goal 5: Poverty and social inclusion

To attain better outcomes in tackling poverty and achieve a more inclusive society through the provision of income and other support services and co-ordinating implementation of Government strategies for social inclusion

Goal 6: Identity management and secure access to services

To establish and authenticate customer identity for public services and to support the development and deployment of a public service-wide identity policy framework

Goal 7: Operational capabilities and modernisation

To develop further an effective, adaptable and capable organisation and a culture of excellence

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Goal 1
Children and families

High-level goal

To contribute to the well-being of children and families through income and other supports and facilitate participation in employment

High-level indicators

- Consistent poverty rates for children
- Consistent poverty rates for families

No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
1.1	Develop and implement appropriate policies to provide a range of income and other supports for children and families	Consistent poverty rates for children Consistent poverty rates for families
1.2	Progress towards the achievement of income support targets in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*	Rate of progress towards these targets Rate of income support
1.3	Extend supports to target disadvantage among school-going children	Number of disadvantaged schools in school meals programme as a percentage of the total number of disadvantaged schools Number of children in receipt of the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance
1.4	Support people on low income, with children, to take up or remain in employment	Take up of Family Income Supplement
1.5	Actively participate in the development and implementation of EU and international social security policies and legislation	EU legislation transposed by due dates Degree to which the Irish perspective is taken into account in international reports
1.6	Customers to receive their correct payment by the due payment date	Level of incorrect and late payments
1.7	Applications for payments and services to be processed in a timely, accurate and efficient manner	Rate of compliance with processing standards
1.8	Reduce fraud and error based on an assessment of risk and ensure that all debts are actively pursued	Level of fraud and error determined in surveys Level of debts recovered

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Goal 2
People of working age

High-level goal

To provide income and other supports to people of working age and to facilitate them in taking up employment, training, education or development opportunities

High-level indicators

- Employment participation rates for various categories of people of working age
- Consistent poverty rates for people of working age
- Social Welfare dependency rates among working age population

No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
2.1	Ensure that social welfare schemes and policies support people of working age	Consistent poverty rates for people of working age
2.2	Ensure that social welfare schemes and policies facilitate people of working age to participate in the labour market	Extent to which suitable policies are developed
2.3	Develop PRSI coverage and benefits as appropriate to the needs of different groups	Extent of appropriate coverage and benefits
2.4	Facilitate people of working age in taking up employment, education, training or development opportunities	Number of referrals Percentage of target group of customers who take up these opportunities Progress towards reaching the *National Development Plan* targets
2.5	Continue to develop income supports for working age and older carers	The extent to which such income supports are developed
2.6	The development of a National Carers Strategy in co-operation with all relevant Departments and Agencies	Delivery of the Strategy in 2008

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No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
2.7	Progress towards the achievement of income support targets in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*	Rate of progress towards these targets Rate of income support
2.8	Actively participate in the development and implementation of EU and international social security policies and legislation	EU legislation transposed by due dates Degree to which the Irish perspective is taken into account in international reports
2.9	Customers to receive their correct payment by the due payment date	Level of incorrect and late payments
2.10	Applications for payments and services to be processed in a timely, accurate and efficient manner	Rate of compliance with processing standards
2.11	Reduce fraud and error based on an assessment of risk and ensure that all debts are actively pursued	Level of fraud and error determined in surveys Level of debts recovered

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Goal 3
Retired and older people

High-level goal

To provide and promote adequate, secure and sustainable pensions and other appropriate supports for retired and older people

High-level indicators

- Poverty rates for older people
- Supplementary pension coverage rates

No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
3.1	Develop and implement income and other supports for retired and older people in line with Government policy	Consistent poverty rates for older people
3.2	Develop framework for long-term pensions policy, following consultation process on *Green Paper on Pensions*	Consultation process on the *Green Paper on Pensions* concluded and the framework developed
3.3	Ensure that social welfare schemes do not act as a disincentive to older people remaining in or returning to the workforce	Extent to which appropriate flexibilities or incentives are introduced
3.4	Progress towards the achievement of income support targets in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*	Rate of progress towards these targets Rate of income support
3.5	Engage with the Pensions Board in promoting supplementary pension provision	Level of engagement with the Pensions Board Development and enactment of pensions legislation Impact of the National Pensions Awareness Campaign
3.6	Actively participate in the development and implementation of EU and international social security policies and legislation	EU legislation transposed by due dates Degree to which the Irish perspective is taken into account in international reports

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No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
3.7	Customers to receive their correct payment by the due payment date	Level of incorrect and late payments
3.8	Applications for payments and services to be processed in a timely, accurate and efficient manner	Rate of compliance with processing standards
3.9	Reduce fraud and error based on an assessment of risk and ensure that all debts are actively pursued	Level of fraud and error determined in surveys Level of debts recovered

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Goal 4
People with disabilities

High-level goal

To provide income and other supports to people with disabilities and to facilitate them in taking up employment, training, education or development opportunities

High-level indicators

- Employment participation rates for people with disabilities
- Consistent poverty rates for people with disabilities
- Social Welfare dependency rates among people with disabilities

No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
4.1	Ensure that social welfare schemes and policies support people with disabilities	Consistent poverty rates for people with disabilities
4.2	Ensure that social welfare schemes and policies facilitate people with disabilities to participate in the labour market	Extent to which suitable policies are developed in relation to people with disabilities
4.3	Facilitate people with disabilities in taking up employment, education, training or development opportunities	Number of referrals under the Supporting Economic Participation by People with Disabilities Programme Percentage of people with disabilities who take up these opportunities Progress towards reaching the *National Development Plan* targets
4.4	Progress towards the achievement of income support targets in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*	Rate of progress towards these targets Rate of income support
4.5	Actively participate in the development and implementation of EU and international social security policies and legislation	EU legislation transposed by due dates Degree to which the Irish perspective is taken into account in international reports

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No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
4.6	Implement the *Department's Disability Sectoral Plan*	Number of Plan actions implemented
4.7	Transfer the income support schemes (Domiciliary Care Allowance and Respite Care Grant, Mobility Allowance, Blind Welfare Allowance and Infectious Diseases Maintenance Allowance) from the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive to this Department	Progress towards completing the transfer
4.8	Customers to receive their correct payment by the due payment date	Level of incorrect and late payments
4.9	Applications for payments and services to be processed in a timely, accurate and efficient manner	Rate of compliance with processing standards
4.10	Reduce fraud and error based on an assessment of risk and ensure that all debts are actively pursued	Level of fraud and error determined in surveys Level of debts recovered

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Goal 5
Poverty and social inclusion

High-level goal

To attain better outcomes in tackling poverty and achieve a more inclusive society through the provision of income and other support services and co-ordinating implementation of Government strategies for social inclusion

High-level indicators

- Consistent poverty rates
- EU social inclusion indicators (as set out in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*)

No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
5.1	Co-ordinate implementation of Government strategies for social inclusion through the monitoring and reporting mechanisms provided in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*	Compliance with reporting deadlines
5.2	Develop and implement a strategic approach to communicating Government strategies on social inclusion	Extent to which approach is developed and implemented
5.3	Promote the incorporation of anti-poverty and social inclusion objectives in public policy development	Number of Poverty Impact Assessments undertaken Number of Poverty Impact Assessment training courses delivered to Departments
5.4	Promote the development of appropriate data strategies and research to inform anti-poverty policies and to facilitate improved monitoring of outcomes	Extent to which data strategies and research is undertaken
5.5	Develop appropriate policies in line with the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Expenditure Review	Extent to which the recommendations of the Review are implemented
5.6	Actively participate in the development of EU and international social security policies and practices in the area of social inclusion	EU legislation transposed by due dates Degree to which the Irish perspective is taken into account in international reports
5.7	Customers to receive their correct Supplementary Welfare Allowance payment by the due payment date	Level of incorrect and late payments

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No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
5.8	Applications for Supplementary Welfare Allowance payment to be processed in a timely, accurate and efficient manner	Rate of compliance with processing standards
5.9	Continue to engage with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to implement the Rental Accommodation Scheme	Number of cases transferred from the Rent Supplement Scheme to the Rental Accommodation Scheme
5.10	Support people on low income in addressing their debt issues through the development of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service	Client usage levels
5.11	Promote co-operation on social inclusion issues between Ireland and other jurisdictions, in particular, Northern Ireland	Level of participation in various fora

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Goal 6
Identity management and secure access to services

High-level goal

To establish and authenticate customer identity for public services and to support the development and deployment of a public service-wide identity policy framework

High-level indicators

- Progress made in the implementation of the Standard Authentication Framework Environment programme
- Efficient and effective customer identity management systems developed and implemented, identity management services provided to external Agencies and security and privacy principles developed and implemented

No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
6.1	Develop Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) in conjunction with the Centre for Management and Organisation Development	Progress made in implementing initiatives under the Standard Authentication Framework Environment
6.2	Develop a revised registration service to establish customer identity	New registration service developed and operational
6.3	Manage the allocation and usage of the Personal Public Service Number	Levels of irregularity detected in fraud and error surveys
6.4	Produce and manage SAFE compliant Public Services Cards and promote their usage in other Agencies	Number of Public Service Cards issued to Departmental customers Take up by other Agencies
6.5	Provide identity management services to external Agencies	Level of usage of services
6.6	Review and enhance underlying security facilities and processes to ensure that data protection principles are further embedded in Departmental systems	Work programme defined and progress achieved in its implementation

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Goal 7
Operational capabilities and modernisation

High-level goal

To develop further an effective, adaptable and capable organisation and a culture of excellence

High-level indicators

- Internal and external customer satisfaction as measured by periodic surveys
- Achievement of the Department's Modernisation Action Plan
- Implementation of the Human Resources Strategy

No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
7.1	Develop and implement a new Human Resources Strategy for the period 2008-2011	Strategy published Number of actions implemented
7.2	Full and effective integration of the Human Resource processes and the Performance Management Development System	Level of compliance with the Performance Management Development System
7.3	Develop a learning organisation	Percentage of budget spent on training and development Extent to which training needs are met
7.4	Ensure a working environment which is based on co-operation, participation and mutual support	Findings of staff climate surveys
7.5	Implement the Department's Modernisation Action Plan	Extent to which elements of the Plan are achieved within specified timeframes Satisfactory reports from the Civil Service Performance Verification Group
7.6	Implement the Department's Decentralisation Programme	Extent to which the Programme is implemented
7.7	Foster good industrial and employee relations throughout the Department	Stable industrial relations environment
7.8	Support and enhance an effective policy development capacity	Number of policy analysts working in policy areas

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No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
7.9	Implement the Value for Money and Policy Review Programme	Number of reviews undertaken and completed
7.10	Develop and implement a Corporate Data Strategy	Extent to which elements of the Strategy are implemented
7.11	Support and monitor State Agencies under the aegis of the Department in the discharge of their statutory functions	Verification of compliance with statutory and corporate governance requirements
7.12	Implement the Government decision in relation to: the transfer of the Community Welfare Service from the Health Service Executive to this Department; the transfer of the General Register Office from the Department of Health and Children to this Department; and the transfer of Treatment Benefit Schemes from this Department to the Health Sector.	Functions transferred
7.13	Ensure Information and Communication Technology capacity to support the business	Skills and facilities in place
7.14	Develop and implement external and internal Customer Action Plans	Number of actions in Plans implemented and targets met Level of satisfaction with information services achieved Customer satisfaction ratings determined by surveys
7.15	Develop and implement a Customer Information Strategy	Strategy published and implemented
7.16	Develop and implement a Channel Strategy (face to face, on-line, telephone and post) to optimise the way in which we communicate with our customers	Extent to which the Strategy is implemented
7.17	Embed a culture of sustainable and continuous process improvement across the Department	Number of business areas in which a Process Improvement programme has been successfully implemented

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No.	Strategic Objective/Action	Performance Indicator
7.18	Maintain corporate governance systems	Findings arising from Comptroller & Auditor General reports Findings of Public Accounts Committee and other Dáil Committees Findings arising from Internal Audit reports
7.19	Provide a satisfactory service in Irish, in line with the requirements under the Official Languages Act, 2003	Extent to which the Department's Scheme is implemented
7.20	Maintain robust financial management and reporting systems	Compliance with Government accounting procedures
7.21	Ensure redress systems (including review and independent appeal) for social welfare customers	Systems in place
7.22	Accommodation to meet the requirements of both staff and customers	Extent to which accommodation meets required standards
7.23	Review and implement appropriate organisational structures for the Department	Review completed and implemented Participate as required in the Organisational Review Programme being conducted by the Department of the Taoiseach

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Monitoring and reporting on the progress of our Statement of Strategy

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This Statement of Strategy is designed to be both flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. In order to ensure that it remains 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 Annual Report will detail the progress achieved each year on the strategic objectives/actions contained in this Statement of Strategy.

The Annual Output Statement will identify annual expenditure against the high-level goals in the Statement of Strategy and key outputs from the business planning process.

The Department's progress in achieving its objectives and targets under the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* will be reported on in the annual reports on implementation of the Plan, and on a three-yearly basis to the EU in the Report on National Strategies on Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

Our existing reporting arrangements are strengthened by the reporting process required to meet our commitments to the Civil Service Performance Verification Group in *Towards 2016*.

Underpinning this monitoring and reporting process is the preparation, at divisional level, of annual business plans which follow from a consultation process between management and staff. This also informs, and is 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.

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Appendices

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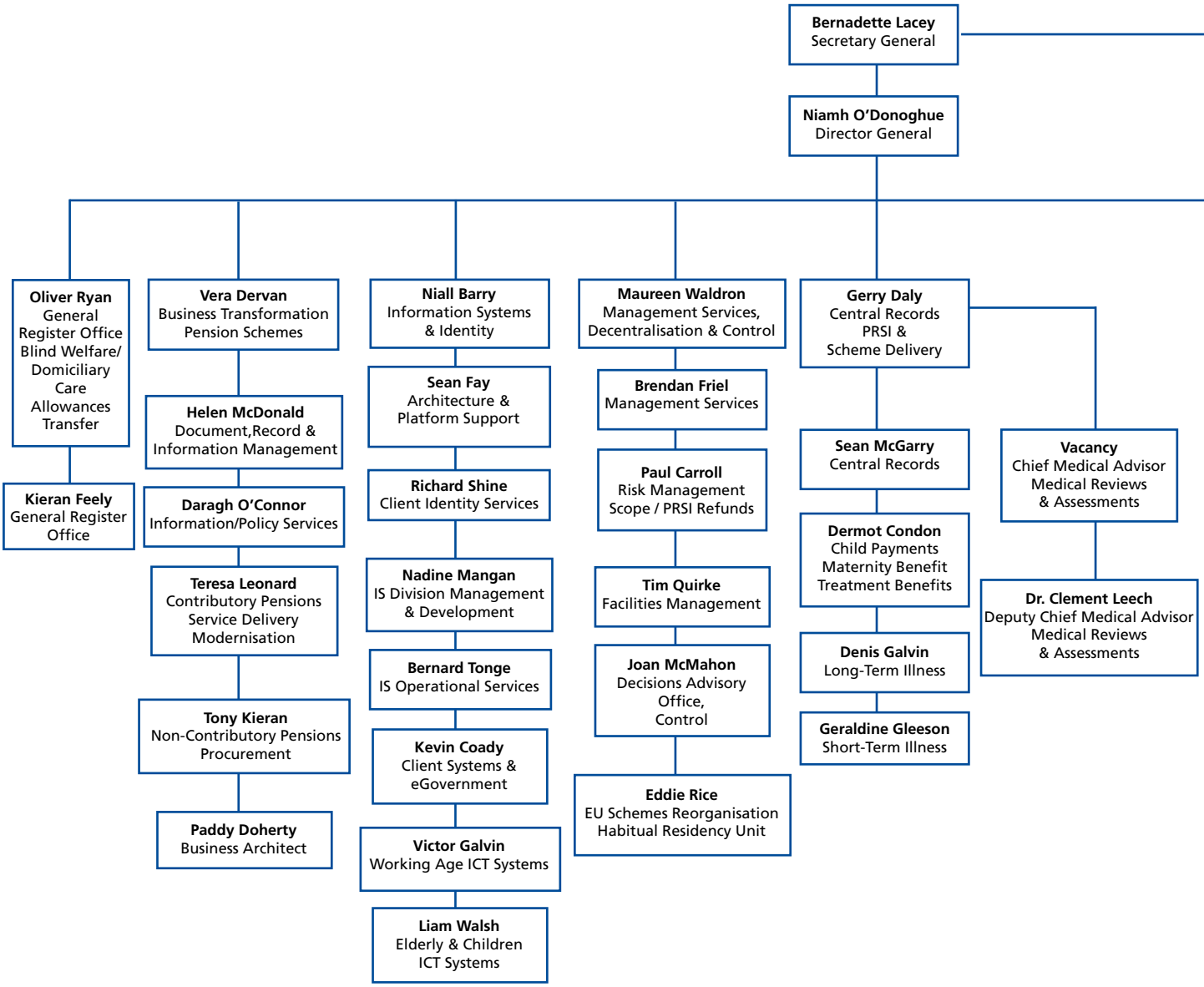
Appendix 1

Organisation Structure - June 2008



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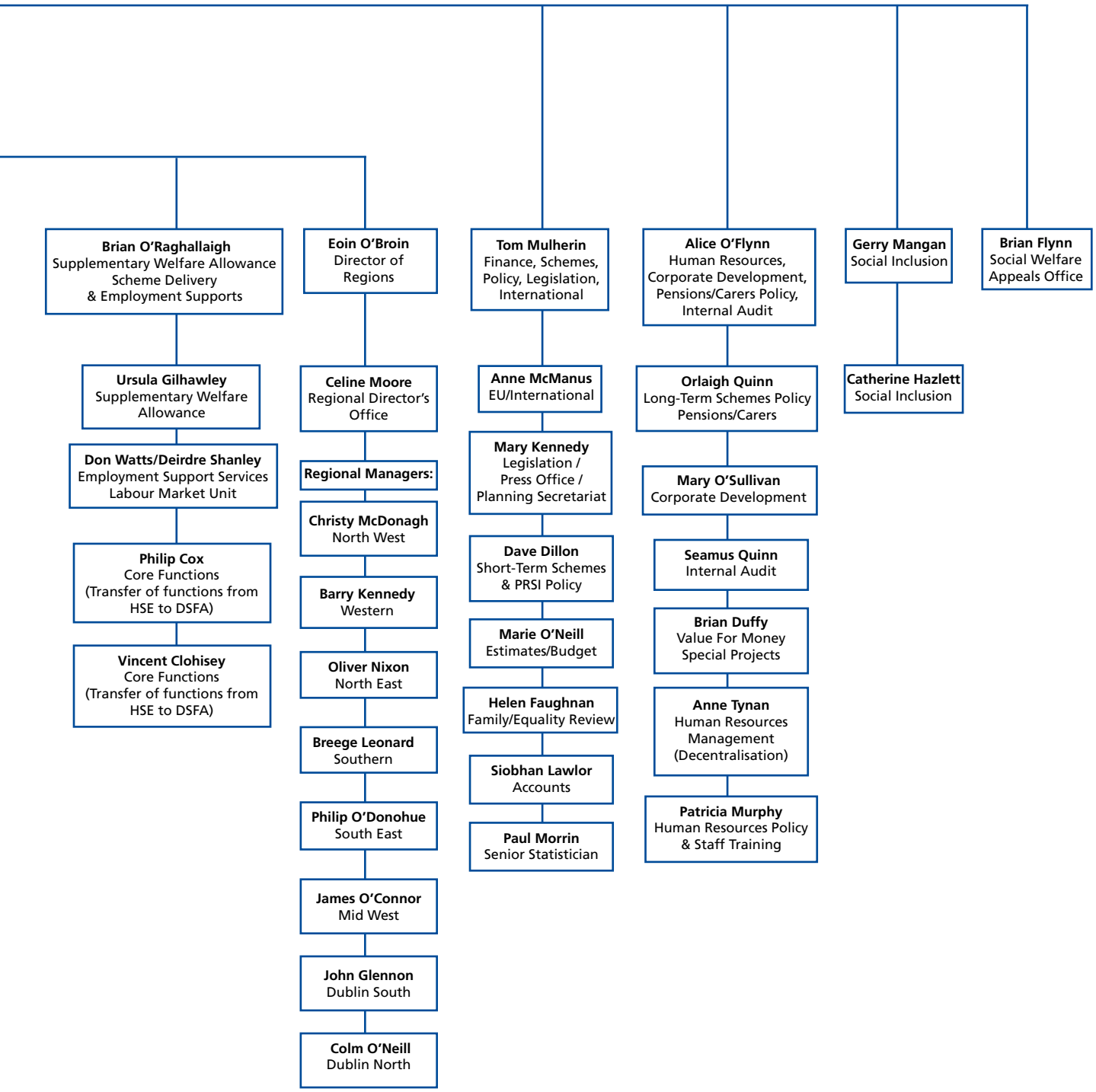

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Appendix 2

Agreed Programme for Government commitments relevant to the Department of Social and Family Affairs

No.	Commitment	Objective/ Action
1	Abolish the PRSI ceiling for full ratepayers and reduce the rate at which this tax is levied from 4% to 2% over the lifetime of the Government. Reduce the rate of PRSI paid by the self-employed to 2% from 3%	2.3
2	Ensuring that pay improvements for public sector workers continue to be linked to delivery and verification of agreed improvements in public services	7.5
3	All Ministers will submit an Annual Output Statement with their Annual Estimates to the relevant Oireachtas Committee	7.20
4	Support the further opening up of management roles to the best qualified candidates	7.1
5	Roll out the new Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)	7.2
6	Implement improvements in human resource management which will ensure that all public servants are helped to develop to the best of their ability	7.1
7	Support succession and career planning to ensure a talent pipeline for the future leadership of the public sector	7.1
8	Continue to move ahead with decentralisation taking account of the *National Spatial Strategy*	7.6
9	Ensure that no public servant is obliged to accept decentralisation against their wishes and that promotion opportunities remain available	7.6
10	Expand the current free telephone rental scheme by providing for free broadband for older people	3.1
11	Continue to support low-income farmers through the Farm Assist Scheme and adapt it in consultation with the farming organisations	2.1
12	Increase the range of supports to families and communities affected by suicide and bereavement	7.11
13	Support the family carers of older people to continue their caring role	2.5
14	Increase the rate of [the Early Childcare Supplement and] Child Benefit	1.1

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No.	Commitment	Objective/ Action
15	Continue to support community groups and other appropriate family support structures to promote better parenting	7.11
16	Increase the rate of [the Early Childcare Supplement and] Child Benefit, while building on the Qualified Child Allowance	1.1
17	Increase the basic State pension by around 50% to at least €300 per week by 2012	3.1
18	Seek to develop imaginative proposals in the context of the Green Paper (the publication of which is a commitment under *Towards 2016)* and in consultation with the social partners, to provide an SSIA type scheme in an effort to make supplementary pension provision more attractive to those on low incomes	3.2
19	Aim to secure the target of at least 50% of pre-retirement earnings from all sources including social welfare supports, private and occupational pensions, and savings and investments	3.5
20	Complete the scheme introduced in Budget 2007 to provide a personal pension payment for pensioner spouses in receipt of the Qualified Adult Allowance. The payment will be set at the level of a full rate Non-Contributory State Pension and the income limits will be improved to enable more people to qualify for it. The role and economic contribution of spouses working on the farm will be better recognised within the social insurance system	3.1 2.3
21	Extend the Age Allowance to Qualified Adults over 80 years old	3.1
22	Remove anomalies identified in the pension system	3.1
23	Ensure women are treated fairly in pension provision	3.1
24	Increase the State Pension for every year that a person over 66 delays taking it	3.2
25	Extend the amount those in receipt of the State Non-Contributory Pension are allowed to earn without it affecting their pension entitlement	3.1
26	Integrate the tax and social welfare systems fully to allow for more efficient data and money transfer mechanisms and provide for a fully integrated PPS number	Goal 6 7.13
27	Maintain the policy of phasing and using transition payments for those coming off social welfare	2.2
28	Ensure that women are treated fairly in the Social Welfare code and examine the proposals in the *Green Paper on Pensions* in this regard	2.1 3.1 3.2 4.1

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No.	Commitment	Objective/ Action
29	Continue to maintain the value of the lowest rate of social welfare payments as agreed in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*	2.7 4.4
30	Further increase eligibility for the Carer's Allowance	2.5
31	Double the non-means-tested Respite Care Grant to €3,000 per person cared for	2.5
32	Extend the National Fuel Allowance Scheme to cover eligible carers	2.5
33	Ensure a National Carers Strategy focusing on supporting informal and family carers in the community will be developed by the end of 2007	2.6
34	Continue to make improvements in the support for Carers	2.5
35	Implement a range of reforms to income support, including removal of the cohabitation restriction, replacing Lone Parents' Allowance with a new and improved family friendly allowance, and relaxing restrictions on work while retaining the social welfare payment	2.1 2.2 2.4
36	Continue to prioritise the interests of families with children	1.1
37	Amalgamate Qualified Child Allowances and Family Income Supplements in order to develop a second tier of income support targeted at the poorest families	1.1
38	Implement significant improvements to the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance and the School Meals Programme	1.3
39	The standard means test for Rent Supplement will be kept under review and will provide enhanced financial incentives for the take up of part-time employment, training, education or other progression measures – minimising where possible, the impact of sudden withdrawal of social welfare payments. The emphasis will be on the provision of appropriate long-term housing solutions rather than on moving retention thresholds at which some or all of the social welfare payment is lost	2.2 5.9
40	Initiate a feasibility study on reforming rent supplement	5.5
41	Invest further in the Citizens' Information Board to enable it to engage advocacy officials to assist people with disabilities in accessing their entitlements	4.6 7.11
42	Implement the Citizens Information Act, which provides for an independent personal advocacy service for people with disabilities	4.6 7.11
43	Examine the introduction of Free Travel for Irish citizens of pension age particularly those resident in the UK when visiting Ireland, and press the European Commission to examine a similar EU wide scheme	3.1
44	Work to deliver free public transport for emigrant pensioners when they visit Ireland	3.1

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No.	Commitment	Objective/ Action
45	As part of the modernisation of customer services, replace the existing paper travel pass with a plastic card which can be used on all public transport services which offer the facility of free travel	3.1 6.4
46	Further enhance the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) by the establishment under legislation of a new structure with national leadership for the 21st century which maximises and recognises the current local voluntary involvement together with a strong professional role aimed at continuing to provide strong and confidential support for its clients	5.10
47	Give MABS a central role in increasing access to affordable credit for low income earners and social welfare customers	5.10
48	Continue to support the Office for Social Inclusion and review the effectiveness of the poverty proofing mechanisms currently being used	5.3
49	Continue to fully resource the Family Support Agency and its programmes of Counselling, Family Resource Centres, etc.	7.11
50	Offer people with disabilities further improved pathways to participation in employment or education, avoiding the benefits trap	4.3

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Appendix 3

Table of key linkages

Goal	Issue	Department /Agency	Co-ordination Mechanism
Goal 1: Children and families To contribute to the well-being of children and families through income and other supports and facilitate participation in employment	Support to children and families	Family Support Agency	Family Support Agency Board and Sub Groups
	National Longitudinal Study of Children Ireland	Office of the Minister for Children	Interdepartmental Project Team and Steering Group
Goal 2: People of working age To provide income and other supports to people of working age and to facilitate them in taking up employment, training, education or development opportunities	Lone Parents	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) Department of Education and Science Office of the Minister for Children	Sub Group of the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion (Lone Parents) Interdepartmental/ Agency meetings
	Carers Strategy	Department of Health and Children Health Service Executive Department of Finance Department of the Taoiseach Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Working Group on Long Term Care Interdepartmental meetings Carers Strategy Working Group
	Activation	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) Department of Education and Science Department of Health and Children	Social Partnership Group on Activation Interdepartmental Groups Interdepartmental meetings

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Goal	Issue	Department /Agency	Co-ordination Mechanism
Goal 3: Retired and older people To provide and promote adequate, secure and sustainable pensions and other appropriate supports for retired and older people	Pensions	Pensions Board Office of the Pensions Ombudsman Department of Finance Department of the Taoiseach Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Office of the Attorney General Chief State Solicitor's Office EU Institutions	Committees Sub Committees Interdepartmental Groups Partnership Pensions Review Group EU fora Interdepartmental meetings
	Employment Conditions	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Cross Departmental Group on Older People
	Strategy for Older People	Department of Health and Children	Cross Departmental Group on Older People
	Free Travel and Household Benefits	Department of Transport Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Department of Foreign Affairs	Interdepartmental meetings
Goal 4: People with disabilities To provide income and other supports to people with disabilities and to facilitate them in taking up employment, training, education or development opportunities	Disability Sectoral Plan	Department of Health and Children Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) Department of the Taoiseach Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform	Senior Officials Group on Disability National Disability Strategy Stakeholder Monitoring Group Interdepartmental Groups Interdepartmental meetings Disability Consultative Forum

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Goal	Issue	Department /Agency	Co-ordination Mechanism
Goal 5: Poverty and social inclusion To attain better outcomes in tackling poverty and achieve a more inclusive society through the provision of income and other support services and co-ordinating implementation of Government strategies for social inclusion	Promoting social inclusion across all lifecycle stages	Relevant Government Departments and Agencies Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Northern Ireland Department of Work and Pensions, UK Combat Poverty Agency MABS Network	Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion (Children and Integration) Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion Social Partnership Steering Group Office for Social Inclusion National Advisory Committee
	Housing Homelessness	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Health Service Executive	Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion (Children and Integration) Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion Interdepartmental meetings
	Fuel Poverty	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources	Ongoing business contact
	School Meals	Department of Education and Science	Interdepartmental meetings
Goal 6: Identity management and secure access to services To establish and authenticate customer identity for public services and to support the development and deployment of a public service-wide identity policy framework	Provision of identity management services	Most Public Service Bodies/Agencies as specified under legislation	Liaison Groups Specific Project Groups Ongoing and *ad-hoc* business contact
	Development and Deployment of a National Identity Management and Privacy Protection Policy	Department of Finance Public Service Providers	SAFE Steering Committee Working Groups

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Goal	Issue	Department /Agency	Co-ordination Mechanism
Goal 7: Operational capabilities and modernisation To develop further an effective, adaptable and capable organisation and a culture of excellence	Human Resources	Department of Finance Department of the Taoiseach Civil Service Performance Verification Group Office of Public Works Civil Service Unions Public Appointments Service	Interdepartmental Committees and Network Groups Ongoing business contact Committees Sub Committees Interdepartmental groups
	Customer Services	Citizens Information Board An Post Revenue Commissioners Department of the Taoiseach	Customer Representative Groups Committees Sub Committees Memorandum of Understanding
	Modernisation Action Plan	Department of Finance Civil Service Performance Verification Group Civil Service Unions	Ongoing business contact Committees Progress Reports
	Decentralisation	Department of Finance Public Appointments Service Office of Public Works Other Government Departments Public Service Unions	Decentralisation Implementation Group Interdepartmental Decentralisation Groups
	Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative	Department of Finance Value for Money Policy Review Central Steering Committee Relevant Agencies	Department of Social and Family Affairs Policy Committee and Expenditure Review Group Value for Money Review Steering Committee Value for Money Review Network Committee Progress Reports

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Goal	Issue	Department /Agency	Co-ordination Mechanism
Goal 7: (continued)	Transfer of Core Functions Programme	Department of Finance Department of Health and Children Health Service Executive Civil Service Unions Public Service Unions	Interdepartmental Steering Group Interdepartmental Implementation Groups
	Information and Communications Technology	Public Service Departments and Agencies	Interdepartmental Committees Project Boards Network Groups
	Strategic Management Initiative	Department of the Taoiseach	Ongoing business contact Committees
	Organisational Review Programme	Department of the Taoiseach	Ongoing business contact
	Corporate Governance	Heads of Internal Audit Forum	Ongoing business contact
	Accommodation	Office of Public Works	Ongoing business contact

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