



Human Resources Strategy 2003-2005

Partnership, Development and Performance

Department of Social & Family Affairs



“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.”

Ár Misean agus Ár Mandáid

“Is é ár n-aidhm sochaí chomhbhách a chur chun cinn trí rochtain ar thacaíocht ioncain agus ar sheirbhísí gaolmhara a chinntiú, a chothóidh rannpháirtíocht ghníomhach, a chuirfidh comhghlacadh sóisialta chun cinn agus a thabharfaidh tacaíocht do theaghlaigh.”

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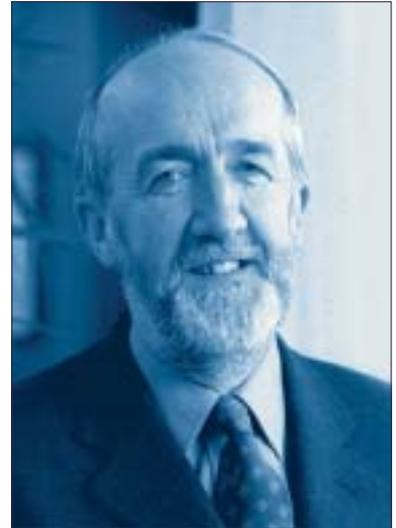
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Foreword from the Secretary-General

Colleagues,

The idea of a Human Resources Strategy is to focus on the human side of working life. It represents an acknowledgement of the fact that the Department is built on the contribution and the commitment of the people who work here. It sets out what we plan to do to improve the experience of work and the opportunities for people to have a worthwhile and fulfilling experience in their jobs.

Work is not, and never has been, the centre of the human universe, even though it sometimes seems to dominate our existence. Work should, nevertheless, be an experience that benefits the spirit. We all seek meaning in our work and we all bring our personal hopes and values with us to the work situation. We work in an organisation whose mission, built around the idea of a caring society, is easier to identify with than many others. In preparing our Strategy Statement 2003-2005 and this Human Resources Strategy we have tried to articulate the values which drive the organisation and which are evident in the way we do our business. The extent to which we can continue to match the Department's mission with these values will determine our success.



The achievement of this Human Resources Strategy challenges all of us and we have set demanding goals for the period ahead. The Strategy covers the broad Human Resources agenda and contains actions which are, in many cases, interdependent and which, taken together, constitute a comprehensive programme of substantial developments and improvements. We must recognise that in everything we do we are providing a service, whether directly to our customers, to the taxpayer and the contributor, to the Government or to each other. In each of these areas the same quality of service has to apply. Clearly, this is particularly crucial in the prevailing environment in which we must meet our responsibilities, while operating within extremely tight budgetary conditions.

This Strategy is aimed, ultimately, at enhancing the service we provide but also at making this a rewarding and a fulfilling experience for everybody. The title "*Partnership, Development and Performance*" sums up three key themes of the Strategy. We recognise that partnership-based approaches and the provision of high quality training and development are crucial to the achievement of the level of performance which is essential in order to meet our overall objective of providing an excellent service to all of our customers.

People from across the Department have contributed to the preparation of this Strategy during a lengthy process of consultation, which included the extensive use of our Partnership structures. It is intended that the implementation of the Strategy will be monitored via Partnership and that updates on progress will be regularly communicated to all.

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone involved for their contribution to the preparation of this Strategy. I look forward to the challenge of delivering, together, the commitments which it contains.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hynes". The signature is fluid and cursive.

John Hynes
Secretary-General

January 2003

A Chomhghleacaithe, a chairde,

Is chun díriú ar an ngné dhaonna de shaol na hoibre a cheaptar Straitéis Acmhainní Daonna. Aithnítear inti gur saothar agus díogras a lucht foirne is bunsraith leis an Roinn. Leagtar amach inti na pleananna atá againn, maidir le feabhas a chur ar shaol na hoibre agus ar dheiseanna ag daoine chun saol fiúntach sásta oibre a bheith acu.

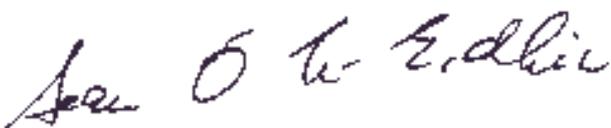
Ní hé saol na hoibre is croílár do shaol an duine, agus ní raibh riamh, cé go samhlófaí, uaireanta, gur chuige sin is ann dúinn. Ba cheart go n-ardódh an obair meanma an duine, mar sin féin. Lorgáimid ar fad brí na céille inár gcuid saothair, agus tugaimid linn isteach chun na hoibre luacha agus mianta pearsanta dár gcuid féin. Táimid ag obair in eagraíocht a bhfuil a cuid aidhmeanna níos so-aitheanta ná aidhmeanna eagraíochtaí go leor eile, toisc gur eagraíocht í a tógadh timpeall ar shochaí lena samhlaítear comhbhá. Le linn dúinn ár Ráiteas Straitéise 2003-2005 agus an Straitéis Acmhainní Daonna seo a réiteach, d'fhéachamar leis na luacha a thiomáineann an eagraíocht agus a léirítear sa tslí ina gcuirimid ár ngnó i gcrích a chur i bhfocail. Beidh rathúlacht inár gcuid oibre ag brath ar cé chomh maith agus is féidir linn aidhmeanna na Roinne a bhaint amach de réir na luachanna sin.

Is dúshlán do gach uile dhuine againn an Ráiteas Acmhainní Daonna seo a chur i gcrích, agus tá spriocanna móra leagtha amach againn don tréimhse atá romhainn. Cuimsíonn an Straitéis seo clár leathan oibre Acmhainní Daonna, agus tá cur síos inti ar ghníomhartha atá ag brath ar a chéile agus iad fite fuaite lena chéile i gclár cuimsitheach forbairtí agus leasuithe. Is gá dúinn a thuiscint gurb é is gnó dúinn, ó thús go deireadh, seirbhís a sholáthar, go díreach nó go hindíreach, dár gcustaiméirí, do na cáiníocóirí, do na ranníocóirí, don Rialtas, agus dá chéile. Is gá an caighdeán ceanann céanna seirbhíse a sholáthar i ngach réimse acu sin. Is léir go bhfuil sé sin tábhachtach, nuair is gá dúinn ár ndualgas a chomhlíonadh i láthair na huaire i dtimpeallacht lena mbaineann buiséad, fíordhocht.

Tá an Straitéis seo dírithe, i ndeireadh na dála, ar ár gcuid seirbhísí a fheabhsú i slí ina mbainfidh gach duine an tairbhe agus an taitneamh is mó as an obair sin a bheith á déanamh. Is achoimre teideal na Straitéise seo ar na trí phríomthéamaí a ghabhann léi, mar atá, *“Páirtíocht, Forbairt agus Feidhmíocht”*. Is maith a thuigimid gur den riachtanas cur chuige páirtíochta agus scoth na hoiliúna agus na forbartha a sholáthar, chun an leibhéal feidhmíochta a chur i gcrích a theastaíonn chun ár n-ollchuspóir a bhaint amach, mar atá, scoth na seirbhíse a thabhairt dár gcustaiméirí uile.

Daoine ar fud na Roinne ar fad a chuir le hullmhú na Straitéise seo, trí phróiseas fada comhairliúcháin inar baineadh úsáid leathan as ár gcuid struchtúr Páirtíochta. Tá sé beartaithe againn faireachán Páirtíochta a dhéanamh ar chur i ngníomh na Straitéise, agus go scaipfear tuairiscí, maidir leis an dul chun cinn sin, ar chách.

Is mian liom mo bhuíochas a chur in iúl do gach duine a chabhraigh linn an Straitéis seo a ullmhú. Táim ag dúil go mór leis an ndúshlán atá romhainn ar fad i dteannta a chéile anois, chun na gealltanais atá inti a sheachadadh.



Seán Ó hEidhin
Ard-Rúnaí

Eanáir 2003

Promoting a Caring Society

Our Strategy Statement 2003-2005 sets out our High-Level Goals and our Values and Guiding Principles.

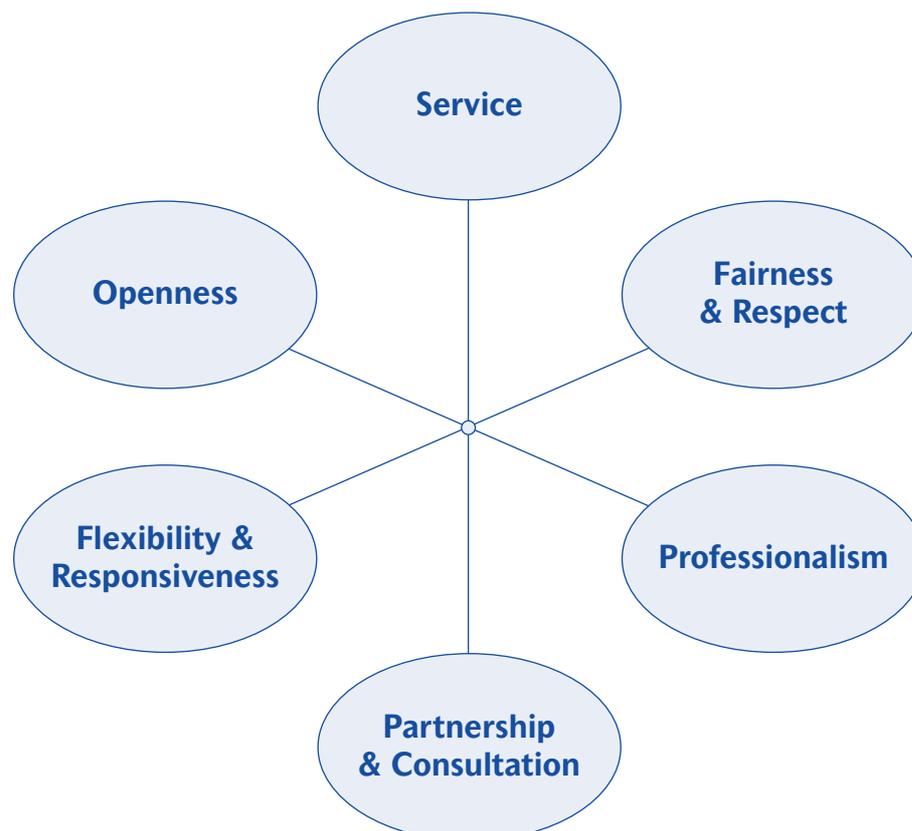
Our Human Resources Goal

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.

Ár Spríoc Acmhainní Daonna

Eagraíocht éifeachtach, sholúbtha agus cumasach a fhorbairt, agus cur chuige lena mbaineann mórtas, nuálacht agus feidhmíocht, le leibhéal ard rannpháirtíochta ag gach aicme foirne, ina gcuirtear cumas agus gairm beatha an duine chun cinn.

Our Values and Guiding Principles



PART I :

Introduction and Context

Part I of this Strategy explains the purpose of having a Human Resources Strategy, sets out the context (internal and external) in which it has been developed and links the Strategy to the Department's overall strategic priorities and direction.

Introduction

This is the first Human Resources Strategy to be produced by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Its implementation period is three years (2003-2005).

It is envisaged that this will be the first in an ongoing series of Strategies. The purpose of our HR Strategy is to bring together our various HR policies, integrate them within the overall organisational Strategy and, therefore, place HR at the centre of the organisation's decision making.

This Strategy has been prepared following consultation via the Partnership process and has been informed by a wide range of consultative initiatives undertaken in recent years. It has also taken account of the Guidelines on the development of Human Resource Strategies issued by the Department of the Taoiseach.

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 Department of Social and Family Affairs is one of the largest service delivery organisations in the State. Our income support work impacts on the lives of almost every person in the country. Payments are made to more than 903,000 people each week and, on an annual basis, 1.7m claims are processed (2001 figures). The gross estimated expenditure figure for 2003 is more than €10billion.

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.

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, applications for Personal Public Service numbers 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 return to work, training or education.

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:

- **The 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.
- **The 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 Service 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.
- **The Family Support Agency**, which is responsible for the provision of a family mediation service, supporting, promoting and the 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.

Environmental Context

The role of the Civil Service and all civil servants is to serve the public. We recognise that this is particularly the case for our Department in the light of our remit, the services we provide and the extent of our direct interaction with the public. Ultimately, it is essential for the many strands of Human Resource Management to operate together effectively and coherently within the Department in order to provide a high quality service to our extensive and varied range of external and internal customers.

The Department operates within the wider, unified Civil Service environment. This means that, for the present, many of the issues which are fundamental to Human Resource Management are negotiated and decided centrally and regulated by the Department of Finance. In particular, critical functions such as recruitment, pay and conditions of service are determined outside of the Department. Notwithstanding this however, we have an amount of scope and control over the conditions under which we operate and work together.

Increasingly, the external environment within which the Civil Service itself exists is affecting the way it, and the Department, does its business. The level of expectation in relation to customer service amongst members of the public and other stakeholders of the Department – employers, families, voluntary organisations and other departments – is continuing to rise. Rapidly changing technologies and the demands of e-Government mean that the Department must gear itself to deliver its services in fundamentally different ways. In developing our Human Resources Strategy, we must build an environment

which will enable us to work effectively within the wider Civil Service and national environments and promote our organisation as an employer of choice, regardless of prevailing economic conditions, for serving staff and potential recruits.

Over the past number of years the nature of our work has altered considerably, the complexity of work has increased and we have taken on many additional functions and responsibilities. These changes have only been possible because we have continually sought and found ways to work together more effectively and productively.

We have carried out a wide-ranging examination and preparatory process on the question of how we can best deliver our services in the future. This has resulted in an extensive change programme called the Service Delivery Model which is being initially implemented in our Child and Treatment Benefits Office and, subsequently, in the Pension Services Office. In essence, the Model puts the customer at the centre of our service. We recognise the need to conduct an analysis of the range of skills and competencies that our staff will require so that the Model's ambitious objectives can be reached.

There is also a necessity for us to do this in order to achieve our business and strategic objectives including those relating to such diverse and crucial areas as the development and implementation of social policy, the Reach initiative, the modernisation of the General Register's Office and the delivery of services in the Irish language. Against this background we are required to operate, as ever, within Government policy on public sector expenditure and staff numbers.

To meet these challenges, therefore, we will be relying on the contribution and commitment of everyone in the Department. The development and implementation of an innovative HR Strategy is crucial to enable all of us to maximise the very considerable resources and potential that we have.

The contribution of staff to the implementation of extensive changes in our Department in recent years is greatly valued. An ongoing commitment by all of us to continue to develop in a structured, participative and carefully managed manner will be required in the years ahead.

“The contribution of staff to the implementation of extensive changes in our Department in recent years is greatly valued.”

Public Service Modernisation

At the launch of the Public Service Modernisation Programme (also known as the Strategic Management Initiative), in 1994 and again in the “Delivering Better Government” Report of 1996, Human Resource Management was recognised as a key element of the Modernisation Programme. The main HR objectives of this Programme are:

- Devolution, by the Department of Finance, of greater responsibility for control and management of Human Resources issues to individual departments and offices;
- A move, in turn, to departmental Personnel units becoming less involved with day-to-day administrative matters with more attention being devoted to better planning and a more strategic approach to HR management;

- As a consequence of the above restructuring of Personnel units, responsibility for day-to-day staff management issues will be devolved to line/section management;
- Implementation of the Performance Management and Development System;
- Development, delivery and evaluation of training and development programmes;
- Development of best practice in the recruitment, placement and career progression of staff;
- Introduction, management and monitoring of flexible working arrangements;
- Addressing the gender imbalances at the higher grades within the Civil Service.

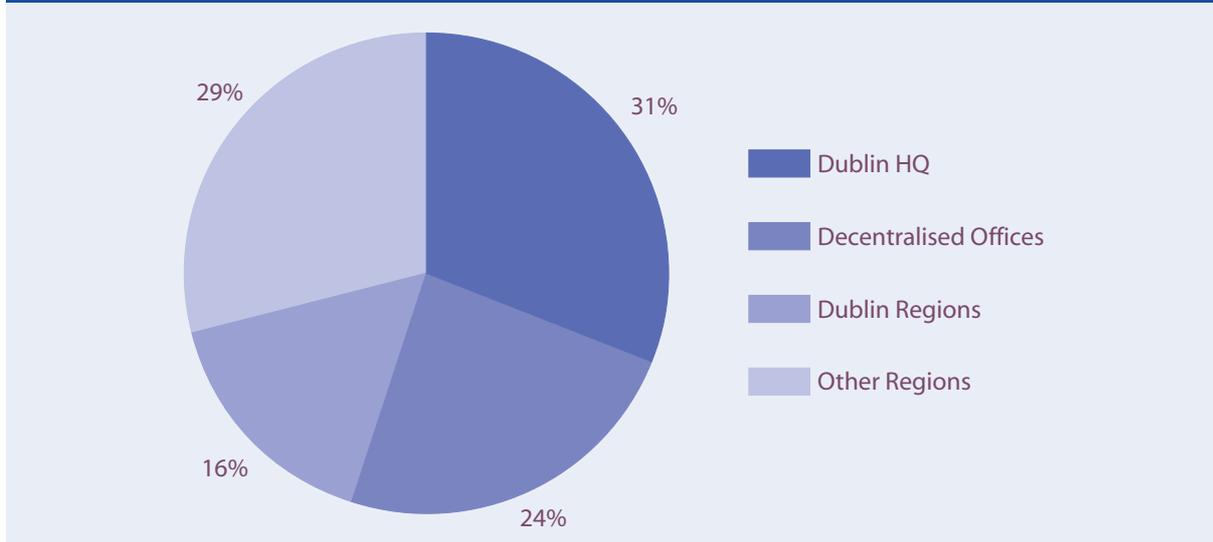
In the Report on the Evaluation of the SMI by independent consultants which was published in 2002, the need to make significant, tangible progress in the HR area was described as perhaps the greatest challenge facing the whole Delivering Better Government/SMI process. Substantial and coherent advancement across the HR agenda was acknowledged as a key 'enabler' to drive the overall Modernisation Programme forward in an increasingly complex and changeable environment.

“...the need to make significant, tangible progress in the HR area was described as perhaps the greatest challenge facing the whole Delivering Better Government/SMI process.”

Profile of our Organisation

This Department employs approximately 4,850 staff (of which over 900 are worksharing which means we have about 4,400 full time equivalent posts) and, therefore, is one of the largest employers in the Civil Service. One of the most fundamental features of our Department is the fact that our staff are located in all parts of the country, in a network of over 140 headquarter, decentralised, regional and local offices. The fact that the large majority of these offices are open to the public is a hugely significant feature of the organisation. A large proportion (53%) of our staff work outside the Dublin area, with the remaining 47% serving in HQ and Regional/Local Offices in the Dublin area (see Figure 1).

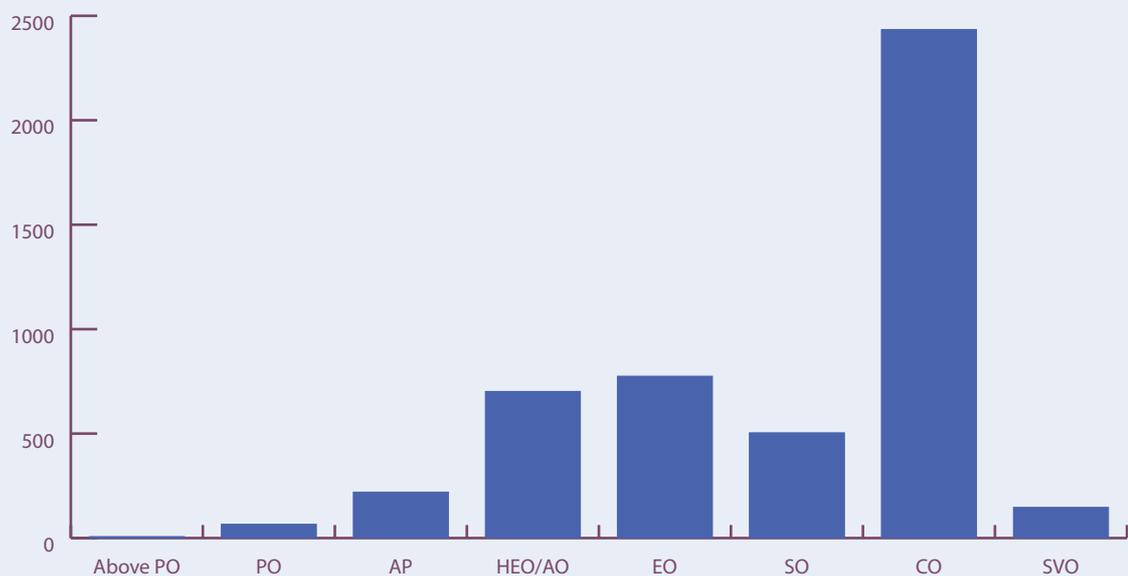
Figure 1: **Location of Staff**



This obviously influences the environment in which our HR policies and practices must operate and must be taken account of in the development and implementation of such policies and procedures. The dispersed nature of the Department also presents significant challenges for us in the area of internal communications.

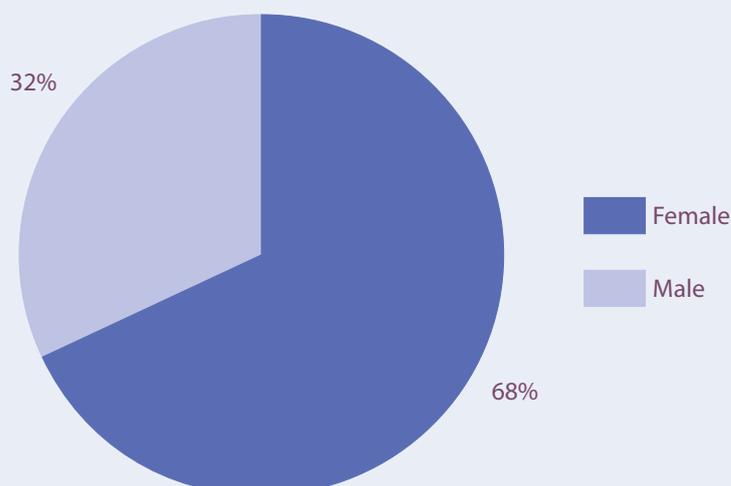
Our largest grade representation is at Clerical Officer level (50% of the workforce), followed by Executive Officer at 16%, Higher Executive Officer at 14% and Staff Officer at 10%. 6% of our workforce are at the grade of Assistant Principal or above (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of Staff by Grade



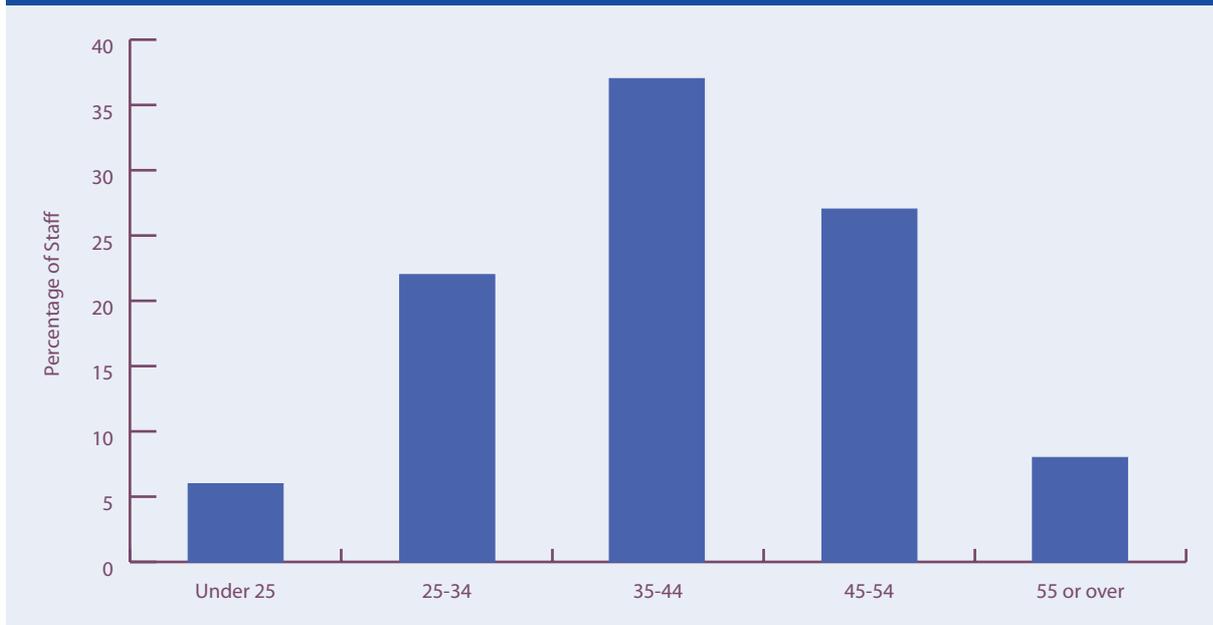
The gender breakdown of staff is 68% female, 32% male (see Figure 3). In common with other Civil Service departments and offices, women are under represented at higher management grades – while 44% of HEOs are female, only 28% of Assistant Principals and 28% of Principals are female.

Figure 3: Gender



A significant feature of our workforce is the age profile. The breakdown is as follows; under 25 (6%), 25-34 (22%), 35-44 (37%), 45-54 (27%) and 55 or more (8%) (see Figure 4). We will need to take account of the age profile in our future approaches to key HR areas including manpower planning, succession planning, training and development and the induction process.

Figure 4: **Age Profile**

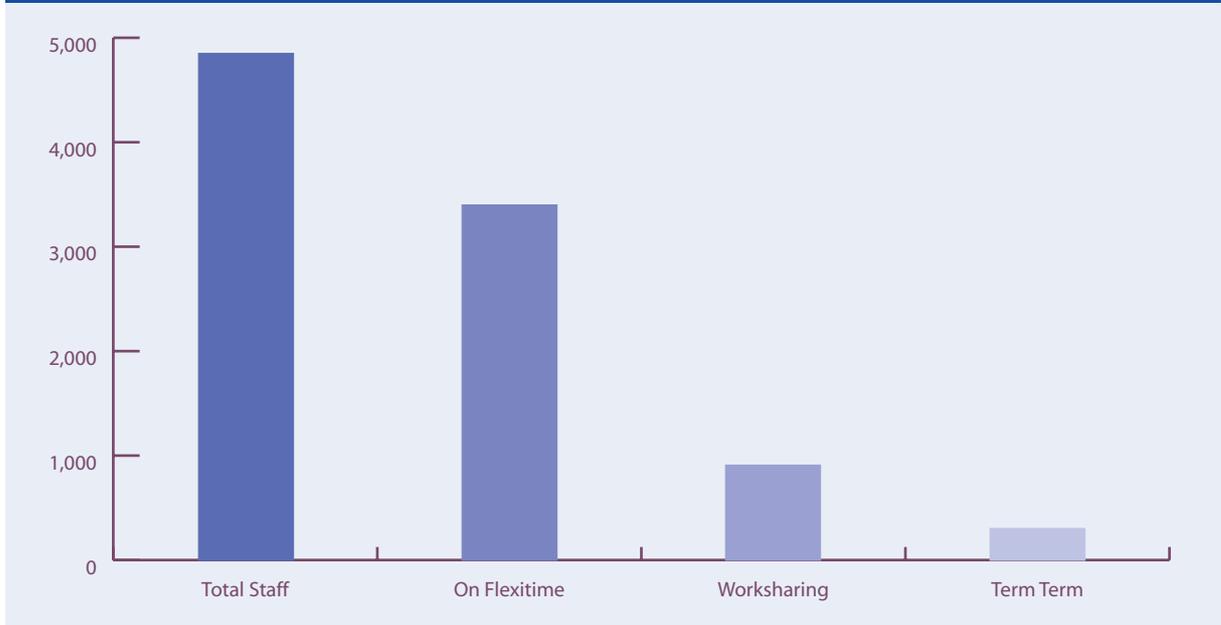


There is an appreciable level of turnover of staff in the Department, although turnover has slowed somewhat from its highest levels in the late 1990s. In 2001, a total of 582 people (approx. 12% of the workforce) came into the Department by way of open recruitment, transfer from other departments/offices and return from career break or secondment. 413 people (approx. 9% of the workforce) left the Department, whether by resignation, retirement or transfer or promotion out of the organisation. A slower turnover rate increases the importance of maintaining high staff motivation levels and updating of skills to face new challenges. As of November 2002, a total of 249 employees of the Department were on a career break.

Overall, taken together with hundreds of internal staff moves within the organisation, this shows that there is a very significant and continual incidence of people having to take on and learn new jobs within the Department.

Another significant feature of our workforce is the number of employees availing of Flexible Working Arrangements (see Figure 5). More than 3,400 staff (almost 75%) utilise the Flexitime System. As regards worksharing arrangements a 4 day week worksharing option was introduced in early 2002 and additional options became available at the end of 2002. These options were a three day week, three weeks on/one week off and 9am-3pm. As of January 2003, there were 965 people (915 female and 50 male) worksharing – one fifth of the total workforce. As regards term time, 304 employees (284 female and 20 male) went on term-time leave in 2002. Overall, these working arrangements provide major challenges for the Department as regards the desire to provide them to the maximum extent possible while continuing to achieve our strategic and business objectives.

Figure 5: Flexible Working Arrangements



Note: A staff member can avail of more than one of these options.

A relatively new development in the Department is the employment of temporary clerical staff to cover term-time and other medium to long-term absences. In November 2002 there were approximately 50 temporary staff in the Department. Another 243 were employed to cover the 2002 term-time period.

The Kind of Organisation We Want to Work In

We want to create an organisation in line with the **Human Resources Goal** in our Strategy Statement 2003-2005:

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.

Values and Guiding Principles

In our Strategy Statement 2003-2005, “Promoting a Caring Society”, we set out our Values and Guiding Principles. 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 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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 the Performance Management and Development System, 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- ensuring transparency in the decision-making process in the interests of wider ownership and inclusiveness.

We will promote discussion of our Values and Guiding Principles as an organisation and acknowledge and reward examples of good practice in living up to those Values and Principles.

Some Key Developments

Partnership

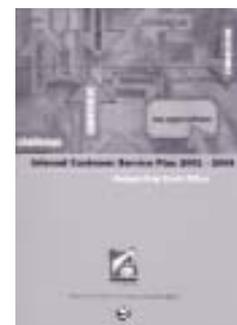
In keeping with our commitment to the Partnership process, this Strategy has been developed through consultations with the Partnership Committees. The principles underpinning Partnership will form an integral part of our approach to developing and implementing policies to give effect to this Strategy.



“The principles underpinning Partnership will form an integral part of our approach to developing and implementing policies to give effect to this Strategy.”

Internal Customer Service

We published our Internal Customer Service Plan 2001-2004, “Supporting Each Other” in 2001. The progression of various HR-related matters is a key element of the Plan. It emphasises the role that each member of staff can play in contributing to excellent internal customer service. This is recognised in the name of the Plan and in a section within it called “Our Commitments To Each Other”. It is clear that we cannot expect to deliver quality customer service to the public if our internal customer service (including service related to HR issues) does not have similar standards of timeliness, courtesy, information and consultation etc.

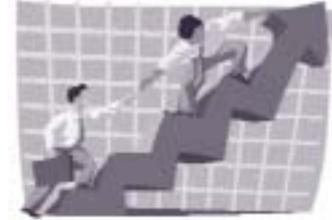


The Plan details the various areas in which we must develop our internal customer service including better information on the services provided, training and awareness raising, enhanced methods of measurement of performance, improved inter-sectional co-operation and, crucially, consultation with the customers of the service. This HR Strategy has been prepared in the light of these commitments.

Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

The Performance Management and Development System is an integral element of this HR Strategy. Essentially, PMDS aligns individual and team performance with the goals and objectives of the organisation.

PMDS gives us a framework that defines how we can advance towards improved performance, greater staff development and job satisfaction and better service delivery.



The scope of PMDS has been extended to all staff in the Department and we will continue to implement PMDS fully in order to enhance organisational, team and individual performance and personal and career development.

Strategy Statement, Human Resources Strategy, Business Plans and PMDS: The Linkages

Our Strategy Statement outlines, at a high level, the role, direction and priorities of the Department. This Human Resources Strategy is a central element of that over-arching programme of work. The Business Plans demonstrate how each area and section in the Department will contribute to the implementation of the Strategy Statement over the course of a year. The Human Resources elements of the Department's Business Plans will, over the course of the next three years, be based on the content of this HR Strategy. The Performance Management and Development System, in turn, links in to the annual Business Plans, showing the role of each individual and team in contributing to the achievement of the Department's objectives.

“...we will continue to implement PMDS fully in order to enhance organisational, team and individual performance and personal and career development.”

Our Human Resources Objectives

Our Human Resources Strategy has five Objectives. They are:

1. **Ensure that Human Resource Management supports the achievement of our strategic and business objectives.**
2. **Promote a positive working environment, equality of opportunity for all employees and a culture of mutual respect.**
3. **Promote personal and career development for all employees so that they can reach their potential and, therefore, contribute fully to the achievement of our strategic and business objectives.**
4. **Re-orient the Human Resource Management function to support the devolution of authority and responsibility for the day-to-day management of Human Resources issues to line management.**
5. **Strengthen and extend the Partnership process and other consultative, participative and communications processes across our organisation.**

Ár gCuspóirí um Acmhainní Daonna

Cúig chuspóir is bun leis an Straitéis seo. Is iad sin:

1. **Féachaint chuige go mbeidh Bainistíocht Acmhainní Daonna ag tacú lenár gculpóirí straitéiseacha agus gnó a bhaint amach.**
2. **Timpeallacht dhearfa oibre a chothú, ina mbeidh comhionannas deiseanna do chách ar an bhfoireann, mar aon le cultúr ina gcothaítear meas ar a chéile.**
3. **Leas pearsanta agus gairme gach fostaí a chur chun cinn, chun go mbeidh siad in ann a gcumas ar fad a bhaint amach agus, ar an ábhar sin, cur leis an obair atá ar siúl againn chun ár gculpóirí straitéiseacha agus gnó a bhaint amach.**
4. **Bainistíocht Acmhainní Daonna a athshocrú chun údarás agus freagracht a thiomnú go dtí bainistíocht líne, chomh fada is a bhaineann le bainistíocht acmhainní daonna ó lá go chéile.**
5. **Próiseas na Páirtíochta a neartú agus a leathnú, chomh maith leis na próisis eile a bhaineann le comhairliúcháin, le rannpháirtíocht agus le cumarsáid ar fud na heagraíochta seo againne.**

PART II :

Implementing Our Strategy – The Actions We Will Take

The following five Strategy Areas reflect our Objectives set out on page 19.

1. Achieving our Strategic and Business Objectives

2. Ensuring a Positive Working Environment

3. Reaching our Potential

4. Creating a New Human Resource Management

5. Strengthening Partnership, Consultation and Involvement

The approach taken with each Strategy Area is that the context is given and then the appropriate **Actions** are set out. Each Action has one or more **Performance Indicators (PIs)** which will enable progress on the implementation of the Action to be measured and monitored.

Strategy Area 1: Achieving our Strategic and Business Objectives

Objective: Ensure that Human Resource Management supports the achievement of our strategic and business objectives.

Our Department is widely recognised by our customers, the general public and the business community as having a strong focus on delivering a high-quality customer service. However, we acknowledge that there is room for improvement. We want to have an organisational culture of service excellence, innovation and quality where there is a very strong focus on results and continuous improvement. This culture will be founded on key customer service principles such as timeliness, courtesy, openness and fairness. We value these principles and expect them from each and every person in the organisation.

While the focus in the past has been largely on improving service delivery to external customers, we are now, also, placing a much greater emphasis on addressing the needs of the internal customer. A high quality internal customer service means an enhanced service to our external customers.

It is vital that we ensure that HR issues are considered as an essential element of all aspects of our work and that the Human Resources dimension is integral to all organisational change. This is absolutely central to the successful performance of our organisation as we go forward.

A key theme of this Strategy is the enhancement of organisational, team and individual performance in order to provide a professional service to our customers and stakeholders. The embedding of the Performance Management and Development System into the culture of the Department is a critical success factor in that regard.

We are committed to developing and utilising a variety of methods to recognise and reward a high standard of performance and a commitment to quality and innovation. In parallel with this, we will effectively address under-performance and non-performance. It is clear that consistent under-performance or non-performance by an individual has a negative effect on their colleagues and on the organisation as a whole. In this regard, we will take full account of and make appropriate use of central developments arising from forthcoming legislation, including the provision of detailed guidelines for managers on how to address these matters in an effective, equitable and supportive manner.

As a further means of enhancing organisational performance we will promote and support the development of a progressive and innovative managerial culture and excellent management practice throughout the Department. A summary of some key roles of the manager and the supports available to fulfil those functions is outlined on page 28.

We will examine various options in the area of organisational development accreditation schemes in order to choose the most appropriate one(s) for our needs.

In line with all other Government Departments, this Department is progressing a Management Information Framework (MIF). The MIF Project is aimed at developing a comprehensive Management Information System which, when operating with our existing flexible accounting and financial reporting systems, will enhance performance measurement and accountability and, thus, facilitate improved management of resources. This is an objective in our Strategy Statement 2003-2005 and is a key element of the overall Public Service Modernisation Programme.

Taking account of our experiences with mechanisms such as the Corporate Staffing Review and the Local Office Templates, we will prioritise the Department's needs and deploy our resources accordingly in the

PART II : Implementing Our Strategy – The Actions We Will Take

most effective and efficient manner. As an integral part of this process we will develop formal manpower planning policies. We will take account of the greater flexibility being given to Departments in recruitment matters, as proposed in the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Bill.

There is great scope for us to improve the efficiency of our processes and work practices. Very often it is the people operating at ground level who are best placed to identify and remedy inefficient work practices. The process improvement challenge shall be regarded as a basic element of the work of each staff member in our organisation.

It is acknowledged that we, along with the rest of the Civil Service, must become increasingly innovative and flexible in our HR policies and ensure that they are implemented in an effective and coherent manner. We will develop and implement formal policies in all the main HR areas, taking account of best practices and with a key aim of attracting and retaining excellent people in our organisation.

As part of this policy development programme we will review our promotion processes with the aim of ensuring that they are effective, progressive and consistent with the Objectives of this Strategy. In particular, it is important that our promotion processes enable the organisation to acquire and maintain the appropriate management skills and capabilities.

As regards mobility we will particularly focus on addressing the issue in the context of the Department being a large and dispersed organisation. Mobility is important in promoting change, exchanging ideas and experiences and generally providing opportunities for people to develop to their potential. Our aim is to have placement and mobility arrangements operating within an effective system of personal and career development linked to the PMDS. Placement and mobility policies must be grounded in the requirements of the job, the investment to date in the individual's training and development, their future requirements in that regard and, crucially, the business needs of the Department.

In carrying out our business, it is crucial to have excellent employer/employee relations and a supportive industrial relations climate so that, together, we can meet the Department's objectives. An ongoing constructive approach from all concerned is vital in that regard.

A key element of the Public Service Modernisation Programme is the extension of responsibility and accountability from the centre to the line Departments. There is a clear need for us to maintain an excellent working relationship with the Department of Finance in order to manage this transfer effectively.

Our relationship with the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission will continue to be an important element of our HR agenda. The Commission carries out the large majority of the Department's recruitment. We will need to take account of any flexibilities in that area if the envisaged legislative changes regarding recruitment and the establishment of the Public Appointments Service are made.

If the Department is affected by any future programme of decentralisation of Government services it will be essential to ensure that the HR agenda is a central consideration in our plans.

“A key theme of this Strategy is the enhancement of organisational, team and individual performance in order to provide a professional service to our customers and stakeholders.”

Actions

HR and Organisational Strategy

Ensure that human resource issues are systematically considered at the decision making stage, for example, decisions in relation to the introduction of new initiatives or improvements in social welfare payments and programmes.

PI: The Human Resources function to be represented on all appropriate Project Boards and Working Groups.

PI: Each Business Area, when drawing up their Business Plan, required to consider any relevant HR issues – Q4 each year.

Organisational Structure

Ensure that, when the Department is reviewing the structures and processes necessary for the efficient delivery of schemes and services, the HR dimension is fully considered.

PI: Review group(s) to include representation from the HR function to ensure that the HR implications are addressed.

Internal Customer Service

Implement the highest standards of internal customer service, as set out in our Internal Customer Plan 2001-2004.

PI: Monitoring of the implementation of the HR-related elements of the Plan via the Monitoring Group established under Partnership.

Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

Continue to implement PMDS fully across the Department in order to enhance organisational, team and individual performance and personal and career development.

PI: Delivery of PMDS training to CPSU grades (approx. 2,900 staff) as follows:

Phase I September 2002 - January 2003

Phase II March 2003 - June 2003

Phase III September 2003 - March 2004

Note: Training to non-CPSU grades (approx. 1,700 staff) completed in September 2002.

PI: Continuing implementation of PMDS in the Department, as monitored and evaluated by the PMDS Project Board.

Develop competency profiles for a range of roles within the organisation, based on the PMDS role profile forms.

PI: Production of competency profiles – Q3 2003 onwards.

Performance

Develop and implement existing and new approaches aimed at fostering a strong performance culture in the Department.

Such measures should aim to:

- address under-performance and non-performance;
- implement appropriate probation and increment processes;
- recognise and reward innovative, committed and sustained good performance;
- promote excellent management practices through supporting managers in improving their people management skills.

PI: Development of guidelines for managers in relation to dealing with underperformance and non-performance, in line with any central Civil Service guidelines, by end Q4 2003 (dependent on central agreement).

PI: Continuing to place strong emphasis on appropriate management skills training.

PI: Promotion of and setting of targets for the use of the Fiuntas and Input schemes.

PI: Recognition of initiative, commitment and sustained good performance in the development of promotion policies.

Team Working

Promote the value of a team-based approach to the work of the Department.

PI: Inclusion of the concept:

- in the Training and Development Strategy 2003-2005
- in the continuing implementation of the PMDS
- across the range of management processes.

Managing of Resources and Prioritisation of Work

Ensure that the Department, both corporately and at Branch level, makes formal decisions about the planning of manpower and allocation of resources, in light of agreed work priorities.

PI: Consideration as part of the annual Business Planning and Administrative Budget processes.

Ensure that the Human Resources implications for the Department are fully considered as part of the overall implementation of the Management Information Framework (MIF) project.

PI: Consideration in all decisions made in the progression and implementation of the MIF.

Process Improvement

Develop a framework for greater staff involvement in process improvement and service delivery developments based on successful approaches and initiatives across the organisation.

PI: Extension of Quality Assurance projects and similar initiatives to additional business areas over the timescale of the Strategy.

Accreditation Schemes

Examine various options in the area of accreditation schemes in order to choose the most appropriate one(s) for the Department's needs.

PI: Decision on involvement – Q4 2003.

Policy Development

Undertake a Policy Development Programme in the following HR areas:

- **Manpower and Succession Planning**
- **Recruitment**
- **Placement & Mobility**
- **Promotion**
- **Performance**
- **Attendance & Absenteeism**
- **Equality/Diversity**
- **Devolution of Authority & Responsibility for HR Functions**

Note: The Programme will involve a full review of the current positions, analysis, examination of and, where appropriate, formal research into best practices. It will be developed taking account of our business needs, the personal and career development needs of our staff and the features particular to our organisation, i.e. geographical dispersal, contact with the public etc. It will be undertaken in a consultative manner, including the involvement of the Partnership process, other interested parties, including the formal industrial relations mechanisms, as appropriate.

PI: Production and communication of a series of policies over the timescale of this Strategy.

Develop and implement manpower planning and recruitment policies to ensure that adequate numbers of properly deployed employees are available to enable the organisation achieve its business objectives.

PI: Effective manpower planning practices to be part of the annual Business Planning and Administrative Budget processes.

Review and develop policies with the objective of the retention of experienced, committed and motivated staff, including those in specialist areas.

PI: Examination of the retention situation and addressing of necessary issues.

Develop and implement policies in the areas of placement and mobility, in the context of PMDS, aimed at supporting the personal and career development of staff in accordance with the business needs of the Department. Having regard to these needs and the geographical dispersal of the organisation, to the extent possible, employees will be assigned to areas where their skills can be developed and utilised most effectively.

PI: Development of a staff mobility programme in consultation with staff interests, building on existing practices and experiences, and its implementation on a phased basis.

Continue the process, in consultation with the Staff Side, of working towards making an increasing number of promotions in all grades based exclusively on merit.

PI: Agreement on revised procedures over the timescale of the Strategy.

Develop and implement an Attendance and Absenteeism Policy based on an analysis of absenteeism levels across the Department and taking account of the work already done by the Absenteeism Working Group.

PI: Production of the policy by end Q4 2003.

Employee Relations

Foster good industrial and employee relations throughout the organisation by:

- developing further the good working relationships between the Official Side and the Unions and Associations;
- providing advice to managers on industrial and employee relations matters and information in relation to the implementation of central agreements;
- communicating and negotiating centrally with unions and staff associations on major organisational changes to ensure their effective implementation.

PI: A good Industrial Relations record over the timescale of this Strategy.

Our Agencies

Support the agencies under the aegis of the Department in carrying out their HR functions.

PI: Regular contact with the agencies and feedback from them on the quality of Human Resources support provided by the Department.

Relationship with the Department of Finance

Work together with the Department of Finance on:

- the extension of HR responsibility and authority to the Department in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Modernisation Programme;
- the operation of policies and practices which will continue to be directed centrally.

PI: The quality of support and service received from the Department of Finance.

PI: The extent and quality of the Department's contribution towards central policy developments.

Relationship with the Office of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission

Support the Commission through effective manpower planning practices.

Review our relationship with the Commission following the planned enactment of the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Bill.

PI: The quality of support and service received from the Commission.

Future Decentralisation Processes

Adopt an effective and strategic HR approach to any further decentralisation of departmental staff and services as part of the overall Civil Service decentralisation programme.

PI: Agreement on a programme with any business area(s) involved and effective consultation with staff interests.

Role of the Manager

A key focus of this Strategy is the development of people management competencies throughout the Department and support for line management to enable them to manage people more effectively. This applies to all people in the Department who have staff management responsibilities. The roles of the manager can include:

- Key Facilitator in Implementing the Change Process
- Achiever of Quality Results by Individuals and Teams
- Leader
- Strategist
- Decision Maker
- Problem Solver
- Supporter of Participative Processes for Staff
- Facilitator of Staff Development
- Communicator
- Coach, Mentor, Listener
- Motivator
- Supporter of Staff Initiative
- Promoter of the Performance Management and Development System
- Delegator
- Monitor of Budgets

Supports to the Manager

It is acknowledged that there is a need for more detailed and structured support for managers in order for them to carry out their range of duties effectively and appropriately. Among the supports necessary are:

- Provision of Support and Advice from their Manager
- Clarity of Role, Objectives and Priorities via the Strategy Statement, Business Plans and the PMDS process
- Provision of Support and Advice from Senior Management
- Provision of Management Training and Development
- Provision of Support and Advice from Scheme and Support Areas
- Appropriate Delegation of Authority and Responsibility
- Availability of a Range of Enhanced Communications Channels
- Appropriate Resources

Strategy Area 2: Ensuring a Positive Working Environment

Objective: Promote a positive working environment, equality of opportunity for all employees and a culture of mutual respect.

Our aim is to have a range of policies in place which will foster a positive working environment for everyone in our Department. We recognise, nonetheless, that a positive work environment is not created merely through the development of and implementation of policies. Everyone in the organisation has a role to play in ensuring that these actions lead to tangible benefits in the workplace.

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all employees, particularly in the areas of personal and career development and advancement. Our Gender Equality Action Plan 2003-2005 will be one of the visible responses to that commitment. We will also monitor our HR policies and practices to ensure they are consistent with the Civil Service Policy on Diversity. We recognise that equality of opportunity means maintaining a work environment in which differences are respected and in which there is a culture of mutual respect. In *“Our Commitments to Each Other”* published in our Internal Customer Service Plan we state that *“We Value Openness, Consistency, Fairness and Courtesy in Our Dealings with Each Other”*.

This Department has been to the forefront in the Civil Service in the introduction of flexible working arrangements. Arrangements such as flexitime, worksharing, term time and career breaks have helped people to balance their professional and personal needs and responsibilities having regard to the Department’s strategic and business needs. However, it is essential that arrangements such as worksharing are integrated with the rest of the Department’s HR policies. We value the commitment of everyone in the Department (full-time, work sharing and temporary) and we recognise the need to have arrangements in place that can be seen as practical, reasonable and workable by all concerned. This issue of how to effectively manage worksharing has been identified as a key priority for the organisation over the timescale of this Strategy.

We are committed to having a safe working environment where the welfare of everyone in the organisation is protected and valued and which meets the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act. In this regard, the key priorities are the implementation of the Department’s Safety Statement and the further development of the Employee Assistance Service which provides information, advice, support and referral services for a wide range of personal and work-related problems.

The Department is fully committed to *“A Positive Work Environment”*, the Civil Service Anti-Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy under which every employee has the right to carry out their duties free from harassment, sexual harassment and bullying. These totally unacceptable forms of behaviour are in many instances illegal and will not be tolerated.

A new Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour is currently being developed centrally. When it is finalised it will be communicated across the Department. We recognise the need to continue to emphasise, foster and support the core public service values of integrity, equity, confidentiality and objectivity. We also acknowledge the need to recognise the commitment displayed by long-serving staff and the contribution they have made to the work of the Department.

“We value the commitment of all staff (full-time, worksharing and temporary) and we recognise the need to have (worksharing) arrangements in place that can be seen as practical, reasonable and workable by all concerned.”

ACTIONS

Equality of Opportunity

Develop initiatives to increase awareness of equality issues as they apply across the various HR areas.

PI: Evidence of the promotion of, and existence of, a departmental working environment with fair and equitable HR practices.

Publish and implement the Department's Gender Equality Action Plan 2003-2005 which is based on the Civil Service Policy on Gender Equality. The Plan sets out a range of initiatives aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity in key human resource areas:

- Recruitment
- Placement and Mobility
- Training and Staff Development
- Promotion
- Work and Family Issues
- Language in Publications
- Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying

PI: Production of Gender Equality Action Plan – Q1 2003;

PI: Significant progress regarding gender equality including the achievement of the targets set (as required under a Government decision) for increased representation of women at senior management grades i.e.

Female representation at AP level by end 2005: 30% (from 28%)

and

Female representation at PO level by end 2005: 30% (from 28%).

PI: Regular monitoring of gender balances across grades and functions.

Ensure that the Department's HR practices are in line with the Civil Service Policy on Diversity which deals with the other eight grounds of discrimination, besides gender, covered in the equality legislation as follows:

- Marital Status
- Family Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Religious Belief
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Membership of the Traveller Community

PI: Implementation of the policy to be reviewed at least once a year by the Secretary-General and the Partnership Steering Committee.

PI: Progression of initiatives aimed at addressing issues affecting staff with disabilities, including the strengthening of the role of the Disability Liaison Officer.

PI: The proportion of staff with disabilities will be at least maintained at the level required by Government i.e. 3% (position at January 2003: 3.14%).

Flexible Working Arrangements

Continue to make available, in consultation with management and staff, a range of Employee Friendly Working Arrangements, having regard to our business needs and the parameters of central agreements.

PI: Availability and take-up of the various additional worksharing arrangements over the timescale of the Strategy.

Ensure that all Employee Friendly Working Arrangements are provided to the maximum extent possible, consistent with our service delivery responsibilities and in line with central agreements

PI: Review of the effects of Employee Friendly Working Arrangements – by end 2003.

Develop a departmental policy on e-working/teleworking with a focus on effectively utilising the opportunities afforded by technology to increase both performance and job satisfaction.

PI: Introduction of e-working arrangements (initially on a pilot basis) and subsequent evaluation – Q2 2003 onwards.

Working Environment and Staff Welfare

Ensure that all parties take relevant responsibility for contributing to the implementation of the Department's Safety Statement.

PI: Regular monitoring of the provisions of the Safety Statement.

Continue, in co-operation with the Office of Public Works, to refurbish existing accommodation and provide new accommodation, as required.

PI: Addressing of accommodation needs as agreed and set out in Business Plans.

Continue to support the welfare of all employees through the promotion and further development of the Employee Assistance Service.

PI: Appointment of an additional Employee Assistance Officer, bringing the total to four for the Department – Q1 2003.

PI: Regular communications to staff on the role of the Service.

PI: Monitoring of the levels of usage and awareness of the service.

Enforce vigorously the Civil Service policy on harassment, sexual harassment and bullying under which every employee has the right to work in an environment free from these forms of behaviour.

PI: Issuing of relevant information material to all staff, as appropriate.

PI: Inclusion of material on this issue in appropriate training and awareness raising courses.

PI: Reviewing of the operation of the policy in the Department and contributing to any central review of the policy – by end 2003.

Develop, through Partnership, initiatives aimed at recognising the contribution and commitment of long-serving staff.

PI: Agreement on appropriate methods – Q4 2003.

Ensure that all staff are aware of the need to comply with the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour (currently in development).

PI: Making all employees aware of the Code and monitoring of adherence to its provisions (dependent on central agreement).

Strategy Area 3: Reaching Our Potential

Objective: Promote personal and career development for all employees so that they can reach their potential and, therefore, contribute fully to the achievement of our strategic and business objectives.

We are committed to having a workforce which performs at a high standard and is highly skilled and motivated. We, therefore, must create an organisational culture where training and development is seen as a core value and as an investment by both managers and staff. It is clearly important that training and development opportunities for staff are maximised. In parallel to this commitment it is crucial to establish the new or enhanced skills, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours that are required from all of us in order to drive the Department forward successfully and effectively. PMDS has a central role to play in this regard.

In this context, it is proposed to publish a 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 this Strategy is twofold; firstly, to encourage all staff to maximise their potential and, secondly, to enable each individual to fulfil their role as identified through the Performance Management and Development System. This will be achieved by giving staff the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to contribute effectively to achieving the business goals of the organisation. The objectives of the Training and Development Strategy are set out on page 34 but will be developed further in the full Strategy document to be published in April 2003.

We recognise the importance of keeping our staff abreast of technological developments and of making best use of such developments. In this regard, we will ensure that we develop strategies to meet the significant and diverse Information and Communications Technology (ICT) training requirements of the Department.

The importance of customer service training and awareness for staff will also be reflected in our training Strategy, including the provision of Irish language training. In line with our aim to keep social welfare fraud and abuse to an absolute minimum we will also ensure that control awareness is part of all relevant training programmes and initiatives.

The induction process has been identified as critical to a range of HR issues such as retention, placement and mobility and health and safety. We are reviewing the induction process with the aim of focusing on it as an introduction to the organisation, the person's career possibilities and the staff support systems that are in place.

We are placing a particular emphasis on developing a culture of strong, visible and consistent leadership across the organisation.

During the lifetime of the Strategy there will be a clear focus on ensuring that people management skills are seen as a core competency for all managers and that an open, communicative and supportive management style is the norm. Allied to this will be an emphasis on the necessity to share knowledge and information and the clear benefits that arise from so doing.

“We, therefore, must create an organisational culture where training and development is seen as a core value and as an investment by both managers and staff.”

Objectives of Training and Development Strategy 2003-2005

The objectives of the Strategy can be summarised as follows:

- To support the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy.
- To have a comprehensive range of training programmes targeted at meeting the needs of the personal development plans arising from the Performance Management and Development System.
- To develop the manager as the key focus of organisational change, by improving management and leadership skills, knowledge and behaviours through targeted training programmes.
- To strengthen the role of managers in training and developing their staff.
- To provide flexible, responsive and accessible training opportunities to advance a positive working environment.
- To have an integrated, effective training structure to meet the various needs of regionally based and headquarters staff.
- To have an Induction Training Policy which promotes the integration of newly appointed staff into the workplace, in addition to formal induction training.
- To adopt a quality approach to the three elements of the training cycle, that is, training needs analysis, delivery and evaluation.
- To maximise the range of training and development methods/options for staff including greater emphasis on the Refund of Fees scheme, on-the-job training and coaching, mentoring, self-learning, computer-based training, E-Learning and Action Learning.
- To have reliable management information systems in order to maximise economy and efficiency in Training and Development activity. Also to interact, where feasible, with the Centre for Management and Organisational Development (CMOD) and other Government Departments in identifying and replicating best practice and realising potential for economies of scale.

Note: The Strategy contains a detailed set of Actions and Performance Indicators aimed at meeting these Objectives.

PI: Publication of Training and Development Strategy – April 2003.

PI: Implementation of the Strategy over its three year timescale.

PI: Monitoring mechanism in place to assess progress achieved.

Strategy Area 4: Creating a New Human Resource Management Environment

Objective: Re-orient the Human Resource Management function to support the devolution of authority and responsibility for the day-to-day management of Human Resources issues to line management.

In common with other Civil Service Departments and, as part of the overall Modernisation Programme, we are in the process of moving from a personnel administration system towards a more strategic Human Resource Management model. The new approach to HRM is centred on the Performance Management and Development System and has also involved placing an additional emphasis on the equality of opportunity agenda, further initiatives in the area of flexible working arrangements and greater openness and transparency generally. The development of an added focus on the service provided to our colleagues (the internal customers) and the introduction of our own Internal Customer Service Plan are all in keeping with this new approach.

A key element of the Public Service Modernisation Programme is a transfer of authority and responsibility for day-to-day HR matters from Personnel sections to line managers. The role of Personnel Sections in the future will be to develop a more strategic, advisory and supportive focus. This devolution needs to be paralleled by a transfer of certain HR functions from the Department of Finance to the other Government departments.

A comprehensive programme of consultation will be conducted in order to agree how the devolution to our line management can be most effectively carried out. We have already devolved some functions (annual leave, approval of worksharing arrangements and some local recruitment). Clearly, the successful devolution of additional HR functions is a very substantial and complex undertaking which will require appropriate training and ongoing support for line managers as well as appropriate resourcing, particularly where there are large numbers of staff.

It is important to acknowledge that line management have concerns that the devolution will merely add to their workload and not provide tangible benefits to them. People management, which necessarily involves various HR matters, is a central responsibility of the individual line manager. For the devolution to be carried out successfully managers will need to be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and attributes as regards their staff's day-to-day personnel issues, career development, mobility, training and performance management. Personnel Branch will have an absolutely crucial and ongoing role to play in this regard. This will involve an enhancement of the Branch's specialist knowledge and expertise.

The successful upgrade and roll-out of the Department's computerised HRM System (HRMS) is a critical enabling factor in the devolution process. The planned Time and Attendance System, which will replace the Flexitime System and interface with the HRMS will also play an important role in the extended devolution process.

“...we are in the process of moving from a personnel administration system towards a more strategic Human Resource Management model.”

ACTIONS

Devolution Process

Develop and implement a consultation programme regarding the progression of the programme of devolution to line management.

PI: Establishment of a Working Group by Personnel Branch – Q3 2003.

Implement, following this consultation programme and on a phased basis, the devolution of responsibility, authority and accountability for day-to-day HR matters to line management.

PI: Commencement of implementation – 2004 onwards.

Future Role of Personnel Branch

Promote excellent standards of service to and support of the rest of the organisation by the Branch, including the development of monitoring mechanisms.

PI: Monitoring of the Personnel Branch commitments in the Internal Customer Service Plan 2001-2004.

Continue the process of developing the skills, competencies and training needs of staff in the HR/Personnel area in order to equip them to provide an excellent Human Resources support service to the Department and to carry out their new strategic HR functions.

PI: Development and implementation of a range of training and development initiatives and opportunities – Q3 2003 onwards.

Re-structure the work of Personnel Branch to enable it to effectively adopt a strategic and advisory role in the new HR environment.

PI: Finalisation of Branch organisational review – end 2003.

Promote excellent communications and information provision between the central HR function and line managers, so that the movement of HR activities to line management is supported in the best possible way.

PI: Development of specific guidelines for managers and staff – end 2003 onwards.

Human Resources Support Systems

Upgrade the computerised Human Resource Management System (HRMS), in particular to support the devolution of authority and responsibility to line management.

PI: Upgrading to Version 8 of HRMS – Q2 2003.

PI: Usage of HRMS in the analysis and reporting of HR activities across the Department.

Select a new Time and Attendance System and implement it across the Department.

PI: Selection of System – Q4 2003.

PI: Implementation of System – 2004.

Information on Human Resource Issues

The Circulars Shared Drawer on the Office System has a wide range of information on matters such as Human Resources policies and procedures, leave entitlements and worksharing arrangements. It includes a directory of people in Personnel Branch which provides their contact details and the areas for which they are responsible.

If you have a query on any HR matter it would be advisable to access the **Personnel Folders** before contacting Personnel Branch as it may provide you with all the information you require. Alternatively, it should assist you in your contact and discussions with your colleagues in Personnel Branch.

Strategy Area 5: Strengthening Partnership, Consultation and Involvement

Objective: Strengthen and extend the Partnership process and other consultative, participative and communications processes across our organisation.

Partnership is a formal participative and consultative process within the Civil Service involving representatives of management, unions and staff. The aim is to achieve common ownership of the goals and objectives of the change programme and to progress their implementation. The objectives of the Department's Partnership process are:

- To enhance the success of the organisation.
- To develop new arrangements for discussion of major decisions affecting the organisation's future.
- To release the ideas, abilities and commitment of all the people working in the organisation.
- To improve the quality of the work environment.

The Department has an extensive structure of Partnership committees at Steering, Regional and Local level. This has led to significant benefits for the organisation, particularly as regards fostering good communication practices and the common ownership of challenges. The findings of the cross-departmental review of Partnership published in 2002 provide the basis for the progression and deepening of Partnership, both across the Civil Service and in our Department.

In parallel with Partnership there is a need to maximise the participation and involvement of staff whereby they can input to discussions regarding their jobs, their work environment and their personal and career development. In doing this the necessity for managers to communicate, and to respond fully (and to do so in a positive way, where feasible) to issues raised by staff must be borne in mind. It is also essential for communications between managers and staff on changes in policy or service delivery matters to be clear and timely. It is acknowledged that face-to-face communication and personal interaction is, very often, the most effective method of communication. This aspect of the role of the manager will be emphasised through a variety of methods over the duration of this Strategy.

“In parallel with Partnership there is a need to maximise the participation and involvement of staff whereby they can input to discussions regarding their jobs, their work environment and their personal and career development.”

ACTIONS

Partnership

Advance the Partnership process through:

- * **Further extension and strengthening of the Partnership structures at national, regional and local level.**

PI: Extent and activity levels of Partnership structures.

PI: Staff views on the Partnership process, as measured through surveys and other consultative processes.

PI: Extent of liaison and co-operation between the various Partnership Committees and Groups.

- * **Providing training, advice and support to all staff engaged in Partnership.**

PI: Proportion of staff who have received Partnership Training.

PI: Staff views on the quality of Partnership training and support they receive.

- * **Communicating updates on the work programme of Partnership on a regular basis to all staff using a variety of methods including Partnership publications, presentations, magazine articles and e-mails.**

PI: Extent of Partnership communications, presentations, seminars, newsletters etc.

Participation and Involvement

Promote and facilitate a culture of communication, involvement and participation through:

- * **Keeping staff informed of policy, programme or service changes and encouraging them to input their views on issues relating to their role and to the work of the Department.**
- * **Development of an enhanced communications infrastructure.**

PI: The Business Planning process, at all stages, being as inclusive as possible – in the development and communication of the Plans, and in their use in the PMDS process.

PI: Use of staff communication and involvement processes (sectional meetings, e-mails, departmental and sectional magazines, presentations, seminars, Input scheme, development of intranets, etc.)

- * **Development of management training and development programmes where staff consultation and involvement and people management are seen as core competencies.**

PI: Incorporation in training and development programmes e.g. Front Line Managers and HEO Skills programme.

PI: Implementation of Management Development Programme for Principals and Assistant Principals – end 2003 onwards.

- * **Development of management communication processes where participation and involvement are encouraged.**

PI: Use of communication processes such as circulation of minutes of top management meetings to all Principal Officers and subsequent circulation to other staff.

PI: Extent of various management meetings e.g.:

- Scheme Management
- Support Section Management
- Regional and Local Management
- Principal Officers
- * **Structured consultation with staff, including staff surveys on HR issues, based on the Objectives of this Strategy.**

PI: Conducting of a programme of staff surveys – commencing in 2003.

PART III : Making It Happen

We have called this third part of the Strategy “**Making It Happen**”. It identifies a series of critical success factors which will determine the extent to which we will be successful in implementing this HR Strategy. It also details how the Strategy will be communicated across the Department. Finally, it indicates how the monitoring of the Strategy will be carried out.

Critical Success Factors

A diverse range of factors will determine how successful the Department will be in implementing the extensive programme of actions set out in this Strategy. A fundamental principle that underlies the Strategy is that we have a shared responsibility to put it into action and, thus, realise its benefits.

- **Creating the Climate for Change** – this will involve providing all of the necessary supports and communication processes so that an organisational culture is created that is receptive to, and will support, the implementation of the Strategy.
- **Role of Senior Management** – demonstrated and consistent leadership by the senior management team is essential to the success of the Strategy.
- **Role of Line Managers and Supervisory Staff** – individual line managers and supervisory staff have the lead role in ensuring effective implementation of HR policies and practices in their own offices or sections. Positive and effective working relationships between job holders and their managers will be necessary to the success of this Strategy. It is acknowledged that an individual's performance can be crucially affected by the attitude and support displayed by their immediate line manager.
- **Role of Every Employee** – individual staff employees will need to be aware that they have some personal responsibility in respect of the successful implementation of the Strategy, for example in contributing to a positive work environment and the PMDS process.
- **Partnership** – the continuing strengthening and extension of the Partnership process is necessary to facilitate a broad and effective involvement of staff in the implementation of the Strategy.
- **Performance Management and Development System** – the embedding of PMDS into the culture and business of the Department is central to the success of the Strategy.
- **Role of Personnel Branch** – the Branch must play an active and positive role in progressing the Strategy, including through its role in supplying advice and guidance in HR matters and its maintenance of the computerised HRM System.
- **Role of Staff Development Unit** – SDU has a key role in the Strategy as regards the direct provision of training and development programmes and the support and advice to other areas of the organisation that are also delivering training and development.
- **Relationship with Department of Finance** – the Department will need to co-operate effectively with the Department of Finance regarding both the devolution of functions and the operation of those policies and practices which will continue to be directed centrally.
- **Research and Analysis** – effective research and analysis of HR-related matters will be necessary on an ongoing basis to ensure that the correct actions can be decided on and implemented. This will include the identification of best practice in HRM in other organisations for benchmarking purposes.
- **Co-ordination and Alignment** – there will need to be effective co-ordination and alignment in the development and implementation of the various strands of the Strategy.
- **Capacity and Flexibility** – the Department will need to develop and maintain the capacity and flexibility to implement the Strategy in parallel to the very substantial number of other strategic projects that it is also necessary to progress.

Resource Allocation

In this Strategy we have defined the critical issues and challenges that will face the Department in the Human Resources environment over the next three years and, accordingly, set out an extensive programme of developments and initiatives to be implemented over that period. At the time of publication of this Strategy it is clear that there will be an ongoing climate across the public service of rigorous examination and prioritisation of all spending proposals. We are conscious that this will affect all aspects of the Department's business, including the HR agenda. Therefore, we will need to be flexible and imaginative in how we plan, resource and implement our HR programmes and initiatives. This is in line with the commitment in our Strategy Statement 2003-2005 to effectively manage and control the resources available to us.

Our ability to deliver this comprehensive and essential programme of work through the appropriate distribution of resources will be examined on an ongoing basis over the timescale of this Strategy. In our endeavours in this regard we must be heartened by the Department's hard-won reputation as a 'can-do' organisation which has an extensive track record of achievement in the implementation of ambitious change programmes in times of scarce resources.

Communicating the Strategy

Copies of this Strategy and a summary version are being sent to every member of staff. The Strategy will be widely distributed and publicised throughout the Department, using a variety of methods including presentations, magazine articles and e-mails.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy

This Strategy will be one of the key documents on which departmental Business Plans will be based over the three year period 2003-2005. There are already separate reporting processes within the Department on a number of important elements of this Strategy (e.g. staffing numbers, PMDS, Partnership, Internal Customer Service Programme) but there will also be a composite reporting on the implementation of the Strategy and the programme of action across the five Strategy Areas which will be reviewed by the Secretary-General and the Partnership Steering Committee on a regular basis, at a minimum twice a year. Progress reports will also be included in the Department's Annual Report.



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