

CONTENTS

Foreword from the Minister	2
Foreword from the Secretary-General	3
The business of the Department	4
Environmental Analysis	6
Our Values and Guiding Principles	16
Our High Level Goals	19
Goal 1: Retired and Older People	21
Goal 2: People of Working Age	29
Goal 3: Children	39
Goal 4: Coverage, Access and Entitlement	45
Goal 5: Poverty, Social Inclusion and Families	59
Goal 6: The Department and its staff	69
Cross Departmental Issues	83
Better Regulation	88
Reporting on the Progress of our Statement of Strategy	89
Appendix 1 - Number of Recipients of Social Welfare Payments by Payment Type at December 2004.	90
Appendix 2 - Customer Charter	92
Appendix 3 - External Departmental Representation	97
Appendix 4 - Glossary of Terms	100
Appendix 5 - Organisational Structure	104



FOREWORD FROM THE MINISTER

I welcome the publication of this Strategy Statement, *'Security with Opportunity'*, prepared by my Department in accordance with the terms of the Public Service Management Act, 1997, which sets out our main objectives for the next three years.

The Department of Social and Family Affairs is the biggest spending department in the State. Its budget this year, at over €12.2 billion, means that for every three euro spent by the State, one euro goes on welfare supports and entitlements.

For hundreds of thousands of people this Department is the safety net that keeps them out of the grip of poverty, provides supports when they are sick, or are unable to obtain work, gives pensioners an income and helps carers to continue their valued and valuable work.

Week in, week out the Department delivers payments to over 970,000 people that, when dependants are taken into account, directly benefits more than 1.5 million men, women and children.

It is my Department's responsibility to deliver welfare supports and entitlements that raise living standards, offer security and a degree of empowerment.

But this Department is not just a mechanism for paying money. We also have a responsibility to use that income support to help solve the social problems behind the payments being made. It is not sufficient to have schemes for such things as child poverty, lone parents or pensions on the basis that if we pay the bill and sign the cheque, the problem will go away. If the problem does not go away, we must deal with the social issue behind the payment. All of us have this responsibility.

We have a responsibility, in conjunction with other agencies, to give people the opportunities that they need whether it be to get back into employment, education or training or to support them with their caring responsibilities. At different stages of people's lives different interventions may be appropriate. Any interventions must be sensitive to the circumstances of each customer.

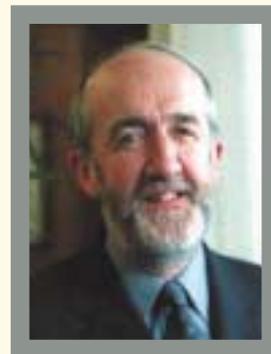
The Department and I are committed to helping our customers achieve their potential and to deliver income supports to them in a manner that facilitates their participation in the labour market and in wider society.

The objectives outlined in this Strategy Statement support these commitments and I look forward to working with the Secretary General and the staff of the Department, together with all other stakeholders, in progressing the achievement of these challenging objectives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Seamus Brennan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Seamus Brennan T.D.
Minister for Social & Family Affairs

FOREWORD FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL



The publication of a new Strategy Statement gives us the opportunity to reflect on the appropriateness of our goals and how well we have been achieving them.

While our mission is unchanged, our goals and objectives have been updated to reflect the diverse needs of our different customer groups. They also reflect our increasing emphasis on developing a range of services that not only give our customers financial security but also encourage them to maximise their participation in society, at whatever level their skills and abilities permit. Of course, this is not something which can be achieved by ourselves, but in partnership with other Government Departments and Agencies.

In our last Strategy Statement I referred to the challenges ahead. We must continue to respond to the developing needs of our customers in a time when resources are constrained. A new challenge is to do this while implementing an ambitious programme of decentralisation. I am confident that, in the light of our previous experience, we can rise to this challenge.

In meeting these challenges we depend on each and every member of staff. I would like to thank all those who contributed to the Strategy, and, more importantly, all of those whose work has contributed to the successful implementation of our previous strategies. I am confident that, working together in a spirit of mutual trust and co-operation, we can achieve the significant programme that is outlined in this Strategy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'John Hynes'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Hynes
Secretary-General



THE BUSINESS OF THE DEPARTMENT

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

Our Main Functions

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

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

Scale of our Business

Our income support work impacts on the lives of almost every person in the State. The bulk of our activity is in the delivery of direct services to the public (some 970,000 people each week claim a weekly social welfare payment and, when their dependents are included, a total of more than 1.5 million people, or almost four out of every ten people in the State, benefit). This involves a considerable level of interaction between our staff and the public, whether in person, by phone, etc. and with their representatives. Meeting the needs of an ever increasing and diverse customer base requires flexibility and a high level of skill and training.

Total funding for social welfare is €12.25 billion in 2005. An effective control programme sits alongside the provision of the highest quality service to the Department's customers. Savings of €386 million

were realised in 2004 in combating fraud and abuse, which were achieved from a range of control activity such as data-matching exercises, special control projects and ongoing control activity.

Organisation of the Department

The Department has some 4,734 people (4,289 full-time equivalent posts) and is structured on Aireacht/Executive lines.

Our HQ offices are located in Dublin, Dundalk, Letterkenny, Longford, Sligo and Waterford. The local delivery of our services is structured on a 10-region basis with 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 68 Branch Offices (SWBOs).

The **Reach** agency, which reports to the Department, has as its aims to radically improve the quality of service to personal and business customers of Government and to develop and deploy the Public Services Broker (PSB) to help agencies achieve that improvement. In particular Reach is to develop and implement an integrated set of processes, systems and procedures to provide a standard means of access to public services, to be known as the Public Services Broker. (web address:- [http:// www.reachservices.ie](http://www.reachservices.ie)).

The Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) is an independent Office responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements. (information on web address:- <http://www.welfare.ie> ; email:- swappeals@welfare.ie).

There are, in addition, five statutory agencies/offices under the aegis of the Department:

- **Comhairle** which has responsibility for supporting the provision of independent information, advice and advocacy services for all citizens throughout the country. OASIS (On-line Access to Services, Information and Support), is a public service information system provided over the Internet by Comhairle (web address:- <http://www.comhairle.ie>);
- **Combat Poverty Agency (CPA)** which has responsibilities in the areas of advice to the Minister, research, action programmes and information in relation to poverty in Ireland (web address:- <http://www.cpa.ie>);
- **Family Support Agency (FSA)** which is responsible for the provision of a family mediation service, the support, promotion and development of marriage and relationship counselling and other family supports, and the Family and Community Services Resource programme. The Agency's responsibilities also include undertaking research, providing and disseminating information about parenting and family issues, and providing advice to the Minister on matters relating to families (information on web address:- <http://www.welfare.ie>);
- **The Office of the Pensions Ombudsman**, which investigates complaints of injustice due to maladministration, disputes of fact or law, in occupational pension schemes. The Pensions Ombudsman is a statutory officer and exercises his functions independently. He reports to the Houses of the Oireachtas (web address:- <http://www.pensionsombudsman.ie>); and
- **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 (web address:- <http://www.pensionsboard.ie>).



ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

While there have been changes in the economic environment since our last Strategy Statement, *'Promoting a Caring Society'* 2003-2005, many of the challenges outlined in that Strategy remain central to the Department's plans over the next three year period and are explored in the Environmental Analysis which follows.

First, the external environment is considered in terms of the political, economic and social factors at national, EU and international levels, which will impact the Department over the period of the Strategy. The internal environment and issues arising are then considered, including the modernisation and change agenda of the civil service, the customer agenda, technology and issues relating to developing the capacity of the Department and its people. Finally, from amongst these issues, we highlight those which we have identified as priorities.

Political Context

The key changes in the political context affecting the Department's strategy are contained in the Programme for Government launched in June 2002, reviewed in August 2004 and in the Social Partnership Agreement *"Sustaining Progress"* and in the National Action Plan to combat poverty and social exclusion (NAP/Inclusion).

The main elements of the Programme for Government which impact the strategy are captured under the themes of: Sustaining a Strong Economy, Building an Inclusive Society and Supporting Civil Life. These programme elements include a range of commitments relevant to the Department of Social and Family Affairs, in relation to the following;

- Children and childcare
- Employment and enterprise

- Disability and caring
- Older people
- Regenerating disadvantaged communities
- Asylum and Immigration
- Equality and Law reform
- The Irish language

A number of specific commitments relate to the achievement of a target rate for specific categories of payments within the lifetime of this Strategy.

In addition, a Government white paper 'Regulating Better' sets out core principles of good regulation together with a programme of actions to give effect to these principles. The white paper sets out a framework in which new regulations are more rigorously assessed in terms of their impacts, more assessable to all and better understood and that existing regulations will be streamlined and revised, where possible, through a process of systematic review and by repealing, restating and consolidating them as appropriate.

Economic Factors

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

- Economic growth as measured by GNP has averaged 5.8% over the 6 years from 1998 to 2003. The out-turn for 2004 is expected to be 5.3%. The most recent Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Medium Term Review, published in 2003, forecasts average GNP growth of 5.4 % over the period 2005-2010.
- Ireland's General Government Debt at end 2004 is estimated at 29.9% down from a estimated 32.0% at end 2003. The current forecast is for a General Government Debt of 29.5% of GDP which is one of the lowest rates in the EU.
- The more buoyant public finance situation will increase the potential to make more resources available for social transfers and for new initiatives in the social policy area, which require additional expenditure.
- There were 1,894,100 in employment at end of 2004 (QNHS), an increase of 65,200 or 3.0% in the year. The labour force increased by 64,900 to 1,979,700 in 2004, accounting for 61.% of all those over the age of 15 years of age, an increase from 60.2% the previous year.
- In the medium term to 2016, the working age population is projected to grow from 2,590,000 in 2001 by between 489,000 and 587,000. This represents an increase of between 1.1% and 1.4% per annum compared to an annual increase of 1.7% in the ten years to 2001.
- In the same period, the Labour force is projected to grow from 1.92 million in 2004 to between 2.27 and 2.37 million by 2016. It is anticipated that over the period of this Strategy, the current

buoyancy in the labour market will maintain the unemployment rate close to its current level and will also provide a positive response to the Department's proactive labour market programme.

- Population growth will continue, mainly through continued immigration. The CSO in its projections, conclude that the recent growth in fertility, which followed a significant decline, is unlikely to be maintained and that the long-term decline can be expected to resume but at a more moderate rate. This raises long term concerns in relation to population ageing and population decline.
- Net immigration in recent years reached a high of 41,000 in 2002 but has fallen back somewhat to about 32,000 in 2004. This trend is projected to continue at levels close to 30,000 per annum over the period of this Strategy and to decline in the medium term. This trend in immigration of non-nationals, particularly non-EEA nationals, will change the profile of customers of some schemes. This poses the challenge of taking into account cultural and religious differences, both in dealing with customers and in the structure of schemes
- There is likely to be more 'churning' in the labour market, with a higher level of short-term unemployment than in the past. Strategies may be required to prevent people drifting into long-term unemployment.
- The growth in 'non-standard' employment, e.g. part-time work, fixed term contracts, etc. will continue. Over the period 1994 to 2001 part-time employment grew by an annual average rate of close to 11 per cent compared to a growth rate of just over 4 per cent for fulltime employment. This poses challenges for social welfare systems based on the norm of full-time employment.
- Higher employment rates in recent times have contributed to a rapid growth in the insured population. While this will slow down in the short term, the insured population is likely to continue at a high level. A consequence of this is increased potential claimant levels for various social welfare schemes.

Social Context

The unprecedented performance of the Irish economy over the last decade has had a significant impact on reducing the level of unemployment and providing a real improvement in living standards. However, the changing social environment continues to challenge the development of appropriate strategies. Some of the more important social factors include;

- Despite economic growth, and an overall increase in living standards for everyone in society, there is still a significant group of people who are in consistent poverty (below 60% median income and deprived of basic items). In addition, the number of those at risk of poverty (below 60% median income) continues to rise. Tackling poverty and social inclusion will continue to be major determinants of policy in the social welfare area.
- Research has identified a number of groups which require special attention because of the vulnerabilities attached to their situation. These groups include:
 - * The elderly

- * Families with four or more children
- * Lone parents
- * Households where the reference person is ill or disabled
- * Unemployed and those on home duties
- * Migrants and members of ethnic minorities

These groups are characterised by long duration on means tested social assistance payments and low educational attainment.

- In addition, the following are at risk of poverty due to their vulnerability in the labour market:
 - * Early school leavers: 18% of young people are not completing secondary school and in some areas 60% of males are not taking the leaving certificate examination.
 - * Older workers with low skills in industries which are vulnerable to economic restructuring; these workers will require access to services which will ensure they can retain ongoing employability.
- As the skill levels of the workforce develops, the skills gap between those in employment and those in long term unemployment could continue to widen making it more difficult to achieve future involvement in the labour market.
- Ireland has seen huge social change over the past decade and significant changes have taken place in family formation and family structures. Overall there has been a shift towards a greater diversity of family types, a growing incidence of later marriage, cohabitation, marital and family breakdown and lone parenthood. There are also a greater and growing number of one person households. The increase in diverse family forms in Irish society raises issues in relation to the current structure of social welfare payments.
- More women are seeking economic independence on the same basis as men through paid work and we are seeing greater female participation, mainly among married and older women, in the workforce. This rise in female employment and the increasing absence of a full time fit and capable person in the home has diminished the capability of the family to provide care.
- Women are frequently in situations of vulnerability because they take on the main responsibility of caring for children and other family members. As a result their earnings are still, on average, significantly lower than those of men as are their employment participation rates. They form the majority of those in part-time employment and of other vulnerable groups such as lone parents and carers in the home of elderly and disabled relatives. Their longevity and relatively poor pension entitlements, based as they are on employment records, means that many women are also at risk of poverty in old age.
- The numbers of people in two of the Department's key customer groups – children and the elderly – will not increase appreciably over the period of the Strategy and dependency ratios will continue to decrease.

- The demographic indicators show that population ageing is set to have major implications for the sustainability of pensions as the ratio of pensioners to contributors steadily rises. It is expected that pension costs will rise from a current level of 4.5% (2002) of GNP to 8% in 2026 and 9% in 2056. This presents a major challenge for Ireland in ensuring that provision is made to meet the income needs of older people into the future.
- Population increase is being accompanied by a rapid increase in household formation due to the age structure and the rate of marital breakdown. This is creating unprecedented demand for housing. Taken together with the rate of house price inflation, this suggests significant increases in demands for social housing and other housing supports.
- The values of society are changing, standards are rising and there is a greater awareness of each person's human rights and a recognition of the social evil of discrimination and racism towards minorities. This is evident in the progress made in relation to people with disabilities, special needs education for children and that families should be supported in providing care to those vulnerable in society.

EU and International Developments

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

- Reduction of poverty and progress in using the open co-ordination method of policy development adopted at EU level.
- Modernisation of social protection, in particular pension systems.
- Benchmarking of policies against EU trends.
- Challenges and opportunities presented by EU expansion.

In addition, the development of cross border activities will be 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.

Modernisation of the Civil Service

The Civil Service Modernisation Programme (otherwise known as the Strategic Management Initiative, SMI) has been in place since 1994 and has had a significant impact on all Government Departments over that period. Over the past decade or so, the Department has instituted a wide-ranging programme of change to the way it does its business – from organisational re-positioning at all levels (including decentralisation, regionalisation and an ongoing process of localisation), to scheme changes, process

improvements and more streamlined working methods – all of which form a package of continuous, balanced and targeted improvements in the delivery of our services. The Department is a customer-centered organisation; its modernisation and change agenda is designed to ensure that the customer comes first by being placed continually at the centre of its operations and that its staff are equipped and supported in the delivery of this objective.

Following the independent review of the SMI in 2002, the overall approach to modernisation in the civil service is set out in the Social Partnership Agreement '*Sustaining Progress*'. This has also formed the basis for the Department's own approach as set out in its Modernisation Action Plan (MAP) which is required under '*Sustaining Progress*'.

The MAP is a very detailed document which builds on the Department's progress, to date, in achieving its change and modernisation programme – the overall aim being to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and capacity of the organisation.

Priority areas which have been identified in the modernisation programme and which will be addressed in the period ahead include:

- Maximising the benefits of new technology and e-Government to deliver consequent efficiencies and flexibilities – this includes implementation of the Department's Service Delivery Modernisation (SDM) programme and associated projects. The SDM involves the development of a new generation of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems which facilitate customer-centered services and also supports the eGovernment strategy. This is interlinked with other projects, such as the civil registration modernisation programme, the public service broker and the development of public service identity management. There has already been substantial progress in each of these areas;
- Continuing the programme of process improvements and localisation of services (including that of the One Parent Family Payment scheme) with the anticipated outcomes being better service to the customer, more control and facilitating more customers to access the increasing range of supports available in local offices;
- Ongoing improvements in external and internal Customer Service;
- Maintaining business continuity in the context of, in particular, preparations for decentralisation - the successful implementation of the Government's decentralisation programme for the Department represents a considerable challenge but also provides an opportunity to evaluate the business and to make improvements where necessary, provided this can be achieved without disruption to the delivery of service;
- A range of initiatives in the Human Resources area including continued, effective implementation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) and, in particular, addressing any issues which arise out of this;
- Financial Management, Programme Evaluation and Regulatory Reform.

The Department is committed to continual improvement in the quality of its service to customers and to efficiency in the use of resources. '*Sustaining Progress*' offers both the opportunity and the incentive to advance more quickly the programme of modernisation and improvement on which the Department is embarked, and to achieve early agreement between management, staff and staff unions and associations on the measures necessary to respond to change.

Meeting Customer Needs

As a Department with a large and diverse customer base we are aware of the importance of delivering a quality customer service to all our customers. Our services affect individuals, families and society in general and we are committed to meeting the differing needs of these customers. Our Customer Action Plan 2004-2007 and our Customer Charter demonstrate our strong commitment to customer service.

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

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

The key finding from these consultation processes has been that there is generally a high level of satisfaction amongst our customers - for example, the results of the last touchscreen survey, undertaken in October 2004, showed that:

- 92% were satisfied with the service received.
- 74% found it easy to complete our forms.
- 80% were satisfied that their claim was dealt with quickly.
- 83% were satisfied with the level of privacy given to them.
- 81% were aware of our information booklets and leaflets.

Technological Factors

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

There are a number of specific ICT related challenges that need to be faced over the coming years:

- The Government's decentralisation programme will place demands for more effective and efficient use of ICT throughout the organisation and across organisations. The result of this programme on ICT will be to increase the pressure for development and deployment of more common systems and new collaborative systems. It will require migration of existing systems to new common 'platforms'. This will need to be managed in the context of fulfilling the primary objective of ensuring the smooth running of production / payment systems.
- The emergence of the Public Service Broker (PSB) will emphasise the need to concentrate on the delivery of systems over new 'channels' as well as old. This will require an emphasis on

development of multi-channel delivery and co-ordination capability. It will also require that internal 'backroom' services are re-developed in a manner that facilitates management and delivery over these channels. The services themselves need to be developed in an integrated way in order to provide for 'customer centricity'. Considerable attention will need to be paid to integrating and/or re-developing existing systems running on older platforms.

- The key notion of 'customer centricity' drives a requirement for systems that allow multiple agencies to manage their customer details in a consistent and integrated fashion. One key element of this is the development of cross-departmental systems that manage the identity and authentication of customers in a way that facilitates interaction with public services while respecting privacy and security concerns. The Public Service Identity (PSI) Services and the Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) programme initiatives are key ones in this area.
- There is an increasing emphasis on the provision of secure and adequate access to systems from multiple locations. This requires concentration on security and access issues and the deployment of appropriate modern facilities to staff regardless of location and time.

Developing the Department and its People.

The Department employs 4,734 people (4,289 full time equivalent posts) and is one of the largest employers in the Civil Service. The organisation is a geographically dispersed one with a very extensive office network and our staff work in a diverse variety of roles.

The current age profile of the Department's staff is; under 25 (4%), 25-34 (20%), 35-44 (35%), 45-54 (31%) and over 55 (10%). The gender balance is 68% female, 32% male.

Almost half of the staff (48%) are at the clerical level. At the end of 2004 a total of 3,600 employees (76%) were on flexible working hours and approximately 1,000 employees (21%) were worksharing. In addition, 332 employees availed of Term-Time leave during summer 2004.

All successful organisations must be efficient and effective in the use of resources. In the Department's case, where a personalised service is being provided to customers, the main resource involved is people. The provision of an improved level of service in an expanding business while reducing staff numbers is a challenging environment in which to operate.

The Department operates within a wider and unified civil service environment. This means that many of the key Human Resources (HR) issues are negotiated and decided centrally and are regulated by the Department of Finance. Among the recent developments are the:

- Enactment of the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act, 2004 which allows Departments more opportunities to organise their own recruitment processes.
- Introduction of a new Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.
- Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2004 proposes significant changes in the area of disciplinary matters (including addressing underperformance) and the grievance procedures.

The Department's first Human Resources Strategy was published in April 2003 and reviewed in 2004. The purpose of the Strategy is to bring together the various HR policies and to integrate them within

the overall organisational strategy. Key elements of the HR Strategy will be progressed over the course of this Strategy.

The Government announced an extensive decentralisation programme in December 2003. This Department is playing a major part in this programme. Currently, 53% of staff are working outside the Dublin area. The Department has significant previous experience in successful decentralisations, having undertaken a series of decentralisation processes since the late 1980s. We have decentralised offices in Sligo, Longford, Letterkenny, Dundalk and Waterford.

The decentralisation programme has fundamental implications for the entire Department and, critically, for its overall HR Strategy and the policies within it. The overarching objective of the Department's decentralisation strategy is to ensure that customer service standards are maintained throughout the process. The provision of the service is dependent on the availability of trained and competent personnel in critical service delivery areas. It is also crucial that the operation of the decentralisation programme is done having due regard to our current staff and the needs of new staff joining the organisation. In relation to the latter category of staff, we need to enhance our induction processes, both at the departmental and local level.

Priorities

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

- The most significant challenges identified revolve around the
 - * Continued enhancement to and development of policies which will tackle the issues of poverty and social exclusion.
 - * Development of responses that will ensure that all those capable of engaging with the labour market receive the supports needed to secure that engagement.
- Other significant challenges identified for the next few years are demographic trends, the increased number of one-parent families, greater diversity in our customer base and a heightened emphasis on a rights-based approach.
- In looking at how well-placed the Department is to meet these challenges, the level of adaptability and flexibility which has been shown by staff in adapting to change is seen as a major strength. However, this asset will be challenged during the life of this Strategy through the implementation of the decentralisation programme. Careful and meticulous planning will ensure that this asset will be maintained and replenished and that the current high quality of customer service will be maintained during this period.
- Other internal issues which we will seek to address over the term of this Strategy are the complex organisational structure of the Department and inter-agency relationships.

Conclusion

In carrying out the Environmental Analysis we have attempted to identify and agree on the major issues facing the Department in the period 2005-2007. The Strategy is set out in the context of the Department's long-term aim of *building an inclusive society*. Recognising the opportunities and threats that exist in the external environment as well as the strengths and weaknesses of our organisation are central to the achievement of this aim.

While the economic environment presents opportunities, we are mindful of the open nature of our economy and the potential that change in the economy can have on our social and economic environment. One of the strengths of our organisation has been our ability to adapt to change and to the needs of our customers. This is evidenced through our evolving role from passive income maintenance to a more proactive approach in which we seek to address the underlying causes of poverty and social exclusion.

Central to this has been the willingness and ability of our staff to adapt and change. Continuing to adapt to political priorities and changing customer needs, in an environment where the Department needs to progress its decentralisation programme, will be the key challenge which this Strategy needs to address.



OUR VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The services for which the Department is responsible provide essential supports to people who have recourse to them. The delivery of those services has to be of a high standard in order to meet the legitimate needs of customers. We recognise the importance of the shared values which we bring to the delivery of our business. In carrying out our work we seek to be guided by the following key values and principles:

Service

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

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

Fairness and Respect

We recognise the need for fairness and mutual respect. We give expression to this by:

- treating customers and each other in accordance with fair procedures;
- providing our customers with all necessary information regarding our decisions and our services,

responding promptly to their concerns and being prepared to review our decisions where appropriate;

- recognising the contribution, input and views of the people who work with us;
- ensuring a fair application of internal rules and procedures, having regard to the requirements of the work and the need for an equitable sharing of rights and responsibilities; and
- having an independent adjudication system for those who disagree with our decisions on their entitlements and their insurability.

Openness

We are open to change. We give expression to this by:

- encouraging and facilitating within the Department the open expression of views and a participative approach;
- seeking the views of users of our services and their representatives, interested voluntary groups, statutory bodies and other external groups;
- participating actively in groups established under the “Sustaining Progress” social partnership agreement, in NESF, NESF and other fora;
- carrying out objective analysis and continuous review of our activities and being concerned to continually learn from our experience and;
- implementing change in policies, structures, procedures and resource allocation in response to these activities.

Professionalism

We aim to apply the highest professional standards in every aspect of our work. We give expression to this by:

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

Flexibility and Responsiveness

We pride ourselves on our ability to respond to challenges in a flexible and creative manner. We give expression to this by:

- taking a practical approach to challenges which arise;
- being flexible in addressing particular needs when these are required;

- responding with initiative and creativity, with any other interests involved, when major projects, challenges or crises present themselves; and
- utilising the opportunities offered by new technology to improve services, performance and the working environment.

Partnership and Consultation

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

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

OUR HIGH-LEVEL GOALS

GOAL 1: RETIRED AND OLDER PEOPLE

To ensure adequate, secure and sustainable pensions for retired and older persons and provide additional services in response to changing needs which allow them to maintain a reasonable standard of living on attaining retirement age.

GOAL 2: PEOPLE OF WORKING AGE

To provide income supports and access to relevant services to people of working age who cannot secure an income (or an adequate income) from employment and facilitate them in taking up relevant employment, training, education or development opportunities as appropriate.

GOAL 3: CHILDREN

To ensure the well-being of all children through income support that assists with child-rearing costs in general, including those which arise in circumstances of particular need or disadvantage.

GOAL 4: COVERAGE, ACCESS AND ENTITLEMENT

To ensure that the range and level of social security coverage is appropriate to the social and economic circumstances of different groups, that the services for which people are eligible are readily accessible and delivered in an efficient, effective and integrated way, through direct provision to our customers and by supporting agencies in providing services to our customers.

GOAL 5: POVERTY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND FAMILIES

To support and promote families and to attain better outcomes in tackling poverty and achieving a more inclusive society through co-ordinating, developing and implementing national anti-poverty strategies, and through the provision of income and other support services for people in debt or at risk of experiencing hardship.

GOAL 6: THE DEPARTMENT AND ITS STAFF

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

GOAL 1: RETIRED AND OLDER PEOPLE



To ensure adequate, secure and sustainable pensions for retired and older persons and provide additional services in response to changing needs which allow them to maintain a reasonable standard of living on attaining retirement age.

The current pensions strategy, which is broadly based on the report of the Pensions Board on the National Pensions Policy Initiative, is that this goal will be met by a combination of State and private provision, with the State through the social welfare pensions and the household benefits package meeting basic adequacy requirements; and the earnings related element being met by a significant increase in supplementary pensions coverage, on a voluntary basis.

The Government is committed to increasing the rate of social welfare pensions to €200 per week by 2007. There is a target to increase supplementary coverage to 70% of those aged over 30 in the workplace; the current coverage rate is 59% so there is a significant gap to bridge.

Policy in relation to pensions is developed on a partnership basis taking account of the views of the Pensions Board, which has a strategic role in advising the Minister and is representative of the main stakeholders in the area, including the social partners and pensioners

The current pensions environment is far from benign and there are significant challenges in meeting our goal, which include the following:

- ❑ Social welfare pensions are flat rate, which means that there is significant reliance on the role of supplementary pensions to meet the goal.
- ❑ Supplementary pensions coverage rates need to increase: currently these are - 52.4% (overall); men 56%; women 47%; employees 54%; self-employed 43%.
- ❑ take-up of Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs) needs to improve dramatically from the current level of 46,300 holders.
- ❑ the % of the population aged over 65 is forecast to increase from 11.2% at present to 28% in 2056.
- ❑ There have already been significant improvements in longevity with average life expectancy at age 65 expected to further increase by 4.8 and 5.3 years for men and women respectively by 2031. Currently life expectancy at 65 is 15 and 19 years respectively.
- ❑ The financing and funding of supplementary pension arrangements are under considerable pressure due to:
 - * Falling market/equity values in recent years, which reduced pension scheme assets by over half their expected value over the last 3 to 4 years.
 - * Increasing liabilities due to a combination of improved longevity, rising cost of annuities, and higher than assumed level of benefits, usually due to improvements made when schemes were in surplus.
 - * Overall, the level of contributions by employees and employers to defined contribution and PRSA arrangements are too low, leading to an estimated current pensions savings gap of €6 billion equivalent to 11% of average income (source: IIF).
 - * There is a significant shift from defined benefit to defined contributions/PRSA arrangements, whereby the investment risk is shifted from the employer to the employee. Many defined benefit arrangements are closed to new employees.
 - * The combined effect of falling asset values and increasing liabilities is particularly difficult for defined benefit arrangements, 57% of which at present fail to meet the Funding Standard set out in the Pensions Act, 1990.

Under this Strategy, the Department, in consultation with the Pensions Board, will review the current

pensions strategy and bring forward a report for Government in line with a statutory requirement.

The table below sets out the current numbers in receipt of Social Welfare Pensions and expenditure.

Social Welfare Payment	Number of recipients at 31 December 2004	Expenditure (2004) € 000's
Old Age (Con) Pension	118,383	1,050,348
Retirement Pension	88,870	983,706
Old Age (N/Con) Pension	85,172	599,988
Free Travel & Household Benefits	1,535,843	313,621

The following gives relevant details in relation to Occupational Pensions for 2003 (most recent published figures).

Supplementary Pensions	
Defined Benefit members	483,000
Defined Contribution members	241,300

PRSAs

At the end of 2004 there were 46,257 PRSA accounts with an asset value of €178.5 million.

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Achieve a high level of customer satisfaction by delivering social insurance and assistance pensions and additional services to a high standard.</p>	<p>Decide and deliver on entitlements in a timely, accurate and efficient manner in line with customer needs and expectations and in accordance with the terms of the Customer Charter and Customer Service Plan.</p> <p>Implement new Service Delivery Modernisation (SDM) programme to enhance administrative efficiency and improve customer service in relation to pensions.</p> <p>Conduct customer surveys at appropriate intervals.</p> <p>Elicit customer satisfaction with service through other feedback channels.</p> <p>Implement appropriate control measures based on an assessment of risk at earliest point of claim cycle and provide effective control measures during the lifetime of claims</p>	<p>Targets in Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan met.</p> <p>SDM targets</p> <p>Customer survey responses meet targeted satisfaction levels</p> <p>Assessments of control risks completed and measures implemented.</p>
<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Ensure the overall pension system provides a reasonable level of replacement income for retired and older persons and their survivors by</p> <p>(A) Providing adequate and sustainable State pensions, and</p>	<p>Increase social welfare pensions in line with Government policies and the requirements of financial sustainability and having particular regard to the benchmark pension level of €200 per week by 2007.</p> <p>Consider provision of targeted supports for groups of older people considered to have the highest risk of poverty.</p>	<p>Bring forward and implement Budget proposals</p> <p>Attain target rate €200 for basic pension by 2007</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>(B) ensuring extensive, secure and adequate supplementary pension provision, in consultation with the Pensions Board</p>	<p>Increase the Qualified Adult Allowance (QAA) to the level of the OANCP in line with Government commitment; and facilitate the direct payment of the allowance to spouses and partners, by agreement, in accordance with the recommendations of the PPF Group on Administrative Individualisation.</p>	<p>QAA rates (over 66 years) increased to the level of the OANCP; and availability of separate payment arrangements</p>
	<p>Ensure qualifying conditions for contributory pensions are appropriate and strike a reasonable balance between the level of contributions made and benefits paid.</p>	<p>Complete and publish a review of qualifying conditions for OACP and RP in 2005.</p>
	<p>Ensure older workers have sufficient social insurance coverage.</p>	<p>Examine paid contribution levels among older workers in light of 2012 requirements.</p>
	<p>Monitor pensioners' incomes generally to ensure the current system has the capacity to deliver a reasonable replacement income.</p>	<p>At risk of poverty rates for older people; and replacement incomes.</p>
	<p>Increase the number of people with adequate supplementary pensions coverage in line with Government targets.</p>	<p>The extent to which progress has been made toward the Government target of 70% of those in employment, over 30 years of age, with supplementary pensions coverage. The level of contributions being made to Defined Contribution/PRsAs.</p>
<p>Continue the National Pensions Awareness Campaign to encourage people to participate in private/occupational schemes.</p>	<p>The extent to which levels of awareness in the target group in relation to the need for pension provision have been raised.</p>	

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>As far as is possible, maintain defined benefit provision by ensuring that regulation of such schemes strikes a balance between protecting members' benefits and not discouraging employers from maintaining/creating schemes.</p> <p>Undertake major review of the overall supplementary pensions strategy as required by the Pensions Act, 1990 and recommend alternative approaches, if considered necessary. This review will address the capacity of the current pensions strategy to deliver on pensions objectives, in particular in relation to coverage, adequacy and financing.</p> <p>Prepare update reports on pensions under EU Open Method of Co-ordination.</p>	<p>Examine the review of the Funding Standard submitted by the Pensions Board and implement changes, if considered appropriate (2005).</p> <p>Complete review of overall supplementary pensions strategy and set out implementation plan in 2006.</p> <p>Report to EU by June 2005</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>Implement relevant national and international legislation.</p>	<p>Implement EU Directive 2003/41/EC on the activities and supervision of Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provision (IORPs) by September 2005</p> <p>Amendments of Pensions Act, 1990 and Regulations, as required.</p>	<p>Relevant legislation implemented/transposed on time</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 4</p> <p>Simplify the regulatory environment in which occupational/personal pensions operate.</p>	<p>Support all stakeholders through ongoing programme of simplification.</p>	<p>Appropriate simplification proposals implemented.</p>
<p>Objective 5</p> <p>Review and develop the opportunities for improved service to customers of Household Benefits Package and Free Travel.</p>	<p>Support the extension of access by customers to free travel by continuing to support the Rural Transport Initiative, operated by the Department of Transport.</p> <p>Work with Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) and the Rail Procurement Agency (RPA) to ensure that pensioners and other eligible categories can avail of integrated Free Travel facilities.</p> <p>Advance discussions with the Department for Regional Development in Northern Ireland with a view to implementing the commitment to the introduction of an All-Ireland Free Travel scheme for pensioners and other eligible groups, as contained in the Programme for Government.</p> <p>Taking into account the opportunities presented by deregulation, continue to extend choice of service provider to customers eligible for the household benefits package in the telecommunications and energy areas.</p>	<p>Scheme progressed.</p> <p>Choice of service provider in telecommunications area extended to mobile phones</p> <p>Choice of service provider in energy area to take account of liberalisation of the electricity and gas markets regulation in the field of electricity and gas (2005-2007)</p>

GOAL 2: PEOPLE OF WORKING AGE



To provide income supports and access to relevant services to people of working age who cannot secure an income (or an adequate income) from employment and facilitate them in taking up relevant employment, training, education or development opportunities as appropriate.

The Department's customers include large numbers of people of working age. The numbers on each of the main schemes is set out in the table below; a more detailed breakdown of the recipients of all of the Department's schemes is at Appendix 1.

Social Welfare Payment	Number of recipients at 31 December 2004	Expenditure (2004) €'000
Unemployment Benefit (UB)/ Unemployment Assistance (UA) and Pre-Retirement Allowance (PRETA).	142,767	1,164,087
Employment supports ¹	40,216	238,111
One-parent Family Payment (OPFP) and similar payments ²	92,330	795,565
Maternity and related	10,382	122,181
Disability Benefit (DB)/Invalidity Pension (IP)	114,590	966,372
Disability Allowance (DA)	72,976	544,489
Carers Allowance/carers benefit	23,709	217,975

1. Includes: Back to Work Allowance Employee, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, Self-employed First Year, Self-employed Years 2-4, Back to Education Allowance, Part-time Job Incentive Scheme, Family Income Supplement, Farm Assist.

2. Includes: OPFP, Deserted Wife's Benefit, Deserted Wife's Allowance, Prisoner's Wife's Allowance.

OECD data show that despite the fall in unemployment in the 1990s, the percentage of the population of working age dependent on social welfare payments has hardly changed. There has, however, been a shift in the overall composition of this group; the number of unemployed people has fallen, while the numbers receiving payments related to lone parenthood and illness/disability are increasing.

We are committed to delivering income support schemes to all customers who qualify in an efficient and customer-friendly way. In the previous Strategy Statement, attention was drawn to the importance, in addition to income support, of helping welfare customers to get back into employment, education or training where this is appropriate. Indeed, for many years the Department has seen this as part of its role. Programmes such as Family Income Supplement (FIS), the Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) and the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) are examples of specific supports to people to access or remain in work. Following review, these schemes have been revised to make them more focused on those most in need of supports.

The Department also has a network of facilitators throughout the country, whose role is to inform and encourage unemployed people and lone parents to avail of the wide range of incentives and options available from the Department and otherwise. While the scale and level of support which the Department can give directly in this regard is limited, significant results have been achieved in co-operation, where appropriate, with other agencies, e.g. FÁS, and this co-operation will be further developed in the future.

Under the Employment Action Plan (EAP) the Department provides referrals of unemployed customers on the Live Register (LR) to FÁS; in addition, the Department interacts with FÁS through the High Supports Process (HSP) in relation to customers categorised as “non progression ready” through the EAP process. These programmes are aimed at assisting people to access work or, where necessary, training or education to improve their employment prospects.

To date, most of the emphasis in this area has been on customers on the Live Register. As is clear from the table above, however, there are large numbers of customers of working age who are in receipt of other income-maintenance payments; many of these may benefit from suitable supports. The Department’s activation measures, therefore, need to cover other categories such as lone parents and people with disabilities. In this regard, we are conscious of the different needs of the different categories of customers.

People with illnesses or disabilities constitute a diverse group, ranging from those who are temporarily ill (who will return to work within a short time without any active intervention) to those for whom full-time or any work may not be an immediate option. For people with disabilities, interventions are required which respect the needs of different categories, which are integrated across agencies and which serve to reduce the likelihood of lifelong welfare dependency. Any interventions must be sensitive to the circumstances of each customer. We will work with other agencies where appropriate to help these customers achieve their potential and we will deliver income supports to these groups in a manner that facilitates their participation in the labour market and in wider society.

People with caring responsibilities may require supports to facilitate their re-entry to the workplace when the caring period has finished. In the case of people getting One Parent Family Payment (OPFP), not all may be in a position to take up employment. It is clear, however, that many would wish to work and need to be afforded the opportunity and appropriate incentives to do so. There can be a complex set of factors involved, including age of the child(ren), availability of childcare, and the person’s level of education and training. At different stages, different interventions may be appropriate. The programme for the localisation of the OPFP, under which claims for these payments will in future be dealt with in the local offices rather than in one central location, will enable more direct contact and interaction with lone parents and a better focus on their needs and the possibilities locally of addressing them. Interventions and supports are also provided to assist people whose caring role has ceased, to enable them access the labour market.

The Department’s role in relation to the broad groups encompassed here is fourfold:

- to continue to develop income and related supports to an increasing number of customers;
- To review and update scheme rules and conditions, having regard in particular to the need to remove barriers to return to work;
- To deliver as much direct support as possible in helping people access employment, training etc. and work with other appropriate agencies in this regard;
- To support people in delivering on their caring responsibilities.

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Achieve a high level of customer satisfaction by delivering social insurance and assistance payments and additional services to a high standard.</p>	<p>Decide and deliver on entitlements in a timely, accurate and efficient manner, in line with customer needs and expectations and in accordance with the terms of the Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan.</p> <p>Improve services to customers through service delivery modernisation (SDM) programme.</p> <p>Undertake a national customer satisfaction survey</p> <p>Implement appropriate control measures based on an assessment of risk at earliest point of claim cycle and provide effective control measures during the lifetime of claims</p>	<p>Targets in Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan met.</p> <p>Complete relevant phases of SDM programme within relevant deadlines.</p> <p>Benchmark service delivery improvements arising from the programme.</p> <p>Benchmark survey results against delivery outcomes</p> <p>Assessments of control risks completed and measures implemented.</p>
<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Develop specific social welfare schemes for people of working age to ensure that they have an adequate, secure and sustainable income and related supports.</p>	<p>Address Government commitments relating to the Social Welfare system as agreed in 'Sustaining Progress' and Social Partnership agreements.</p> <p>Increase social welfare payments in line with Government policies and the requirements of financial sustainability</p> <p>Develop and implement policies to improve schemes.</p>	<p>Progress in delivering our commitments.</p> <p>'Sustaining Progress' commitments in relation to payment rates met.</p> <p>Policy proposals implemented in the context of annual Budget and otherwise.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>Monitor, analyse and report on labour market & active labour market trends.</p> <p>Monitor and carry out expenditure reviews as appropriate for specific income support schemes to ensure that adequate, secure and sustainable income levels apply.</p> <p>Incorporation of activation/employment objectives in the course of scheme reviews.</p> <p>Complete Expenditure Reviews of BTEA scheme and Atypical Employment in 2005 and consider implementation of recommendations.</p> <p>Implement relevant EU directives and relevant delegated legislation.</p>	<p>Expenditure reviews completed and recommendations implemented.</p> <p>Revised scheme.</p> <p>Relevant legislation scheduled and transposed in appropriate timeframes.</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>Engage meaningfully with persons of working age, particularly marginalised and excluded groups, and provide services directly and in co-operation with other relevant agencies to encourage and support these people in taking up relevant work, training, education or development opportunities.</p>	<p>Support continued operation of the EAP and extend provision to those persons not already covered.</p> <p>Consolidate and deepen our involvement in the HSP, provision of services within HSP to non-LR customers on an agreed, incremental basis.</p> <p>Use information gathered in the context of this activation to identify further supports needed for inactive groups.</p>	<p>Monitor transactions at regional and other levels and report on these.</p> <p>Provisions of EAP to customers not already covered during 2005 implemented.</p> <p>HSP consolidated and expanded to cover non- LR cases.</p>

Objective

Activities

Key Performance Indicators

Provision of employment support services through D/SFA facilitators.

Number of persons on LR activated.

LR exit rates.

Examine potentials of referrals to existing guidance services.

In consultation with FÁS develop a programme of interventions for non-EAP customers.

The levels of participation of relevant groups or individuals in activation.

Examine enhancing role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and others in supplying interventions to marginalised customers.

Special Projects funding to deliver relevant interventions to marginalized groups and individuals.

Co-operation with all departments and agencies to ensure that schemes designed to increase labour market activity are efficient.

Department liaisons in place.

Enhance the nature and quality of data exchanges with FÁS in regard to the processes of the EAP.

Development of shared data with FÁS facilitated.

Effective networking at appropriate levels.

Common Registration system developed.

Ensure that indebtedness does not act as a barrier to persons seeking to maximise labour market activity.

Liaise with, and support Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) projects in this regard.

Fully develop potential of EQUAL initiative and seek to mainstream appropriate interventions

Support relevant projects receiving funding under EQUAL II initiative.

Explore potential of direct, or partnered, provision of interventions in next phase of European Human Resource Development Operation Plan element of the NDP.

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>In addition to the above, particular supports will be provided to:</p> <p>(A) People who are unemployed</p>	<p>Carry out project to evaluate the effectiveness of profiling of claimants to unemployment payments to identify priority groups for supports and examine the potential of applicability of profiling to customers of other schemes.</p> <p>Participate in inter-departmental review of supports to the long-term unemployed.</p>	<p>Complete project by 2006.</p> <p>Implement profiling for unemployed customers.</p> <p>Recommendations considered.</p>
<p>(B) People with disabilities</p> <p>Ensure that our schemes and services which support people with disabilities do so in a manner which facilitates their full participation in society and which meets the mainstreaming principle of the equality agenda.</p>	<p>Initiate a consultative process which will pro-actively seek the views of people with disabilities on the Department's Outline Sectoral Plan published in September 2004 in conjunction with the Disability Bill 2004.</p> <p>Ensure that customers of illness related payments are facilitated in maximising employability and labour market participation.</p>	<p>Publication and laying before the Dail of the final version of the Department's Sectoral Plan in accordance with the provisions of the Disability Bill 2004 when enacted.</p> <p>Ringfence certain interventions for non-EAP clients with FÁS.</p> <p>Project put in place on young persons receiving DA in conjunction with FÁS in 2005.</p> <p>Projects to increase labour market participation of certain DB customers consolidated and expanded.</p> <p>Potential synergies emerging from both of above projects explored.</p> <p>Outcomes of these projects benchmarked against existing approaches.</p> <p>EAP extended to PRETA.</p> <p>Status of PRETA reactivation reviewed and new approaches implemented.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>(C) Lone Parents</p> <p>Examine ways in which obstacles to employment for lone parents can be removed so that this group can be facilitated and incentivised to take up employment, training and development opportunities.</p>	<p>Work closely with all relevant Departments and Agencies to identify and develop cross-cutting initiatives.</p> <p>Systematically engage with certain categories of OPFP customers to identify and address employability issues.</p>	<p>Action plan aimed at improving labour market participation, training, and achieving better quality jobs for lone parents.</p> <p>More focused interaction with lone parents at local level.</p> <p>Referral of lone parents to FÁS Employment Services.</p> <p>Referral of lone parents to NGOs.</p> <p>Inclusion of lone parents in HSP activities.</p>
<p>(D) Older persons</p>	<p>Extend EAP to PRETA recipients not previously covered by the programme and review status of the PRETA scheme in the context of an activation approach.</p>	<p>Referral of PRETA cases to FÁS.</p>
<p>Objective 4</p> <p>Ensure income supports and associated secondary benefits do not create financial barriers to seeking, accepting or improving employment.</p>	<p>Extend EAP to older workers on LR.</p> <p>Analysis in relation to incentive effects of payment levels and structure of schemes along with assessment of impact of such traps on actual participation activity. Provide information on findings to policy makers.</p> <p>Address critical unemployment, inactivity and poverty traps through appropriate scheme changes or the provision of in-work supports.</p> <p>By working cross-departmentally, seek to identify and address wider poverty traps beyond the social welfare system (such as through the working group on the cost of disability).</p>	<p>Over 55s included in EAP referrals.</p> <p>Trends in poverty, unemployment and inactivity traps.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 5</p> <p>Ensure that payments and supports to carers are efficient and effective, recognizing their needs and adequately addressing poverty and social exclusion and are adaptable to the needs of carers in a changing care environment.</p>	<p>Improve income support payments for carers in line with the commitments in the Programme for Government.</p> <p>Introduce new respite care payment as announced in Budget 2005.</p> <p>Monitor issues in the care environment generally to ensure that the current system of payments and supports has the capacity to meet the changing needs of carers.</p>	<p>Proposals brought forward and implemented as appropriate.</p> <p>Arrangements in place to make payment in 2005.</p> <p>Review of Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit carried out and appropriate measures put in place.</p>
<p>Objective 6</p> <p>Ensure that a strategy regarding the financing of long-term care is developed.</p>	<p>In consultation with the Department of Health and Children Working Group, set up to examine the strategic policy, cost and service delivery issues associated with the care of older people, report in 2005 and bring forward proposals for implementation, as appropriate.</p>	<p>New strategy to address long-term caring developed.</p>

GOAL 3: CHILDREN



To ensure the well-being of all children through income support that assists with child-rearing costs in general, including those which arise in circumstances of particular need or disadvantage.

D/SFA provides a number of direct supports for children. They can be classified under income supports, supports for participation in education and caring supports. Income supports include child benefit payments, additions to primary social welfare payments to reflect child dependents and Family Income Supplement (FIS). Educational supports include the back to school clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA) and funding of the school meals programme. Caring supports include orphans payments, maternity/adoptive benefits, health and safety benefit. The social welfare system also provides credits for periods of parental leave and provides that periods spent as homemaker does not unduly affect entitlement to pensions.

The Department also provides supports which while not specifically targeted at children, can indirectly contribute to the welfare of children. These include payments to carers, lone parents payments, qualified adults allowances and family and parenting supports.

The main form of support for children provided by the D/SFA is child income support (taking up an estimated 93% of total direct spending on children). Caring supports account for 6% (mainly maternity benefit) while the remaining 1% relates to educational participation supports. The level of spending on child related supports has increased significantly in recent years (from 16% in 1997 to an expected 20% in 2005). Within child income support the proportion taken by universal child benefit has increased significantly (from 54% of spending on children in 1997 to an expected 77% in 2005).

The table below summarises the main payments and expenditure in 2004 provided to families with children through the social welfare system.

Social Welfare Payment	Number of Child Beneficiaries at 31 December 2004	Expenditure 2004 €000's
Child Benefit (CB)	1,051,005	1,765,117
Child Dependant Additions to primary social welfare payments (CDA)	357,405	326,500 ¹
Family Income Supplement (FIS)	30,000	55,812 ²
Back to school, clothing and footwear allowance (BSCFA)	153,409	17,028
School meals programme	50,800 ³ 41,300 ⁴	4,647
Orphans payments	2,267	12,800

1 Estimated. Amount already included in relevant primary payments.

2 This amount already included in Employment Supports in Goal 2.

3. Urban School Meals Scheme

4. Local Projects

The strategic direction for child income support in recent years has been to substantially increase the level of resources to address the needs of families with children, while at the same time restructure these payments to be more universal at the aggregate level. This Strategy is reflected in a substantial increase in resources in the child benefit scheme, including an additional expenditure of €1.27 billion on child benefit when the current programme of multi-annual increases is completed.

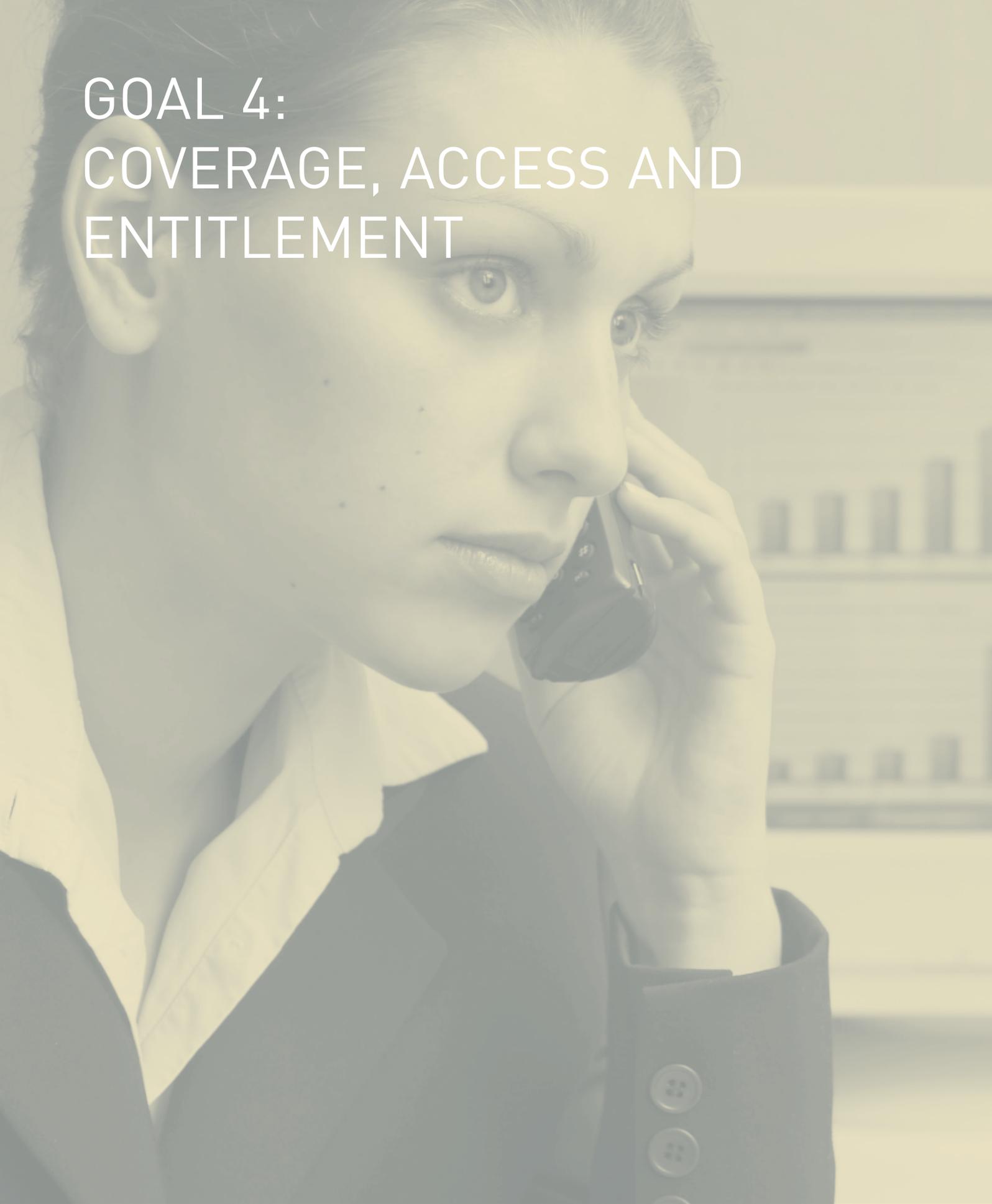
The main reason for the pursuit of this strategic i.e. more universal approach is that while selective payments such as child dependant increases with social welfare payments can target resources at low-income families, they can have an effect of introducing barriers to persons taking up employment, thereby making it more difficult to escape poverty for families in particular. Hence, the child income support strategy has been seen to contribute to both horizontal and vertical objectives.

Following the identification of child poverty as one of the special initiatives in the most recent social partnership agreement, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) has been asked to examine the possibility of merging child dependant increases and family income supplement to produce a targeted second tier child income support payment while ensuring that barriers to employment are not worsened. The outcome of this process will provide an opportunity to re-examine the main pillars of child income support policy over the period of the Statement of Strategy.

The strategic issues for support for children which arise over the period covered by the statement relate to the level of support which will be provided, and the composition of that support. The level of support will be determined by a number of factors in particular the overall level of budgetary support provided to the social welfare budget, the degree of prioritisation of child income support in the overall allocation and the commitments in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and in “Sustaining Progress”. The composition of that support will be driven by the overall balance between universal and selectivist approaches, by the extent to which activist measures under other headings could offset the potential disincentive effects of a selectivist approach (see Chapter 2) and finally by the range of policy instruments which exist to deliver child income support more selectively.

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Achieve a high level of customer satisfaction by delivering income support for families and children to a high standard.</p>	<p>Decide and deliver on entitlements in a timely, accurate and efficient manner, in line with customer needs and expectations and in accordance with the terms of the Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan.</p> <p>Efficient delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CB and CDA payments. - BSCFA scheme. - FIS payments. - Orphans payments. <p>Implement appropriate control measures based on an assessment of risk at earliest point of claim cycle and provide effective control measures during the lifetime of claims.</p>	<p>Targets in Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan met.</p> <p>Meet payment delivery targets.</p> <p>Assessments of control risks completed and measures implemented.</p>
<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Ensure the range of income support schemes for families and children provides adequate help in circumstances of particular need or disadvantage.</p>	<p>Complete multi-annual programme of increases in CB payment.</p> <p>Provide appropriate targeted supports for families with children who are considered to have the highest risk of poverty.</p> <p>Ensure that FIS continues to provide an adequate incentive to parents to take up and/or remain in employment.</p> <p>Maximise FIS take up through employment support services and targeted information programmes with other agencies.</p>	<p>Target levels of payments achieved.</p> <p>Value of CDA/CB maintained as 33/35% of main payment.</p> <p>Bring forward and implement Budget proposals in relation to rates and conditions.</p> <p>Take-up levels increased.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>Participate as appropriate in NESC review of child income support arrangements.</p> <p>Ensure that low income families have sufficient assistance with the cost of school clothing and footwear so that they do not suffer undue financial hardship in meeting those costs.</p> <p>As provided for in the Programme for Government, continue with establishment of the new targeted scheme of school meals for disadvantaged pupils, which will combine existing schemes and, in cooperation with the Department of Education and Science, integrate the scheme with other relevant school-based initiatives.</p> <p>Continue rationalisation of state support mechanisms for access to childcare and crèche facilities by families in need, in consultation with relevant Departments.</p> <p>Examine, in consultation with the Department of Health and Children, the rationalisation of State support to children in respect of whom orphans payments are made.</p>	<p>Policy on Child Income Support developed.</p> <p>Implement recommendations of BSCFA review.</p> <p>Implement recommendations of the School Meals programme review.</p> <p>Liaison set up and supports rationalised.</p> <p>Completion of review by end 2005.</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>Improve the level of information available about the circumstances of children in families in order to better inform policymaking in the area of child poverty.</p>	<p>Undertake, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Children and the National Children's Office, the National Longitudinal Study of children, as a major source of quality information on children and families.</p>	<p>Commencement of the project mid-2005.</p>



GOAL 4: COVERAGE, ACCESS AND ENTITLEMENT

To ensure that the range and level of social security coverage is appropriate to the social and economic circumstances of different groups, that the services for which people are eligible are readily accessible and delivered in an efficient, effective and integrated way, through direct provision to our customers and by supporting agencies in providing services to our customers.

Income support provision in Ireland takes the form of

- Universal payments such as Child Benefit (CB).
- Insurance based payments which depend on payment of Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions.
- Assistance based payments based on fulfilment of a means test.

A range of secondary benefits is provided with insurance and assistance payments and Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) provides a means tested safety net payment.

There has always been strong support for the social insurance model with social insurance coverage for certain payments being extended to additional groups over recent years, the introduction of new benefits and the reduction in the real level of earnings required to secure an insurable employment record. There are a number of strategic questions concerning social insurance which will continue to be addressed e.g. whether the insurance base of the system should be strengthened, whether new contingencies need to be provided for, whether the conditions for access need to be changed, whether access should be broadened further, whether aspects of the system should be privatised etc. However, the main focus of attention over the period of the current Strategy will be ensuring that the current system adequately reflects the changing labour market conditions and the requirements to balance work and caring responsibilities.

In relation to social assistance the policy direction has been to reduce the level of dependence on assistance payments as social insurance coverage has expanded. The social assistance system, like the social insurance system, is contingency based, which means that payments can be targeted and adapted to the needs of particular groups. This also involves a high level of complexity arising from different rates, means tests, disregards, thresholds etc. Problems arising from the contingency based nature of the system have been highlighted from time to time and this is an aspect which also needs to be addressed.

The future structure of social protection and in that context, the appropriate balance between social insurance, social assistance and universalist coverage and the role of service provision in the context of social protection are issues currently being addressed in the context of an important forthcoming study by the National Economic and Social Council (NESCC) on the concept of a “Developmental Welfare State”.

The large and diverse customer base which the Department serves has a major influence on the design of our customer service programmes. It is essential that those services are constantly monitored and updated so as to respond effectively to the changing needs of our customers.

Consulting with and listening to our customers is an integral part of our business and is the key to informing our service delivery approach. We utilise a number of different mechanisms to gather customer feedback, including customer panels involving direct contact with customers, touch screen surveys at our local offices, scheme specific postal surveys, the comments and complaints system, and independent national customer satisfaction surveys. The Department’s Customer Charter makes a clear statement about the standards and services our customers can expect. Those commitments will be subject to ongoing evaluation and will be reported on in the context of the Department’s Annual Reports.

The administration of the present system of social insurance, social assistance and other schemes involves an infrastructure of recording and maintenance of records and arrangements for means testing and verification of circumstances, deciding on and maintaining entitlements in the light of changes in circumstances and making payments as appropriate. All of this must be done effectively and efficiently in accordance with social welfare legislation and the requirements of good public administration. The range of activities which this involves and the strategies for improvement in relation to them are also outlined in this chapter.

In order to manage effectively the wide range of schemes (which affect most of the population at some stage over their lifetimes), the Department has built up expertise in centralised identity management. As a result, the Department is in a position to provide identity-related services to other agencies in accordance with legislation. The most visible aspect of these services to date has been the facilitation of agencies in their use of the Personal Public Service Number (PPSN). Building on this set of services, the Department is constructing Public Service Identity (PSI) services to assist agencies in basic identity management.

The Department is also taking a lead role in developing the Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE). This programme of work will further build on PSI Services to provide the basis for a consistent set of registration and authentication services for customer interaction with public services. The output of this programme will, inter alia, form the basis for the delivery of on-line services by the forthcoming Public Service Broker (PSB), being developed by the Reach agency.

The overall Government strategy is to realise the potential of the Information Society through innovation and modernisation of public services. The Department is currently working with the REACH agency, which reports to the Department, to support the delivery of Phase 1 of the PSB. Work is also under way to identify services for future online delivery via the Broker so as to deliver value for money by prioritising those services which yield most benefit by being online, and to provide customers with a range of electronic payment options for added convenience.

Following an extensive examination of how best to deliver its own services in the future, the Department has embarked on a Service Delivery Modernisation (SDM) programme, the aim being to deliver a high quality, proactive service to customers. The SDM programme is an ambitious multi-year programme of change, using modern systems to facilitate more customer centred services and also support e-government strategies.

The first phase of the SDM programme has been successfully implemented for Child Benefit. This phase brought together a number of eGovernment projects initiated by the Department to integrate applications for the purpose of delivering significant improvements in customer service and in the administration of services.

The projects which played a part in the initiative were:

- ❑ The Civil Registration Modernisation programme;
- ❑ The development of the REACH Inter Agency Messaging Service;
- ❑ The automatic establishment of Public Service Identity (PSI) in respect of children born in Ireland;
- ❑ The development of an internal D/SFA messaging hub;
- ❑ The Department's SDM programme.

The five projects combined so that the registration of a birth automatically results in the establishment of the child's Public Service Identity and the payment of Child Benefit.

The second phase of the SDM programme is now underway for Retirement and Old Age Contributory pension schemes together with related household benefits and Bereavement Grant.

In bringing in new technology we will be conscious of the needs of our different customer groups, in particular, older people as they may be less familiar with new technology and may need particular help and support in using it.

The challenge over the coming years is to progress the implementation of the SDM programme to all the Department's services.

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Ensure that the coverage of the Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) system is appropriate to the respective circumstances of employed, self-employed and other categories.</p>	<p>Review the current legislative approach to the social insurance classification of employees and self employed in the light of emerging employment arrangements e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PRSI status of Directors - Partnership status of individuals with particular reference to family 'employments' - Subsidiary employments (definition in legislation of) <p>Review coverage of the PRSI system for self-employed persons in terms of the risks to be covered.</p> <p>Identify possible insurance needs in relation to contingencies not covered by the PRSI system.</p> <p>Review position of Homemakers.</p> <p>Review of social insurance unemployment coverage in relation to part-time and atypical employment.</p> <p>Review social insurance coverage in the context of changing work and family responsibilities.</p>	<p>To be completed by September 2005.</p> <p>Recommendations brought forward.</p> <p>Needs identified and recommendations brought forward.</p> <p>Covered in review of qualifying conditions for Old Age Pension (OAP) and Retirement Pensions (RP) to be completed in 2005.</p> <p>Report in 2005 and proposals for change.</p>
<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Ensure effective administration of PRSI-related entitlements</p>	<p>In co-operation with Revenue Commissioners, manage the operation of the annual PRSI collection system and minimise the level of incomplete or incorrect returns.</p>	<p>Dates of receipt of end of year tapes.</p> <p>% of deficient records corrected and updated.</p> <p>Credited contributions updated.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>Maintain comprehensive and accessible record of contributions.</p> <p>Set up special data unit to examine the completeness, accuracy and general status of the social insurance records of customers approaching retirement age.</p> <p>Improve acquisition and provision of contribution details from/to other countries under EU etc. regulations.</p> <p>Improve social insurance arrangements for workers moving to/from other EU countries.</p> <p>Improve the process of refunding PRSI contributions overpaid.</p>	<p>Clearance of requests for contribution records.</p> <p>Speed of response to telephone or written queries.</p> <p>Complete record available in advance of person reaching pension age.</p> <p>A limited electronic data exchange facility will be developed and implemented on a pilot basis by end-2008</p> <p>Clearance of claims for PRSI refunds to achieve service targets.</p> <p>Implementation of new computerised refund system.</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>Ensure that the rules for entitlement to social assistance payments are appropriate to the circumstances of claimants, are easy to understand and are applied in a fair and consistent manner.</p>	<p>Review the contingency basis of social assistance and put forward any proposals for change arising.</p> <p>Develop proposals for simplification of aspects of the means test.</p> <p>Ensure that means-testing rules are consistent with activation and support for work policies.</p>	<p>Proposals brought forward.</p> <p>Proposals brought forward for annual budget.</p> <p>Rules reviewed and revised.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 4</p> <p>Ensure that, for entitlements that are wholly or partly medically based, the arrangements for medical examination and assessment are of a high standard and are applied in a consistent and effective way.</p>	<p>Review the existing arrangements for medical review and assessment and bring forward proposals for reform as appropriate.</p>	<p>Review completed end 2005.</p> <p>Implementation of recommendations.</p>
<p>Objective 5</p> <p>Deliver (and support the delivery of) a quality, comprehensive and up-to-date information service to internal and external customers, other state agencies and the wider voluntary and community sector.</p>	<p>Continue to develop the delivery of information services through appropriate channels and outlets and in line with the Information Services Strategy published in March 2003.</p> <p>Ensure that our customers are made aware of their entitlements and their responsibilities when they apply to us for our services.</p> <p>Ensure that changes and improvements to services are advertised and/or publicized as they occur.</p> <p>Ensure that our staff are fully informed, trained and supported in delivering our information services.</p> <p>Ensure that staff are provided with comprehensive information in relation to EU Regulations and bilateral Agreements and adequately supported in implementing these provisions.</p> <p>Provide a comprehensive information service on social security rights of citizens moving within the enlarged Europe.</p>	<p>Range of information products edited, updated and revised and new products introduced to meet new and emerging needs.</p> <p>Training plan specifically designed for the needs of Information Officers.</p> <p>Update existing guidelines on the application of EU Regulations 1408/71 and 574/72 and bilateral Agreements.</p> <p>Publication of a comprehensive guide to social security rights for people moving within the EU.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	Consult with customers with a view to further improving the content and design of information products.	Number of customer surveys and customer panels put in place to obtain feedback on information products.
	Continue to develop the relationship with voluntary and community groups and other independent information providers and support them as appropriate.	
	Provide a quality information service through Irish in line with the requirements of legislation.	Progressive translation into Irish of all written information products.
	Maximise the use of new and emerging technologies in terms of enhanced information dissemination with particular reference to managing, upgrading and promoting usage of the Department's website.	Strategic review of the Department's website carried out.
	Continue to liaise with Comhairle, the national information agency under the aegis of the Department, and support the implementation of its Strategic Plan 2003 - 2006.	Service Level Agreement with Comhairle put in place and implemented on an ongoing basis.

Objective 6

Promote and develop a strong customer service culture through the Department and the agencies under its aegis and deliver continuous improvement in customer service.

Delivery of services to customers with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum of delay.

Maintain a climate of mutual respect between staff and customer.

Evaluate and report on progress being made under (i) the twelve Quality Customer Service Principles, (ii) the commitments in the Customer Charter, and (iii) the Customer Action Plan 2004-2007.

Staff consulted and involved in implementing new developments in quality customer service.

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>Ensure meaningful consultation with and participation by customers in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.</p> <p>Develop and enhance the Department's payment delivery services.</p> <p>Support the agencies under the aegis of the Department in meeting their obligations in implementing the principles of quality customer service.</p>	<p>Customer panels set up, surveys completed and comments and criticisms reviewed.</p> <p>Development of a Payment Delivery Strategy in line with overall Government policy.</p> <p>Publication of Customer Action Plans and Customer Charters, where appropriate, for the bodies under the aegis of the Department.</p>
<p>Objective 7</p> <p>Provide a satisfactory service in Irish, in line with the requirements under the Official Languages Act.</p>	<p>Prepare and agree a 'scheme' under the Act, and implement the arrangements in the scheme.</p> <p>Implement other requirements of the Act as set out in regulations etc.</p>	<p>Satisfaction among Irish-speaking customers.</p>
<p>Objective 8</p> <p>Develop the Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) programme externally and internally and support the development of an identity policy framework for the governance and delivery of identity management services.</p>	<p>Implement an improved, streamlined and cohesive registration service in line with SAFE recommendations.</p> <p>Complete the SAFE standard and bring recommendations to Government, identify a roadmap for implementation, including convergence plans for existing tokens.</p> <p>Support the implementation of the internal Departmental SAFE programme.</p>	<p>A single pan public service Registration Service agreed and progressed.</p> <p>SAFE handbook completed and agreed by all SAFE members in 2005.</p> <p>A convergence plan and roadmap agreed by Government and implementation underway.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	Further develop and implement proposals for appropriate organisational structures for identity services.	Appropriate governance structure agreed and implementation advanced.
	Support the development of appropriate identity management legislation.	Primary legislation prepared.
	Carry out awareness campaign.	Awareness campaign in place.

Objective 9

Develop and implement efficient and effective customer identity management systems, provide identity management services to external agencies and ensure that security and privacy principles are developed and implemented.

Develop and implement the Customer Object as part of the SDM Programme.	Customer Object developed and implemented.
Develop and roll-out PSI services, via the Reach PSB, as a validation service across public service agencies.	PSI services implemented and in use in public service agencies in 2005.
Provide a support service within CIS to support PSB registration and PSI services.	Customer support services put in place in CIS to support PSB, PSI and data matching services in 2005.
Provide batch data matching and validation services to agencies in accordance with PSI Services Policy.	
Develop PSI services to include an update service for primary identity and contact data, including an address update service.	Update services on PSI developed and in use across public service agencies in 2006.
Develop second generation PSI services based on the Customer Object Development referred to above.	Phase 2 PSI Services developed as part of the Customer Object and implemented.
Implement appropriate security and access policies for PSI services users.	Security and access measures developed and implemented with earlier objectives.
Consult on privacy aspects and incorporate across projects.	

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 10</p> <p>To deliver through the Reach project a standard means of access to public services through the Public Services Broker (PSB).</p>	<p>Secure the organisational and resourcing basis of Reach.</p> <p>Deploy Phase 1 of PSB on a phased basis to be completed by mid 2005.</p> <p>Promote the use of the PSB by public service agencies, by business users and by the public.</p> <p>Further development of the PSB, in consultation with public service agencies, to enhance existing services and integrate additional access channels.</p>	<p>Decision on future role and mandate.</p> <p>Phase 1 deployment.</p> <p>Extent of usage of Broker services.</p>
<p>Objective 11</p> <p>Ensure that customers have access to services through a choice of service delivery channels and continue development of the service delivery modernisation plan for delivery of social welfare services.</p>	<p>Develop services for initial online delivery via the PSB.</p> <p>Initiate a review of service delivery channels having regard to customer service goals and eGovernment objectives and maximize capability of electronic channels.</p> <p>Develop and plan for e-enablement and e-delivery of D/SFA services.</p> <p>Develop a policy for the delivery of D/SFA services in the context of SAFE.</p> <p>Plan, develop and implement a phone strategy for D/SFA.</p>	<p>Initial services online.</p> <p>Channel approach agreed and implementation of plan initiated.</p> <p>D/SFA e-Payments strategy implemented.</p> <p>Electronic data exchange arrangements extended nationally and internationally.</p> <p>eServices plan developed.</p> <p>Internal SAFE Policy developed.</p> <p>D/SFA Phone Strategy defined, developed and implemented.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 12</p> <p>Modernise and improve the delivery of services to the Department's customers through the development and implementation of agile ICT systems and organisational change programmes.</p>	<p>Develop a proactive high quality service for customers.</p> <p>Design, develop and implement new secure ICT systems for long-term pension schemes.</p> <p>Design and implement a programme of organisational change in parallel with ICT development to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new streamlined and integrated work processes • redesigned organisational structures • appropriate performance targets. <p>Promote pension scheme simplification to allow easier access to services for pensioners and more efficient and automated processing of claims.</p> <p>Develop a Customer Service Framework for pension schemes including implementation of proactive pension claim initiation, where possible.</p> <p>Facilitate the development of integrated services in line with the development of the eGovernment agenda and other modernisation projects.</p> <p>Ensure that business requirements, new processes and organisational structures currently being developed, meet the demands of further phases of the SDM programme.</p>	<p>New SDM system, processes and structures, conforming to best practice, in place for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RP/OAP, related Household Benefits/Free Travel and Bereavement Grant by the last quarter of 2005. • Invalidity Pension, Widow/er and Orphans Contributory Pension, related Household Benefits/Free Travel by end 2006 • OAP, Widow/ers and Orphans Non Contributory and Blind Pensions, Carers and DA and related Household Benefits/Free Travel in 2007/2008. <p>Systems, processes and structures developed to deliver services to the highest standards and to support electronic delivery of services</p> <p>Significantly reduced development timeframes for future projects.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 13</p> <p>Ensure access at a local level to a wider range of services and more effective collaboration with other agencies in the delivery of those services.</p>	<p>Deliver One Parent Family Payments (OPFP) through local offices and identify potential for delivery of further services locally.</p> <p>Develop strategy for delivery of SWA more effectively integrated with other services delivered locally.</p>	<p>All OPFP claims administered at Local Office level.</p> <p>Strategy completed and implementation commenced.</p>
<p>Objective 14</p> <p>Ensure that error, fraud and abuse are prevented, detected and deterred by implementing effective risk-based controls of all income support and related expenditure.</p>	<p>Implement 2003 Control Strategy.</p> <p>Ensure fraud and error surveys are an integral part of the Department's control programme.</p> <p>Implement appropriate control measures at earliest point of claim cycle and provide effective control measures during the lifetime of claims.</p> <p>Continue the process of systematic fraud risk assessment of schemes.</p> <p>Publicise detected fraud.</p> <p>Actively pursue the recovery of debt to maximise recovery level, with due regard to value for money and with particular emphasis on recovery for people no longer dependant on welfare payments.</p>	<p>Commitments in Control Strategy delivered.</p> <p>Number of shortcomings detected by audit.</p> <p>Levels of fraud and error and detection realised.</p> <p>At least two fraud and error surveys implemented annually.</p> <p>Control measures implemented.</p> <p>Fraud risk assessments introduced for all major social welfare schemes.</p> <p>Amount of publicity generated.</p> <p>Increase in level of overall debt recovered.</p> <p>Level of debt recovered from debtors not in receipt of welfare payments.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>Control awareness campaign for public and staff to highlight the importance of debt recovery in respect of monies overpaid.</p> <p>Plan, design and implement a new overpayments and debt management computer system and devise and implement new procedures to maximise debt recovery.</p> <p>Maximise the use of information technology for fraud and error detection and data analysis.</p> <p>Enhance co-operation at local and national level with other State agencies, the Health Executive (HSE), local authorities etc. in fraud detection and prevention.</p> <p>Continue to co-operate with other jurisdictions and external organisations as appropriate.</p> <p>Implement improved prosecution policy and support scheme areas in initiating prosecutions in appropriate cases.</p> <p>Examine current review policy for all major social welfare schemes and implement all changes considered necessary.</p>	<p>New computer systems implemented and new procedures in place.</p> <p>Expanded levels of data sharing and establishment of data sharing unit.</p> <p>Arrangements for co-operative working agreed.</p> <p>New initiatives identified and measures of co-operation put into effect.</p> <p>Numbers of prosecutions and outcomes.</p> <p>New risk-based policies devised and implemented.</p>

Objective 15

Ensure maintenance of timely, accurate and efficient systems of decision, appeal and redress for social welfare entitlements.

Training on claim processing and decision making under social welfare legislation.

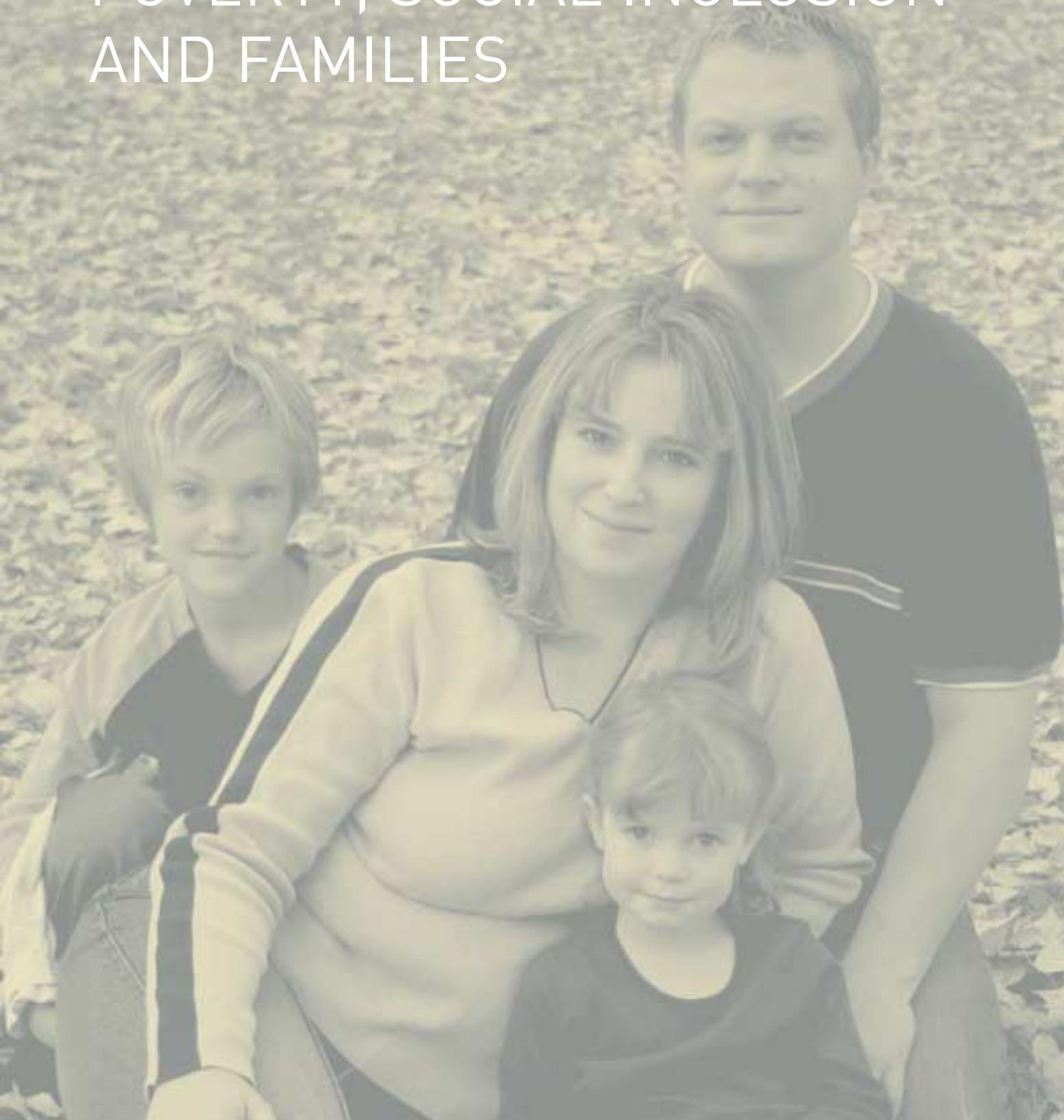
Ensure that proper procedures are applied in determination of entitlements.

Training provided in accordance with business plans.

Procedure corrected where necessary and information training given.

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>Ensure that all customers who receive an adverse decision are advised of their right to have their claim reviewed in the light of further information brought to notice.</p> <p>Co-operate with the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) to ensure that the system of appeal against decisions on entitlement continues to meet the needs of our customers.</p> <p>Co-operate with Ombudsman and other relevant authorities in relation to implementation of proper procedures for decision and redress.</p>	<p>Automatic notifications issued.</p> <p>Timely responses to enquiries.</p>
<p>Objective 16</p> <p>Ensure that the social welfare code meets the requirements of the Equal Status Act, 2000, as amended, and other relevant legislation.</p>	<p>Undertake a comprehensive review of all social welfare schemes, including non-statutory schemes, to identify incompatibilities, if any, with the provisions of the Equal Status Act 2000, as amended.</p> <p>Take account of ongoing work by relevant bodies and of the views of interested parties during the course of the review.</p>	<p>Review completed and plan in place.</p>

GOAL 5: POVERTY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND FAMILIES



To support and promote families and to attain better outcomes in tackling poverty and achieving a more inclusive society through co-ordinating, developing and implementing national anti-poverty strategies, and through the provision of income and other support services for people in debt or at risk of experiencing hardship.

Tackling poverty and building a more inclusive society is a key priority for Government. The Department has a major role to play in achieving this priority by working to attain better outcomes through effective coordination of economic, employment and social policies. This requires a concerted effort across the various policy areas by Government Departments and Agencies, with the support of the social partners, the community and voluntary sector and people experiencing poverty, working together within the wider EU context. The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI), located within D/SFA is the Government Office with overall responsibility for developing, co-ordinating and driving this strategic process. It is also charged with developing technical support functions to assist and strengthen the process. A key challenge for the Office is to ensure that the social inclusion agenda is being implemented, and further developed, at national, regional and local levels of government, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

The Office is driving the implementation of the second National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion, covering the period 2003-2005, which was submitted by Government to the EU in July 2003, as part of an EU-wide effort to make a decisive impact on poverty by 2010. The Plan incorporates the commitments made in the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) – Building an Inclusive Society 2002 to 2007, and the social partnership agreement, “Sustaining Progress”.

The key areas identified for action in the National Action Plan are unemployment, income adequacy, educational disadvantage, health, housing and disadvantaged rural and urban areas. A number of key targets are set out for each of these areas. In addition, account is taken of certain groups who have been identified as particularly vulnerable to being at risk of poverty. These include older people, children, women, people with disabilities and new and emerging groups such as migrants and ethnic minorities.

There are ten staff directly involved in the OSI and these are supported by a number of Social Inclusion Liaison Officers in other Government Departments.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) 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 is a scheme of last resort which ensures that no person has to suffer hardship for want of a minimum income.

The scheme has a number of functions. It provides a guaranteed minimum income to every person in the state; it 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 for these from their own resources.

SWA is administered, under the general direction and control of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, by Community Welfare Officers (CWOs) within the Health Service Executive (HSE). All programme and administration costs are met from the social welfare vote. The table below sets out the numbers in receipt of SWA at end of December 2004:

Social Welfare Payment	Number of Recipients at 31 December 2004	Expenditure 2004 €000's
Basic SWA*	29,748	210,754
Rent Supplement	57,874	353,762
Mortgage Interest Supplement	3,318	6,333
Other Supplements	19,844	14,568

In addition, some 220,000 exceptional needs payments were made at a cost of €51 million, and €45 million was paid to the HSE for the administration of the scheme.

Families have a role in social cohesion, in preparing children for life in society and in caring for dependent family members, including people with disabilities and the elderly.

The Department plays a key role in developing policies and in providing income and other supports for families. The Family Affairs Unit (FAU) has a co-ordinating role in this area. The Family Support Agency (FSA) provides a Family Mediation Service throughout the country for couples who have decided to separate, supports, promotes and develops the provision of marriage and relationship counselling services, child counselling services and bereavement support for families, provides grant aid to voluntary organisations providing these services in the community and supports, promotes and develops the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme. In addition, the Agency is responsible for the provision of information on family related issues and for commissioning and conducting research into matters related to its functions.

Under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 there is a commitment to 100 Family Resource Centres by the end of 2006. In 2004, funding was provided to 523 Voluntary and Community Organisations who provide marriage, child and bereavement counselling.

There are currently 14 Family Mediation centers around the country. This number will increase to 16 in 2005 with the opening of two new centers, one in Portlaoise and one in Letterkenny.

Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS): Over-indebtedness is a factor in keeping families in poverty. The MABS is an independent voluntary service for individuals and families on low income, particularly those on social welfare payments, which provides guidance on managing finances to avoid problems with debt and money lending. The emphasis is on practical budget-based measures which will remove people permanently from dependence on moneylenders and in opening up other sources of low cost credit through local credit unions. MABS also provides general money advice and education for local communities. There are 55 MABS companies around the country. Each is an independent company with a board of directors drawn from local level. The service is funded by the Department.

* Gross expenditure on Basic payments before inter-scheme adjustments and refunds are taken into account.

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion, which incorporates the objectives and targets of the revised NAPS and the partnership agreement “Sustaining Progress”</p>	<p>Work with the social inclusion units in Departments in monitoring progress being achieved, using the indicators and targets in the NAPS.</p> <p>Work with relevant Departments and agencies in evaluating the effectiveness of their policies and programmes in combating poverty and social exclusion.</p> <p>Co-ordinate the ‘Ending Child Poverty’ special initiative under “Sustaining Progress” and other relevant commitments under Social Partnership.</p> <p>Promote the development of a local and regional focus on social inclusion and monitor progress in the NDP.</p> <p>Review outcomes in consultation with the Management Group of Assistant Secretaries and prepare a report for Government approval and submission to the EU Commission as part of the “open coordination” process.</p> <p>Ensure through regular meetings of the Social Inclusion Consultative Group that the social partners and Community and Voluntary Sectors are kept up to date on developments and that their advice is obtained on the implementation and further development of the plan.</p> <p>Work with the NESF and other partners to ensure that the annual Social Inclusion Forum provides an opportunity to contribute to the process; organize other consultation fora, as appropriate.</p>	<p>Progress reports bi-annually.</p> <p>Annual report.</p> <p>Report to EU on implementation/ evaluation of the NAP by July 2005.</p> <p>Bi-annual meetings with the Social Inclusion Consultative Group.</p> <p>Annual Social Inclusion Forum with National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) and other partners.</p> <p>NDP social indicators work completed.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 2:</p> <p>Ensure that there is a clear knowledge and understanding of the nature, extent and causes of poverty and social exclusion and the strategies to address it.</p>	<p>Work on developing the type of technical supports necessary to underpin and further develop the NAPS, including a data strategy, poverty proofing guidelines and co-ordinated research, in consultation with the ESRI and the Combat Poverty Agency (CPA).</p> <p>Continue to develop a communications strategy designed to inform the general public on the reality and causes of poverty and social exclusion and on the Government's National Action Plan.</p> <p>Ensure that there is full and effective involvement in relation to issues pertaining to social inclusion through the open coordination process at EU Level, the European Committee for social cohesion of the Council of Europe, the Social Policy Committee of the OECD, the British Irish Council, and other relevant international fora and that full account of the findings is taken in policy development.</p>	<p>NAPS data strategy completed including the review of poverty measures.</p> <p>Poverty proofing guidelines revised.</p> <p>Communications Strategy implemented.</p> <p>Support package for NAPS Liaison Officers delivered.</p> <p>Series of appropriate leaflets. Website effectiveness reviewed.</p> <p>Two trans-national projects completed.</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>Develop the next National Action Plan 2006-2009.</p>	<p>Work with Departments and Government Agencies in determining their objectives and priorities having regard to the outcome of research and consultation with stakeholders, and the assessment of the existing plan by the EU.</p> <p>Ensure that objectives, priorities and costed actions to implement them are identified on a Departmental basis in good time.</p>	

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>Promote cross departmental linkages to ensure the effective delivery on shared government policy.</p> <p>Develop an effective consultation process with groups, committees engaged in the development and delivery of policy (e.g. National Partnership, Social Inclusion Forum), the Community and Voluntary sector and promote the involvement of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in the process.</p>	<p>Input to national partnership process.</p> <p>Take full account of the implementation and evaluation of the existing plan, relevant research findings both nationally and internationally, and the outcomes of the consultation with key stakeholders, within the framework of general Government policy and priorities.</p>
<p>Objective 4</p> <p>Develop a strategic process to facilitate the development of integrated policies to meet the needs of families in a changing society.</p>	<p>Complete preparation of proposals to support families through an inter-Departmental Committee for Government approval.</p> <p>Develop the necessary structures, through the FAU, for monitoring, evaluating and further developing these proposals and for co-ordinating the process with other Departments and Agencies.</p>	<p>Government approval by 2005.</p>
<p>Objective 5</p> <p>Ensure that the Family Support Agency (FSA) receives the necessary support and resources to enable it carry out its functions and implement its strategy in relation to supports for families.</p>	<p>Work closely with the FSA in developing its functions in relation to counselling, family mediation and Family Resource Centres (FRCs) to ensure good quality services that meet the needs of families in a changing society.</p> <p>Contribute to the development of the FSA's research strategy in relation to research on its own functions and on priority family related issues that require an integrated policy response.</p>	<p>Regular liaison on outcomes being achieved.</p> <p>Research Strategy completed Q 3 2005.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 6</p> <p>Complete the development of policies to provide a more effective and integrated range of income and other supports for families at risk of poverty, particularly lone parents and large families, designed to enable them achieve greater self-sufficiency and social inclusion.</p>	<p>Ensure that particular attention is given to low income families in the context of the strategy for families in a changing society being prepared.</p> <p>Review the operation of income support arrangements for lone parents generally, to improve their choices of either caring full-time for their children, or taking up employment, with a view to ending welfare dependency and achieving a higher standard of living for themselves and their children.</p>	<p>Strategy completed end-2005.</p> <p>Report completed Q3 2005.</p>
<p>Objective 7</p> <p>Ensure that no person experiences hardship for want of basic necessities, because they have exceptional needs or because they have difficulties accessing relevant services.</p>	<p>Provide a guaranteed standard minimum income through the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) system to any person in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their basic needs.</p> <p>Provide a weekly or monthly supplement or a once-off exceptional payment to those with additional specific needs that cannot be met from their standard minimum income.</p> <p>Provide advice and, where appropriate, immediate and flexible financial assistance to those in need who either do not qualify for support under other state schemes or in cases where such support is not available.</p> <p>Reduce the extent to which people making a claim for D/SFA-administered payments have to have recourse to basic SWA payment by developing procedures, processes and good practice in the delivery of SWA in local offices.</p>	<p>Quality service provided to customers in a manner that is effective, efficient and economic in accordance with the Department's service standards.</p> <p>Procedures agreed and implemented.</p>

Objective

Activities

Key Performance Indicators

Implement appropriate control measures based on an assessment of risk at earliest point of claim cycle and provide effective control measures during the lifetime of claims, to ensure fraud and abuse are prevented, detected and deterred and any monies incorrectly paid are recovered.

Controls implemented on a cost-effective basis at all claim stages in line with an agreed control strategy, fraud and error surveys undertaken and appropriate management reports produced.

Rationalise and improve the administration of the SWA service in co-operation with the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive.

Improved liaison arrangements in place and plans for new administrative arrangements agreed and implemented.

Work with Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to enhance the response of local authorities to long-term housing needs and thereby minimise the dependence on SWA rent supplement by persons assessed as needing housing assistance on a long-term basis.

Reduction in the number of people requiring rent supplement for more than 18 months.

Further refocus SWA towards meeting immediate, unforeseen or short-term need by working with relevant service providers to enhance their services where appropriate.

Reduction in the number of people requiring SWA payments, especially on a long-term basis.

Monitor and review the scheme to ensure that SWA is reflective of changes in work and social patterns.

Complete review of SWA as part of the Expenditure Review Initiative.

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 8</p> <p>Support, through a nationwide Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), families and individuals identified as having problems with debt and moneylending.</p>	<p>Develop policies for more innovative ways of tackling over indebtedness in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Identify, conduct research and involve the target group to ensure that the service is responding to their needs.</p> <p>Work closely with statutory agencies, commercial bodies, voluntary and community groups and the credit union movement for the benefit of people with debt problems.</p> <p>Maintain a quality service by agreeing and implementing a Code of Practice and a Customer Charter</p> <p>Develop the capacity of MABS in the area of Community Education through MABS National Development Limited in partnership with Comhairle and education providers.</p>	<p>New measures implemented to combat indebtedness.</p> <p>Code of Practice and Customer Charter agreed and implemented.</p> <p>Standardised MABS service nationwide.</p> <p>National Strategy on Community Education for MABS completed.</p>

GOAL 6: THE DEPARTMENT AND ITS STAFF



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

The nature of the Department's business means that change is a constant feature. The social welfare system has to be responsive to other changes in society and be flexible enough to deal with such change. There is an annual cycle of change arising from the Budget process and significant scheme change can arise in this context. Scheme sections must also deal with the increasing numbers of people accessing the system and with changes in the circumstances of people in receipt of payments. This must be done in a context of policies on reducing staff numbers across the public service.

The continued provision of quality service in an expanding business and with reduced staff resources presents a considerable challenge for the Department. Other changes in the environment in which the Department operates, including the decentralisation programme, developments in technology and in public service delivery generally, require that staff and internal processes are such as to be fully capable of meeting these challenges.

Human Resources Management/Organisation Development

The delivery of the services for which the Department is responsible requires a considerable personal input by many people and a person-centred approach is a major element of our customer service culture. In the same way we recognise the importance of a people-centred approach within the Department, of supporting each other and maintaining an environment in which the contribution of every member is valued and acknowledged. The success of the organisation depends on its people; their skills and knowledge, their commitment, teamwork and desire to provide an excellent service to their customers and colleagues.

The Department places a high value on the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS), which is the centrepiece of its Human Resource (HR) agenda for the period of this Strategy and beyond. This system has a vital role in the development of the skills base of staff, in the consequential improvement of performance and job satisfaction and in the achievement of business objectives and the effective management of resources.

Risk Management & Information Security

The Department is putting in place a Risk Management programme and will implement this across the organisation. During the period of this Strategy, procedures in this area will be reviewed in the light of implementation experience.

One important area of risk relates to information security. The Department is responsible for ensuring the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information under its control. It has put in place internal structures to review and improve its policies and practices relating to information security. During the period of this Strategy, it will undertake additional work on its information systems' controls and procedures.

Information & Communication Technology (ICT)

The Department's ICT systems are an integral part of the business. There are four related aspects of ICT deployment in the Department – support for existing production systems, provision of ICT facilities to staff, development of new integrated systems and support of internal and external eGovernment programmes. The Department will continue to invest significantly in programmes to maintain and modernise both its systems and the infrastructure required to access them effectively, efficiently and securely.

In relation to eGovernment systems, reference has already been made to the provision of national enabling services such as PSI and SAFE and Departmental channel strategies to support customer service. It is also expected that the demands for interoperability will increase significantly. Satisfying these demands will require an increasing amount of attention during the period of this Strategy.

Structures & Governance

The Decentralisation Programme will present very significant challenges for the Department during this Strategy period. Under the programme the Department is required to relocate 1,300 posts to six locations throughout the country with three locations targeted in the first phase announced by the Government.

In addition to the impact on business areas relocating from Dublin, the decentralisation programme will significantly impact existing decentralised offices in Sligo, Longford and Dundalk and also the Local Office network, as staff from these offices move to new locations.

The aim of the Department is to ensure a smooth transition to the new locations which will minimise disruption to services, staff and management. The planning, logistics, HR and resource requirements associated with implementation of the programme will be a major priority for management over the period.

The decentralisation programme also highlights the importance of the Department's structures and governance arrangements, including its committee structures and this issue also needs to be addressed. At all levels of the organisation, it is essential to have good structures of authority and accountability as well as good control mechanisms.

The Department also places high priority on the effective management of the resources for which it is responsible and on having good financial management and control systems in place.

Safe and Healthy Working Environment

The Department is committed to ensuring that a safe and healthy environment is provided and maintained to the highest standard for all its customers and staff.

Policy Development and Planning

In a rapidly changing environment it is increasingly important that the Department builds a strong policy capacity to meet the challenges ahead. It is expected that there will continue to be an emphasis on working with customer representatives, social partners and other interests in this regard.

There has been a substantial programme of work undertaken across Government in recent years to improve the quality and range of social and equality statistics available to support policy. There is an increasing recognition of the value of administrative sources in meeting policy requirements for social statistics. The Department's response to these Government initiatives, as both a user and a producer of social statistics, is being set out in the Department's Data and Statistics Strategy.

HRM and Organisational Development

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Implement our Human Resource Strategy 2003-2005.</p>	<p>Continue to implement and promote our HR Strategy throughout the Department and, through its implementation, ensure that HR issues are considered as an essential element of all aspects of the Department's work and integral to organisational change.</p>	<p>Final Progress Report produced in Q2 2006.</p> <p>HR implications of departmental strategies, projects and business plans assessed and addressed.</p>
	<p>Support the achievement of organisational objectives/targets contained in the Modernisation Action Plan (MAP) under "Sustaining Progress".</p>	<p>Targets achieved in line with timeframes contained in MAP.</p>
	<p>Examine and, where appropriate, implement new HR management systems involving devolution of greater responsibility, authority and responsibility to line managers, in particular in relation to performance issues.</p>	<p>Devolution of certain HR functions to initial pilot sites in 2005.</p> <p>Evaluation and, as appropriate, extension of pilots to other areas from 2006 onwards.</p>
	<p>Implement Attendance Management Policy.</p>	<p>Publication of Policy by mid-2005.</p> <p>Progress Reports at Q2 2006 and Q2 2007.</p>
	<p>Exploit technology options to support efficient and effective achievement of departmental HR objectives.</p>	<p>HRM system upgraded in 2005.</p> <p>New Time and Attendance System selected and roll-out commenced 2005/2006.</p> <p>Managed Services option evaluated.</p>
	<p>Having regard to progress achieved under current strategy, central civil service and departmental /organisational developments, and in consultation with stakeholders, prepare new strategy.</p>	<p>New HR Strategy published in first half 2006.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Provide a positive working environment and, in line with equality legislation, promote equality of opportunity for all employees of the Department.</p>	<p>Continue to develop our Employee Assistance Service.</p> <p>Continue to implement and monitor the Civil Service anti-harassment, sexual harassment and bullying policy, with a particular emphasis on awareness-raising and the use of mediation, where appropriate.</p> <p>Develop and implement a health promotion programme aimed at supporting employees in pursuing healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>Promote work-life balance by implementing employee friendly and flexible working arrangements.</p> <p>Continue to promote and implement equality policies and ensure that the Department's HR practices are in line with Civil Service policy on diversity, including a focus on anti-racism. Increase awareness of equality issues.</p> <p>Continue to improve our supports for our staff with disabilities.</p>	<p>Effective service provided.</p> <p>Policy implemented. Specific initiatives in relation to awareness and training implemented.</p> <p>Development of programme 2005.</p> <p>Implementation of programme 2005 onwards.</p> <p>Flexible working arrangements in place to maximum extent possible, consistent with service delivery responsibilities and in line with central agreements.</p> <p>Equality policies implemented. Progress reported on Gender Equality Action Plan: Q2 2005 and Final Report Q2 2007.</p> <p>New and enhanced supports for staff with disabilities in place.</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>Foster good industrial and employee relations throughout the Department.</p>	<p>Industrial relations and communications mechanisms effectively employed to minimize potential for industrial action.</p>	<p>Positive and co-operative industrial and employee relations environment in place.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 4</p> <p>Ensure that each staff member has the knowledge, skills and competencies to contribute effectively to achieving the business goals of the Department and develop the role of the manager as the key facilitator in implementing change and improvement.</p>	<p>Embed PMDS process.</p> <p>Ensure that the PMDS system is used to develop, support and train managers for their roles.</p> <p>Publish Training Strategy.</p> <p>Prepare and implement decentralisation training strategy</p>	<p>Effective monitoring and evaluation processes in place.</p> <p>Training Strategy published mid-2005.</p> <p>Strategy finalized mid-2005 and implemented as decentralisation roll-out proceeds.</p>
<p>Objective 5</p> <p>Ensure a working environment which is based on co-operation, participation and mutual support.</p>	<p>Partnership: Advance the ethos and practice of partnership as the optimal operating approach throughout the organisation, facilitating common ownership of our internal change and modernisation programme.</p> <p>Internal Customer: Continue to encourage and promote the highest standards of internal customer service by working supportively together, to maintain a positive working environment which is built on trust, understanding and mutual respect, in the achievement of the Department's strategic and business objectives.</p> <p>Staff Attitudinal/Climate Survey: Address the findings of the Staff Attitudinal/Climate survey so as to strengthen our consultative, participative and communications processes.</p>	<p>Implementation of the action plan <i>"Promoting Partnership: an Action Plan for Partnership in the Department of Social & Family Affairs"</i>.</p> <p>Progress will be monitored and evaluated by the Partnership Steering Committee on a twice-yearly basis.</p> <p>Achievement of the objectives of the Department's 2nd Internal Customer Service Plan which will be published in early 2005.</p> <p>Progress will be monitored through the Department's partnership structures on an ongoing basis and by measurements of staff satisfaction through surveys and other methods.</p> <p>An agreed plan of action will be drawn up which will include, for example, developing and enhancing coherent internal communications approaches – satisfaction levels with which will be measured by staff surveys.</p>

Information and Communications Technology

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Operate, maintain and enhance the Department's Information Technology production systems.</p>	<p>Maintain a consistently high degree of applications and infrastructure availability.</p> <p>Review and extend the system of active management and preventative maintenance for ICT infrastructure.</p> <p>Monitor and enhance ICT security and risk mitigation measures.</p>	<p>Application uptime targets achieved.</p> <p>Degree of completion</p> <p>Action plans and security projects completed.</p>
<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Develop and enhance ICT systems to respond to the requirements of the Department's change agenda.</p>	<p>Develop, operate and maintain service delivery channels.</p> <p>Develop and implement the Business Object Model for the SDM Programme.</p> <p>Develop and implement appropriate administrative systems e.g. office systems, document management, HR, Financials, Management Information Framework service.</p> <p>Implement Central Overpayments and Debt Management system.</p>	<p>Facilities developed, including links to the Public Service Broker.</p> <p>Department's Business Object Model expanded to encompass additional schemes, and central records system replaced.</p> <p>Systems developed and in place.</p> <p>System implemented.</p>

Governance and Management of Resources

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Ensure the governance arrangements of the Department and its agencies are appropriate to achieve the tasks which must be undertaken.</p>	<p>The operation of the Department's management structures will be examined; this will include examination of the Management Advisory Committee and related committees, their roles, their composition and relationship to each other.</p> <p>The governance arrangements for the Department and its associated agencies/bodies will be reviewed and any necessary changes made in light of that review.</p>	<p>Examination completed and appropriate measures put in place.</p> <p>Review completed and changes put in place as necessary.</p>
<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Ensure the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) is implemented in the Department.</p>	<p>Continue to progress the Department's change and modernisation programme, in the context of, inter alia, the Strategic Management Initiative / Delivering Better Government and the "Sustaining Progress" Agreement.</p>	<p>Implementation of the priorities and actions in the Department's Modernisation Action Plan.</p> <p>Department recognised as progressive, responsive and efficient in the delivery of its services.</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>Ensure that the Department maintains a robust system of internal control and arrangements to evaluate same and that the principles of efficiency, effectiveness and economy are applied in all the Department's activities.</p>	<p>Review the Department's system of internal financial control and ensure that it is improved on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Ensure that the Internal Audit Unit is adequately resourced and trained to enable it to provide a comprehensive and independent appraisal, advisory and consultancy service to management in relation to the Department's operational, financial, compliance and IS processes.</p>	<p>Confirmation of the quality of controls outlined in the Statement of Internal Financial Control attached to the Appropriation Account.</p> <p>Annual audit plan provides for the full range of internal audit checks on a systematic basis.</p> <p>Compliance with internal audit standards and guidelines.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>Ensure that the Department's other corporate governance institutions are maintained at an optimum level to carry out their functions and contribute to the achievement of the Department's mission statement and objectives.</p>	<p>Compliance with accepted best practice.</p>
	<p>Review purchasing expenditure, set procurement policy objectives and purchasing strategies and incorporate in a corporate procurement plan for the Department.</p>	<p>Procurement plan provided 2005-2006.</p>
	<p>Address efficiency and effectiveness systematically in the expenditure review programme.</p>	<p>Improvements implemented.</p>
	<p>Continue the development of non-financial resource management reporting under the Management Information Framework (MIF) project with particular focus on improving Performance Indicators, standardisation of reporting formats, developing an appropriate statistical database and the provision of a costing framework for each business area.</p>	<p>Project targets achieved.</p>
	<p>Support the management system by providing appropriate internal financial reporting and by ensuring accountability and control of delegated responsibility.</p>	<p>Accurate and timely reports.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 4</p> <p>Promote and develop a risk awareness and management culture which will complement and underpin the Department's corporate governance process.</p>	<p>Introduce a comprehensive process to identify and assess the key risks facing the Department in achieving its corporate objectives.</p> <p>Outline measures to manage identified risks.</p>	<p>Risk Management system rolled out on a phased basis across the Department.</p> <p>Comprehensive analysis of identified risks provided for consideration.</p> <p>Corrective measures taken to mitigate risks.</p>
<p>Objective 5</p> <p>Design, develop and implement document and data management strategies for the Department.</p>	<p>Engage consultants to assist in the development of the Department's document management strategy.</p> <p>Consult with all areas of the Department with a view to defining and agreeing a document management strategy.</p> <p>Design and develop document management system.</p> <p>Implementation of document management system commenced by end 2005.</p> <p>Define, agree and implement an operational data management strategy for D/SFA.</p>	<p>Strategy agreed by mid-2005</p> <p>Implement document management on a phased basis throughout the Department.</p> <p>Operational Data Management Strategy developed and in place.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 6</p> <p>Deliver, in accordance with the timeframe approved by Government, on decentralisation programme.</p>	<p>Prepare updated Implementation Plan for decentralisation as required, for the Department and related agencies.</p> <p>Co-operate with Department of Finance, OPW, Public Appointments Service and other Government Departments as required in the delivery of the programme.</p> <p>Prepare detailed training, communication and transfer plans to support sections/staff engaged in the decentralisation process.</p> <p>Prepare staff movement plans in accordance with the Department's Implementation Plan.</p> <p>Evaluate, on an ongoing basis, the impact of the programme on business processes continuity and customer service and adapt/review with a view to necessary corrective action.</p> <p>Implement Risk and Management Strategies to ensure effective and efficient implementation of Decentralisation Programme</p>	<p>Revised Implementation Plans submitted as required.</p> <p>Effective and efficient liaison/information processes/systems in place.</p> <p>Support plans available for managers and staff in accordance with timeframes.</p> <p>All necessary staff in place in accordance with the required timeframes.</p> <p>Impact reports to MAC on a regular basis.</p> <p>Effective corrective action taken as required.</p>

Safe and Healthy Working Environment

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Ensure quality accommodation is provided and is maintained to the highest standard to enable customers/ staff to have a clean, comfortable and safe environment.</p>	<p>Continue to work with OPW on D/SFA building / refurbishment programme.</p> <p>Continue to carry out information/ awareness campaign to keep managers briefed on Health and Safety matters and carry out relevant Health and Safety training for managers/ staff as required.</p> <p>Continue to provide an adequate level of security for staff/ customers.</p> <p>Continue to arrange for "best practice" cleaning and disposal of waste from the Department's offices.</p>	<p>Provision of new accommodation where required.</p> <p>Necessary refurbishment work carried out.</p> <p>New offices provided as part of the Decentralisation Programme as required.</p> <p>All Risk Assessments up to date.</p> <p>Safety Audit carried out in all Department's offices.</p> <p>Revised Safety Statement prepared.</p> <p>Secure environment provided.</p> <p>Introduce modern waste management process in the Department.</p> <p>Formulate and promote waste recycling/ reduction practices in the Department.</p>

Policy Development and Planning

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 1</p> <p>Promote and support an effective, inclusive and consultative policy making process.</p>	<p>Maintain a high standard of policy making capacity in the organisation and involve all relevant areas of the Department in inputting to the policy making process.</p>	<p>Undertake consultation processes as part of reviews.</p>
	<p>Promote a culture of research and analysis and facilitate the development of skills required to provide support to the policy development process.</p>	<p>Research programme drafted.</p>
	<p>Develop in association with other key actors, a research programme aimed at informing and developing policy responses to social policy issues.</p>	<p>New research programme implemented.</p>
	<p>Promote the involvement of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in policy decisions that affect them.</p>	<p>Hold annual pre budget forum. NAPS consultations.</p>
	<p>Develop an effective consultation process with groups, committees engaged in the development and delivery of policy (e.g. National Partnership, Social Inclusion forum)</p>	<p>Produce and disseminate reports on proceedings to all relevant Departments and agencies</p>
	<p>Providing an open, courteous and quality service to public representatives, Oireachtas Committees and related bodies and to relevant international organisations.</p>	<p>Response to committees and related bodies including the Social and Family Affairs and Public Accounts Committees and to the Joint Committee on European Affairs. Provide input to national partnership process.</p>
	<p>Respond to Parliamentary Questions (PQs) representations, correspondence within appropriate timeframes and in accordance with the Customer Service Plan and Customer Charter.</p>	<p>PQs etc. replies meet corporate service standards.</p>

Objective	Activities	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Support the development and implementation of responses to cross-departmental issues.</p>	<p>Build and develop cross-departmental linkages to ensure the effective delivery on shared policy objectives.</p>	<p>Effective cross-departmental linkages in place.</p>
<p>Objective 3</p> <p>Monitor and evaluate the performance of schemes in meeting their desired objectives.</p>	<p>Undertake a planned programme of reviews of schemes and programmes under the Expenditure Review Initiative and implement changes to schemes in the light of the outcomes of reviews.</p> <p>Develop an effective policy proofing process.</p> <p>Meet our national and international requirements for high level policy indicators.</p>	<p>Completion of a series of Expenditure reviews.</p> <p>Analysis of poverty related data and research.</p> <p>Delivery of enhanced policy-proofing process.</p>
<p>Objective 4</p> <p>Develop D/SFA data holdings as a resource supporting policy development and programme evaluation and ensure that our data sources facilitate national developments in social and equality statistics.</p>	<p>Survey data needs of both policy and operational scheme owners, with particular focus on data collected in administrative systems.</p> <p>Compile an initial list of variables for policy analysis purposes based on the survey's findings; any overlaps with the MIF project will be clearly identified.</p> <p>Carry out an audit of computer based software packages currently used to analyse data within the Department, taking into account the main analytical requirements for policy users.</p> <p>Evaluate statistical and analytical training needs for D/SFA staff.</p> <p>Continue to improve data quality on the Central Records System (CRS), particularly for the Public Services Identity (PSI) data and contributions data.</p>	<p>Scope of survey identified and survey initiated in 2005.</p> <p>Initial list compiled in 2006 based on the survey.</p> <p>To be carried out in 2006 based on the analytical requirements identified in the survey.</p> <p>PSI data cleanup details.</p> <p>Contribution data cleanup details.</p>

CROSS DEPARTMENTAL ISSUES

Effective cross-Departmental co-operation is necessary for the achievement of many of the goals, objectives and strategies identified in earlier sections of this Strategy. In some cases, such as the National Anti-Poverty or the REACH project, we have the central co-ordinating role. In other cases we do not have the driving role but co-operate with other Departments to ensure that overall cross-Departmental policies (such as the Employment Action Plan or the National Children's Strategy) are delivered. We have regard also to the commitments in the Programme for Government to ensure that all state agencies prioritise integrated work in areas of significant disadvantage and that public activity supports the development of social capital, particularly on a local community level. Here we set out the main areas for Cross-Departmental action. A full list of interdepartmental issues in which the department is involved is at Appendix 3.

Issue	Lead Department	Other Depts/ Agencies	Action by D/SFA
National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)	D/SFA	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Establish and support the Office for Social Inclusion <input type="checkbox"/> Support Social Inclusion Units and NAPS liaison officers in other Departments <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a more effective poverty proofing process <input type="checkbox"/> Continue process of extending NAPS initiative to local government <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a NAPS data strategy.
Support to Work	D/ETE FAS	D/SFA D/E&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage maximum take-up of customers. <input type="checkbox"/> With D/ETE and FAS, continue roll out of EAP. <input type="checkbox"/> Work to improve data flows between Departments/Agencies <input type="checkbox"/> On a pilot basis, identify suitable working/training or education opportunities for customers with disabilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Review effectiveness of labour market interventions.
e-Government	D/TAOIS	ALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Through the REACH project, provide co-ordination and leadership across the public service in the management and deployment of the Public Service Broker and related services. <input type="checkbox"/> D/SFA will be providing Public Service Identity (PSI) Services to Reach and to other public agencies in support of their identity management needs.
	D/SFA D/F	ALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE): Co-chair the interdepartmental steering group established under government decision to provide a set of Framework recommendations in the first half of 2005. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide the Programme Support Office and undertake specific actions in relation to the Department's own needs as already set out in the Statement of Strategy.
Supplementary Welfare	D/SFA	D/H&C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop in consultation with the Department of Health and Children and the Health Service Executive, proposals to improve the delivery of SWA, including the assignment of a substantial level of direct responsibility to the D/SFA for the delivery of the scheme.
Expenditure Reviews	D/F	Other Departments as necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We will continue to involve other Departments in our expenditure review, wherever overlaps (or potential overlaps) of objectives or responsibilities arise.

Issue	Lead Department	Other Depts/ Agencies	Action by D/SFA
National Children's Strategy	D/H&C	D/SFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Continue our work towards achievement of the objectives in the National Children's Strategy, particularly by addressing child poverty through the NAPS and through our range of income supports. ❑ Work with National Children's Office to develop the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland. ❑ Through the Family Support Agency, continue to support families in caring for their children through a range of measures, including family mediation and family resource centres. ❑ D/SFA will be engaged at local level on childcare committees. ❑ Coordinate the preparation of a strategy for families and family life in a changing society and begin a strategic process under which issues affecting families would be addressed in an integrated way across the range of Departments and Agencies currently involved in issues impacting on families.
People with Disabilities	D/H&C	D/SFA D/JELR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ In conjunction with other agencies ensure that appropriate policies are considered and that supports and services are enhanced for people with disabilities. ❑ Participate in a range of interdepartmental committees examining disability issues, such as the PPF working group on the feasibility of a cost of disability payment.
Financing of long-term care	D/H&C	D/SFA D/F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Examine proposals to address personal long-term care funding.
Insurability of employment	D/SFA	D/ETE Revenue Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Consult on an ongoing basis to achieve higher levels of consistency in determination of employed and self-employed status through promoting greater harmonisation of the relevant legislation and procedures.
Grants to voluntary and community groups	D/CRGA	D/SFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Following the recent transfer of this scheme from D/SFA, we will agree arrangements for appropriate involvement of local and regional staff in this work.
Treatment Benefits	D/SFA	D/H&C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Continue to liaise with D/H&C to ensure the scheme of social insurance cover for dental, optical and hearing benefits continues to remain compatible with similar services provided by the HSE.

Issue	Lead Department	Other Depts/ Agencies	Action by D/SFA
Involvement in local development activities	D/CRGA	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ D/SFA will be appropriately engaged at local, area and national level in County and City Development Boards, Local Partnership Committees and RAPID/CLÁR Programmes.
Education support for children	D/E&S	D/SFA D/H&C Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Review the school meals scheme and back to school clothing and footwear scheme as part of our series of programme evaluations.
Equality/Diversity	D/JELR	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Through staff training and awareness raising we will ensure that our services are provided in a manner that all of our customers find accessible and culturally appropriate. ❑ Participate in the Governments KNOW RACISM campaign and in the National Action Plan Against Racism. ❑ Continue to work with the Health Service Executive to provide supports and advice to asylum seekers, refugees and other non-nationals granted the right to remain in the State. ❑ Work with the Reception and Integration Agency in providing services to asylum seekers and refugees.
Fuel Poverty and Climate Change	D/ELG	D/SFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Participate in National Climate Change Team led by the Department of the Environment and Local Government and work with Sustainable Energy Ireland in developing measures to address the causes of fuel poverty.
Housing	D/ELG	D/SFA, Local Authorities Health Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Participate in the Housing Forum and work with the Department of the Environment and Local Government and Local Authorities, the Health Service Executive and other agencies on measures to meet the housing and other needs of homeless people and others on low incomes.
Prisoners	D/JELR	D/SFA IPS P&WS Health Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Work with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Probation and Welfare Service, the Irish Prison Service, the Health Service Executive and other agencies to develop more responsive social welfare services to meet the needs of ex-prisoners.
Travellers	D/JELR	D/SFA Health Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Work with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Department of the Environment and Local Government, the Health Service Executive and other agencies to ensure that our services are provided in a manner that is appropriate to the needs of travellers.

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

BETTER REGULATION

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

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

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

- amendments and extensions to the Social Welfare Code and to Occupational Pensions legislation are prepared and enacted as required;
- all relevant stakeholders are consulted appropriately and that their views are reflected, where possible, in the preparation of legislation – for example, the Department convenes an annual pre-Budget forum, comprising key representative groups, to discuss Budget proposals for social welfare;
- the design of our legislative proposals reflects the requirements of the Government's National Policy Statement on Better Regulation and will incorporate the principles of Regulatory Impact Analysis, when developed;
- the legislative review is undertaken to ensure that the Social Welfare Code is compatible with both national and EU law;
- the Government's programme of Statute Law Revision is supported;
- all legislation is clear and accessible;
- The Department's Decisions Advisory Office (DAO) provides guidelines, advice and training for Deciding Officers on making and notifying decisions in accordance with the legislation. Legislative skills courses are available to staff as is an internal electronic directory of all legislation. In addition, our body of legislation may be accessed on our website – www.welfare.ie;
- the consolidation process is being progressed with a new Social Welfare (Consolidation) Bill, incorporating all legislative changes from 1993 to date. We are also embarking on a programme of consolidation for our secondary legislation;
- our current legislative programme is continued which, in addition to the two annual Social Welfare Bills, also includes the Comhairle (Amendment) Bill 2004 which provides, inter alia, for the introduction of a personal advocacy service for people with disabilities.

REPORTING ON THE PROGRESS OF OUR STATEMENT OF STRATEGY

In this Statement of Strategy, we have set out, at a high level, the role, direction and priorities of this Department over the next three years. Our six thematic and high-level goals each contain corporate objectives, actions and performance indicators which set out what is required to achieve these goals. The Statement of Strategy is designed to be both flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. In order to ensure that it remains relevant, we have put in place a number of procedures against which we will report our progress. Some of these are now well-established, having been developed against the background of our previous Statements of Strategy and in line with the requirements of the Public Service Management Act, 1997. Others are more recent initiatives reflecting ongoing progress under the Modernisation Programme. The Department's Annual Report details the progress achieved over the year on the Statement of Strategy. This is in line with the provisions of the Public Service Management Act, 1997. Building on our existing reporting arrangements and to ensure that progress remains on-track, we will also conduct formal half-yearly reviews of developments in line with the commitments in the Strategy. Underpinning this process is the annual preparation, at divisional level, of business plans which follow from a consultation process between management and staff. This also informs, and is linked to, the implementation of the Performance Management and Development System for all staff. The business plans contain specific targets for each business area to achieve in the given year. The commitments are based on the content and direction of the Statement of Strategy and also include the specific targets we have set out in relation to the provision of services to our customers in the published Customer Action Plan and Internal Customer Service Plan. Progress on the business plans is monitored on a monthly basis.

As part of the MIF Project, currently underway, reporting arrangements at all levels are being reviewed with a view to, inter alia, more formal regular internal reporting on our high level goals. The MIF process may lead to a revision of some of the KPI's in this Strategy Statement

APPENDIX 1:

NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS OF SOCIAL WELFARE PAYMENTS BY PAYMENT TYPE AT DECEMBER 2004

Type of Payment	Recipients	Total Beneficiaries
Old Age (Contributory) Pension	118,383	146,564
Retirement Pension	88,870	115,631
Old Age (Non-Contributory) Pension	85,172	89,408
Pre-Retirement Allowance	11,228	16,484
Widow/er's (Contributory) Pension	105,338	119,575
Widow/er's (Non-Contributory) Pension	15,284	15,284
Deserted Wife's Benefit	10,769	16,880
Deserted Wife's Allowance	1,456	1,456
Prisoner's Wife's Allowance	2	2
One Parent Family Payment	80,103	210,041
Maternity Benefit	10,356	10,356
Health and Safety Benefit	21	22
Adoptive Benefit	26	26
Orphan's (Contributory) Allowance	992	992
Orphan's (Non-Contributory) Pension	579	579
Disability Benefit	58,726	103,427
Invalidity Pension	55,864	85,272
Injury Benefit	915	1,388
Interim Disability Benefit	316	436
Disablement Pension	12,162	13,024
Death Benefit (OIB Widows)	652	820
Disability Allowance	72,976	96,740
Carer's Benefit	679	1,544
Carer's Allowance	23,030	44,201
Blind Person's Pension	2,027	2,567
Unemployment Benefit	57,699	84,738
Unemployment Assistance	73,840	125,521
Back To Work Allowance Employee	4,711	10,122
Back To Work Enterprise Allowance	6,855	16,136
Back To Education Allowance	5,247	7,735
Part-Time Job Incentive Scheme	326	326
Family Income Supplement	14,727	45,093
Farm Assist	8,350	20,518
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	29,748	61,085
Rent Allowance	303	303

The total figures include a small element of double counting as some persons could be in receipt of more than one payment the second of which might be, for example Disablement Pension, Rent Allowance or Family Income Supplement.

OTHER PAYMENTS

Treatment Benefits paid in 2004

701,624

Child Benefit recipients at 31 December 2004

Families	540,911
Children	1,051,005

Household Benefits recipients at 31 December 2004

Electricity	284,437
Group Account Allowance	2,406
Travel	619,908
Telephone Rental	297,838
Bottled Gas	379
Natural Gas	24,312
TV Licence	306,563

TOTAL	1,535,843
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APPENDIX 2:

CUSTOMER CHARTER

Introduction

The Department is committed to delivering a high quality customer service. An Taoiseach set down a requirement by Government in December 2002, that all Departments should publish a Customer Charter.

Before preparing this Charter we asked our customers and staff for their views on our existing service. The following key areas were identified as most important from the feedback we received from that consultation process:

- Access to our Services
- Provision of Information
- Your Claim
- Comments & Complaints

We have included other commitments, which will further assist in the provision of the best quality service possible.

Our commitment (outlined in this leaflet) “What We will do for You”, is our response to your views and suggestions. We will be focussing on the aspects of our service that mean most to you for the duration of this Charter.

We can all help to make our experiences as pleasant as possible in our dealings with one another, by working together to show respect, consideration and patience.

We have also included in this leaflet a number of ways in which you can help.

WHAT WE WILL DO FOR YOU

Access to our Services

We are committed to:

- Making our offices accessible for all including people with disabilities (80% of our offices are accessible for people with disabilities at present)
- Extending our opening hours in many of our Local Offices (check the opening hours displayed at your own Local Office)
- Respecting your privacy needs if calling to our offices
- Improving our services for visually impaired customers (LoCall 1890 500 000 ext 8442 or 8459 for this service)

- ❑ Improving our telephone answering service by aiming towards a target of answering all telephone calls within 30 seconds.
- ❑ Phoning you back if you ask us to

Help Us to Help You

- ❑ Have your Personal Public Service Number (PPS Number) and other reference numbers ready when contacting the Department
- ❑ Bring two forms of ID (such as a passport or the long version of your birth certificate and a driver's licence or Child Benefit Book/Bank Card/Rent Book)
- ❑ Bring your Social Services Card if you have one

Your Claim

We are committed to:

- ❑ Letting you know how soon you may expect a decision on your claim
- ❑ Advising you how to get financial or other help in the meantime, if necessary
- ❑ Letting you know the different payment options available
- ❑ Informing you of the reasons for the decision on your claim
- ❑ Informing you of your right to appeal that decision and how to make an appeal
- ❑ Letting you know that you also have access to the Ombudsman's Office

Help Us to Help You

- ❑ Fill in all forms fully, sign them and send or hand in all the documents needed with your claim
- ❑ Be on time for appointments or let us know if you will be late
- ❑ Let us know if there is any change in your circumstances (for example getting married; changing address; taking up employment)
- ❑ Make yourself aware of the rules and regulations governing the receipt of your payment and comply with them

Provision of Information

We are committed to:

- Providing you with full, clear and correct information on our schemes and services when required. You can request claim forms and information leaflets by telephoning LoCall 1890 20 23 25 or you can download them from our website at www.welfare.ie
- Ensuring our forms and leaflets are simple and easy to understand
- Providing help with filling in forms at your local Social Welfare Office or your local Citizen's Information Centre (contact LoCall 1890 777 121)
- Supporting employers in the operation of the PRSI contribution system

e-Government Services

We are committed to:

- Using modern technology to significantly improve the service we give
- Providing an improved range of services through our website
- Continuing to support REACH (an agency set up by the Government to develop electronic ways of linking people and the public service)

Treating You Fairly

We are committed to:

- Serving all our customers in an equal, fair and courteous manner
- Applying the law consistently and fairly in relation to your entitlements and obligations

Comments and Complaints

We are committed to:

- Promoting and developing our existing comment and complaint system (in operation since May 2002)
- Answering any complaint within 15 working days
- Guaranteeing that your complaint will not affect how we treat you in the future.

Help Us to Help You

Let us know if:

- You are not happy with our service or You have any ideas on how we can improve our service

You can get a Comment and Complaint Leaflet from any of our local or public offices or from our website www.welfare.ie

You may also make a complaint directly by phoning any of our offices with the details

Security and Confidentiality

We are committed to:

- Keeping your personal information safe
- Using that information only for social welfare purposes and as permitted by law

Service Through Irish

We are committed to:

- Providing quality services through Irish and English if required

Customer Feedback

Our aim is to give you the best service possible in your dealings with us. We welcome your views on how we can continue to improve our service into the future. Our contact details are at the back of this leaflet.

Useful Contact Numbers

Social Welfare LoCall Numbers

Child and Treatment Benefit	1890 400 400
Information Services:	
Form and Leaflet Request Line (24 hours, 7 days a week)	1890 20 2325
Maternity Benefit	1890 690 690
Pension Services Office	1890 500 000

Social Welfare Appeals Office **1890 74 7434**

Citizen's Information Phone Service **1890 77 7121**

Department Sections

Carer's Allowance	(01) 7043000
Disability Allowance	(01) 7043948
Disability Benefit	(01) 6797777
Free Schemes	(01) 7043371
Invalidity Pension	(01) 7043000
Occupational Injury Benefit	(01) 6732044

For unemployment payments – see the 'State Directory' in your telephone book for the contact details of your local Social Welfare Office or online at www.welfare.ie/contact/index.html#Local_Offices for Local Office contacts

For further information on the Customer Charter contact:

Quality Customer Services
Department of Social & Family Affairs
Landen House
157/164 Townsend Street
Dublin 2.

Telephone: (01) 6732148; 6732217; 6732281; 6732038

APPENDIX 3:

EXTERNAL DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATION

The Department of Social & Family Affairs is represented on the following:-

- National Economic & Social Forum
- National Economic & Social Council
- “Sustaining Progress” Plenary Group
- Steering Group for “Sustaining Progress”
- Tax Strategy Group
- Board of FÁS
- Board of An Post
- Board of Comhairle
- Board of Combat Poverty Agency
- Board of Family Support Agency
- Pensions Board
- Legal Aid Board

The Department is appropriately engaged at local, area and national level in:-

- County and City Development Boards
- RAPID/CLÁR Programmes
- Area Partnerships and community groups funded through ADM Ltd.
- Supports for local initiatives i.e. Regional Violence against Women Committees; County Adult Guidance Service Committees; County Homeless Forums; ICTU Centres for the Unemployed; Social Economy Working Groups; Area Childhood Development Initiatives; County Council Co-ordinating Services Groups for Travellers; Regional Drug Task Forces.
- Money Advice & Budgeting Service
- Citizen Information Centres
- County Childcare Committees

The Department is also represented on a number of administrative Departmental networks established under the Strategic Management Initiative and working groups on civil service wide issues i.e. Modernisation, Finance & Control, Information & Communication Technology and Decentralisation.

Senior officials of the Department are also on Audit Committees of a number of other Government Departments/Agencies and professional staff of the Department are involved in relevant professional bodies/committees.

The following interdepartmental groups are headed by the Department of Social & Family Affairs but involve representatives from other Departments.

- Social Inclusion Consultative Group (Co-chaired by Department of An Taoiseach)
- SAFE Interdepartmental Steering Group (Co-chaired by Department of Finance).
- Supplementary Welfare Allowance Expenditure Review Working Group
- Expenditure Review Working Group on the Back to Education allowance
- Management Group of Assistant Secretaries for the Office of Social Inclusion
- NAPS Technical Advisory Group

Interdepartmental groups/committees headed by other Government Departments/Agencies on which the Department of Social & Family Affairs is represented.

- Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion
- High Level Group on Traveller Issues
- Committee to Monitor and Co-ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community
- Interdepartmental committee on Census 2006
- Interdepartmental Steering Group on Social & Equality Statistics
- Rural Social Scheme Implementation Working Group.
- Education Committee, Institute of Public Administration
- Education Welfare Board
- Money Laundering Steering Committee
- Interdepartmental PAYE/PRSI Executive Group
- NDP/CSF Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Co-ordinating Committee (EOSICC)
- Interdepartmental Committee to develop a National Women's Strategy
- Immigration Policy Advisory Committee
- Interdepartmental Committee on Asylum and Immigration issues
- Steering Group Anti-Racism Awareness Campaign
- Steering Group on National Action Plan against Racism
- NCCRI (National Consultative Committee on racism and interculturalism)
- National Framework Committee for work/life balance policies
- National Children's Advisory Council
- National Children's Advisory Board
- National Children's Office Research Advisory Group
- National Longitudinal Study High Level Group
- Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education Consultative Committee
- Lifestart Policy & Practice Advisory Group
- Advisory Committee on Implementing Equality for Carers
- Interdepartmental Committee on Reform of Marriage Law
- National Steering Committee on Men's Health
- Senior Official's Working Group on the Disability Bill
- Dental Treatment Policy Working Groups
- National Council for Ageing and Older People
- Interdepartmental Group on the Needs of Older People
- Working Group on Elder Abuse
- Working group on the cost of disability payment
- FÁS National Advisory Committee on Disability
- Workway
- Interdepartmental review group looking at supports to the long-term unemployed
- EQUAL Monitoring Committee
- National Employment Services Advisory Committee
- National Advisory Committee (NAC)
- National Action Plan for Employment (NAPE)
- Employment Action Plan Oversight Committee
- Standing Committee on Labour Market
- Interdepartmental Committee on the National Spatial Strategy
- Task Force on the housing needs of the elderly
- Interdepartmental Committee on homelessness
- EU Social Protection Committee

- Interdepartmental Committee on UN Affairs
- Interdepartmental Committee on OECD Affairs
- Interdepartmental Lisbon Agenda Group
- EU Technical Commission on Social Security for Migrant Workers
- Interdepartmental Group on the EU Directive on Services in the Internal Market
- Employment & Human Resources Development Operational Programme (EHRDOP) Monitoring Committee
- EU Pensions Forum
- Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee for EU Affairs
- High Level Liaison Group on Northern Ireland
- North/South Interdepartmental Working Groups
- Fuel Poverty Action research project team
- Border Midlands West Regional Assembly Monitoring Committee
- Virtual Private Network (VPN) Programme Board
- Hidden Economy Monitoring Group
- Co-ordination Group on Offender Integration
- National Youth Work Committee
- Interdepartmental Committee to oversee implementation of the National Heritage and the National Biodiversity Plan

APPENDIX 4:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ADM	Area Development Management
Aireacht	responsible for the overall management of the Department, formulation of social protection to meet changing needs of Irish society and for the provision of support and advice to the Minister and Government.
Business Object Model (BOM)	forms an integrated basis for development of the Department's strategic systems.
CDA	Child Dependant Allowance
CIS	Client Identity Services
CLÁR	Ceantar Laga Árd-Riachtanais – targeted investment programme for disadvantaged rural areas progressed by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
County & City Development Boards	established during 2000 in each county and county borough. These are representative of local government, the state agencies, local development bodies and social partners to oversee a county/city strategy for economic, social and cultural development.
CPA	Combat Poverty Agency
CRS	Central Records System
CSF	Community Support Framework
CSO	Central Statistics Office (www.cso.ie).
Customer Object	that part of the Business Object Model that encapsulates the data and functions relating to the customer (e.g. its implementation will include provision for data and functions currently provided by the Central Records System).
CWOs	Community Welfare Officers
DAO	Decisions Advisory Office
D/SFA Facilitators	Staff of the Department's Social and Family Support Service who assist our customers in accessing the wide range of work, educational and training options as well as other supports available through the Department and other agencies such as FÁS. These officers may be contacted at Social Welfare Local Offices.

EAP	Employment Action Plan.
EEA	European Economic Area (EU Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute (www.esri.ie)
EQUAL / EQUAL II	funded by the ESF and aims to fight discrimination and inequality in the labour market by implementing measures to improve access to employment and training opportunities for people who are unemployed, or employed but low skilled and therefore vulnerable to unemployment.
EU	European Union (www.europa.eu.int).
EU-SILC	EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions.
FRCs	Family Resource Centres
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair – Training and Employment Authority.
FAU	Family Affairs Unit
FSA	Family Support Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
Household Benefits	Free Electricity/Gas Allowance, the Telephone Allowance and the Free Television Licence.
HR	Human Resources.
HRM	Human Resources Management
HSE	Health Service Executive
HSP	High Supports Process: a system of supports to assist customers disengaged from the labour market back into work/training.
ICT	Information and Communications Technology.
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IIF	Irish Insurance Federation
IORPs	Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provision
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators

Lisbon Agenda:	as agreed by the European Council in Lisbon in 2000, seeks to ensure that the European Union becomes the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world by 2010, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. Social Protection Ministers have a key role to play in ensuring the success of the Lisbon goals. The four key issues of collective concern for them are Social Inclusion, Pensions, Making Work Pay and Access to Health-care and Care of the Elderly.
LR	Live Register: the number of people getting an unemployment payment or unemployment credits in a particular week.
MABS	Money Advice and Budgeting Service.
MAC	Management Advisory Committee
MAP	Modernisation Action Plan: a document that sets out the Department's proposals for implementing the Government's Modernisation programme, as required under the 'Sustaining Progress' agreement.
MIF	Management Information Framework.
NAPS	National Anti Poverty Strategy
NAPSincl	National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion – prepared by each EU Member State on a biennial basis.
National Longitudinal Study	Study which, it is planned, will monitor the development of 18,000 children from different backgrounds (10,000 from birth and 8,000 nine year olds) through to adulthood. It will follow these children from birth and nine years old to adulthood, yielding important information about each significant transition throughout their young lives. It will seek to identify the circumstances which allow children to thrive and those which hinder children's development.
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
NDP	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations.
OASIS	integrated online resource of public service information based around citizen-centred life events (www.oasis.gov.ie).
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (www.oecd.org).

OSI	Office of Social Inclusion: office within D/SFA which co-ordinates the Government's National Anti-Poverty Strategy.
PPF	Programme for Prosperity & Fairness
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System.
PPSN	Personal Public Service Number.
PRSA	Personal Retirement Savings Accounts – vehicle to facilitate increased savings for pensions and extend supplementary pensions coverage overall, especially to people who have no such cover at present.
PRSI	Pay Related Social Insurance.
PSB	Public Service Broker
PSI	Public Service Identity.
RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development – Government initiative targeted at areas suffering high concentrations of deprivation.
REACH	cross-Departmental agency established by the Government in 1999 to build or procure the Public Services Broker – a single, multi-channel gateway to government – and to develop a framework for the integration of public services (www.reach.ie).
RPA	Rail Procurement Agency
RTI	Rural Transport Initiative – established under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 to encourage local or community-based initiatives to provide bus services in rural areas.
SAFE	Standard Authentication Framework Environment
SDM	Service Delivery Model – modernizing the way in which we deliver our services to our customers. It is underpinned by the new computer systems and a parallel programme of organisational change.
SMI	Strategic Management Initiative – the Public Service Modernisation Programme, launched in 1994
SWAO	Social Welfare Appeals Office
UN	United Nations

