

Department of Social Protection Statement of Strategy 2015 to 2017

The Department's Mission is 'To promote active participation and inclusion in society through the provision of income supports, employment services and other services'.

The Department's overall objective for 2015 to 2017 is to put our clients at the centre of all our operations, providing an integrated income support and activation focused service.



Objective 1	Put the Client at the Centre of Services and Policies
Objective 2	Drive Cost, Efficiency and Effectiveness
Objective 3	Develop Staff, Structures and Processes

Foreword by Minister

I welcome the publication of this Statement of Strategy for the Department of Social Protection. This Statement sets out an ambitious work programme, closely focused on addressing the needs of our clients in a way that will promote a working culture and active and sustained participation in society.

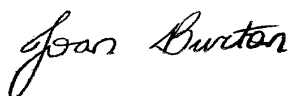
The main priority of the Department is to build on achievements made to integrate services into a new service delivery model so that the Department can continue to contribute in a meaningful way, to the Government's overriding goals of supporting economic growth and promoting employability.

The high-level strategies, key outcomes and high-level indicators in this Statement will now be reflected in the business plans of the staff of the Department; each will know how his/her work contributes to the achievement of the Department's overall mission.

The staff administer over 70 different schemes and services with over 1.44 million people benefiting from weekly payments in respect of almost 2.3 million beneficiaries, as well as a further 607,000 families in receipt of a monthly child benefit payment. This means that our payments and services impact on the lives of almost everybody in the State in one way or another.

Given the importance and scale of our business it is essential that the programme of work for the next three years will achieve the desired objectives and is fully reflective of Government policy.

I already know how committed staff and management of the Department are and I look forward to working with them to achieve our objectives.



Joan Burton T.D.
Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection

Introduction by the Secretary General

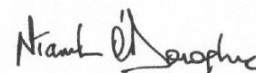
The Department of Social Protection's ninth Statement of Strategy sets out the mission, high-level objectives and key actions which we will pursue in delivering the policies and priorities as set down by the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection and the Government.

As a Department we strive to provide excellent customer service whilst making the best use of the resources available to us. Over the last number of years our role and the demand for the services we provide has changed significantly. To this end there is a continuous stream of work on-going to transform the organisation and improve the way we do things.

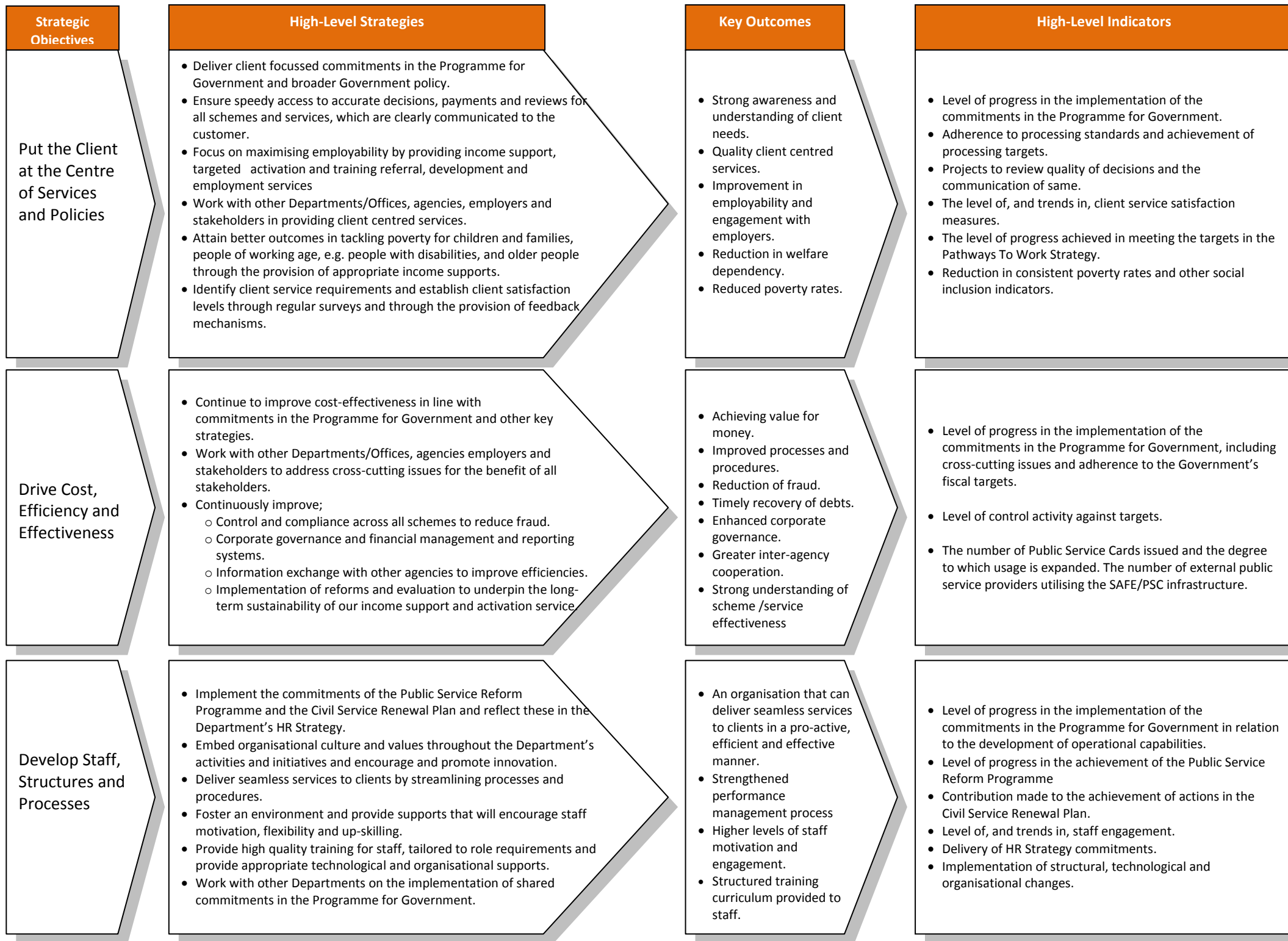
The Department delivers a vast range of services from various locations throughout the country, but as a single organisation, we have a true sense of purpose to put our clients at the centre of all of our activities. Our wide ranging programme of organisational development will continue to deepen integration, support staff and build our organisational and staff capability to successfully manage change, while at the same time meeting our clients' constantly evolving needs.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable support and co-operation of all staff in our continued efforts to deliver and improve our services. It is through their ongoing commitment, co-operation and resourcefulness that the Department has successfully implemented so many positive changes to date, and is well placed to respond to the further challenges facing us over the next three years.

I look forward to working with the Tánaiste and Minister, Joan Burton T.D., Minister of State, Kevin Humphries T.D., the Department's staff and other stakeholders in realising the ambitions set out in this Statement of Strategy.



Niamh O'Donoghue
Secretary General



The key challenges and opportunities in our Operating Environment are:

- **Economic Context**

The domestic, European and global economic context, while improved, will continue to present challenges for economic activity and the fiscal position. DSP expenditure of approximately 40% of all gross current Government expenditure is a challenge to the key Government objective of the management of public finances and adherence to the fiscal rules set out in the Stability and Growth Pact.

- **Working Relationship with other Departments and Public Sector Bodies**

Continuing to foster the good working relationships the Department has with other Government Departments and public sector bodies will be critical to: achieve the Government's objectives, including social reforms which impact on the civil registration system; implement the Compliance and Anti-Fraud Strategy 2014 – 2018 in order to protect the integrity of the system and to ensure that we continue to target our scarce resources at those who most need them; to deliver new services for other State organisations in the context of the wider roles of DSP.

- **European Union**

The Department leads Ireland's contribution to the EU Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion and will continue to actively participate in the relevant EU Committees and networks. The Department also coordinates Ireland's contribution to the Europe 2020 poverty target through the National Reform Programme and the European Semester.

- **National Social Target for Poverty Reduction**

There are challenges for the Department in supporting the national social target for poverty reduction, taking into account the overarching role of social transfers in alleviating poverty and the importance of work as a route out of poverty.

- **Demographic Pressures**

There are financial implications of ensuring an adequate and sustainable welfare system in the years ahead, particularly having regard to the challenges caused by demographic pressures. This includes the maintenance of the social insurance system, based on paid PRSI contributions, with an appropriate level of entitlements based on these contributions.

- **Structural Reform**

The continuing implementation of the significant welfare structural reforms set out in the Programme for Government and Statement of Government Priorities will present opportunities and challenges, as will any decisions by Government on future reforms.

- **Meeting client and stakeholder interests and needs**

The continuing integration of income supports with activation, closer engagement with employers and robust evaluation of outcomes will be critical to ensuring the Department successfully leads the implementation of the Government's Pathways to Work strategy and Youth Guarantee which place a particular emphasis on measures to help long-term and young unemployed people find a route back into employment. The involvement of key stakeholders and experts in the Labour Market Council will inform the Department's approach to the implementation of Pathways to Work.

- **Public Service Reform**

The Department is committed to contributing to the delivery of the Government's Public Service Reform Programme and the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

- **"One DSP" Changing Together**

The continuing implementation of a wide-ranging programme of organisational development will deepen integration, support staff and build organisational and staff capability to successfully manage change and to provide excellent services to our clients.

Achieving our Strategic Objectives will be supported by these Enablers

People and Structures

- Successful communication and embedding of organisational culture and values
- Management of team and individual performance.
- Alignment of Departmental structures and staff deployment with strategy.
- Greater supports to strengthen knowledge, capabilities, leadership and skills throughout the organisation.
- Effective internal and external engagement, communications and networks.
- Availing of opportunities presented through Public Service Reform.

Technology and processes

- Deployment of modern technologies in an innovative way to maximise efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.
- Availability of cross-Governmental programmes, such as shared services, data sharing and eGovernment.
- Ongoing analysis and improvement of key business processes.
- Expansion of client self-services

Governance

- Integrated risk management, strategic planning and business planning system and process.
- Data privacy and security policies, standards and guidelines.
- Internal Controls.
- Oversight by Internal Audit Unit and the Audit Committee.
- Ongoing review of legislative code.

Statement of Government Priorities 2014 - 2016

1. Strengthening the Domestic Economy & Prioritising New Jobs for the Unemployed

- Continue the nationwide roll-out of the Youth Guarantee to ensure work, training and educational opportunities for young jobseekers.
- We will contribute to the commitment to reduce the overall unemployment rate to below the eurozone average this year and to below 10% by 2016
- We will update the Pathways to Work Strategy this year to set out additional measures, including additional funding for the JobsPlus wage subsidy scheme, a further expansion of the Youth Guarantee and the introduction of externally-sourced activation services through JobPath.
- We will also embed the Labour Market Council, alongside the National Competitiveness Council, as a permanent advisory body on reducing unemployment and other labour market reforms.

2. Delivering Better Living and Working Standards

- In Budget 2015, we will introduce measures to assist low-income families by improving the system of child income supports such that those moving from welfare to work will retain payments for children to ensure that people are better off in work.
- We will commit to the full retention of the Free Travel Scheme.
- In Budget 2015, we will increase the Household Benefits Package by €100, in part to compensate older people and other vulnerable groups for the introduction of water charges¹.
- We will address the pension's gap between men and women, the old and the young, and the public and private sectors. During 2015, we will agree a roadmap and timeline for the introduction of a new, universal supplementary pension saving scheme.
- We will strengthen the independent advice service offered to distressed borrowers.

4. Responsible and Sustainable Management of the Public Finances

- We will complete a Comprehensive Review of Expenditure ahead of the Budget in order to prioritise expenditure allocations for the coming years.
- We will contribute to the publication of the state's first Open Data plan to leverage the economic and participatory potential of open data.
- We will systemically publish details of all appointments to State Boards.
- In advance of a referendum on same-sex marriage in the first half of 2015, we will reform and modernise family law through the Children and Family Relationships Bill².

¹ Now replaced by introduction of Water Conservation Grant.

² The Department of Social Protection will make any necessary legislative amendments to the civil registration legislation on foot of the enactment of the Children and Family Relationships Bill and the holding of the referendum on same sex marriage.