

**Lead topic:**  
**Public Service Reform**

**Sub-topic:**  
**Delivery of Reform**

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## **FAST FACTS**

### **Public Service Reform Programme**

- Public Service Reform has been a central element of the response to the challenges of recent years and remains an essential part of building for the future.
- A new phase of public service development and innovation is being developed to cover the period 2017-20. This follows from a comprehensive programme of public service reform implemented in two phases which ran from 2011-13 and from 2014-16.
- The first Public Service Reform Plan was published in November 2011. With fiscal adjustment the key driver at the time, the focus of that plan was mainly of efficiency and cost containment. The second Public Service Reform Plan which covered the period 2014-2016 maintained a focus on efficiency but had the overarching objective of better outcomes for stakeholders.
- My Department commissioned a Review of the second Public Service Reform Plan, 2014-16 in late 2016 and the results of that Review will be published later this month. The findings of the Review will be taken forward in the next stage of reform.
- We are now moving from a stage of reform to one of development and continuous improvement. The next phase of public service reform is being shaped with this vision in mind. A new Public Service Development and Innovation Framework designed around three pillars, specifically Delivering for our Public, Innovating for our Future, and Developing our People and Organisations is currently being developed. The Framework will set out a number of key Actions which will build on the achievements of the last six years, respond to new challenges and continue to deliver improvements across the public service.
- It is intended to publish the finalised Framework and accompanying Actions in November 2017.
- Preparation of the Framework has involved a wide-ranging process of engagement with representatives from across the civil and public service. This included the Reform and Innovation Network, the Senior Officials Group on Social Policy and Public Service Reform, external experts and academics on public administration, and the OECD.
- An upcoming period of consultation with the general public and the wider public

service is an important part of the engagement process. The consultation will run for 4 weeks from 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2017 with submissions invited via an online portal, dedicated email address and also accepted in writing.

- All submissions will be reviewed by staff in the Reform and Delivery Office in my Department. The consultation process will be in line with the Guidelines on Public Consultation published in late 2016.
- Integrated Reform Delivery Plans are completed by all Departments and major Offices at the start of each year. These Plans set out the actions and milestones for the implementation of priority areas of organisational, sectoral and cross-cutting reform, as well as actions to implement the Haddington Road Agreement.

### **Civil Service Renewal**

- Civil Service Renewal Plan was published in late 2014. The Plan is a key part of the Government's wider public service reform programme.
- The Plan sets out a vision and 3-year action plan to achieve it. It outlines 25 practical actions that will create a more unified, professional, responsive, open and accountable Civil Service that can provide a world-class service to the State and the people of Ireland.
- The Plan is being implemented over 4 phases and will run to end December 2017.
- The third Progress Report detailing the progress on implementation was published on 30 June 2017 by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.
- This report shows significant progress has been made in implementing the priorities during phase 3 and also captures the progress made across the full programme.

### **Q&A**

#### **Public Service Reform**

##### **1. What overall progress has been made in the area of Public Service Reform?**

**A.** Significant progress has been made since the publication of the Government's **first Public Service Reform Plan in November, 2011**. Fiscal adjustment was a key driver at that time and so the focus was, to a large extent, on cost containment and efficiency improvements. Public Service staff numbers were significantly reduced, while meeting increased demand for services due to the downturn. The reform of public services became critical to the delivery of those services and strong progress was made, as set out in two published progress reports.

The **second Public Service Reform Plan (2014-16) was published in 2014** and reflected the need to maintain a focus on reducing costs and increasing efficiency, having regard to the continuing increased demands for many public services. However, the Plan had an ambitious, overarching objective of delivering better outcomes for all stakeholders and a strong emphasis on service improvement. The overall objective of better outcomes was pursued across all sectors of the Public Service through:-

- A Focus on Service Users
- A Focus on Efficiency
- A Focus on Openness, Transparency and Accountability
- A Focus on Leadership, Renewal and Organisational Reform

The Public Service Reform Plan 2014-16 included a broad range of reforms, with 227 specific actions set out. Key priorities included, for example, more digital delivery of services, better engagement with customers, the use of alternative models of service delivery, implementation of shared services and more efficient and effective public procurement and property management, and increased openness, transparency and accountability.

**Two Annual Progress Reports** on the Public Service Reform Plan 2014-2016 have been published setting out details of the significant progress made to date. The first Progress Report in March 2015 and the second Progress Report in April 2016. These are available on my Department's website. A **final Progress Report** is due to be published in mid-July 2017. Work has begun on development of a new Public Service Framework to cover the period 2017-2020.

**Q.2. What will be the purpose of the next phase of reform?**

**A.** The purpose of the new public service Framework is to deliver better services by building on the process of reform started in 2011. This phase will consolidate the significant progress made since the first Public Service Reform Plan was launched in 2011. By moving to a new

phase of continuous improvement and embedding the reforms already in place, we enable:-

- an engaged Public Service that responds to the needs of the public;
- resilient and agile public service organisations;
- collaborative working across public sector organisations who identify and share innovation and best practice to meet the challenges ahead;
- improved service delivery through the use of new technologies, alternative methods of delivery and data as an enabler; and
- improved outcomes for the public.

These high-level outcomes will be underpinned by the principles of the Framework;

Evidence: actions are based on evidence informed approach,

Flexibility: we change direction or reprioritise if the evidence shows another approach is better, or if changes circumstances require it,

Inclusion: in design, implementation, evaluation and review of the Framework we take an inclusive approach drawing on expertise across and outside the public service as well as listening to our staff and engaging with the public in line with Public Service Duty,

Outcomes focus: we will continue to move from an emphasis on outputs and process to focus on outcomes and impact, and

Evaluation and review: the Framework and individual actions will be subject to regular evaluation and review.

### **Q.3. How will the next phase of public service reform deliver improvements?**

**A.** This Framework will set out a series of actions to be delivered out to 2020 which will both build on the achievements of the last six years and also respond to new challenges.

The uncertain and unpredictable external environment poses significant challenges for Ireland.

We need a robust and agile public service which contributes to our economic development, ensures delivery of quality services to the public and allows Ireland to compete and thrive in a time of accelerating change as the Programme for Partnership Government envisages.

The next phase of reform will focus on delivering improvements across the three main pillars of the public service: The draft Framework sets out our goals under three key pillars:-

- Delivering for our Public
- Planning our Future
- Developing our People and Organisations

This Framework will identify a series of specific actions with designated owners and will focus on areas which will deliver improvements across the whole public service. These actions will complement and reinforce the extensive reforms already being delivered at local and national level in individual sectors of the public service.

**Q.4. How will the new Framework take stakeholder views on board?**

**A.** A significant programme of engagement in developing the next phase of reform is underway. This includes a number of workshops with both the Civil Service and Public Service to examine the achievements of the current Plan and scope priorities for the new framework.

Further engagement is planned and includes a public consultation. We would welcome any engagement with members of the Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform. My officials are available to meet with Committee members to discuss the approach and to hear their views.

In addition the OECD is undertaking a review of the Public Service Reform Plan 2014-2016 and learnings from this review will inform the development of the next phase of reform. The OECD report of the review is due to be published in mid-July.

**Q.5. How does the new Framework relate to the spending reviews being initiated by your**

## **Departments?**

**A.** Reform is continuing to deliver savings and value for money across a range of specific areas such as shared services, procurement reform and property management.

While these savings free up expenditure, we need to learn the lessons of the past and spend in a smart and efficient manner. That is why, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February last, I announced a public spending review to ensure better value for the taxpayer. Moderate, sustainable, expenditure growth is now planned over the medium-term. However, increasing and competing public service demands will mean managing expenditure, and this is likely to prove challenging. Spending reviews can support better policy choices by broadening the Government's options. We must ensure that sufficient resources are available when considering new policies. We cannot rely on incremental expenditure increases fuelled by economic growth. I am convinced that a more dynamic approach to the allocation of resources will result in better services for our citizens.

## **Q.7. How is the Reform Programme being implemented?**

**A.** The delivery of the ambitious reforms set out in the Reform Plan 2014-2016 required a continuing emphasis on implementation. This was a key element of the first and second Reform Plans which focused on strong and effective programme management and governance arrangements, both centrally and within each of the main sectors. This process is led by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform.

Integrated Reform Delivery Plans (IRDPs) have been completed by all Departments and major Offices. These plans set out how those organisations implement the cross-cutting reforms set out in the new Reform Plan, alongside sector-specific reforms. Progress reports were submitted regularly to DPER as part of the IRDP process.

## **Q.8. Can you show any evidence of the positive impact of the reform programme?**

**A.** Our public services continue to improve and deliver quality services. A recent report by the Institute of Public Administration (Public Sector Trends 2016) had many positive findings including:

- Ireland's Public Administration comes **first in the EU28** for being the **most professional and least politicised**<sup>1</sup>;
- Irish Public Services are **5<sup>th</sup> in the EU28** for the **quality of its public administration** (a relatively consistent score over last three years);
- Ireland remains **4<sup>th</sup>** in the EU28 in the rating of perceptions that **Government decisions are effectively implemented**.

In terms of customer service, the **Civil Service Business Customer Survey 2016** (based on interviews with 534 businesses) was published in January 2017 and indicated that 82% of business customers are satisfied with the service they received. This is a significant improvement on the last survey in 2009, where 71% were satisfied. 61% of respondents felt that the service provided by the Civil Service has improved in the last 5 years.

Moreover, the **Civil Service General Customer Satisfaction Survey 2017** found overall satisfaction levels for service delivery and outcome are the highest recorded to date. 83% of customers were satisfied with both the service received (up from 76% in 2015). 82% were satisfied with the outcome of their most recent contact (also up from 76% in 2015), and 87% said service levels are mostly meeting or exceeding expectations (up from 83% in 2015).

### **Civil Service Renewal**

#### **Q. 9 What is the Renewal Plan about?**

It is supporting the development of the Civil Service to ensure that it can address current and future challenges. It is built on four pillars to create a more unified, professional, responsive and open and accountable Civil Service.

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<sup>1</sup> Professionalism Index, pg35, IPA Public Sector Trends 2016

**Q. 10 How is the change programme implemented?**

Delivery of actions in the plan is driven collectively by the Civil Service Management Board and implementation is led by the Secretary General to the Government and myself. A Programme Management Office in my Department supports the process.

**Q. 11 What are the key areas delivered this year?**

The priority actions for the latest phase of implementation are:

- A new **Civil Service People Strategy** has been developed which focuses on three strategic priorities: being an employer of choice; building the workforce of the future and building, supporting and valuing managers as people developers. (Action 7)
- Three pathfinder projects are **piloting new ways for delivering Whole-of-Government** work namely the Public Services Card, the National Cyber Security Strategy, and Youth Mental Health. The overall learning across the three projects will be reviewed in October 2017. The Youth Mental Health pathfinder project team has completed its initial work and presented an evaluation of the successful collaborative process. (Action 5)
- Further progress on preparing for the introduction of the new shared **learning and development** model including finalisation of the core curriculum. (Action 9)
- Introduction of **talent management programmes** commencing with pilot programmes for Assistant Secretary and Principal Officer levels. (Action 10)
- Establishment of a **Project Management** Leaders and Advisory Service; a new Project Management Network; publication of a Project Management Handbook and development of a dedicated website for project management resources. (Action 17)
- Progress on developing guidance on **policy-making** and continuance of a series of Open Policy Debates that involve networks of practitioners, academics and experts. (Action 22)

The latest progress report shows that significant progress has been made on these and other actions in the Plan. A summary of progress is appended.