



Please recycle this
copy of OneGov

Building on progress to meet challenges ahead

IN THIS ISSUE

- ▶ Progress on Transforming Public Services
- ▶ Implementing the Croke Park Agreement
- ▶ Organisational Review Programme
- ▶ Tackling social exclusion in higher education

Contents

2. Three little words
3. Implementing the Croke Park Agreement
4. Rewind and review
Taking stock of progress in Public Service transformation
5. Better Regulation
6. Delivering the goods
Improving service delivery
7. Supporting Public Service transformation
8. Mapping the State
8. OECD countries discuss reform issues
8. Picturing road safety
9. Hear, Dare and everywhere
10. Efficiency in local government
11. HSE Achievement Awards
11. Competition
Win an iPod Touch
12. An external perspective on the Organisational Review Programme

CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR are looming large and three little words are on everyone's lips: four year plan. To employ another seasonal analogy, we are on a wintry road, steering carefully to ensure we get to our destination in one piece. State employees have a duty that has never been more important: we have to focus on our roles and continue to deliver. True, it will be harder. Diminished resources will impact on how we do our work but the country is relying on us.

We have proven that we can – and do – rise to challenges. Against a backdrop of recruitment moratoriums and budget cuts, we have continued to deliver quality service to the citizen; we have, collectively, put mechanisms in place that support the implementation of the far-reaching Transforming Public Services programme. OneGov Newsletter is proud to report those achievements. The year-end is a good time to look back and take stock of the good work that has been done. On pages 4 and 5, we look at some of the milestones passed in progressing the TPS agenda. On pages 6 and 7, we present a range of recent, everyday examples of quality service delivery in Government Departments and Offices. Of course, everything we do from here on will be influenced by the Croke Park Agreement, as well as the four-year National Recovery Plan and the Budget. Our article on page 3 examines the importance of our collective commitment on that front.

Efforts to increase efficiency in Local Government are featured on page 10. Also, the HSE Awards (page 11) show how much good is being done in that sector. What is happening in your sector? Your voice is important right now. Keep us informed about the developments in your area of work. OneGov Newsletter and its sister website, www.onegov.ie, want to ensure that the progress is acknowledged, reported and publicised. We want to hear from readers across the Public Service so that we can give a voice to your achievements.

Equal access to education is extremely important. On page 9, we look at how certain disadvantages are being overcome for students. OneGov regularly returns to equality and diversity issues, and we look forward to reporting such progress across all sectors.

We must remember that our effort is collective and, as the old cliché would have it, we are only as strong as our weakest link. The Organisational Review Programme is looking closely at that aspect, ensuring that Departments and Offices are fit for purpose. Dr. Richard Boyle and Joanna O'Riordan share a very useful external perspective on that process on page 12.

Whether or not you celebrate Christmas, we wish you peace and happiness at this time of year. With the weather biting hard these days, we'd encourage you to keep an eye on elderly and vulnerable neighbours. Stay safe on the roads too (see page 8!).

And, finally, we'll round up with another three little words: Happy New Year!



Visit www.onegov.ie

Implementing the Croke Park Agreement

FULL AND TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION of the Croke Park Agreement is a crucial element of the overall response to the challenges that we all currently face. The National Recovery Plan (Four Year Plan) was prepared on the basis that the Agreement will deliver tangible savings and sets out a significant programme of change in this regard. The National Recovery Plan also makes it clear that the commitments entered into by the Government under the Agreement are dependent on savings being delivered through its comprehensive implementation.

“The Croke Park Agreement provides a means of radically transforming the Public Service, especially through greater flexibility, redeployment, changed work practices and overall reductions in numbers.”

Implementation Body

The management / union Implementation Body, independently chaired by P.J. Fitzpatrick, continues to meet regularly. In addition, all of the sectoral implementation bodies are now established and actively working to pursue implementation of the current Action Plans in each sector.



“Action Plans should be regarded as dynamic, living documents.”

Action plans

The Sectoral Action Plans for the Health, Local Government, Education, and Civil Service and State Agency Sectors have now all been published on the relevant Departmental websites, and the Garda plan will also be published shortly. While the current Action Plans focus on the short to medium term, the Croke Park Agreement covers the period to 2014. Therefore, the Action Plans should be regarded as dynamic, living documents that evolve to meet circumstances over that period. The Implementation Body has now requested management to revisit the current Action Plans by mid-January, to take account of the specific organisational impacts of decisions in relation to the National Recovery Plan and Budget 2011.

Accelerating the pace of change

The Croke Park Agreement provides a means of radically transforming the Public Service, especially through greater flexibility, redeployment, changed work practices and overall reductions in numbers. It is clear that public servants are transforming how they work and this is being done at an unprecedented rate. It is, however, a rate of progress that will need to continue and indeed accelerate. The cost of delivering

public services must be reduced further and quality services delivered ever more efficiently. The next edition of OneGov Newsletter will include updates on implementation of the Agreement from across the Public Service.



FURTHER INFORMATION

The news page on the TPS website, www.onegov.ie, will keep you abreast of key developments on these issues.

The website also carries links to the Croke Park Agreement, the National Recovery Plan and Budget 2011.

In addition, OneGov Newsletter will return regularly to these matters.

Rewind and review

Taking stock of progress in Public Service transformation

4



Progress in the Health Sector: the launch of the HSE's National Information Line

THE APPROACH OF THE YEAR-END is a useful opportunity to pause, look back and take stock of what we have achieved. The running tally of successes helps us to identify what still needs to be done and how best to proceed with plans for the next steps. While the new Budget and the Government's four-year plan are important, the focus on the implementation of the Transforming Public Services programme must still be maintained. That will require the commitment and engagement of public servants at every level, right across the board.

Updates

In response to Parliamentary Questions in mid-November, the Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen, T.D., was able to update the Dáil on the significant progress being made in delivering on the complex and wide-ranging TPS (Transforming Public Services) agenda. In his report, he addressed a number of areas that will be of interest to readers of OneGov.

Background

The OECD review of the Irish Public Service, *Towards an Integrated Public Service*, was published in April 2008. It benchmarked the Public Service in Ireland against comparable countries. The document included a range of recommendations on the further direction of Public Service reform. The Transforming Public Services programme was developed on

foot of the OECD Review and is designed to create flexibility in the deployment of people and other resources, to improve performance by organisations and individuals and to address the immediate priority of securing maximum value for public spending.

The Public Service Agreement – or the “Croke Park Agreement” – will be a key enabler for the successful implementation of the Transforming Public Services agenda.

Human resources

Progress has been made across the system. In the human resource area, for example, four main instruments have contributed to important expenditure savings: notably the incentivised scheme of early retirement; the special Civil Service career break scheme; the shorter working year scheme; and the moratorium on the filling of Public Service vacancies.

It is crucial to highlight that the resulting reduction of around 12,000 in Public Service numbers since the end of 2008 has not led to any reduction in services.

Recently, voluntary early retirement and voluntary redundancy schemes were approved for certain categories of staff in the public health service. The aim is to achieve a permanent reduction in the numbers employed in the public health sector and to facilitate health service reform. The closing date for that scheme has very recently passed with more than 3,000 people applying for the scheme.

eGovernment

e-Government is a key element of the Transforming Public Services (TPS) agenda and the National Recovery Plan. Statements of Strategy must address eGovernment issues



Progress in the Justice Sector: improved safety in the Irish Prison Service

and organisations are required to develop detailed eGovernment Plans.

It is anticipated that Ireland's progress will be favourably reflected in the EU Commission's 2010 eGovernment Benchmarking Report. Further phases of the eGovernment Strategy will make interaction with State bodies much easier for the citizen and for business.

Examples of progress in this area include the increasing number of online services, specifically: student grant applications; new business registration; public library services; and, shortly, unemployment benefits. Also, an eGovernment seminar will be hosted by the Department of the Taoiseach in early 2011. Key eGovernment documents are available over Government Networks at www.ict.gov.ie/egov.

Better buying power

The National Procurement Service (NPS) was established to improve the Public Service's buying power by organising procurement of common goods and services across the Public Service. Savings in the region of €35 million have been achieved already. The TPS Programme Office worked with the NPS earlier this year to run a seminar on the improved procurement practices. Interest in the event was extremely high and the NPS are now running a series of events themselves to raise awareness and competency levels in public procurement.

Pooling resources

There are significant potential savings associated with the sharing of services and



Achievements right across the Public Service: winners of the Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Awards 2010

pooling of resources. Work is underway to advance shared services in several sectors, in areas that include human resources, pensions administration, payroll and financial management. For example, an RFT was recently issued for external assistance with a HR Shared Services Centre for the Civil Service.

Reviewing organisations

The Organisational Review Programme has been extended so that all Departments and major offices will be reviewed by the end of 2012. Work is also progressing on the development of new performance and governance frameworks for State Agencies and the greater use of service level agreements. This

is happening against a background of agency rationalisation and, of course, reduced staff numbers.

Honouring the agreement

The terms of the Croke Park Agreement provide a means by which we can radically transform the Public Service through greater flexibility, redeployment, changed work practices and overall reductions in numbers.

Good leadership from management as well as staff will be required. The Agreement was painstakingly discussed and agreed, and its implementation will be important to everyone, citizens and public servants alike.

Better Regulation



2010 HAS BEEN A BUSY YEAR on the Better Regulation front with significant progress made across a range of projects.

Following detailed research, including direct interviews with a wide range of stakeholders,

the OECD finalised their Review of Better Regulation systems and processes in Ireland. The Review is part of wider research project focusing on the EU 15, financed by the EU Commission, and is expected to shape future work in this area at both national and EU level. For further information see www.betterregulation.ie or www.oecd.org.

Work is continuing on the implementation of the Government Statement on Economic Regulation within key Departments and Regulators, particularly in relation to the stress-testing of regulatory frameworks. The Regulatory Liaison Group (RLG) and the Senior Officials Group on Economic

Regulation have been tasked with driving progress on the various actions.

The issue of regulatory training and capacity was of key interest to the RLG throughout the year and following a formal procurement process, UCD and the IPA have been contracted to deliver a professional Diploma in Regulatory Governance on a pilot basis in 2011.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Visit www.betterregulation.ie

Contact

betterregulation@taoiseach.gov.ie

Delivering the goods

Improving service delivery

THE TPS PROGRAMME OFFICE regularly liaises with Departments, Offices and Agencies to gather information on their activities to improve service delivery. This helps to build an informative picture of the real commitment to customer service improvement and its benefits for the citizen. The results of a recent survey show that real progress continues to be made. In times when the Public Service seems to attract more than its share of negative commentary, it is important that we reflect on the real progress being made, that we highlight the facts of the matter: the Public Service delivers.

Reassurance

This is about much more than simply protecting our collective reputation, though. It is important to reassure the citizen that services will continue to the best of everyone's abilities, despite the significantly reduced resources at our disposal. In addition, recognising and acknowledging the work being done helps to support the morale of the people whose efforts and commitment are central to making things happen.

Good examples

Over the course of the past year or so, a great deal of good work has resulted in some terrific service improvements for customers. These results have been achieved in a variety of areas right across the board.

Online Services

The ongoing developments in e-Government are overseen centrally by the Department of Finance. Significant improvements continue to be made in delivering online services to our customers in a diverse range of areas. There are some very interesting efficiencies and developments to report.

For example, the *Office of the Revenue Commissioners* launched a new suite of next generation applications (or apps as they are commonly known) for "smart" mobile phones. This service should further help customers to manage their tax affairs from their mobiles – whether at home, in the office or out and about.

Also, the *Department of Social Protection* is using ICTs (Information & Communication

Technologies) to make the claims and verification processes more efficient and customer friendly. This makes life easier for their clients and means that human resources can be used more effectively.

Process Improvement

Business process improvement is an important element of the TPS programme. The TPS Programme Office is keen to promote proactive approaches to revolutionizing the way work is done so that the citizen, the public servant and, indeed, the Exchequer can benefit from the new efficiencies. The Programme Office has run seminars on "Redesigning Business Processes" this year. They were so successful that it is planned to run the seminars again in 2011.

Accessibility

Equal access to services remains an important issue for all State organisations. The QCS Officers' Network continues to focus on accessibility issues as part of excellent service delivery.

The *Courts Service*, for example, refurbished and upgraded over 50 courthouses across the country to ensure full accessibility. The Criminal Courts of Justice building in Parkgate Street has earned them the status of 'Ability Company in the area of Environmental Accessibility' in the O2 Ability Awards.

Diversity/Equality

Equality and diversity issues are central to customer service excellence and are taken very seriously by the Public Service.

The *National Sports Council* introduced the Sports Inclusion Disability Officer (SIDO) Initiative and currently has 17 SIDO's employed across the country to increase opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity for people with a disability and to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive programmes.

The *Probation Service* carried out a multicultural snapshot survey last year to improve their organisations' knowledge and understanding of all their service users. The



Delegates at a QCS Officers' event

data gathered will be used to facilitate planning and delivering best practice interventions.

Shared services and cross organisational achievements

Progress continues to be made in developing and improving shared services. Many organisations are now pooling resources in a number of areas to reduce costs and streamline operations between State bodies.

One example of this is the *Office of the Revenue Commissioners*, the *Property Registration Authority* and the *Law Society* who are working together on a new “e-Stamping system” which enables practitioners (e.g. solicitors) to complete the stamping of instruments (e.g. property conveyances) in a fast and secure way via the Revenue On-line Service.

Customer Consultation / Engagement

It remains important that the Public Service engages with customers to ensure that it provides the best, most efficient and relevant service possible. Consultation enables organisations to tailor services to the needs of the citizen.

One example of embracing customer input is *Dublin City Council*, who recently launched its new project, *Your Dublin, Your Voice*. The Dublin City Council website allows citizens living and/or working in Dublin to take online surveys and opinion polls. The Council can tap into peoples’ experiences and views to discover the matters that need particular attention around the city.

Tell us

It is ever more important to recognise the successes and achievements being made in spite of the very difficult economic circumstances that influence the availability of resources. Civil and public servants continue to deliver the goods under challenging circumstances and with access to diminished financial and human resources. That needs to be recognised. It is something of which we should be proud. To this end, we aim to repeat this process of highlighting the “good news stories” on a regular basis.

This article covers just some highlights of the continuous efforts being made right across the Civil Service. We’re confident that there are many more developments to report from your sector or organisation: please let’s hear from you. The recent survey mainly covered Civil Service Departments and Offices, so your contributions from the wider Public Service will be both useful and interesting.

Supporting Public Service transformation

Free events organised by the TPS Programme Office



Delegates at the BPI Seminar - May, 2010

WHEN IT COMES TO ENSURING the success of the wide-ranging Public Service transformation initiatives, it is important that officials and practitioners are offered practical support.

The TPS Programme Office is playing its part in this regard. Over the last year, we have organised a number of seminars and conferences, focusing on issues central to driving the transformation process. Crucially, these events are provided free of charge to attendees. They feature high-level speakers and content, and the feedback received has been very positive.

Canny, budget-conscious public servants have recognised the value of these events. Places are snapped up almost as soon as they are advertised.

Successes so far

These conferences and seminars are designed with efficiency in mind. The content is focused and to-the-point. The subject matter is rooted in issues designed to improve practices and enhance services for the citizen.

Recent events include a conference in October in Dublin Castle – “The HR Challenge” – which was heavily subscribed. The conference explored the developments that are influencing policy and practices in

the areas of human resources management. Earlier in the year, there were seminars on business process improvement, public procurement and customer service training. These events were all very well attended, reflecting the commitment of officials keen to remain abreast of important developments.

Planning ahead

The most recent event was a seminar on Redesigning Business Process, which took place in Dublin Castle on 14th December. This event built upon the success of the similar event held in May this year. It featured new speakers and addressed experience gained from more recent business process improvement projects.

With an eye to developments in the new year, an eGovernment conference is planned for 18th January, with a seminar on Shared Services to follow on 10th March, 2011 (Dates may be subject to change).

It is envisaged that other seminars and conferences supporting a range of TPS issues will be arranged by the Programme Office throughout 2011. These events will be promoted in OneGov Newsletter, and on the www.onegov.ie website. E-mail onegov@taoiseach.gov.ie or telephone 01 619 4090 for more information.

Mapping the State

New research resource for Irish public administration

Niamh Hardiman (UCD) & Muiris MacCarthaigh (IPA & UCD)

The *Irish State Administration Database* (ISAD) was launched in November. It provides a complete source of information on the evolution and development of national administrative structures in Ireland since 1922. It is the result of 'Mapping the Irish State' – a research project undertaken at the Geary Institute at University College Dublin.

The database provides the raw material which makes it possible to profile trends in institutional evolution, to track changes in governance mechanisms, and to analyse the context in which policy is made in Ireland.

The information coded in the database permits the formulation and testing of further hypotheses about the processes and quality of policy making and implementation, such as changes in regulatory governance, the impact of New Public Management and other trends in public administration such as the growth of network governance.

As well as the myriad state agencies and enterprises created since independence, Government Departments are also captured in the database to present a complete picture of the national administration.

The Database is fully interactive and, as well as establishing links to the Irish Statute Book,

it is intended that it will in future be linked with other national databases.

This is an innovative medium for linking research work with the real-world challenges of adapting state structures to 'fit' contemporary policy challenges, and to assess the effect of structures on policy. As the Irish State's administrative structures enter a new period of development, adopting a longer-term view of the evolution of the institutional basis of public administration should help lay the foundation for improved policy decisions.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Access the Irish State Administration Database at www.isad.ie. Research papers and further details on the Mapping the Irish State project are available at <http://geary.ucd.ie/mapping/>

OECD countries discuss reform issues

IN OCTOBER, 32 countries of the OECD came together in Italy to discuss public service reform. Specifically they discussed how governments can deliver better public services under fiscal pressures; how the public service can always be ready for tomorrow, be more effective and performance-oriented, as well as foster openness and transparency.

They concluded that key to governments playing their part in restoring economic growth will be boosting the productivity of the public sector, and maximising the returns on investment in technology.

The theme for this meeting of the OECD's Public Governance Committee was 'Towards Recovery and Partnership with Citizens: The Call for Innovative and Open Government'. During this meeting, the importance of leadership, fostering efficiency and effectiveness through innovation in the public sector were acknowledged.

In addition, the importance of preparedness for future challenges was stressed. It was agreed that public sectors, across the OECD countries, must be forward looking, agile and prepared for the challenges of the future. They should have the

capacity to identify and assess these challenges, change strategic direction and allocate human and financial resources accordingly.

To support these efforts, the Committee called on the OECD to collect data and provide regular updates on governments' progress on improving public sector performance. They also asked the OECD to propose cost effective approaches to help countries build a more efficient and effective public sector.

Full details of the meeting are available on www.oecd.org

Picturing road safety

The system of road safety cameras goes live

THE ROLLOUT OF THE MOBILE road safety cameras promised in the Road Safety Strategy has now started. The purpose of these new cameras is to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on our roads.

In countries where a safety camera network has been introduced, deaths and injuries as a

result of speeding have dropped significantly. Enforcement will be focused on locations which the Gardaí have identified as having a high incidence of speed related collisions.

There will be ongoing surveys of the speeds travelled by vehicles at locations, to ensure that enforcement is as effective as possible.

On completion of the rollout in early 2011, the network will provide 6,000 hours of monitoring and 1,475 hours of surveying each month.

Significantly, the cameras will operate during both day and night-time hours, regardless of weather conditions. It is also intended that, as a rule, the camera vans will operate overtly. The location and times of camera deployment will be determined by the Gardaí. Information on the locations where the cameras will be deployed is available on the website of An Garda Síochána, www.garda.ie.

Hear, Dare and everywhere

Irish Higher Education sector to tackling social exclusion



EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS' chances of going to college have been given a boost with the offer of over 1,650 college places through the DARE and HEAR initiatives. This is a 61% increase on the number of offers made in 2009. The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) give a points reduction to disadvantaged students and students with disabilities thus increasing their chances of success in getting to Third Level.

In the run up to the Leaving Cert 2010, the schemes were integrated into the CAO application system and opened up to secondary school students nationwide, with a record number of applications being received. The accesscollege.ie website was also launched as part of a targeted marketing campaign. Development of the schemes was supported by the Department of Education's Strategic Innovation Fund.

These latest developments underscore the continuing commitment of the Irish Higher Education sector to tackling social exclusion. In June 2008, the HEA National Access Office launched the *National Action Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008 – 2013*, setting out ambitious targets and equity of access measures for the next five years. Those targets include an entry rate of at least 54% for all socio-economic groups by 2020 and a doubling of the number of students in 3rd level with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities by 2013. According

to Ann O'Brien, Chairperson of the DARE and HEAR Schemes, "the significant increase in the number of offers made this year is a welcome sign that these schemes are on track to meet national targets. It also offers encouragement to students from these groups to begin considering higher education as a real option in the future."

Access schemes are effective in overcoming the effects of disadvantage as shown by the recently published Trinity Access Programme (TAP) report, which shows that the quality of degrees attained by access graduates mirrors those attained by other graduates. However, continuing efforts are needed in this area as shown in recent Geary Institute research, which demonstrated that students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds have lower earnings expectations.

"The current economic climate reinforces the importance of tackling exclusion," said IUA Access Manager Maureen Dunne, "as disadvantaged groups are even less likely to get jobs in a tight labour market, and this problem is magnified greatly for people with lower educational attainment. The HEAR and DARE initiatives help overcome this problem by boosting access to college and helping disadvantaged students fulfil their true potential."

Vivian Rath, science graduate and former UCD Students' Union Vice President and Welfare Officer said, "With the help of the Disability Support Service' once I

began university I started to forget about my disability and focused on my many abilities. The support provided allowed me to participate fully in all the college activities such as debating, wheelchair basketball, student societies and the students' union."

Support for the scheme:

"DARE is an excellent support scheme which helps students with disabilities engage in higher education so that they can realise their full potential. Access should be universal but sometimes it's the little things that can get in the way. DARE assists prospective students in overcoming barriers in accessing education and in doing so helps create a more inclusive society which benefits everybody – able and disabled people alike," said Caroline Casey, Social Entrepreneur, Founder of Kanchi and the O2 Ability Awards.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact: Lia O'Sullivan,
Communications Manager, Irish
Universities Association.
Tel: 01 676 4948/085 714 1414.
Email: lia.osullivan@iua.ie

Efficiency in local government

ENSURING VALUE-FOR-MONEY and improving efficiency and effectiveness in all areas of the Public Service is essential. Significant progress has been achieved by the Local Government Sector in these areas in recent times and local authorities are focussed on attaining further cost efficiencies into the future.

It makes sense that local authorities would coordinate their activities to their mutual benefit. In their drive for cost savings, local authorities are already engaged in sharing services, facilities and resources. Significant progress has been made on a number of fronts, including roads, water, waste and other services and in the provision of financial management, human resources and payroll systems.

On the eGovernment front, local authorities are constantly looking at using on-line facilities to improve customer service levels. One example of this is the extension of the e-planning application and submission system from individual councils to other local authorities. In terms of procurement efficiency, the innovative "LAQuotes" online procurement application is used by the bulk of local authorities and is delivering considerable cost savings.

Examples

Issues such as these provide just a small insight into the huge amount of work being done to increase efficiency and effectiveness

in the Local Government Sector. During the Summer, the Report of the independent Local Government Efficiency Review Group was published by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government. This Group, chaired by Mr. Pat McLoughlin (Chief Executive, Irish Payment Services Organisation and former Deputy Chief Executive of the HSE) was established in late 2009 to review the cost base, expenditure of, and numbers employed in local authorities with a view to reporting on:

- Specific recommendations to reduce costs;
- The effectiveness of particular programmes;
- Optimal efficiency in the way programmes are delivered;
- and any other proposals to enhance value for money in the delivery of services at local level.

During the course of their review, the Group identified that local authorities have already saved €300 million in the past two years through making efficiencies within the local government system. The Group's Report contains 106 recommendations and identifies additional efficiencies and other savings of €511m for the Local Government Sector to be attained in the short, medium and long terms. These savings are comprised of €346m in efficiencies and €165m in improved cost recovery and revenue raising.

A key focus of the Group was on reducing costs in the Local Government Sector and in directing efforts towards improving the delivery of local public services. Their recommendations cover proposals such as: joint administrative areas for some sets of counties/cities; reductions in senior management and other staffing levels; greater efficiency in procurement; more use of shared services; better financial management; and targeted use of service indicators to help improve performance.

As part of the review, a public consultation process was carried out during which the Group met with a significant number of local public representatives, local authority officials, and organisations that interact with the local government system. The Group was also impressed by the skills and dedication of the Local Government public representatives and officials that it met and this was acknowledged in their Report.

As regards implementation of the Group's Report, a review of the staffing complement and the number of senior managers in Cork and Dublin City Councils is one of the recommendations contained in the Group's Report. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has recently established a Group, independently chaired by Mr. Pat McLoughlin, to carry out the Dublin City Council review and, within six months, to recommend to him actions to reduce the Council's staffing complement into the future.

The Minister also intends establishing an implementation group with an independent chairperson to focus on driving key recommendations of the Report in line with Government decisions in this regard.

DOWNLOAD

The Local Government Efficiency Review Group Report is available at www.environ.ie/en/Publications/LocalGovernment/Administration/



HSE Achievement Awards

Recognising excellence and innovation



THE HSE ANNUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS in association with Quest Diagnostics, took place on Wednesday 24th November 2010 in Dublin. The Awards recognise outstanding work by health and social care staff, reward best practice and raise standards within the health sector. A total of 326 entries were received.

The award for Overall Best Project was presented to Wexford General Hospital (HSE South). Their Site Infection Surveillance Service, is an innovative post-discharge surveillance system that monitors surgical site infection rates. It has resulted in a sustained decrease in such infection rates at the hospital over the last three years.

The Balance Matters project, from HSE Dublin North East, is a collaboration between HSE physiotherapists and community groups to improve older peoples' balance and mobility, build their confidence and prevent falls.

The 'Anyone Can Eat' tube weaning programme from Our Lady's Children's Hospital won in the HSE Dublin Mid Leinster category and was runner up in the Overall Best Project category. One of the beneficiaries of this project is a little girl called Rose, who had been tube-fed from birth. According to her mother, "before the 'Anybody Can Eat' programme I had tried a number of unsuccessful methods to help wean Rose off tube feeding. The whole programme turned our lives and Rose's life around, she is so much happier now."

Representing HSE West, the Regional Anaesthetic Facility at Galway University Hospitals won their Achievement Award for a project that allows patients to have regional anaesthesia techniques performed and to avail of day case treatment where possible. The project has been such a success that the model has been used by hospitals throughout Ireland, the UK and mainland Europe.

COMPETITION

1st prize: iPod Touch

2nd and 3rd prizes: iPod Nano

Answer the following:

1. What was the title of the OECD's review of the Irish Public Service?

.....

2. Who chairs the Croke Park Agreement Implementation Body?

.....

3. How many Sports Inclusion Disability Officers are there nationwide?

.....

4. Which three organisations are working together on the new "e-Stamping" system?

.....

5. Name the Chairperson of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group?

.....

How to enter: Send your answers to competition@taoiseach.gov.ie. Send your hard-copy entries to ONEGOV Newsletter, TPS Programme Office, Department of the Taoiseach, Dublin 2. The closing date for the receipt of entries is Friday, 28 January 2011.

Name:

.....

Address:

.....

.....

Telephone:

.....

Email:

.....

OneGov Issue 5 winners

1st Prize: Kevin Kelly, Office of Public Works

2nd Prize: Paul. A. Walsh, Department of Social Protection

3rd Prize: John Butler, Courts Service



An external perspective on the ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW PROGRAMME

by Dr. Richard Boyle and Joanna O’Riordan

CAPACITY MATTERS greatly to any organisation. Without the capacity to make good decisions and to implement them well, organisations fail. From this perspective, the Organisational Review Programme (ORP) can be seen as a constructive initiative, placing Ireland among a small number of countries addressing this vital issue. The approach is based on a broadly sound methodology that has won general acceptance amongst participants, ensuring a relatively robust, consistent and evidence informed process.

But there are a number of challenges facing the ORP if it is to be a significant driver of change in the current economic climate. One particular issue is that of timeliness. So far, since the announcement of the initiative in 2006, seven reviews have been published. In the UK, where more resources were allocated to the process and the methodology was less consultative, seventeen Departments were reviewed over an eighteen month period. It has been announced that the ORP will complete the remaining Departments by the end of 2012. It is important for the credibility of the programme to stick to this timetable.

A further issue is the quality of Action Plans. IPA research suggests that some review findings are under addressed or even omitted from Action Plans. Action points can be vague in respect of their commitments. The approach in the Action Plans of Revenue and the Department of Health and Children whereby action points are linked to related objectives, expected outcomes, timescales and a person or area of responsibility, is to be recommended.

It is also critical that some mechanism is put in place to ensure that Departments actually follow up on commitments in Action Plans. Business plans are the main means by which Departments aim to address actions identified in the Action Plan. But there

is no guarantee that this results in actual implementation. Some actions may drop off the agenda. There are no comprehensive systems in place to monitor action taken by Departments to address review findings. The commitment that the Public Service Board will advise on developing a ‘look back’ process is to be welcomed in this context.

The approach applied in UK reviews has been criticised on the grounds that the initiative’s purpose is unclear and a better understanding is required as to whether reviews are an independent external inspection or ‘audit’, or whether they are more like an internal peer assessment with a developmental focus. Similar criticisms are valid in relation to the Irish programme. Public and political pressure for public sector reform would tend to suggest increasing demand for a more ‘audit’ style of review in the future. Getting the balance right presents a difficult challenge.

Finally, the late Professor John Murray in his commentary on the second report of the ORP highlighted three key issues with regard to the content of reports, all of which have implications both for Departments and the centre (Departments of the Taoiseach and Finance):

Measurement: the limited capacity of organisations to come to terms with metrication and calibration;

Productivity: not a particular emphasis in reports, but one which will be of increasing concern and;

Human resource management: a theme in all reports, particularly leadership capacity.

The ORP process has a useful contribution to make to Civil Service



Dr. Richard Boyle



Joanna O’Riordan

modernisation. But there will be increased public pressure to demonstrate its actual impact on capacity and ultimately the performance of Departments and Offices.

About the authors:

Richard Boyle is head of research and Joanna O’Riordan is research officer at the Institute of Public Administration. Joanna O’Riordan’s examination of the ORP will be published by the IPA in the near future, and will be available for download from www.ipa.ie/State_of_the_Public_Service_Series