

A New Focus On Reform



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Editorial

A lot has happened since the last edition of OneGov. There is a new Government in place with a new Programme for Government setting out its vision for Public Service reform. All public servants have an important role to play in the changes ahead. We are responsible for implementing changes that matter. Changes that will make a real contribution to the citizen in terms of national recovery, helping restore confidence in our economy, helping rebuild our reputation abroad and, of course, serving the citizen.

While this may seem like a major challenge, it can be done. Articles in this edition of OneGov (and past editions) show how change can be achieved. On page 6, there are examples of changes that have the potential to yield significant savings, such as procurement savings in the Education Sector and administrative changes in the Justice Sector. The eGovernment article (page 12) shows how much can be achieved by the Public Service.

Implementing the Croke Park Agreement is a key element of the reform programme and an update on how this is progressing is featured on page 8 with an example of how the Agreement was used in relation to change in medical laboratory services (page 7).

Change can happen at any time but it is best to plan for this (as much as you can) rather than just letting it happen. In this context, the article on page 3 indicates how Government Departments/Offices should now be preparing Statements of Strategy. This level of forward planning is essential and will assist in strategic business planning for the future as well as performance management for individual public servants.

Change needs a leader. The new Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin, T.D., highlights (page 4) the importance of Public Service reform for Ireland and the plans the new Government has for “embarking on the most ambitious programme of reform since the foundation of the State”.

We have achieved success in the past. We now have a new focus on reform. If we all contribute, we can achieve more. The future is the responsibility of all of us, as citizens and as public servants.





Get Strategic

New Statements of Strategy required

The Public Service Management Act, 1997, requires each Secretary General/Head of Office to submit a Statement of Strategy to their Minister within six months of the appointment of a new Minister. Given the recent appointment of new Ministers, all Government Departments and certain Scheduled Offices should now be preparing their Statements of Strategy for the period 2011-2014.

Aims and objectives

A Statement of Strategy is a forward-looking document that serves as a framework for action by the Department/Office. As defined by the Public Service Management Act, it comprises “the key objectives, outputs and related strategies (including use of resources)” of the Department or Office. It sets out, for staff and customers alike, the important aims of the organisation and how, broadly, those aims will be achieved.

Citizen centred

This open and transparent approach

maintains focus on the citizen’s needs and rights. As on previous occasions, an advertisement will invite interested parties – e.g. customers, user groups, professional, trade and other organisations, private firms, service users, and individuals – to submit their views on the shape and content of these new Statements of Strategy. In parallel, Departments and Offices will be making direct contact with stakeholders to invite their views.

Consultation

Consultation is a major contributory factor in successful workplace change and innovation. While the views of external stakeholders are important, the contribution of staff is equally vital. Civil servants at all levels are encouraged to get involved in shaping their organisation’s Statement of Strategy.

A Statement of Strategy is also central to the success of the PMDS (Performance Management and Development System). In setting out the organisation’s goals, it creates a roadmap for teams, and individual

workers. Their Role Profiles – which are, essentially, personal ‘statements of strategy’ – set out how the individual will contribute to achieving those goals and they must make sense in that context.

New guidelines

The guidelines for the preparation of Statements of Strategy are being revised to take account of the new Programme for Government and other developments. They will be available on the www.onegov.ie website shortly.

Accessible and cost effective

The existing guidelines recommend that Statements of Strategy should use accessible language and not exceed 20 pages. They also recommend that Statements should be principally published and distributed electronically. This is a cost effective and environmentally responsible approach and the simpler, more compact nature of the documents should mean that the information is far more user-friendly.

A New Focus on Reform

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin, T.D., sets out his vision for the Public Service in the coming years.



Responsibility

I am honoured by my recent appointment as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. I am conscious too, of the responsibility that rests with me, as we embark on the most ambitious and important programmes of political and administrative reform since the foundation of the State.

Of course, I share this responsibility with my Government colleagues and with all public servants at every level and in every sector.

In the coming weeks, the new Department of Public Expenditure and Reform will be formally established by primary legislation but its work is well underway. I intend to bring coordination and focus to what is a large and diverse system. I want to engage with public servants and other stakeholders, so that of some 300,000 people together we can deliver the best possible public services to the people of Ireland.

The time for change

I wish to recognise the commitment and effort that has always been a feature of the Irish Public Service. I appreciate too, that public servants have made a significant contribution to Ireland's economic recovery over the past three years, in a difficult environment.

However, I also believe that the time is now opportune for us to engage with a new process of change. There is a sense of urgency about this in light of the challenges we face and many of our systems and processes are in need of radical reform. The cost of delivering public services must be reduced further and this will be done through the planned reduction in Public Service numbers and

The new Programme for government can be seen on the OneGov website - www.onegov.ie

See page 9 for some of the main points on Public Service reform.

“ become more flexible, more responsive and more focused on the citizen. ”

through greater efficiencies in the way in which public services are delivered.

As well as cutting costs, which is crucial of course, we must become more flexible, more responsive and more focused on the citizen. New technologies and leading edge business practices will be necessary to ensure that we are positioned to meet the challenges of the future.

Programme for Government

The new Programme for Government sets out the details of our ambitious programme of reform. In this context, the Government has already announced a comprehensive review of all areas of public spending to ensure that we are getting value for money in delivering public services. The review process will be completed in the autumn, in time to inform the preparations for the 2012 Budget and Estimates.

We will be bringing forward legislation to hardwire root-and-branch reforms of the institutions of the

State. This will include legislation in the areas of Public Service accountability and responsibility, openness and transparency and protecting whistleblowers. We will also be strengthening corporate governance legislation and enforcement.

We want to remove barriers to mobility across the Public Service and have a top-class Senior Public Service. We also want to have a strong focus on performance management, eGovernment and shared services.

Changing minds

I believe that there is a need for a shift in mind-set, and that all business planning, from the strategic corporate level to individual performance management and development plans, should maintain a clear focus on the core objectives of the Public Service – to serve the needs of our customers as effectively and efficiently as possible. We have a real opportunity to do this now, not least because standing still is not an option.

Croke Park

The Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement will be a cornerstone of the reform agenda. The Government intends to use the full potential of the Agreement to deliver greater flexibility, redeployment and changed work practices. While progress is being made, it is clear that the pace of change needs to be accelerated so that savings can be achieved and services delivered more effectively with reduced numbers and a stronger

focus on the citizen. I will be working with the Implementation Body to ensure progress is made, and to give direction and support where necessary. It will not be an easy process but with commitment and vigour, we can deliver results.

Vision

I believe that in order to change we must have a vision for the future. I believe that this will be a Public Service that is more dynamic, integrated, transparent and customer-focused, as well as being leaner and more efficient.

I also believe that we must build upon the traditional Public Service values of integrity, impartiality, diligence and commitment. We must also endeavour to foster a culture of openness, transparency and accountability, which will be of the utmost importance in re-building public confidence in the institutions of the State.

Communication

I am committed to engaging with all stakeholders on the change agenda. The voice of public servants, at all levels, must be heard and I will ensure that the rationale for reform, as well as the reform plans themselves, are clearly set out. We are all cautious of change sometimes but we have no option. Of course there will be challenging times in the months and years ahead, but I believe that together we can achieve our goals and deliver the type of the Public Service that this country deserves.

“ we must build upon the traditional Public Service values of integrity, impartiality, diligence and commitment. ”



Radical Reform of Student Grant Service

It was recently announced that from the 2012-13 academic year, a single student grant awarding authority will replace the existing 66 grant awarding bodies and a system that has been in operation in the State since 1968. Following a competitive process, the City of Dublin VEC (CDVEC) will operate as the new centralised authority.

CDVEC will work with the Department of Education and Skills along with Third Level Institutions, Further Education Colleges, student representative bodies and other organisations to provide a responsive and timely service to all grant applicants.

The single grant authority will operate on a transitional basis. It will accept all new applications from 2012.

For this year, 2011, students will still apply to their local authorities or VECs for a grant and these bodies will continue to deal with renewal of existing grants on a wind-down basis over three to four years.

This reform represents a concrete development in meeting the objectives set out in the Croke Park Agreement, and will bring about greater simplicity and efficiency for the more than 72,000 students eligible for grants. Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, T.D., has spoken of his expectation that the new single authority would deliver

“a very significant service enhancement to students”.



Brigid McManus, Secretary General, Department of Education and Skills

Learning to Save

Close co-operation between the Vocational Education Sector and the National Procurement Service (NPS) is set to yield significant savings in the procurement of key goods and services.

Following the sharing of VEC information and data relating to big-spend items, the NPS is currently going to the market in order to meet the Sector's energy, stationary and office equipment needs. The resulting contracts are expected to yield minimum savings of 10% (stationery) and 30% (office equipment).

The combined buying power of 33 VECs, comprising 600 schools/centres, will ensure greater value for

money than previously where VECs procured separately.

The initiative has also resulted in the establishment of a VEC Procurement Network which is working to implement money-saving initiatives and facilitate the standardising and professionalising of procurement across the Sector.

There is also significant work being carried out on procurement in other areas of the education sector. For example, the Shannon Consortium Procurement Network is working to achieve greater procurement savings in the third level sector.

More detail is available at <http://www.ul.ie/shannonconsortium/>.



The National Procurement Service (NPS) is pleased to announce the launch of its official website www.procurement.ie. The site will be a valuable resource providing assistance and information on procurement activity across the Public Service.

Medical Laboratory Services

A concrete demonstration of the benefits of the Public Service Agreement is seen from the recent agreement with unions and staff on revised work practices for medical laboratory services.

Following an independent review of services in 2007, discussions commenced on reforming the current provision of medical laboratory services. The new arrangements facilitate the introduction of an extended working day for medical laboratory staff and for revised on-call arrangements outside of this extended day.

The Public Service Agreement recognised and acknowledged the advanced level of engagement that had already taken place on medical laboratory services. It provided the framework for delivering on revised work practices.



As a result, services will now be delivered in a more effective manner that supports the introduction of extended working arrangements throughout the health system.

The 2007 independent review also highlighted limitations with the current system and recognised the implementation of a single coordinated system including the processing of large scale routine tests from community and primary care in dedicated “cold” labs. A range of options on the development of cold laboratory services are currently under consideration.

Other developments in the health sector include the health service ‘footprint’ being reduced, with offices and smaller facilities closing or reducing and staff transferring to other facilities as well as the establishment of a single unit for processing medical card applications and an online facility for applications. See page eight for other developments on the implementation of the Croke Park Agreement.

Criminal Justice Interoperability

Government capabilities in the Justice Sector have recently been advanced with the implementation of the Criminal Justice Interoperability Project (CJIP). CJIP is an innovative and creative solution to what was a labour intensive administrative process prone to delays.

CJIP facilitates the electronic exchange of data and supports all business between An Garda Síochána and the District Courts nationally. Prior to CJIP the Courts Service Central Criminal Tracking System application (CCTS) and An Garda Síochána’s

PULSE system (Police Using Leading Systems Effectively) shared data in paper form. It handles around 2.5 million messages a year.

CJIP has transformed the exchange of information between An Garda Síochána and the Courts Service. It has eliminated 75% of the administrative process steps and replaced a paper based information exchange with an integrated electronic information exchange. CJIP has delivered improvements in the timeliness, accuracy and quality of criminal prosecution data.

Prior to CJIP, the process of making an application for a

court summons right through to executing the order required duplicate data entry by both agencies. CJIP has reduced data entry requirements for both agencies by over 105 full time equivalents (100 staff of An Garda Síochána and 5 staff of the Courts Service). This has directly contributed to improvements in efficiency in the administration of justice and is an example of eGovernment in action.

Consideration is being given to extending the project in due course to link in with the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service.

Implementing the Croke Park Agreement

Comprehensive implementation of the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement is crucial to the reform of the Public Service.

The Implementation Body established under the Agreement is continuing to drive and monitor its implementation. Earlier this year, each Sector submitted revised Action Plans to the Body. These Action Plans set out the necessary changes needed in each sector and are available on the new Implementation Body website (see below for details).

Already, significant progress has been made in a number of areas, and it is important to note that it has been made while maintaining services despite a substantial ongoing fall in Public Service numbers. Some of the main areas where delivery has been achieved are set out below. A more complete list is available on the new website.

- In the Garda Sector, revised rostering arrangements have been implemented for the Garda Traffic Corps and Command and Control Unit so that more Gardai will be available at times when they are most required;
- In the Prison Sector, a task review which will deliver significant changes to the working practices and rostering arrangements in prison has commenced. Less costly rostering arrangements have already been implemented in Wheatfield Prison and Limerick Women's Prison;
- In the Civil Service, there has been significant redeployment to the Department of Social Protection to meet increased workloads there. The footprint

of Departments/Offices and facilities are also being reduced and staff redeployed. For example, the Courts Service is closing many smaller court venues and offices and the Department of Agriculture, Marine and Food is re-organising its local office network and closing 41 offices;

- Senior management in the Civil Service is changing too with the establishment of the Senior Public Service and the restructuring of the Top Level Appointments Commission;
- In the Education Sector, arrangements have been agreed and put in place for primary school teachers to work additional hours outside normal school hours, so that necessary training and meetings will not impact on teaching time;
- Within the Health Service, the HSE successfully redeployed staff to address the impact of 2,000 recent redundancies/early retirements at very short notice and without any adverse effect to services;

• State Agencies are also being rationalised with some being discontinued and other being merged to secure significant savings in back office functions.

In the coming year and to 2014, the Croke Park Agreement will help to deliver the necessary quantity and quality of services with greatly reduced staff numbers and resources. To do that Public Service bodies will continue to change the way that they do their business, to become more efficient, integrated and customer-focused.

Reports on the progress being made will be published regularly on the Implementation Body website, which was launched in January this year - www.implementationbody.gov.ie.

The screenshot shows the Implementation Body website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with the following links: Home, About Us, Outputs, Action Plans, Publications, Recommendations, Contact Us, Members Only Area, and Log Out. Below the navigation menu, there is a search bar with the text "Search this website:" and a "Search" button. To the right of the search bar, there is a "Gaeilge" language selector and a "No of Visitors to Site: 3843" counter. The main content area is titled "Home" and features a "Welcome to the Implementation Body Website" section. This section contains a paragraph of text and a list of bullet points. The text reads: "The Public Service or 'Croke Park' Agreement is a commitment by public servants and their managers to work together to change the way in which the Public Service does its business so that both its cost and the number of people working in the Public Service can fall significantly, while continuing to meet the need for services and improve the experience of service users. Contingent on delivery of the savings and compliance with the Agreement, the Government gave certain commitments to serving public servants:". The bullet points are:

- no further reductions in their pay rates, other than those applied in 2009 and 2010;
- no compulsory redundancies (where they do not currently apply) as long as public servants are flexible about redeployment;
- an extension of the period within which the January 2010 pay reductions are disregarded for the purposes of calculating pensions, now to February 2012;
- a review of the position on public service pay in the Spring of each year of the Agreement.

Below the bullet points, there is a paragraph of text: "Recent events have only served to highlight the significance of the commitments made by the Government especially on the issues concerning pay, job security and pensions in the Agreement. Successful and full implementation of the Agreement is now even more critical in light of the challenges faced by each public service body to continue to meet public needs for their services while staffing numbers fall. In line with the provisions of the Agreement the Implementation Body was established by the Government to drive and monitor the implementation of the Agreement, and verify progress or otherwise on its implementation including the sustainable savings and reforms it intended to deliver." To the right of the main content area, there is a "Links" section with the following links: Croke Park Agreement 2010 - 2014, National Recovery Plan 2011 - 2014, Budget 2011, Government Departments, Department of Finance, Transforming Public Services (ONEGOV), and ICTU.

Committing to Change

The new Programme for Government sets out a number of objectives for Public Service reform. Some of the main points are summarised below.

OVERHAULING THE WAY POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT WORK	MORE EFFECTIVE FINANCIAL SCRUTINY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation on Cabinet Confidentiality, Freedom of Information, Whistleblowers and the Official Secrets Act. • Legislation to overhaul the Ministers and Secretaries Acts and the Public Service Management Act. • New guidelines for public servants making appearances at Oireachtas Committees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New independent body to undertake economic projections and provide advice on fiscal policies. • A Comprehensive Spending Review to examine all areas of public spending and to develop multi-annual budget plans. • Changes to the Estimates Cycle.
OPEN GOVERNMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater accountability at every level from Ministers down. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhaul top-level appointments process. • Stronger emphasis on Regulatory Impact Assessment. 	
PUBLIC SERVICE NUMBERS	BETTER USE OF RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned reduction in Public Service numbers of 18,000 to 21,000 by 2014, and another 4,000 by 2015. • Remove barriers to mobility across the Public Service to allow for better staff deployment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationalise the number of State bodies and core processes that are duplicated across the Public Service. • Establish shared back-office operations.

Further details can be seen in the Programme for Government on the www.onegov.ie website.

Public Service Events

eGovernment

A major conference on the future of eGovernment in the Irish Public Service took place in St. Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle, on 18th January. This conference featured speakers from across the Public Service, presenting on a range of recent initiatives. These included latest developments in Revenue services, the Public Services card, on-line education grants and on-line certificates. The conference, which was attended by over 200 public servants, was also addressed by Dr. Chris Horn, founder of Iona Technologies and currently a member of the Innovation Taskforce Implementation Group.

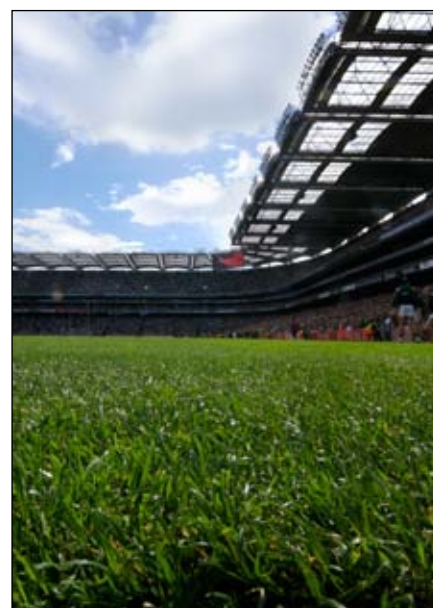
Shared Services

Developments in Shared Services across the Public Service were presented and discussed at a seminar in Dublin Castle on 8th March.

This event brought together shared service practitioners from across the Public Service, and allowed for the exchange of best practice and information sharing. Further details of this event, including the presentations made, can be seen at www.OneGov.ie/eng/events

Major Conference on the Croke Park Agreement

A conference for Public Servants titled "The Croke Park Agreement - One Year On", will take place in Croke Park on 30th June this year. This will be an important event for the Public Service, featuring high-level speakers from the Public Service Agreement Implementation process, including representatives from government, trade unions and senior public servants. Further details of this event will be posted on the www.OneGov.ie website and featured in coming issues of **OneGov Newsletter**.



It should be noted that there is no charge for any of these seminars or conferences. For details of these events, keep an eye on future issues of OneGov Newsletter and visit www.OneGov.ie

Fingal Open Data

Open Data is a worldwide movement which encourages government bodies to make official data freely available to the public in an open format. Fingal County Council is leading the way in this country, with Fingal Open Data Website, which is the first of its kind in the country and is based on the principles of Freedom of Information and the Reuse of Public Sector Information.

This website releases useful information relating to Fingal, to be freely used by the wider community, and builds on the work of the Fingal Data Hub which was established to enable data sharing in relation to Fingal between nine partner agencies.

There are four main objectives for Fingal Open Data:

Transparency – access to the data used by officials in making decisions.

Participation – citizens can use the data to analyse issues, propose new ideas and to enrich their lives and their community.

Collaboration – data from different public sector agencies can be combined to facilitate collaboration.

Economic Opportunities – data can be used as the basis for online services, mobile applications, analytics, etc.

To date 70 datasets have been published in 12 categories, allowing a range of applications to be built. Already Fingal's data has been used to provide location and contact details

for such disparate services as polling stations, burial grounds and disabled parking spots, as well as allowing easy access to Fingal County Council reports and statistics, including allowances and expenses. The intention is that software developers will continue to identify and build many more useful apps.



Fingal Open Data may be found at <http://data.fingal.ie>,
on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/fingalopendata> and by email at opendata@fingal.ie

3rd Business Statistics Seminar

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) hosts seminars to inform public servants and the general public of emerging developments and trends. These seminars, featuring CSO and guest speakers, provide an ideal opportunity to hear about some of the new data holdings and reports being developed by the CSO and learn about some ongoing research that is making use of CSO data.

The 3rd Business Statistics Seminar was hosted by the CSO on March 23, 2011, in Dublin Castle and focused on innovation statistics.

Innovation lies at the heart of the dynamics that drive economies, markets and businesses to change.

It has been evident to the CSO for some time that there is considerable interest in this topic within the research community. From the wider policy perspective, there has also been growing interest, reflecting the strong emphasis on the knowledge economy. This growing interest in R&D and Innovation is not unique to Ireland but is discernable across the EU and OECD.

The mix of CSO and guest speakers made for a very thought provoking and varied afternoon interspersed with active and lively discussion and debate. The seminar series provides an ideal forum

for statisticians and data users and suppliers to meet and discuss issues of interest, such as data quality, scope, methodology and of course new or emerging data needs.



Presentations from this seminar and details of future seminars are available on www.cso.ie.

Learning to Share

The development of training shared services

A fair amount has been written in OneGov about the successes arising from the development of shared services in the financial, HR and other areas. These projects have made the most of technological and human resources. The benefits are clear and there is much to be learned from them.

A somewhat smaller – but no less important – shared service development is currently taking shape. Recognising the need for meaningful customer service training, the Department of the Taoiseach, the CSTDC (Civil Service Training & Development Centre) and the Department of Social Protection are collaborating on the design and delivery of a training programme that will, in particular, support a number of Departments and Offices that have limited in-house training facilities.

The first course is scheduled for mid-May and subsequent iterations of the course may be further enhanced on the basis of experience gained through the first run.

Interest in the course is proving phenomenal and, already, waiting lists are being collated. The aim of the course is to equip frontline staff with a range of skills to provide an effective service to the public, as well as a few handy hints for dealing with difficult situations.

It is early days yet but, all going well, consideration will be given to extending the approach to other forms of training.

Details of the full range of CSTDC training courses can be found on its website – www.cstdc.gov.ie



Competition

1st prize: iPod Touch
2nd and 3rd prizes: an iPod Nano

Answer the following:

1. In 2007, where did Ireland rank in the EU eGovernment Benchmarking Report?

2. Who is the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform?

3. What was the main topic of the 3rd CSO Business Statistics Seminar?

4. Existing guidelines on Statements of Strategies recommend that they should not exceed how many pages?

5. When was the website for the Implementation Body for the Public Service Agreement launched?

How to enter:

Send your answers to competition@taoiseach.gov.ie. Send your hard-copy entries to ONEGOV Newsletter, 7-9 Merrion Row, Dublin 2. The closing date for the receipt of entries is Friday, 27th May 2011.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

WIN

OneGov issue 6 Winners:

- 1st prize: Kevin Hogan, Department of Education and Skills.
2nd prize: Marian Hughes, Refugee Appeals Tribunal.
3rd prize: Eoghan FitzGerald, Courts Service.

Ireland Ranked First in EU eGovernment Benchmarks

The good progress achieved by Ireland in rolling out eGovernment services has been reflected in the European Commission's 2010 eGovernment Benchmarking Report, which was published in February, 2011.

The 2010 report, which measures progress against a range of indicators across 32 European countries, demonstrates that Ireland is now rated first in Europe in terms of online availability and sophistication

of the twenty services measured in the benchmarks. This is a marked improvement from the 2007 exercise, when Ireland was rated 17th of 31 participant countries.

Ireland is now also ranked first for eProcurement. In addition, online facilities for Citizens and Business Information are regarded as examples of international best practice in the benchmarks.

Updates on Ireland's engagement in these benchmarks have been an important element of the

regular Department of Finance eGovernment Progress Reports to Government since 2009. Some examples of the key achievements in recent years include eProcurement, student grants, business registration, environmental permits, birth and marriage certificates and public libraries.

The Department of Finance is currently preparing the next phase of the eGovernment Strategy which will be published later this year.

Accessible eServices

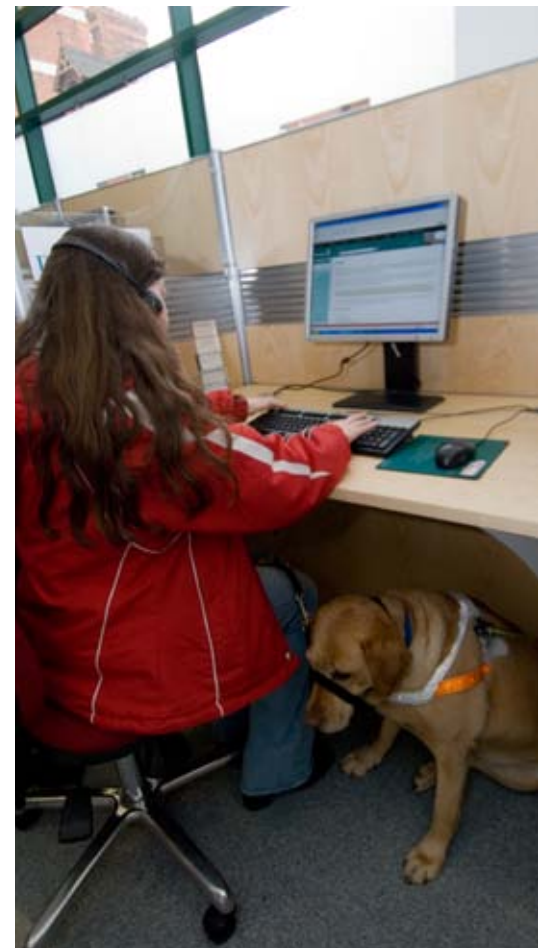
Public services that are available over the Internet are particularly important for people with disabilities and many older people. Some people find it difficult to travel, or to get into some public buildings. As approximately one in every six Irish people has some form of disability, it is very important that eServices are designed to be accessible and usable by everybody.

Many people with disabilities are enthusiastic users of the Internet and other eServices. People with vision loss can use screen reading software or screen magnifying software. People with hearing loss can understand videos that have captions. People with limited dexterity can use touch-screens, trackballs, voice recognition software, mouth sticks, or head wands to navigate webpages.

The best way to make sure that any eService is accessible for everybody is to follow a user-centred design methodology from the start, involving a broad range of users with a range of disabilities in the design, prototyping, and testing of any new or redesigned eServices or applications.

It is important that eServices are easy to use and easy to navigate. Every image or graph on a website should have alternative text associated with it in the website's code. This text will be read out for customers who use screen reading software to help them to understand the image's purpose.

Accessibility is particularly important for multi-media applications. Videos should have captions and transcripts available. Sign language interpretation and audio description may also be required, depending on the content of the video and the target audiences.



Sections 27 and 28 of the Disability Act 2005 require Irish public bodies to make sure that web services are accessible. The National Disability Authority recommends that web services should have Level AA conformance to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (www.w3.org).

You can learn how to make sure that eServices are accessible for everybody on the National Disability Authority's <http://universaldesign.ie> website.