

Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) Progress Report for Offices

Guidance Notes for Reporting Template for Year Two

Reporting Period

1. The reporting period is the 12 months from end Q1 2011 to end Q1 2012. Please include text to describe ALL progress made during the 12 month period (i.e. including progress made on completed items under the last version of Action Plans.)

Completing the Report

2. A summary list of bullets highlighting the main developments over the 12 month period should be included at the head of the document.
3. Include text to describe the progress made on each action specified in the Action Plan for the Department and its agencies under the '**Current Position**' column on the far right.
4. The text in each row or Action should be coloured as follows:
 - In **GREEN** if the Action has already been achieved, is underway and currently on time for delivery in accordance with the Plan;
 - In **ORANGE** if the delivery of the Action is substantially underway but is not likely to meet its specific target date;
 - In **RED** if there has been no tangible progress on the Action to date.
5. A statement of reasons for delay should be given in respect of any action highlighted in **ORANGE** or **RED** in the final column.
6. Any actions for which a timeframe for delivery under the Action Plan was given as either 'ongoing' or over the period of the Agreement, or equivalent, should only be marked in green if some progress has been made on the Action in the reporting period. Details of that progress should be provided in the '**Current Position**' column.
7. Where figures/estimates of savings being achieved are available, these should be noted also in the '**Current Position**' column.

Submitting the Report

8. Reports should be emailed to Alan Plummer (alan.plummer@per.gov.ie) and Bridie Cuddy-Smyth (bridie.cuddy-smyth@per.gov.ie), Implementation Body Secretariat by close of business on 2nd May 2012. Telephone contact number is (01) 6045340.

Progress Report on Action Plan for the Office of the Ombudsman

TO BE RETURNED NO LATER THAN 2nd May 2012

1. Summary of Main Progress Achieved in the 12 Month Period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012

1. New work flow model in the Office of the Ombudsman has significantly improved complaint handling output over the period (+ 9% year-on-year), while just over 65 per cent of valid complaints are resolved within 12 weeks (up from 46% over the previous year). This required radical re-organisation of the Office's infrastructure, management structures and processes. The process, from review to implementation, took five months.
2. The Office of the Ombudsman cross-organisational initiative "Health Complaints", launched in September 2011, has significantly improved public awareness of health and social services; about how to give feedback on health and social care services delivery, and the rules of the various bodies, from service providers to regulators within the sector.
3. The Office of the Ombudsman has put an Investigations Unit in place to identify and make recommendations with regard to systemic issues of maladministration; such investigations often raise issues relating to administrative overlap and inefficiencies.
4. Following a review of the services currently provided in these areas, the Offices of the Ombudsman, Information Commissioner and the Standards in Public Office Commission have identified significant improvements to be made in their social media and web platforms that will deliver internal efficiencies and provide a much improved service to their respective customers and stakeholders. This will make the Offices more accessible to their customers and help facilitate online communications.
5. A new comprehensive Corporate Procurement Policy has been introduced for the Offices of the Ombudsman, Information Commissioner and the Standards in Public Office Commission: in addition to updating the procurement guidelines it contains specific measures for identifying value for money efficiencies.
6. Overheads – Non-pay savings of €83,000 have been identified and achieved for the period in question.

Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) Progress Report

2. Detailed Progress Update for the 12-months – 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012

1. Better human resource management: *To include, for example, actions around the reduction of staff numbers; the redeployment of staff to areas of greatest need; the restructuring/reconfiguration of service delivery; changes to work practices; revisions in attendance arrangements; absence management; performance management etc.*

Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014	Action	Target Date as per Current Action Plan	Current Position
1.1 Paragraphs 4.1 and 4.4	Office of the Ombudsman Following a recent comprehensive external review of the organisational structure, significant reconfiguration of both the processes and structure of the Office has been implemented to deliver enhanced service to customers and to meet increased recent demand (+30% since 2009) in the face of declining staff resources (2014 ECF will be 16% less than that envisaged in 2009 AEV).	Q2 2011 – implemented.	Reconfiguration of structures and processes complete and operational. Case processing for the period from 01/04/2011 to 31/03/2012 (4,033 cases) is 9% higher than for the previous year and handling times for valid complaints have been shortened – over 65% of valid complaints resolved within 12 weeks as opposed to 46% for the previous year.
1.2 Paragraphs 4.1, 4.3 and 4.4	Information Commissioner (OIC) Following a recent external review, staffing levels and certain work practices have been adjusted within the OIC to ensure best fit with demand and to deliver improved flexibility to quickly match resources with demand patterns across the organisation as a whole.	Q2 2011 – implemented, further structural changes ongoing.	In place.
1.3	Offices of the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner		

Paragraph 4.4	More dynamic and focused team-working across the Office will allow enhanced participation by all staff in value adding activities, process and output quality improvement.	Q2 2011 implemented	In place.
1.4 Paragraphs 4.1, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.15	Office of the Ombudsman Amalgamation of Commission for Public Service Appointments with the Office of the Ombudsman in line with the “McCarthy” Report and Public Service Reform Plan. Legislative amendment still awaited from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.	Effective from 4 Oct. 2010	Amalgamation in place. Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (PER) to arrange legislative amendment to formalise process.
1.4 Paragraphs 4.1, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.15	Office of the Ombudsman Assist in merging functions of An Coimisinéir Teanga/Language Commissioner with the Office of the Ombudsman in line with the Public Service Reform Plan*.	End 2012	Some initial actions including a cost benefit analysis are taking place.
1.4 Paragraphs 4.1, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.15	Offices of the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner Assist in merging of back-office functions of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children into the Ombudsman/Information Commissioner’s Office*.	End 2012	Initial contacts underway with regard to identifying possible synergies.
1.4 Paragraphs 4.1, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.15	Office of the Ombudsman Assist in amalgamation of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner with the Office of the Ombudsman*.	End 2012	Department of Justice and Equality have begun a cost benefit analysis.
1.5 Paragraph 4.11	Organisation-wide 1. A fundamental review of the operation of PMDS within the organisation has been completed with a particular focus on recognising good performance and tackling under-performance.	1. Effective from Jan. 2011 2. Jan. 2012	Office implementing fully the terms of the amended PMDS Scheme.

	2. Implementation of Phase 1 of centrally agreed full-scale review of PMDS.	ongoing	
1.6	Organisation-wide		
Paragraph 4.13	Within the Office, merit-based competitive promotion has been the norm for many years.	Ongoing for some time	In place
1.7	Organisation-wide		
Paragraph 4.5	Increase staff collaboration and engagement through increased consultative processes (e.g. Innovation Forum established).	In place	In place
1.7	Organisation-wide		
Paragraph 4.10	Fully implement civil service policy on sick leave to maintain absenteeism levels below norm	In place	In place
1.8	Organisation-wide		
Paragraph 4.11	Efficient and effective delivery of training and talent management (e.g. mentoring and coaching for succession planning purposes), together with specific evaluation of training and development programmes.	In place	In place

2. Better Business Processes: *To include, for example actions to increase efficiency and productivity; rationalise core structures, business processes, accommodation requirements etc; establish shared service approaches, establish cross-functional teams/ new work structures, optimise the potential of new technology to streamline operations and generate efficiencies etc.*

Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 - 2014	Action	Target Date as per Current Action Plan	Current Position
2.1 Paragraphs 4.4 and 4.11	Ombudsman Ombudsman complaint process has been reviewed and areas for increased efficiency have been identified. The process has created a smoother and faster flow through the office. As with all continuous improvement-based models this process will continue to evolve in terms of efficiency gains over the coming years. To date progress has been very positive with decrease in cases on hands evident already.	Q2 2011 to Q3 2012	New structures and processes in place (see 1.1 above). These structures and processes removed inefficiencies and introduced more clearly defined flow model to complaint handling. Operation is constantly under review and refined as necessary.
2.1 Paragraphs 4.4 and 4.11	Information Commissioner Following review, further efficiencies have been identified in case processing, management and case allocation. Action plan to affect these is being rolled out.	Q2 2011 to Q3 2012	Case management and allocation changes in place with full implementation achieved by Q4 2011.
2.1 Paragraphs 4.4 and 4.13	Offices of the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner Invalid demand (phone and mail) impact on the process being reduced significantly through new technology and web-based innovations. Further web initiatives in this regard being rolled out in Q2.	Ongoing and subject to regular monitoring	Between 01/04/10 and 30/03/10 some 5,150 invalid telephone calls were received. Post introduction of new system some 5,030 calls that would have required staff intervention have now been filtered out of the system, and, instead, have been transferred directly to the relevant public/private body. This improves customer service and assists in driving resource

			efficiencies.
2.2 Paragraph 4.4	Organisation Generally New organisational processes and structures introduced (e.g. business processes, work practice agility and responsiveness etc.) and IT has provided optimal assistance in delivery of quality customer service and organisational and administrative efficiency.	In place	Reconfiguration of organisation and premises is complete. Staff re-assigned as required and all necessary amendments to IT system architecture in place and operational.
2.3 Paragraph 4.13 and 4.14	Organisation-wide Identify how new media can assist customers access the Office and how the current websites should look and operate based on customer and organisational needs is currently underway. The process has included consultation with website users and other customers.	New media policy is now in place and will be implemented along with new websites to be completed by Q3 2012	Review completed. New websites and social media designed and being rolled out. Initiatives include making websites more accessible and facilitating ease of online communications.
2.4 Paragraph 4.15	Organisation-wide The management of risk within the Office is done in such a way that the Risk Register and its proposed action plans are linked directly to strategy and unit Business Plans.	In place and ongoing	In place
2.5 Paragraph 4.4	Organisation-wide The Office's Business Planning Process ensures uniformity of approach in terms of improved measurable outputs/outcomes and better clarity around individual staff responsibility in that context.	January 2011. In place.	In place

2.6	Organisation-wide		
Paragraphs 4.14.and 4.15	The Office will identify and utilise improved financial metrics to monitor and improve the overall efficiency of organisation	March 2011 onwards	New comprehensive Corporate Procurement Policy has been introduced: it contains specific measures for identifying value for money efficiencies. In addition, unit cost measurements have been identified.
2.7	Organisation-wide		
Paragraphs 4.14 and 4.16	Achieve a significant overall reduction in supplier prices by end-2012	Ongoing since Q4 2010	See 2.6 (above).The Policy commits the Office to reviewing high value contracts at year-end and annual evaluation of procurement to ensure Policy compliance.

*These actions are being co-ordinated by sponsoring Department – the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

3. Delivering for the Citizen: *To include, for example, actions to enhance service delivery to the public, including changes to the technology used, more online services, service integration, efforts to reduce information burdens on citizens through better data management/sharing of data, including around identity etc*

Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 - 2014	Action	Target Date as per Current Action Plan	Current Position
3.1	Ombudsman		
Paragraph 4.4	Redesign of the complaints process to focus on quicker throughput and decision-making.	In place.	See 1.1. above
3.2	Ombudsman and Information Commissioner		
Paragraph 4.4	Dedicated enquiry team trained and in-place to address enquiries efficiently and effectively at the first point of contact with a view to improving customer responsiveness.	In place.	In place – assisting complainants at first point of contact and progressing or resolving some 35 per cent of complaint contacts within 5 working days.
3.3	Ombudsman		
Paragraph 4.4	The Office of the Ombudsman has led a cross-cutting project group with regulatory agencies, advocacy groups and complaint handling bodies in the health sector and put in place agreed mechanisms to facilitate for potential customers easier interaction with the various constituent bodies and raise awareness of how best to pursue a complaint or raise a matter of concern about health and social services	In place.	The <i>Healthcomplaints</i> initiative led by the Office of the Ombudsman, in conjunction with 16 health and social care regulators, service providers and service user representative groups, was launched on 19 September. The resource tools developed as part of the initiative (to assist members of the public know- how to complain about health and social care services) have been distributed to relevant bodies nationally and the website www.healthcomplaints.ie is now live.
3.4	Organisation-wide		
Paragraph 4.4	Identify improved strategic quality service delivery and output standards.	In place.	High level Quality Assurance Group established that regularly reviews and makes recommendations with regard to case process,

			output, and outcome. In addition, significant progress has been made with regard to identifying improved customer service delivery via web and new media platforms (see 2.3 above).
3.5 Paragraph 4.4	Office of the Ombudsman and information Commissioner Continue and improve the customer feedback process via various media and maintain and increase the level of customer satisfaction	Regular evaluation	Regular evaluation of all external Office engagements including our targeted outreach programme of regional and citizen information centre visits, to improve targeted effectiveness and impact now ongoing. Customer surveys further refined to focus more clearly levels of satisfaction with the quality of service and outcomes.
3.6 Paragraph 4.4.	Organisation-wide As part of its Strategic Plan the constituent Offices have identified a number of initiatives that are designed to bring about systemic improvements across the public service or are directly related to enhancing customer care. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collating examples/evidence of poor public service delivery and unfair practices for further possible investigation, • developing a strategy to liaise with and support new public bodies due to come under the remit of the Ombudsman's Office in 2011-2012, • identifying and undertaking systemic investigations/commentaries on examples of maladministration, • identifying and targeting public bodies performing particularly poorly to address maladministration 	Ongoing	A dedicated Investigations Unit was established on 1 March, 2011. To date it has completed 5 investigations covering 7 cases and have discontinued 2 further investigations which were resolved satisfactorily. The Unit is progressing a further 11 investigations in relation to specific or systemic maladministration.