



Annual Report 2016

Civil Service

Accountability Board

Foreword from An Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D.

I am pleased to present the first Annual Report of the Civil Service Accountability Board. This first report encompasses the period from its establishment in July 2015 to the end of 2016, during which time the Board met four times. The Board marks the first time such a group has been established in Ireland to enhance accountability of the Civil Service. It is one of 25 Actions in the Civil Service Renewal Plan published by Government in October 2014 and follows a recommendation of the Independent Panel chaired by Kevin Rafter on Civil Service Accountability and Performance.

This Board is a new model with ministerial, Civil Service and external members with a variety of skills, perspectives and experiences. These have been harnessed to provide oversight of a limited number of priority actions in key areas such as the implementation of cross-cutting priorities, performance management and the capacity and capability of the Civil Service to deliver. Civil Service Renewal is about empowering the Civil Service to deliver for citizens into the future and implementing the renewal agenda provides the steps that will help the Civil Service deliver its functions more effectively.

The Accountability Board Performance Review Group has met to consider and contribute to the new process of performance management for Secretaries General which was approved by the Accountability Board and which will be fully implemented in 2017. We have also considered the methodology for conducting departmental organisational capability reviews and will continue to evaluate the methodology and review implementation of the recommendations arising from the Capability Reviews. Lastly, the Board has considered better ways of working effectively across multiple Departments and Agencies and the overall learning arising from the implementation plans agreed for three cross-cutting projects.

An Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D.

Background

In 2013, as part of a process to renew the vision and strategy for the Civil Service, the Government asked an Independent Panel to report on strengthening Civil Service accountability and performance. Following public consultations the 2014 [Report of the Independent Panel on Strengthening Civil Service Accountability and Performance](#), chaired by Kevin Rafter, recommended the establishment of *“an Accountability Board for the Civil Service, chaired by the Taoiseach, with external membership to review and constructively challenge senior management performance and monitor progress in delivery of agreed priorities.”*

Role of the Board

The Civil Service Renewal Plan, published in October 2014, includes the establishment of an Accountability Board for the Civil Service as its first Action to strengthen accountability and performance across the Civil Service by introducing greater oversight of delivery. It also recommended that the Board focus on providing oversight of a limited number of priority actions including: the implementation of cross-cutting priorities set by Government; the capacity and capability of the Civil Service to deliver; and a performance management process for Secretaries General. This is the first time Civil Service, Ministerial and external perspectives to enhance performance and accountability in the Civil Service has been established in Ireland.

Following a State Boards recruitment process for external members undertaken by the Public Appointments Service, the Board was formally appointed in July 2015 and reconstituted following formation of the new Government in May 2016 with no meetings held between November 2016 and May 2016. The Board has met four times up to the end of 2016 (July 2015, November 2015, July 2016 and December 2016) and the final minutes of each meeting are published on the website of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The membership of the Board is set out at Appendix 1.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Accountability Board, approved by Government in February 2015, are:

- to have an overall governance role across the Civil Service and advise on and support the development of the capacity and capability of the Civil Service;

- to provide oversight and review of proposals for a new performance management system for Secretaries General and the effective implementation and operation of the system across the Civil Service;
- to provide oversight and review of the new programme of Organisational Capability Reviews including implementation of recommendations arising out of them; and
- to oversee Civil Service capability in implementing cross-cutting priorities set by Government or other system wide issues; this may involve considering individual case studies to promote learning and highlight best practice.

Progress in 2016

Organisational Capability Reviews

The Board reviewed the proposed methodology developed which included general principles, a description of roles and stages in the process and a framework of components to assess the organisational effectiveness and capability of the Department under review. The overall aim is to examine the general performance of Departments in meeting their overall objectives, identify strengths and weakness and make recommendations. They will be developmental in nature with the aim of assisting Departments in being fully fit for purpose in delivering on their business agenda.

Updates have been provided on progress to date. The new Organisational Capability Review programme with a dedicated review team, has undertaken the first pilot review in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport with a report to issue shortly. The learning from this first review, which is due to report in Q2 2017, will be used to further strengthen the methodology for the next upcoming review being undertaken.

The Accountability Board will be consulted on the overall model for the reviews, including amendments, if any, arising from the evaluation of the pilot review. Guided by information provided by the Review Steering Group, the Accountability Board will consider on an annual basis the programme of reviews and assess its effectiveness and will review implementation of the recommendations arising from the reviews

The Accountability Board may decide to provide a view on the process and any systemic issues arising from the reviews and include commentary on those issues in its annual report.

Improve the delivery of shared whole-of-Government projects

Three pathfinder projects have been selected to pilot new models for delivering Whole-of-Government work regarding elements of:

- The Public Services Card which has been developed to establish and authenticate an individual's identity for the purposes of access to public services.
- The National Cyber Security Strategy which focuses on the security of the country's computer networks and associated infrastructure.
- The Youth Mental Health element of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

A key aim of this process is to test new and innovative working models rather than mirroring traditional approaches. The Board discussed the proposed model developed for these pathfinder projects which seeks to address practical issues of ownership, accountability and resource allocation in cross-government projects. Implementation plans have been developed for each project setting out in detail the objectives, approach and associated timelines for each project. Three review points, October 2016, April and October 2017, were agreed for each pathfinder. The Board considered an update on progress following the October 2016 review point. Some emerging issues include the clarity around shared understanding of roles in co-chairing arrangements and securing the appropriate level of funding and resources for implementation and mechanisms to allow for sharing across bodies if applicable and how that is captured in the budgetary process.

Performance management system for Secretaries General

The Board reviewed proposals for the new performance review process for Secretaries General which was initiated during 2016. At the outset the Board identified the need to review and adapt the process in light of experience. The change of Government provided a number of challenges to the implementation of the full year cycle in 2016 but the learning has usefully informed the process for 2017.

It is a three stage process which involves each Secretary General agreeing priority objectives for the year ahead with the relevant Minister, reviewing progress at the mid-year point and again at year end. Its core purpose is to provide a means for Secretaries General and Heads of Office to consider their own leadership role and professional development needs, and to receive feedback which will facilitate the provision of support for continuous development in their roles. The emphasis will therefore be on behaviours and how objectives were achieved, and not just on what was achieved.

This process is being overseen by a Performance Review Group, whose role is to validate the objectives, review progress and provide feedback and report on the process to the Civil Service Accountability Board. The Performance Review Group comprises of an independent member of the Accountability Board, the Secretary General to the Government, and the Secretary General of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. In 2016, the Performance Review Group reviewed the process including the proposal for some shared indicators in the areas of policy, operations and leadership. A review of 2016 and of the 2017 goal setting process will be undertaken in Q1 2017.

Wider Civil Service context

During the early stages, detailed background information on Civil Service staffing, demographics, workforce planning and structures, performance measurements processes and information on sick leave were considered by Board members as part of their familiarisation with current Civil Service processes and data. The Accountability Board's role was discussed in the broader context of Professor Rafter's Report of the Independent Panel on Strengthening Civil Service Accountability and Performance, the Civil Service Renewal Plan and the wider public service reform programme. This allowed a more contextualised understanding of the complex and challenging issues encapsulated in the three priority actions under the Board's remit and an acknowledgment of the wider Civil Service landscape in which they operate.

Civil Service Renewal Overview and Progress

The Board was also regularly updated on progress being made on implementation of the Civil Service Renewal Plan. The Plan sets out the overall vision to provide a world-class service to the State and the other people of Ireland. The three year action plan sets out 25 significant actions to strengthen capacity, capability, accountability and leadership and represents a new strategy and direction for the Civil Service. The Plan is being overseen by the Civil Service Management Board, comprising all Secretaries General and Heads of major offices. The CSMB has been assigned collective responsibility for implementing the Plan and all Board members lead one or more actions.

Two progress reports have been published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in July 2015 and July 2016 and all 25 actions in the Plan have now been initiated.

Some notable progress to end 2016 includes:

- New Corporate Governance Departmental Frameworks in place across all Departments formalising role of management boards. (Action 3)
- New policy to improve gender balance in the Civil Service, particularly at senior levels. (Action 8)
- New Mobility scheme for principal officers and development of service wide mobility scheme for clerical and executive officers. (Action 15)
- A new model of Learning and Development with a core curriculum and skills register designed. (Action 9)
- Enhanced performance review process for Assistant Secretaries including 360 degree feedback implemented following a successful pilot in 2015. (Action 12)
- Talent Management pilot programme for Assistant Secretary cohort underway and development of talent management programmes for other grades. (Action 10)
- A Civil Service Engagement Survey in September 2015 to ascertain staff engagement and drive ongoing organisational improvements. (Action 25)
- Performance management for all civil servants is being strengthened with the introduction of a new two point ratings format for the PMDS (Performance Management and Development System) 2016 cycle. Supporting this is a new Disciplinary Code and Underperformance Policy which has been implemented. (Action 11)
- An annual Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards ceremony celebrating excellence and innovation in the Civil Service. (Action 13)
- New Project Management Guidance published and project managers' network established. (Action 17)
- New Accountability Code and Induction Programme for Special Advisers. (Action 21)
- Publication of 'Transfer of Functions Guidelines and Best Practice Handbook. (Action 21)

Ambition of the Board and Measuring Progress

There is a wide breadth and complexity of activity across the Civil Service, much of which is difficult to measure in quantitative terms. The Board acknowledges the need to develop key performance indicators (KPIs) to appropriately measure its own role and influence in relation to the three priority actions it has oversight of. Work is ongoing to develop this KPI

framework which will take account of the role of the Board and will focus initially on a small number of outcomes.

As part of this discussion the Board has examined a number of indicators which may be appropriate for each priority action. These include a focus on implementation of performance management at Secretary General level with compliance and completion rates, timeliness of process and quality of objectives considered as suitable initial indicators. The number of reviews conducted, recommendations successfully implemented and robustness of the review process have also been considered as indicators to measure the outcome of an effective Organisational Review Programme. The third priority action focuses on implementing cross-cutting and whole-of-Government projects with the development of working methodologies and progress on pilot projects identified as appropriate indicators.

The Board recognises that more sophisticated longer-term KPIs will be required which will assess progress on improving capacity and capability of the Civil Service through outcomes from the Civil Service Staff Engagement Survey, outcomes from Civil Service Customer Surveys, and other metrics of service delivery or efficiency. This will also be informed by work underway on assessing the benefits of implementation of the Renewal Plan by the Programme Management Office in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Civil Service Renewal Plan presents a major opportunity to lead transformational change and respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead – to preserve and protect the values and strengths that matter most and tackle the things that will enhance service delivery. The role of the Accountability Board to oversee these three priority actions to strengthen accountability and performance has ensured enhanced oversight of the delivery of these priority actions. The Board will continue to develop key indicators to assess its own role and influence as well as the wider Civil Service capacity and capability.

Appendix 1: Civil Service Accountability Board Membership

The Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, T.D. (Chair)

The Tánaiste, Frances Fitzgerald T.D.*

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe T.D.**

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone T.D.***

Secretary General, Department of the Taoiseach, Martin Fraser

Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Robert Watt

Secretary General, Department of Education and Skills, Seán Ó Foghlú

Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners, Niall Cody

External Member, Paul Farrell

External Member, Bernie Gray

External Member, Shane Bissett

External Member, Jane Williams (Chair of the Top Level Appointments Committee)****

*Replaced Joan Burton T.D. July 2016

**Replaced Brendan Howlin T.D. July 2016

***Replaced Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan T.D. July 2016

****Replaced Dorothy Scally December 2016

Appendix 2: The Civil Service in 2016

The majority of civil servants are based in Dublin (47%) with only 1% located outside the jurisdiction.

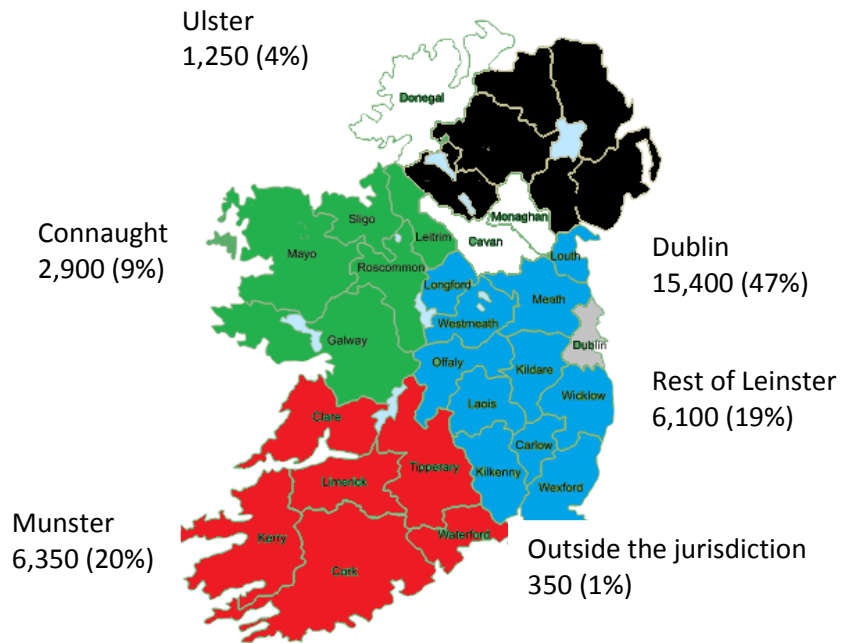


Fig 1: Location of civil servants (FTE) in 2016

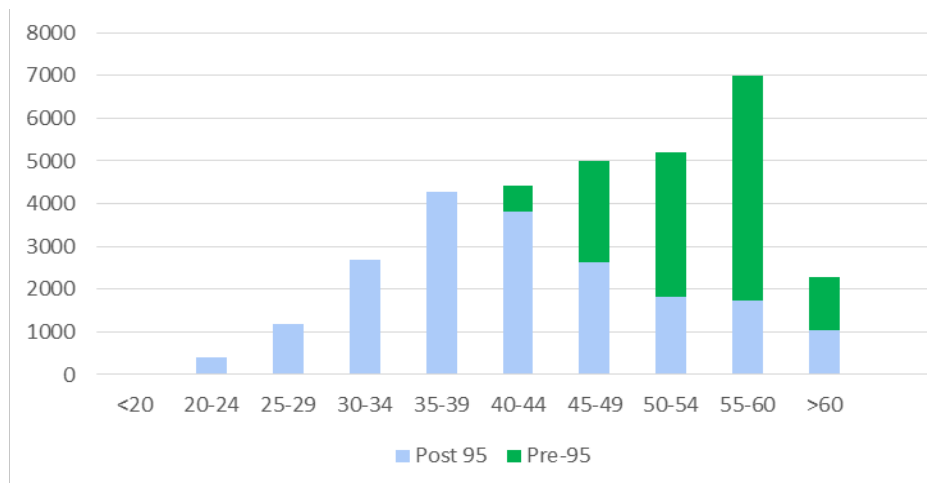


Fig 2: Age profile of the Civil Service by year of entry

The Public Appointments Service has run a number of competitions over the previous 3 years (2014 – 2016). In 2016, 103,973 applications were processed for 361 advertised campaigns. This represents a 62% increase on applications processed in 2015.

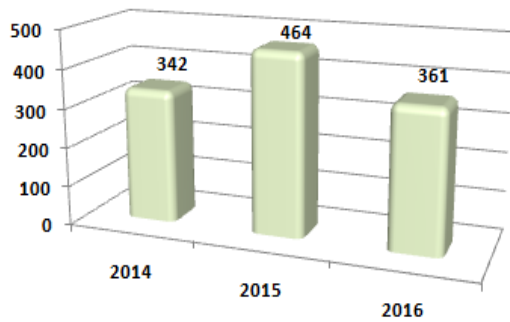


Fig 3: Campaigns advertised 2014-2016

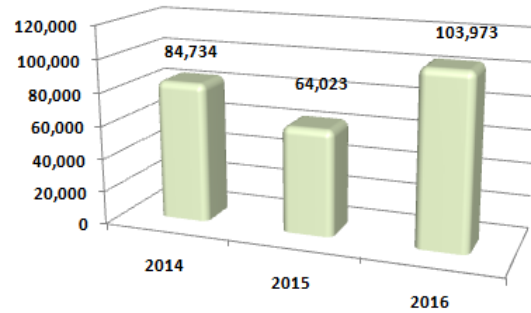


Fig 4: Applications processed 2014-2016

These campaigns resulted in 12,852 candidates interviewed, with 7,584 assigned to a position.

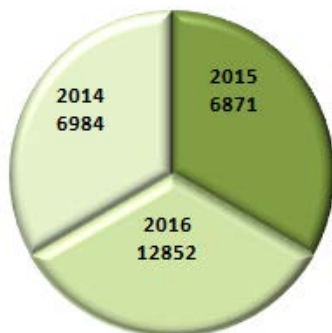


Fig 5: Candidates interviewed 2014-2016

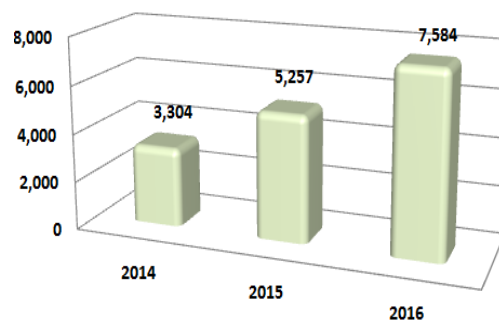


Fig 6: Assignments 2014-2016

In 2016 the Public Appointments Service ran a number of large volume open competitions for various grades within the Civil Service.

Role	Number Assigned 2016
Principal Officer	33
Assistant Principal Officer	160
Higher Executive Officer	130
Administrative Officer	157
Executive Officer	442
Clerical Officer	1634
Temporary Clerical Officer	2704
Trainee Auditor	17
AO Economist	19
Executive Officer ICT	55
First Secretary	26

Fig 7: General Service Grade Competitions 2016