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Partnership, Development and Performance

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The CSO's Human Resources (HR) Strategy, which has been developed through the Partnership process, is a very important document for the office. I welcome its publication and want to thank those involved in its preparation.

The contribution made by all our staff is a critical key to our operational effectiveness. This HR strategy is a fundamental support for the business strategy, setting out the structures and guiding principles to support and direct staff towards achieving the objectives of the Office. A cohesive set of policies and action plans will be developed to implement the HR strategy. These will set out in detail how staff will be managed, supported and encouraged; how performance will be measured and improved; and how communications and team working should take place so as to achieve the goals and objectives set out in our Statement of Strategy 2004 - 2006.

All staff and management are encouraged to contribute to the implementation of this HR strategy. The CSO Partnership Committee and HR Division will play important roles in progressing the implementation of the HR Strategy and ensuring that it becomes a key enabler for the continuous development of staff and the achievement of the goals and objectives of the CSO.



Donal Garvey
Director General

1.1 Strategic Management Initiative

The government's Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) seeks to address the significant internal and external demands for improved management of the civil and public service. The Delivering Better Government (1996) (DBG) report, which is the policy statement of the SMI, clearly states that achievement of the SMI objectives will require major reform of current human resource management structures toward a proactive approach to effective management.

The DBG Report recommends a more strategic/developmental approach to effective human resource management systems with greater devolution of day to day functions to line managers to ensure that each person who works in the Civil Service can develop to his/her maximum potential in contributing to the attainment of stated goals. The report also recommended that there be greater devolution in human resource matters from the centre to individual Departments/Offices.

1.2 Reorientation of the Personnel function

Supported by changes in the structures and systems for human resource management (HRM) DBG recommended that individual Departments/Offices re-orient the activities of their Personnel Units to take a more strategic/developmental approach and to devolve responsibility for human resource matters to line managers. In recognition of the changes proposed by DBG the CSO's Statement of Strategy identified the need to develop an integrated set of human resource policies which take into account and support a future devolution of personnel functions.

1.3 Social Partnership

Under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and Sustaining Progress the Civil Service has committed itself to the implementation of a range of HRM initiatives. These include recruitment and selection, induction, promotion, tenure, values and ethics, work practices, performance management, equality of opportunity and the re-orientation of the personnel function. Furthermore, a commitment was made to enhance training and development for all civil servants.

1.4 HRM in the CSO

The CSO recognises that its effectiveness is dependent on the motivation and calibre of its staff and on making the optimal use of their talents, qualifications and skills. The CSO aims to achieve this through the promotion of best practice HRM in the areas of recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, equality of opportunity, employee support and the provision of a safe working environment.

The HRM function in the CSO, along with the other key support areas of dissemination, customer service, administration and information technology, provides a critical underpinning to the achievement of the strategic aims and objectives of the CSO. Failure to achieve an alignment between these support elements and the strategic objectives of the CSO could put at risk the achievement of those objectives. SMI/DBG has resulted in significant changes to HR policies throughout the Civil Service and, indeed, the CSO. This HR Strategy sets out the aims and plans of the CSO for further developing its HR capability in accordance with the objectives set out in SMI/DBG and the CSO's Statement of Strategy 2004 - 2006.

1.5 Integration of HR Strategy with business objectives

The HR Strategy must be linked to, and supportive of, the Statement of Strategy on an on-going basis, with CSO's priorities and key objectives being reflected in HR priorities and objectives. HR Division, working closely with the SMC and the Partnership Committee, will develop HR action plans necessary for the implementation of the HR Strategy.

Much of the information needed to devise HR action plans can only be obtained through the relationship between HR and other Divisions. Therefore, this relationship will be the key to the success of the HR Strategy.

In implementing the HR Strategy through HR action plans, it will be essential that a strategic focus is inbuilt at all stages through to the final implementation. A strategic approach to HR should include some combination of the following elements:

- ◆ A method to ensure that the HR action plans integrate with each other, and that, collectively they fully support HR Strategy and the Statement of Strategy
- ◆ A method to ensure that the best value for money is achieved for the public
- ◆ A proactive policy which addresses the safety, health and welfare of all staff.

1.6 Roles and Responsibilities

Managers will also play a key role in the wider implementation of HR Strategy as it will be the managers who will be best placed to work with their own staff, planning and achieving the objectives and the work of the Division, along with planning for the future development, training and careers of their staff. Staff too must play their role in inputting to the planning process and to the setting of objectives, both for themselves and their division. Staff should work with managers to plan for their personal and career development.

The role of the HR staff will be to support and facilitate managers and staff in the wider implementation of the HR Strategy. This could involve such diverse matters as helping managers in the identification of resource requirements for their area, working with managers to develop appropriate training and development for their staff and advising staff directly on the options for development in a particular area. An intrinsic part of the overall process will be the support of the strategy by the Staff Associations and Unions.

1.7 Implementation

All staff, management and representative groups can contribute to implementation of this document. Implementation will be done in a participative and inclusive way in conjunction with the Partnership Committee, and in accordance with normal industrial relations practice. There will be a periodic review of the implementation process to assess progress.

2.1 Introduction

The recruitment and selection process is at the heart of HRM. Recruitment and selection concerns finding the right person for the right job at the right time.

The overall aim of the recruitment and selection process should be to obtain the optimum number and quality of people required to satisfy the business needs of the CSO. The recruitment and selection process arises directly from the HR strategic planning process and ends once the new recruit has accepted the job offer. The process also links closely with both the induction and probation processes. It should aim to attract the appropriately skilled people in a timely fashion and to then retain and further develop these skills. There should also be a strong evaluation link between the recruitment and selection process and the probation process.

2.2 Current Practice

At present, the Civil Service Commissioners (CSC) have primary responsibility for the recruitment and selection of most staff for the Civil Service. The CSO, from time to time, carries out its own recruitment and selection to facilitate the carrying out of a number of periodic surveys such as Census of Population, Household Budget Survey, Quarterly National Household Survey etc. This recruitment and selection is authorised through Exclusion Orders granted by the CSC under Section 5 of the Civil Service Commissioners Act, 1956.

2.3 Proposed Change

The Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Bill proposes the following changes to Civil Service recruitment;

- (a) the separation of the regulation of civil service recruitment from the actual recruitment operations by establishing two separate bodies for each; and
- (b) allowing civil service departments to carry out their own recruitment, under licence from the new recruitment regulators.

In the future the responsibility for some recruitment may be devolved to CSO with the CSC acting as advisors to and auditors of the recruitment process.

2.4 Recruitment and Selection in the CSO

The recruitment and selection policies of the CSO must:

- ◆ Respond to corporate objectives, organisational needs and divisional relationships
- ◆ Be based on clearly defined criteria, including skills and competencies, so that the strategic needs of the CSO are met in a timely fashion,
- ◆ Be conducted in a professional manner in accordance with best practice
- ◆ Comply with all legislation and
- ◆ Adhere to the principles of fairness, equality, openness and merit

The long term strategic objectives for Recruitment will be largely determined by reference to the overall Corporate strategy. The future recruitment policies of the CSO will be dependent on the proposed restructuring of the CSC and the possible devolution of responsibility for recruitment.

The principal objectives of the CSO recruitment policies should be as follows:

- ◆ Needs identification, recruitment and selection planning using the HR strategic plan as the foundation
- ◆ Involve managers in planning for recruitment and selection including the determination of job competencies and specifications and as appropriate
- ◆ Involvement in the carrying out the selection process
- ◆ The training of managers, HR staff and others, as appropriate, in all necessary skills for full recruitment and selection including: job specification preparation and competency based interviewing

2.5 Roles and Responsibilities

It will be the role of managers to identify and plan for recruitment needs for the short and long term working closely with HR, to participate in recruitment and selection training, (including competence identification, interviewing, etc) and to ensure that their staff participate in any relevant training and in the process as required.

It will be the responsibility of staff to work with management to plan for recruitment needs in the division as appropriate, to participate in recruitment and selection training, as appropriate and to participate in recruitment process as appropriate.

It will be the responsibility of the HR Division to agree clearly defined recruitment and selection needs with SMC and managers within the parameters of the overall HR plan and staff budget. HR will also be required to co-operate fully with the CSC in carrying out the recruitment and selection process on the CSO's behalf, ensuring early communication of requirements to CSC, supply of people to sit on boards, feedback after recruits are received.

It will be the function of HR to implement and adhere to recruitment and selection policy as devised centrally by Department of Finance and prepare for future devolution of responsibility of the recruitment and selection process in the context of CSC changes.

In the context of the anticipated structural changes in the CSC, the HR Division will have responsibility for the following:

- ◆ Managing and co-ordinating the full recruitment process
- ◆ Reviewing and evaluating the recruitment and selection processes and
- ◆ Co-operating with the "new" CSC to ensure that the quality and integrity of the entire process is maintained

2.6 Probation

Probation is the process of determining whether a new employee is suitable for employment in this Office of the wider Civil Service. Those employees who have been deemed suitable will be confirmed in

their appointment at the end of the probationary period. Currently, the probationary period for new entrants is two years and the probationary period on promotion is one year. Confirmation of appointment, after the relevant probationary period, is based on the suitability of the staff member to the grade and vice versa.

The importance of using probation as a real test of suitability will be reinforced and confirmation of appointments cannot be viewed as automatic. Current probationary procedures will be reviewed and if necessary made more relevant to the needs of the organisation.

It will be the responsibility of the SMC to ensure that their managers apply effective probation practices in their areas of responsibility. Managers will also draw up probationary reports at regular intervals in the concerning conduct, attendance patterns and sick leave, and recommend whether or not to establish the staff member at the end of the probationary period.

The performance targets set for new staff will be agreed jointly between the new staff members and their respective managers. All staff will be required to help new staff to integrate into the new division. HR will consider a re-design of the probation reports to reflect a Performance Management system.

Chapter 3 Training & Staff Development and Induction

3.1 Introduction

Training and Staff Development is a process aimed at enhancing the ability of each member of CSO staff to address the present and future needs of the organisation and their own developmental needs.

Training is concerned with task related learning activities aimed at improving on-the-job performance in order to satisfy the current and future needs of the CSO, and to enhance staff job satisfaction.

Development is about learning activities which will improve the overall competence of staff beyond the needs of their present job to be able to meet the future needs of the organisation, and their own career goals.

3.2 Identification of training needs

The overall objective of training and staff development is to equip staff with the knowledge, experience, confidence and skills to develop and perform to their full potential. This will allow us to achieve high productivity, promote job satisfaction and enhance the career development opportunities for all staff.

We aim to achieve this objective through focused training programmes as follows:

- ◆ A structured induction programme
- ◆ Management development programmes
- ◆ Staff development programme
- ◆ Specific skill/development training

In addition to these the Official Languages Equality Act, 2003 will be supported by the provision of suitable schemes to support staff who are required to communicate through the Irish Language. Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) will be the key tool for identifying training and development needs. The focus will be on the role and importance of the individual and the team in achieving productivity and quality performance.

Other methods of identifying training and development needs will be through:-

- ◆ Formal training needs analysis (TNA)
- ◆ Consultation with Heads of Divisions
- ◆ Consultation with line managers
- ◆ Staff satisfaction surveys
- ◆ Consultation with customers

The CSO recognises that staff are the key to superior performance and achievement. In this regard we aim to promote the CSO as an organisation where development according to ability is encouraged.

Training and development activities will be aligned to the business strategy and goals of the organisation. This will ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge that they need to implement the business strategy.

The training and development function within the CSO will take cognisance of developments under SMI/DGB/SP or any other developments formulated by Central Government. These issues will be addressed as the public service modernisation programme evolves.

The CSO is committed to resourcing training and development (current target is 4% of payroll). Training activities will be reviewed on an on-going basis to ensure effectiveness and value for money.

3.3 Responsibilities

The individual staff member, line managers and senior management share the responsibility for training and staff development, and the Training and Development Unit supports the organisation in meeting this responsibility. IT Infrastructure Division, Office Service Unit (OSU) and Personnel Section also have responsibility in supporting the organisation in meeting training and development needs relevant to their area of expertise.

Individuals are expected to:

- ◆ Assist in the identification of their own and their work groups training and development needs.
- ◆ Participate actively in training and development activities
- ◆ Advise supervisors where specific or general training needs are not being met

It is the responsibility of each line manager and supervisor to ensure that staff under their control:

- ◆ Receives the training necessary to do their job effectively
- ◆ Are provided with suitable opportunities for personal and professional growth
- ◆ Are given the time and support necessary to achieve the benefit of training and development opportunities

Senior Management have the responsibility to take a proactive part in the training and development of their staff, and to support the Training and Development Unit in identifying staff and work group training needs and determine priorities.

The Training and Development Unit have the responsibility to identify, facilitate, monitor, develop and to provide the necessary training and development activities under the guidance of the Training and Staff Development Committee(TSDC).

Services provided by the Training & Development Unit:

- ◆ Trainer Training
- ◆ Learning Centre
- ◆ External Resources
- ◆ Accommodation
- ◆ Needs Analysis

- ◆ Evaluation
- ◆ Refund of Fees Scheme
- ◆ Workshops and Seminars Networks Civil Service Wide Development Initiatives
- ◆ Training Courses

3.4 Induction

Induction is the process whereby new staff to the CSO are introduced to their new area of work, to the people with whom they will be working and to all the pieces of information they require on taking up a new position. It is a means of familiarising new employees with the general conditions of employment, the rules and regulations, the work, their new colleagues and the culture of the CSO. The induction process should be in place in advance of the arrival of the new staff members and will not be limited to the formal courses which are run shortly after the new staff members take up their posts.

The CSO has a detailed organisation wide induction process. Given the different nature of work areas induction is tailored to suit particular groups. On arrival new entrants, whether from external or interdepartmental sources, are given a comprehensive induction pack which is designed to familiarise them with the general terms and conditions of employment, the rules and procedures of the CSO and the support services available to staff. Informal induction takes place within the assigned sections and divisions. Each employee is also required to participate in a specially designed modular induction course. In recognition of the importance of induction the CSO has adopted a planned approach to the induction process. The plan adopted will seek to ensure that the induction process fully meets the needs of both staff and the CSO.

4.1 Introduction

Performance management is a broad term to describe the way that a jobholder's work performance, career and development needs are managed. Performance Management can be seen as a process for establishing a shared understanding between job holder and manager, of what is to be achieved and how it is to be achieved. It delivers an approach to managing and developing people that increases the probability of achieving success.

PMDS links the management of individual/team performance to the objectives of the CSO, as set out in the Strategy Statement. It does this by focusing jobholder/team activities around these objectives and by better measurement of progress towards goals. It allows resources to be managed more strategically to achieve organisational goals. It also defines common core competencies to support organisational values. PMDS recognises the need for continual change and improvement and for the involvement of both staff and management in bringing this about.

The enhanced contribution of staff to the achievement of the CSO's goals and objectives can be best achieved through role clarity, an effective system of staff management and appropriate mentoring and development. These need to be complemented by also ensuring a better fit between competency levels and work assignments. These elements should provide the basis for an organisational climate to support the enhanced motivation, commitment and morale of staff.

The Performance Management and Development System provides for:

- ◆ Translating business objectives and activities to individual objectives and deliverables, thus providing for role clarity
- ◆ Developing competency profiles for individual roles and, in turn identifying the support required for enhancing individual performance
- ◆ Focusing training and development of jobholders in the context of delivering business plans

4.2 Implementation and Monitoring

Successful implementation of PMDS is the primary focus for the CSO in enhancing individual performance. General Council Report Number 1368 recognises that links need to be developed between PMDS and an integrated Human Resource Strategy in each Department/Office.

The CSO will strive for greater integration between PMDS and other HR policies and practices and will continue to support the ongoing implementation of PMDS as follows:

- ◆ Corporate Support Section will support the ongoing development of PMDS, by providing information and material on roll out and monitoring
- ◆ Corporate Support Section will plan for the necessary logistics to support the further embedding and evaluation of PMDS including upward feedback

The implementation of an effective performance management process is central to achieving the goals set out in Delivering Better Government of a modern, dynamic and high performance civil service.

Chapter 5 Equality Policy

5.1 Introduction

The C.S.O. is dedicated to being an equal opportunities employer and promotes equality in all aspects of its activities. The CSO strives to ensure that equality is a core policy driver of the organisation and has been amongst the forerunners in introducing equality and family friendly schemes.

Equality legislation was first introduced in Ireland in the 1970s. This legislation was expanded dramatically with the enactment of the Employment Equality Act in 1998 and the Equal Status Act in 2000. The equality legislation ambit has now been broadened well beyond the familiar gender equality. The Employment Equality Act 1998 makes provisions for the promotion of equality between people in employment and expressly prohibits discrimination on nine grounds:

- ◆ Gender
- ◆ Marital status
- ◆ Family status
- ◆ Age
- ◆ Disability
- ◆ Race
- ◆ Sexual Orientation
- ◆ Religious belief and
- ◆ Membership of the traveller community

The Equal Status Act 2000 operates on the same nine grounds as the Employment Equality Act 1998 but has a more widespread application. Both acts define discrimination as the treatment of one person in a less favourable way than another person is, has been or would be treated on any of the above grounds.

5.2 Implementation

In 2001 the Civil Service published its policy on gender equality. The policy is designed to bring a more strategic focus to the achievement of gender equality. It restates the commitment of the Civil Service to gender equality and sets out the principles under which the policy operates.

Gender equality means that differences between men and women are not used unjustly to favour or to disadvantage one in relation to the other.

The policy recognises that equality is more than an absence of discrimination, and requires that positive steps be taken to address gender imbalances and to enable each individual, irrespective of gender, to overcome obstacles which may diminish their capacity to achieve their full potential. It further recognises that men and women have to balance a range of diverse professional and personal responsibilities.

Equality of opportunity within the Civil Service was reinforced with the publication of “Diversity in the Civil Service - A policy on equality of opportunity”. Equality of opportunity means that no staff member will receive less favourable treatment than another due to any of the nine grounds of discrimination.

The principles of the policy state that equality of opportunity is not a minority matter, but a key issue which directly or indirectly affects all aspects of every man and woman's working life. Inequality of opportunity is not only illegal; it is morally and socially unjustifiable and is wasteful of people, the main asset of the Civil Service.

In addition to policies on gender equality and equality of opportunity the public service has been operating a Code of Practice for people with disabilities. Under the code, disabilities means physical, sensory or psychological impairments that may:

- ◆ Have a tangible impact on functional capacity to perform a particular job
- ◆ Have an impact on the ability to function in a particular physical environment
- ◆ Lead to discrimination in obtaining or keeping employment of a kind that the person would otherwise be suitable for

5.3 CSO Commitments

The CSO is committed to maintaining a working environment in which differences are respected and in which staff are valued as individuals, an environment that is free from harassment and bullying and in which all staff feel safe and secure. The CSO, in formulating human resource policies, will ensure that they are fair and equitable. In addition to its duties under the Employment Equality Act, the CSO will continue to promote equality of opportunity in recruitment, promotion, transfer and job mobility, training and development, and family-friendly working arrangements.

The CSO will strive to ensure that equality be an uncontested principle applied in all aspects of the work of the Office.

It endeavours to achieve this through:

- ◆ The use of gender neutral language
- ◆ Gender balance at all grades
- ◆ Equal access to mobility, training and development
- ◆ Promotion of work/life balance initiatives
- ◆ Monitoring gender equality
- ◆ Implementation of the Public Service Code of Practice for People with Disabilities

Access to family friendly policies are equally available to all staff subject to the exigencies of the CSO. The CSO will continue its policy of non-discrimination on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and membership of the traveller community.

The CSO will ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to recruitment, job mobility, training and promotion and will make all reasonable efforts to facilitate them in relation to accommodation, equipment and safety procedures.

Chapter 6 Mobility

6.1 Introduction

Mobility is the process of ensuring that staff gain experience of working in different sections of the organisation. In some cases mobility has been facilitated between the CSO and other National Statistical Offices or other Irish Government Departments.

6.2 Objectives

Mobility can bring great benefits both to the individual and to the CSO as a whole. Mobility can play a part in helping individuals develop their potential by experiencing different types of work, different work practices, development of new skills through the PMDS framework and exposure to a greater range of people and experiences in their working life. They in turn can benefit the organisation by facilitating the exchange of ideas and information and by promoting change wherever they work.

6.3 Implementation

The mobility policy will aim to balance of the needs of the organisation, the individual and of the managers. Mobility may also be used to capitalise on the CSO's investment in the training and development of an individual.

The purpose of mobility is both to assist staff in developing their skills and to assist divisions in realising business objectives. These two objectives must be balanced in any potential move. A primary focus for the policy is to ensure that there is a balance of skills throughout the CSO.

All parties involved in the proposed transfer should be informed in a timely and confidential manner and should co-operate in the operation of the mobility policy. The mobility strategy will be flexible taking account of particular requirements and skills in some Divisions within the CSO.

In developing the mobility policy the CSO will take account of the following key principles:

- ◆ Staff 5 years or more in the same role will be considered
- ◆ The PMDS framework will be used to guide the operation of the mobility policy
- ◆ Human Resources/Personnel will liaise with staff and managers, to minimise any disruption caused by the move
- ◆ Human Resources/Personnel consult with staff and managers in advance concerning potential transfers

Chapter 7 Health, Safety & Welfare at Work (including EAS)

7.1 Introduction

Providing a safe working environment is a key component of ensuring a positive working environment. Through its Safety, Health and Welfare Policy and Employee Assistance Service the CSO promotes a safe working environment.

The CSO maintains a Safety Statement, prepared in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989, which outlines the policy of the CSO, for ensuring so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees, the public, contractors and visitors.

7.2 Health and Safety

The CSO is committed to complying with the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989 and all other statutory requirements, codes of practice and national standards.

In particular, the CSO endeavours to ensure:

- ◆ A safe place of work, including access, egress and safe systems of work
- ◆ Safe plant, equipment and machinery
- ◆ Provision of appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision
- ◆ Provision of suitable protective clothing and equipment where necessary
- ◆ Provision, where necessary, of a competent person to advise and assist in securing the health, safety and welfare of employees and others

The detailed arrangements for achieving these objectives are set out in the main body of the Safety Statement.

7.3 Responsibility

The Director General, has overall responsibility for health and safety within the CSO. Day to day management of health and safety at the CSO is the responsibility of Section Managers and Safety and Security Officers. Employees share a responsibility with management in ensuring their own safety while at work. The Safety Statement requires the co-operation of all staff, visitors and contractors to enable the CSO to ensure a safe working environment.

7.4 Implementation

The CSO facilitates the appointment by staff of a Safety Representative to represent them in consultation with the CSO and to obtain any necessary information to ensure their safety and health, as set out in the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989. The role of the Safety representative is set out in the CSO's Safety Statement.

The CSO has a Safety, Health and Welfare Committee comprised of management and staff representatives. This is a sub-committee of the Partnership Committee, it meets on a regular basis and reports back to the Partnership Committee.

The CSO provides health and safety training as appropriate to assist staff, managers and safety representatives in their roles and responsibilities. Sufficient authority and resources, both financial and

otherwise, are made available to enable staff to carry out their responsibilities in a reasonable and efficient manner.

The CSO is committed to upholding the highest standards of safety, health and welfare for all employees, customers, contractors and visitors.

7.5 Employee Assistance Service

The CSO has had an Employee Assistance Service (EAS) since 1993, providing a counselling, support and referral service for staff at all levels. The EAS is a confidential support programme aimed at helping staff who are experiencing difficulties either within the workplace or in their personal lives. The service also provides information and advice to managers in relation to staff welfare and thereby complements the responsibility, which managers have for the welfare of their staff. The CSO recognises that for the Service to be effective, it is fundamental that its confidentiality is respected and understood by all.

The service provides information and advice to managers in relation to staff welfare and thereby complements the responsibility, which managers have for the welfare of their staff.

Further information on the EAS is available in Chapter 8: Employee Supports.

Chapter 8 Employee Supports (To include flexibility in working arrangements, EAS etc.)

8.1 Introduction

Providing appropriate supports is vital in generating the commitment of staff. The CSO seeks to support staff by flexibly implementing the centrally agreed initiatives such as Family Friendly policies and the career breaks scheme. In addition there are a number of local initiatives to support staff such as Health Checks and acknowledgement of significant life events. Family Friendly initiatives are important in progressing equality of opportunity issues. The CSO is open to any ideas which would develop a more supportive organisation.

The CSO has been proactive in the range of employee supports available to staff. This chapter outlines a number of family friendly initiatives together with details of the CSO Employee Assistance Service (EAS). For further information on the EAS and the schemes listed below contact the Employee Assistance Officer (EAO) or Personnel Section.

8.2 Family Friendly/Work Life Balance Schemes

8.2.1 Worksharing

Worksharing is a scheme that allows staff to avail of an attendance pattern other than full-time. Examples of the attendance patterns include: mornings only, afternoons only, three days per week, four days per week, 9am to 3pm each day, week on/week off and three weeks out of four. Worksharing staff are paid on a pro rata basis, so that for example, a member of staff who opts to work three days per week will be paid 60% of the salary of a full-time member of staff. (Circular 31/2001)

8.2.2 Term Time

Term Time allows people to take 10 or 13 weeks unpaid leave from June until the end of August to match their working arrangements to their children's summer holidays. To be eligible, a member of staff must:

- ◆ Have a child or children up to 18 years of age or
- ◆ Be acting in loco parentis or
- ◆ Be the primary carer for a person with a disability who needs care on a continuing or frequent basis

(Circular 7/2002)

8.2.3 Flexitime

Flexitime gives staff flexibility to vary their starting and finishing times. CSO staff must be in work during the core times of 10am - 12.30pm and 2.30pm to 4pm. A staff member may start work between 8.00am and 10am and finish between 4pm and 7.00pm. Up to 11.5 hours credit may be worked up in a particular flexi period and carried forward to the next period and taken as leave.

8.2.4 Career Breaks

A career break is a period of unpaid leave from work of between six months and five years. Staff who have completed probation are eligible for this scheme. In the Civil Service staff may take two career breaks during their career. A career break may be allowed for domestic reasons, including child care, education or travel abroad. A person on a career break may not take up paid employment in Ireland. (Circular 18/98)

8.2.5 Paternity Leave

A father is entitled to three days special leave with pay on the birth or adoption of his child. The leave may be taken up to four weeks after the birth of a child. In the case of adoption, the leave may be taken within four weeks of the date of placement. (Circular 32/99)

8.2.6 Special Leave for Domestic Circumstances

Unpaid leave to deal with domestic difficulties is also available:

- ◆ Special leave without pay to care for ill spouse or children (up to 6 months)
- ◆ Special leave without pay to travel abroad to visit an ill relative (up to 2 months)
- ◆ Special leave without pay to deal with other urgent domestic problems (up to 2 Months)

(Circular 22/98)

8.2.7 E-working

In an e-working arrangement the employee works from a home office for some or all of the week. He or she maintains a presence in the CSO electronically via computer, telephone, fax and e-mail. E-working can contribute to increased productivity of the staff member, while simultaneously providing the employee with more free time. The downside to this is that there is a reduction in the effectiveness of communications with the employee and a substantial capital cost. The CSO has participated in an e-working pilot scheme and plans are in place to further expand the pilot.

8.2.8 Marriage Leave

5 Days paid leave is available where a staff member gets married

8.3 Statutory Entitlements

8.3.1 Carer's Leave

Carer's Leave is temporary unpaid leave to allow a person to provide full-time care and attention for someone who is in need of such care. A maximum of 65 weeks Carer's leave is allowed in respect of any one care recipient; the minimum statutory entitlement is 13 weeks. A person may also have an entitlement to Carer's Benefit. Further information on Carer's Benefit is available from the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

8.3.2 Maternity Leave

Women are entitled to 18 weeks paid leave and 8 weeks unpaid leave. (Circulars 35/95 and 9/2001)

8.3.3 Adoptive Leave

Women who adopt and men who are sole male adopters are entitled to 14 weeks paid leave and 8 weeks unpaid leave. The leave commences on the day of placement of the child with the adopting parent. (Circulars 2/97 and 9/2001)

8.3.4 Parental Leave

The natural or adoptive parent of a child is entitled to 14 weeks unpaid parental leave. (Circulars 22/98, 22/2000 and 39/2002)

8.3.5 Force Majeure Leave

An employee is entitled to leave owing to the injury or illness of a family member. Force majeure leave is limited to circumstances where the immediate presence of the employee is essential because of the illness or injury of another person. (Circular 22/98)

For further information on the schemes listed above please contact Personnel Section.

8.4 The CSO Employee Assistance Service

8.4.1 Introduction

The Employee Assistance Service provides assistance and support on a strictly confidential basis to employees and retired staff who may be experiencing either work or personal difficulties.

The EAS provides the following in-house programme through which individuals may avail of :

- ◆ Assistance in evaluating and assessing difficulties
- ◆ Help in planning a structured approach to coping with and/or resolving difficulties
- ◆ Counselling
- ◆ Referral to external professionals or agencies as considered appropriate and in agreement with the individual
- ◆ Management consultancy and support
- ◆ Information on a wide range of topics in the area of social services, health/social welfare entitlements and helping agencies

The EAS also aims to adopt a proactive approach in the area of staff welfare by promoting and highlighting issues of relevance in employee welfare to all staff and management.

8.4.2 What concerns can the EAS help with?

The issues dealt with by the EAS are varied and may include the following:

- ◆ Health related issues
- ◆ Financial problems
- ◆ Family, marital and relationship problems
- ◆ Addictions
- ◆ Stress

- ◆ Bereavement (including practical help with entitlements, pensions, probate; and support at an emotional level to include information on bereavement counselling services)
- ◆ Work related issues - human aspects (e.g. harassment, interpersonal difficulties, coping with the job, balancing work with domestic responsibilities).

The list is not exhaustive but merely an indication of the range of concerns which are encountered.

8.4.3 How can the EAS help the Manager or Supervisor?

Managers may contact the EAS if they are concerned about individual employees. Support will be given to the manager with the option of referral of the employee to the EAS if necessary and appropriate.

8.4.4 Confidentiality

Normal professional standards apply in respect of confidentiality. Apart from exceptional circumstances (see below), discussions between an Employee Assistance Officer and an Individual are confidential. Third parties will not be involved without the prior knowledge and consent of the person. The exceptional circumstances are:

The exceptional circumstances are:

- ◆ Life threatening situations.
- ◆ Where concealment of information would compromise the Employee Assistance Officer.

For further information on the EAS please contact the Employee Assistance Officer (EAO).

9.1 Introduction

Our effectiveness as a public service organisation depends in large measure on how we communicate, internally and externally. The CSO is committed to developing and supporting an internal communications policy that ensures the open and timely exchange of information to inform and empower all people in the organisation. This chapter sets out the main principles and features of our internal communications policy.

9.2 Underlying values

The following are basic values underlying effective internal communication:

- ◆ *Trust:* Communication between people is most effective when a high level of trusts exists between them. Without trust people are less likely to believe what is being said and may look for ulterior motives or a hidden agenda
- ◆ *Honesty:* People want to be communicated with honestly and openly. This involves not only being told the truth but receiving all the relevant facts so that they can come to a fully informed opinion
- ◆ *Equity:* Communication should reflect fairness and impartiality at all times, with due regard to the principles of privacy, confidentiality and natural justice
- ◆ *Empathy:* It is important to establish empathy with people in order to build trust and a suitable environment for the sharing and exchange of information

The acceptance of these values by both management and staff is essential for establishing and supporting the culture and climate necessary to support and encourage open communications.

9.3 Role of Internal Communications

Communication is essentially about sharing and exchanging information. The role and impact of internal communications includes the following:

- ◆ Informs and explains
- ◆ Reinforces credibility, openness and trust
- ◆ Makes clear what the mission and goals of the business are
- ◆ Reinforces the organisation's culture and values
- ◆ Fulfills people's need to predict, understand and shape their environment
- ◆ Impacts positively on attitudes and commitment to corporate objectives

Trust and credibility are essential for effective communication. People, who are the key ingredient for organisational success, will perform best when they feel informed, prepared, consulted and respected. Good communication creates a strong workplace relationship by strengthening positive attitudes, filling information gaps, and by ensuring that the workforce understands the mission, values and goals of the organisation.

Good internal communication brings coherence to the workplace, avoids ambiguity, and helps to ensure that everybody knows where the organisation is heading, where they fit in, what they are expected to do and how they are doing it.

9.4 Means of Communicaitons

Communications in the CSO broadly fall into two categories, interpersonal and written. While traditionally written communications meant pen and paper, the majority of written communication today is by means of electronic media.

The most effective and most frequent communications are interpersonal – either face-to-face or on the phone. Interpersonal communication is immediate and it gives people the opportunity to, ask questions, offer opinions and suggestions, make confirming comments, give and receive feedback. Face-to-face communications include one-to-one dialogue with superiors, peers, colleagues and communications in larger groups – e.g. day-to-day section meetings, section and divisional planning, workshops, training courses, partnership working groups etc.

Interpersonal communications also include the “grapevine”, an influential communications channel in every organisation. Effective communications require an active approach rather than assuming that information will flow on the grapevine.

Traditionally, written communications were paper-based and included Office Notices, circulars, induction material, information booklets, newsletters, instruction manuals, Board reports and Eurostat documents. Most written communications of this kind are now in electronic format, either in e-mail or in the CSO’s corporate document and discussion databases.

With the installation of the Lotus Notes e-mail and database systems in 2000, the CSO developed a policy on how to make the best use of these tools. This forms an integral part of our overall communications policy. It recognises the major downsides of e-mail, which is relatively inefficient as a way of storing and sharing information. It also encourages best practices in using the Lotus Notes databases.

More recently, the Lotus Notes homepage has been extended to include links to corporate topics of general interest – PMDS, Partnership, etc. – as well as to the divisional databases. One of the key ongoing challenges with the Corporate databases is to make it easy to retrieve the information you need.

Electronic communications have encouraged an open documentation environment, which reflects the principles of the Freedom of Information Act. However, while electronic media have improved the way we distribute corporate information internally, they are not a substitute for good interpersonal communications.

Managers and staff need to take an active approach, including:

- ◆ Ensuring that the formal communication processes are up-to-date and effective
- ◆ Managers at all levels liasing closely with their staff, having open discussions sessions for questions and feedback at all meetings, and responding to queries and providing information in an open honest manner (this will not happen if they stay in their offices all day or communicate only through formal structures)
- ◆ Encouraging staff to question and assess grapevine exchanges and to query their supervisor or manager on anything strange or unexpected immediately

9.5 Our Commitment to Good Communications

Communications must be actively managed and good practices need to be encouraged and facilitated. This requires a commitment to good practice and the ongoing development of our communications policies. Management commits itself to:

- ◆ Keeping staff well informed on developments relating to the organisation
- ◆ Operating an open approach to information, restricting access only where there is clear and justifiable reasons for doing so
- ◆ Making it easy for staff to contribute their views on all organisational issues
- ◆ Conveying information quickly, accurately and in a form that is easy to assimilate at all levels
- ◆ Welcoming feedback on all aspects of CSO's activities

9.6 Action Programme to Improve Internal Communications

Work is ongoing by the Partnership Sub-Committee on Communications to update the communications strategy and to encourage best practices in using electronic media. Many of the initiatives envisaged in the 2000 communications strategy have become fact – e.g. use of Lotus Notes, posting of minutes of Senior Management Committee etc.

Chapter 10 Partnership

10.1 The Origin and Aims of Partnership

The Partnership 2000 Agreement, which was launched in 1996, is the key driver for a partnership approach in the Civil Service. This agreement has explicit provision for advancing the modernisation of the public service through a partnership process.

Subsequent to the Partnership 2000 Agreement public service unions and management agreed the structures and broad framework for implementation of Partnership (General Council Report No. 1331). It is up to each public body to adapt this framework and structures to best suit its environment and circumstances. Changes arising from the Strategic Management Initiative and other processes (e.g. collective agreements) will be implemented, to the greatest extent possible, through the partnership process.

Partnership is a fundamental principle of Delivering Better Government. It introduces a new way of working in the CSO under which staff, management and unions aim to develop new workplace relationships based on mutual respect, understanding, trust and shared responsibility.

This is a departure from the traditional top-down approach to making decisions. It offers a way of tackling collectively some of the issues facing the organisation. It is not a ready-made solution to the problems of the CSO; rather, it is an approach under which we can identify and resolve issues in a co-operative rather than a confrontational way.

10.2 What is involved in Partnership?

The essence of Partnership is that everyone in the CSO is more involved, and at an earlier stage, in deciding on what needs to be done, and on how to achieve it. In Partnership, important decisions are arrived at by consensus instead of confrontation. The sense of trust and shared responsibility necessary to allow this to happen cannot be taken for granted however, must be earned.

10.3 Objectives

The objectives of Partnership in the CSO are to:

- ◆ Create the basis and arrangements for discussion of major decisions affecting the future of the CSO
- ◆ Engage the ideas, abilities and commitment of all employees, data providers and customers
- ◆ Enhance the quality of the working environment and thus enhance the performance of the CSO
- ◆ Ensure all employees have an opportunity to influence change. Partnership
- ◆ Enables everybody to share his or her ideas
- ◆ Create a safe working environment is essential
- ◆ Facilitate an atmosphere of trust and confidence

10.4 The Role of the Partnership Committee in the CSO

Partnership operates through a Partnership Committee. Everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the partnership process by participating on a committee / sub-committee, through workshops, by responding to surveys or by offering suggestions. The Committee is composed of unions, management and employee representatives. Working groups involving other employees which report to the Partnership Committee have been set up to address various issues. The views of employees at all levels are sought and welcomed.

10.5 The committee work involves:

10.5.1 Heightening awareness of the partnership process

Partnership's success depends on the active involvement of all elements of the CSO. Awareness is raised through electronic dissemination, publicly displayed notices and reports on current deliberations and awareness and briefing sessions. New entrants are informed of the process, initially through documentation and later through their induction training.

10.5.2 Increasing levels of trust

Promoting common ownership of the partnership process and active participation of employees at all levels enhances trust. This process is based on equality between all partners and tolerance for the views of others and transparency in decision making. Employees are kept fully informed of all decisions affecting them. It is the duty of the Partnership Committee to foster agreement in a spirit of consensus, openness and mutual respect.

10.5.3 Ensuring there are no structural or resource impediments to Partnership

The Committee works to minimise any structural or resource impediments to participation in, or the success of the partnership process.

10.6 Appointment of Committee

The Director General chairs the Committee. Management and staff representative bodies nominate representatives. If a vacancy occurs the position will be filled by a person from the same representative group. Employee representatives are selected from a list of employees who have indicated an interest, by the Partnership Committee who ensure a balanced representation, taking account of factors such as gender, grades and location. The employee representatives also includes a member from the field force. The initial appointment is for a two-year period. At the end of this period one third of the employee representatives stand down annually in rotation and are replaced in the same manner from the list, which is periodically updated.

10.7 Operation of the Committee

The Committee arrives at its decisions by consensus. Consensus is achieved when all points of view have been expressed, listened to and understood; the decision is made openly and fairly; the members agree on a single course of action and understand and accept the decision even though it may not be everyone's first choice. Where consensus cannot be achieved, the issue involved may be referred to an agreed third party facilitator in the hope of reaching agreement. The Partnership Committee may set up a sub-committees to examine specific issues. Committee members are expected to be tolerant and open-minded. They must be prepared to listen and to take on board other members opinions. Personal agendas must not be allowed to interfere on any issue. The interests of the employees, members and the organisation must take precedence in all situations.

10.8 Sub-committees

The Partnership Committee may set up sub-committees to research, monitor or develop specific topics. These sub-committees will initially be comprised of members of the Committee, but they may co-opt other membership to avail of all views and technical expertise available. Any sub-committee formed will report directly back to the full Partnership Committee.

10.9 Industrial Relations

The process is not intended to replace, or be a substitute for, the Departmental Council of the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme, or for other more informal industrial relations systems. Industrial relations issues continue to be dealt with through the existing mechanisms though some issues of a non-substantive or local nature are successfully resolved through the partnership process. It is expected also that as the partnership process develops and evolves, it may reduce the traditional adversarial approach to industrial relations issues.

10.10 The Future of Partnership

As Partnership is an evolving process the experience of past activities informs approaches and organisational awareness and learning is carried into future projects.