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Research Project – Evaluation of Industrial Relations Expertise in the Civil Service

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Research Question:

Is there a deficit of Industrial Relations expertise amongst staff working in the Human Resources Units in Civil Service Departments, and, if so, is this deficit impacting negatively on Management's ability to engage effectively with union officials within the Civil Service Industrial Relations processes and procedures?

This paper has been prepared by staff in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The views presented in this paper do not represent the official views of the Department or Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

IGEES

Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service

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Executive Summary:

Effective management of industrial and employment relations not only underpins industrial peace, but also fosters productivity and promotes economic wellbeing. It is important that Industrial Relations expertise is available to Management in the context of engaging and negotiating with the unions in relation to developing and implementing Civil Service employment terms and conditions while adhering to employment legislation and Public Service Agreements¹.

There is a perception that there is a deficit in IR expertise (skills, knowledge and experience) amongst staff assigned to Human Resources (HR) Units within Civil Service Government Departments. However, this has not been evaluated and therefore the extent of gaps or shortfalls, if any, in IR expertise is unclear. The purpose of this research is to examine whether the perception is justified. Furthermore, if it is found that there are skills and knowledge gaps, the extent to which this is affecting engagement with the Civil Service unions within the Civil Service IR forums, processes and procedures will be considered.

It is widely acknowledged that the role of the HR Unit in all organisations has evolved and Units are now required to provide a comprehensive range of services across the HR functions, including, employee/industrial relations, in support of the organisations business targets and objectives. In the Civil Service it is considered important that IR expertise is available to Management in the context of engaging and negotiating with union officials.

Given the role of the HR Managers in each Government Department it is considered that they are best placed to assess: the level of IR expertise in their Units; whether there is a deficit of skills and knowledge; and whether any deficit is impacting negatively on the interactions between management and staff representatives or unions. HR Managers were requested to complete a short anonymous self-completion survey to help examine the matter. 16 completed questionnaires were received from the 18 HR Managers contacted, i.e. 89% return rate.

All HR Managers who responded to the survey identified initiatives which would enhance, develop and acquire IR expertise. These suggestions ranged from formal training, improved information resources, networking, professionalisation of the roles within HR, and obtaining the expertise through expressions-of-interest and specialist competitions.

¹ Public Service Agreements: Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (“Croke Park Agreement”); the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016 (“Haddington Road Agreement”); the Public Service Stability Agreement 2015-2018 (“Lansdowne Road Agreement”); and the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020; Building Momentum – A New Public Service Agreement, 2021-2022.

Summary of Key findings from the HR Managers' responses:

- a) 69% consider that their HR Units do not entirely have the required staffing levels to carry out the IR tasks and responsibilities.
- b) 75% have identified that IR knowledge, skills and experience could be enhanced and developed further.
- c) 69% are very or extremely satisfied that the staff within the HR Units dealing with IR activities have the capacity to engage effectively with staff representatives and union officials inside and outside of the formal IR processes.
- d) In relation to attracting and retaining staff, just under half of all HR Managers who responded considered that it was difficult to attract staff to IR roles – only 27% disagreed. However, in contrast only 7% agreed that it was difficult to retain IR staff, although it is worth noting that 40% were undecided.
- e) Areas identified where greater expertise would be beneficial are:
 - I. Negotiations and Conflict Resolution
 - II. Employment Law
 - III. Industrial Relations Legislation
 - IV. The Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme
 - V. Public Service agreements, provisions and implementation
 - VI. Civil Service employment terms and conditions

Recommendations made by HR Managers:

- a) Recruitment:
 - i. In order to attract those with the required IR expertise, specialist competitions run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) should be carried out on a regular basis in order to set up panels of HR/IR specialists.
 - ii. The Administrative Officer IR Graduate Development Programme should be widened to recruit greater numbers of graduates who will gain experience and knowledge over the two-year development programme.
 - iii. Internal expression-of-interest (EOI) selection processes can identify and secure IR expertise.
 - iv. A career pathway for IR/ER specialists should be developed.
- b) Learning and Development:
 - i. Long-term third level education opportunities should continue to be identified and supported.
 - ii. The Professional Diploma in Industrial and Employment Relations delivered by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) has been very successful and the need for this to continue was identified.
 - iii. In order to address the difficulty that some staff might have in enrolling for longer term studies due to the time commitment required to undertake such

studies, it is recommended that, in addition to longer term studies, a range of shorter topic focused training be identified.

- iv. There are a number of ways in which training might be delivered and it is recommended that OneLearning (the Civil Service Learning and Development Centre) be consulted for advice and support. Many training programmes can be successfully delivered online using different platforms and webinars which can be assessed by the attendees remotely. Greater use of technology will provide increased flexibility for the delivering and attendance of/at training.

c) Information Sharing and Networking:

- i. The creation of a central repository for IR documents and information was suggested.
- ii. Quarterly IR briefings should be arranged to provide IR executives in the Civil Service with updates on current IR matters.
- iii. It was suggested that a center of excellence be established to provide advice and answers to queries arising.

Findings show that in all areas the HR Managers are satisfied with IR expertise at some level, and no questions attracted a 'Not Satisfied' response. However, the results varied between the different Departments and it is clear that there are areas in which IR skills, knowledge and experience can be enhanced, improved and developed. Much has been done in this regard, and the HR Managers identified an extensive range of measures that have already been implemented in order to develop IR expertise. Furthermore, the HR Managers have identified many measures that can be taken to further enhance IR expertise. Recommendations made by the HR Managers will be reviewed, and consideration will be given to what measures/actions might be taken in order to further develop IR expertise.

It is worth noting that not only have recommendations been made, but suggestions on how these recommendations might be implemented have been put forward in this paper. It is considered important that progress be evaluated periodically and interventions amended and augmented in order to help ensure that the important activity of IR is adequately resourced and supported as required.

1. Research Issue

1.1 Context

Industrial Relations (IR) in the Civil Service is addressed under the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme (CS C&A Scheme) which is administered by the Public Service Pay and Pensions Division (PSPPD) in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (D/PER). The four key forums under the CS C&A Scheme are, Departmental Councils, General Council, Adjudication, and Arbitration.

Departmental Councils and General Council are the forums for raising IR matters. Management and Unions will discuss and engage on matters raised. Departmental Councils deal with matters relating to a particular Department and which generally do not have interdepartmental implications. General Council deals with matters that affect more than one Department e.g. central Human Resources (HR) policies and terms and conditions of Civil Service employment. Very often bi-lateral meetings will be held following Departmental and General Council engagement or, where appropriate, sub-committees comprising of union and management representatives will be established to progress and engage on matters raised.

If, following management/union engagement agreement cannot be reached, disputes, relating to collective terms and conditions of employment, may be referred, by the Union or Management, to Adjudication or Arbitration as appropriate. The Civil Service Adjudicator hears smaller disputes relating to a particular Department while the Arbitration board hears larger disputes which have interdepartmental implications.

Civil servants are excluded from the definition of ‘worker’ in the Industrial Relations Act 1946 and do not have access to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) or the Labour Court in respect of collective employment terms and conditions. Civil servants (circa 39,000 staff)² only have access to the WRC and Labour Court in relation to individual rights based issues or employment law issues.

1.2 The issue

There is a perception that there is a deficit in IR expertise (skills, knowledge and experience) amongst staff assigned to Human Resources (HR) Units within Civil Service Government

² Source – Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2020

Departments. However, this has not been evaluated and therefore the extent of gaps or shortfalls, if any, in IR expertise is unclear. Furthermore, if it is found that there are skills and knowledge gaps, the extent to which this is affecting engagement with the Civil Service unions within the Civil Service IR forums, processes and procedures is not known. In order to ascertain this the following research question is being posed:

Is there a deficit of Industrial Relations expertise amongst staff working in the Human Resources Units in Civil Service Departments, and, if so, is this deficit impacting negatively on Management's ability to engage effectively with union officials within the Civil Service Industrial Relations processes and procedures?

Furthermore, as part of this project, the current thinking on the importance and significance, or otherwise, of the role of IR will be explored.

The aims of this research project can be summarised as follows:

- a) Assess current levels of IR expertise available in Government Departments.
- b) Identify deficits in skills and knowledge where they arise.
- c) Assess whether it is considered that any deficits in expertise identified are impacting negatively on Management-Union engagement in the context of the CS C&A Scheme.
- d) Collate proposals/recommendations from HR Managers as to how IR expertise might be best enhanced.
- e) Explore the current thinking on the value and importance of the IR activity generally.

1.3 Why is this Important?

It is considered important that IR expertise is available to Management in the context of engaging and negotiating with the unions in relation to developing, amending, and implementing Civil Service employment terms and conditions while adhering to employment legislation. This is made even more important by the fact that Civil Service terms and conditions tend to be influential in the wider public service, and therefore any agreements reached; Adjudication findings; or Arbitration findings, may impact well beyond the Civil Service sector.

There are also a number of challenges arising from the current industrial relations environment as follows:

- a) A new, and arguably stronger union - Fórsa, has recently been established which combines three former civil service unions - CPSU, PSEU, and IMPACT. The new larger/integrated union will potentially represent 80% of all civil servants.

- b) A new proposed public service agreement has been negotiated and will need to be implemented in 2021 *'BUILDING MOMENTUM, a new public service agreement, 2021-2022'*.
- c) The unwinding of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Legislation is taking place and in this context it is possible that more claims for improvements to terms and conditions will be raised by Civil Service unions.
- d) Prior to the current health crisis brought about by Covid-19, expectations for improved terms and conditions, including pay increases, were growing. The current crisis may change the country's financial position and this may give rise to challenging negotiations and disquiet amongst staff and staff representatives.

To help address the challenges above and to help ensure effective engagement with the unions while protecting Government policy, senior management in D/PER have identified the importance of enhancing IR expertise across the Civil Service.

From a central position, D/PER is responsible for the management of the CS C&A Scheme. Changes in the IR environment give rise to challenges for those dealing with IR matters in Government Departments, and D/PER is keen to introduce initiatives that will support the development of IR executives and managers who can operate across the Civil Service in the management of IR matters. Effective management of industrial and employment relations not only underpins industrial peace, but also fosters productivity and promotes economic wellbeing at individual, industrial and national levels.

The findings from this research and study will help inform decisions around central IR policy, particularly in relation to the management and development of IR expertise.

The recommendations resulting from this project have been presented to senior management in the PSSPD, D/PER, and will influence policy decisions in relation to initiatives to enhance IR expertise and to support IR executives in the Civil Service.

2. Current Thinking and Theories

2.1 Introduction

The role of the HR Unit has evolved over time. Often operating across three distinct areas - HR Operations, Organisational Development, and HR Business Partnering - HR Units in Government Departments/Offices now provide a comprehensive range of services across the HR functions including, recruitment, workforce-planning, learning and development, HR consultancy, performance management, employee/industrial relations, health and well-being, and change management. Greater emphasis is put on the role of the HR Unit to help support Departments/Offices to meet business needs and strategic objectives. The view that the importance of the HR role is growing is widely shared.

Aghazadeh (2003) maintained that, in the past, HR Units were little more than an administrative necessity for organisations but that much more is now expected from HR Units including adding value to the organisation. HR managers must operate in partnership with line-managers who are answerable to shareholders, customers and employees. In terms of the Civil Service, decisions and policies are made in the public interest and in the context of public funds. More recently Igvinomwanhia, Iyayi and Iyayi, (2013) agreed that HR had been considered to be a necessary but unproductive function in an organisation as it was only required for administrative and record-keeping tasks. However, in recent years the role of HR Units has changed significantly. The HR Units in Government Departments have a wide range of HR activities including strategy and organisation; workforce planning; employee development; employment relations; employment and personnel administration. Gunnigle, Heraty and Morley (2017) explain that industrial relations, which they describe as a key HR activity, is now often referred to as 'employment relations' (ER). They say that ER or IR includes collective bargaining; employee involvement and participation; grievance handling and discipline administration; aspects of social responsibility; aspects of health, safety and welfare; and employee services. They identify the management of ER/IR as one of the most important aspects of the broader HR roles in organisations.

2.2 Specialists and Expertise

IR is a challenging and, at times, difficult environment to work in. It is constantly changing and new challenges continually arise. It is important that IR is handled well. Torrington, Hall and Taylor (2008) make that point that if negotiations are handled badly the situation or conflict may get worse. They also acknowledge that negotiations can be stressful for some people and when over-personalised the focus may be on the conflict itself rather than the cause of the conflict. Torrington et al (2008) maintain that there is growing concern amongst union leaders and amongst management that there is a lack of bargaining experience and expertise.

Within each Government Office there is a HR Unit dealing with a wide range of HR functions. Often the staff within the Unit will deal with several activities across the different functions. This

is particularly true of the smaller HR Unit, however, the larger Departments who employ large numbers of staff, and who tend to have more staff working in the HR Unit will have staff dedicated to a particular function including ER/IR matters.

Gunnigle et al (2017) recognise that in some organisations (mostly larger ones) HR specialists are employed to undertake particular aspects of HR activities such as those associated with ER/IR. In terms of formal education of HR practitioners, to enhance the status and competencies available across the broad field of Human Resource Management (HRM), Gunnigle et al (2017) point to a progressive increase in education opportunities in Ireland since the 1970s. They identify a wide range of educational opportunities for HR professionals. Given this increase in the availability of educational opportunities to develop HR professionals it could be argued that the need and benefits of the HR professional has already been recognised.

The above views point to the need for IR expertise, and raise an interesting question in the context of the Civil Service where heretofore the use of ‘generalists’ was widely utilised i.e. staff who may be successfully assigned to any role within the Civil Service irrespective of their particular qualifications and skills. The extent to which the professionalisation and the development of career paths for those working in IR assist in attracting and retaining IR expertise is an important consideration.

The Civil Service Renewal Plan (2014)³ identifies the importance of maximising performance and the potential of all employees. Action 14 is to strengthen professional expertise within corporate functions. Other actions include establishing a new professional stream for HR executives. In relation to learning and development the Renewal Plan includes the assessment of future skills required in both specialist and generalist areas. The introduction of Continuous Professional Development opportunities for both specialist and generalist roles is also identified as a sub-action.

The Civil Service People Strategy was launched in October 2017, setting the strategic direction for Human Resource Management across the Civil Service while also recognising that each organisation is unique and has its own challenges. The Strategy was developed, in line with the Civil Service Renewal Plan, to build strategic HR capability in the Civil Service.

The Civil Service People Strategy sets the strategic Human Resources (HR) agenda for 2017 to 2020 focusing on three key cross-cutting strategic HR priorities, which are:

- (a) Be an Employer of Choice;

³ The Civil Service Renewal Plan was launched in October 2014 and committed to a significant programme of reform across the Civil Service.

(b) Build the Workforce of the Future; and

(c) Build, Support and Value Managers as People Developers.

These priorities will be supported in their delivery by an enabling priority which is the positioning of HR as a strategic driver. The Strategy recognises that HR in the Civil Service needs to adapt to respond to the evolving demands from the business and deliver on the three strategic priorities. To meet these challenges there is a need to build on existing HR expertise and there is also a need to professionalise HR in the Civil Service in line with developments in the private and public sectors and in line with the commitment in the Civil Service Renewal Plan to strengthen corporate expertise.

Significant and continuing progress has been made in relation to the professionalisation of the Civil Service HR function and the design and development of a high level HR Operating Model is evidence of this. Given the key activity of IR within the broad HR function it is important that the necessary attention is given to this activity to ensure that the capacity and necessary supports are provided to enable effective and efficient engagement in the challenging IR environment.

3. Research Methodology and Sources of Information.

3.1 Survey

HR Manager (Principal Officer level) is a senior management position in the Civil Service. The HR Manager plays a key leadership role in the development and implementation of HR strategies within their Department. Individuals recruited to the role will be expected to develop responses to meet strategic challenges arising from the evolving environment within which the Department operates. They will maintain a working environment conducive to sustaining a productive and fulfilled staff at professional, technical, administrative and clerical grades and will pursue the necessary human resource and organisational development strategies to achieve this objective. The Head of HR is expected to provide leadership in the ongoing promotion of a culture which supports professional development and maximises opportunities for employees of the Department to contribute positively. This culture will be underpinned by the Head of HR supporting the ongoing development of leadership and management capability across the Department and seeking ways to leverage existing and emerging technologies to maximise efficiency. In the context of IR, one of the principal responsibilities is to lead negotiations and consultations with trade union officials and with third parties such as the Workplace Relations Commission and build and maintain relationships with union officials.

Given the role, it is considered that the HR Managers in each Department are best placed to assess: the level of IR expertise in their Units; whether there is a deficit of skills and knowledge; and whether any deficit is impacting negatively on the interactions between management and staff representatives or unions. It is also considered that the HR Managers will be in a position to provide insightful recommendations on how to attract, develop, and retain staff with IR expertise. HR Managers were provided with statements and questions and asked to rate their views on IR expertise amongst their HR staff.

For the purposes of this research, a short anonymous self-completion survey of 9 questions/scales was used.

Appendix 1 - provides a list of the Government Departments that were requested to complete the survey. A copy of the covering note accompanying the survey and the survey itself can be found at **appendix 2 and 3**.

For survey questions 1-4 i.e.

Q1 In terms of staff numbers and grading, to what extent do you consider that there are sufficient staff available within the Human Resources Unit to carry out the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities?

Q2 To what extent are you satisfied that, within the Human Resources Unit, the level of expertise (knowledge, skills and experience) is available to effectively carry out the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities?

Q3 To what extent are you satisfied that the staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with Industrial Relations matters are familiar and comfortable working within the formal processes of the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme e.g. Departmental Council, Adjudications/Arbitrations?

Q4 To what extent are you satisfied that the staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with Industrial Relations matters have the capacity to engage effectively with staff representatives and union officials inside and outside of the formal Industrial Relations processes?

the responses which were assessed by levels of satisfaction were used to determine the level of IR expertise in each Department. The levels of satisfaction ranged from 'extremely satisfied' to 'not satisfied'. The levels of satisfaction were 'extremely satisfied', 'very satisfied', 'somewhat satisfied', 'a little bit satisfied', and 'not satisfied'.

For survey questions 5 and 6 i.e.

Q5 To what extent would you agree with the following statement?

It is difficult to attract staff to Industrial Relations roles.

Q6 To what extent would you agree with the following statement?

It is difficult to retain staff in Industrial Relations roles.

the responses were assessed by levels of agreement to statements made. Levels of agreement ranged from 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'.

Survey questions 7, 8 and 9 facilitated open ended responses which gave HR managers the chance to express their opinions in detail.

Q7 In which of the following areas, if any, do you consider greater expertise (knowledge, skills and experience) would benefit staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities (select more than one area if you wish)?

Employment Law	[]
Industrial Relations – Legislation	[]
Negotiations and Conflict Resolution	[]
Civil Service employment terms & conditions	[]
The Civil Service Conciliation & Arbitration scheme	[]
Public Service Agreements – provisions & implementation	[]

Other areas (please specify):

Q8 What measures/actions/initiatives have been taken to acquire/maintain the optimum Industrial Relations expertise in the Human Resources Unit?

Q9 What measures, actions, initiatives, or supports, would you like to see put in place in order to reach/maintain the acquired Industrial Relations expertise in your Human Resources Unit?

These responses were summarised into text as they could not appropriately be expressed in graph/chart form.

It was decided to circulate the questionnaire individually to HR Managers (by email) as it was considered that this approach would make the questionnaire more 'personal' to the receiver who would readily see that it was short, anonymous, and not time consuming to complete. The purpose of the project was clearly explained. It was hoped that the response rate would increase by employing this approach. The responses were manually collated in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for recording and analysis.

4. Analysis of Results

4.1 Findings

16 completed questionnaires were received from the 18 HR Managers contacted, i.e. 89% return rate. In all areas the HR Managers are satisfied with IR expertise at some level, and no questions attracted a 'Not Satisfied' response. However, while of course, the results varied between the different Departments it is clear that there are areas in which IR skills, knowledge and experience can be enhanced, improved and developed. Much has been done in this regard, and the HR Managers identified an extensive range of measures that have already been implemented in order to develop IR expertise. Furthermore, and very importantly, the HR Managers have identified many measures that can be taken to further enhance IR expertise. This insightful input is crucial in order to compile a comprehensive list of recommendations which can be reviewed and considered.

The majority of HR Managers (69%) consider that their HR Units do not entirely have the required staffing levels to carry out the IR tasks and responsibilities. Furthermore, 75% of HR Managers have identified that IR knowledge, skills and experience could be enhanced and developed further. It has also been identified that in some HR Units greater familiarity/confidence in dealing with the formal processes of the CS C&A Scheme is required. However, notwithstanding this, the majority of HR Managers (69%) are very or extremely satisfied that the staff within the HR Units dealing with IR activities have the capacity to engage effectively with staff representatives and union officials inside and outside of the formal IR processes.

In relation to attracting and retaining staff, just under half of all HR Managers who responded considered that it was difficult to attract staff to IR roles – only 27% disagreed. However, it would seem that it is more difficult to attract people to IR areas than it is to retain them, as only 7% agreed that it was difficult to retain IR staff, although it is worth noting that 40% were undecided.

When asked which areas, if any, it is considered that greater expertise would benefit staff dealing with IR matters, all areas were identified by at least one of the HR Managers. While some areas attracted more attention from the HR Managers it is clear that IR staff would benefit from enhanced expertise in the wide range of areas associated with the IR tasks and responsibilities. In order of popularity these areas are as follows:

- a) Negotiations and Conflict Resolution
- b) Employment Law
- c) Industrial Relations Legislation
- d) The Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme
- e) Public Service agreements, provisions and implementation
- f) Civil Service employment terms and conditions

Finally, all HR Managers who responded to the survey identified initiatives which would enhance, develop and acquire IR expertise. These suggestions ranged from formal training, improved information resources, networking, professionalisation of the roles within HR, and obtaining the expertise through expressions-of-interest and specialist competitions.

Details of the results of each question are set out in **appendix 4, 5 and 6**.

4.2 Comparison between Large Departments and Small Department

Consideration was also given to whether there were differing results between large and small Departments. The 16 departments who responded to the survey were categorised into either 'Large Departments' or 'Small Departments' based on the number of staff in each Department. Based on staff numbers, 5 Departments were classified as being large (i.e. over 1,500 staff) and 11 were classified as small Departments (i.e. less than 1500 staff). The level of satisfaction with IR expertise in each department was determined from the response HR managers gave in the survey.

Details of the results of this comparison for each question are set out in **appendix 7**.

4.3 Analysis of the comparison between large and small Departments

From evaluating and comparing the responses to the questions raised, it is clear that larger Departments are more satisfied with their IR expertise than smaller Departments.

One suggestion for why this could be the case is that larger Departments have greater staff resources in their HR divisions. This means that they may be able to dedicate staff solely to IR issues - something that smaller Departments would not have the resources to do. Additionally, larger Departments may be more satisfied with their IR expertise as they often deal with more IR issues across a wider range of grades (administrative, professional and technical) and functions. This lends itself to the development of greater expertise in dealing with a greater volume and wider range of IR issues.

5. Recommendations for Consideration

5.1 Introduction - Taking into account current thinking in relation to the IR/ER activity within HR; the current Civil Service IR environment; current IR challenges; the responses to the survey; and the suggestions put forward by the HR Managers, the following recommendations are put forward for review in order to further develop and attract IR expertise into the HR Units across Government Departments. Ongoing professionalisation of HR/IR roles is essential to ensure that the HR Units have the expertise to efficiently carry out IR responsibilities and engage effectively in the IR environment. This can be done through recruitment policies and initiatives; learning and development (education and training); information sharing and networking.

5.2 Recruitment

In order to attract those with the required IR expertise, specialist competitions run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) should be carried out on a regular basis in order to set up panels of HR/IR specialists. This will help ensure that the expertise needed is being secured and is readily available to Departments when needed. This would also facilitate succession planning by avoiding delays in replacing staff who leave. In this context, the AO IR Graduate Development Programme should be widened to recruit greater numbers of graduates who will gain experience and knowledge over the two-year development programme. A greater number of graduates would allow for a greater number of Departments being involved in the programme.

Internal expression-of-interest (EOI) selection processes is another way to identify and secure IR expertise. Those interested in working in IR, and who have the expertise, may be assigned to relevant areas.

A career pathway for IR/ER specialists should be developed. This would require the development of opportunities for promotion competition and opportunities to upskill for management positions. This measure would help to attract and retain IR/ER executives.

5.3 Learning and Development

5.3.1 Continuance of Longer Term Education

Long-term third level education opportunities should be identified and supported. The Civil Service already have a refund-of-fees scheme to support staff who wish to acquire relevant third level qualifications.

The recent development of the Professional Diploma in Industrial and Employment Relations delivered by the IPA has been very successful and many HR Managers identified the need for this to continue. This programme is tailor made for public service staff working in HR/IR/ER areas and includes delivery of presentations/lectures by subject matter experts (SMEs). Staff in the

relevant areas should be supported and encouraged to undertake this and/or other relevant third level studies.

5.3.2 Increased Focus on Short Term Training

In order to address the difficulty that some staff might have in enrolling for longer term studies due to the time commitment required to undertake such studies, it is recommended that, in addition to longer term studies, a range of shorter topic focused training be identified. As identified by the HR Managers training topics would include:

- a) Employment Law.
- b) Industrial Relations Legislation.
- c) Negotiations and Conflict Resolution.
- d) Civil Service employment terms and conditions.
- e) The Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme.
- f) Public Service agreements, provisions and implementation.
- g) CS C&A Scheme – procedures and processes of all forums.
- h) WRC processes and mediation.
- i) Public Service policies and Public Service agreements.

There are a number of ways in which this training might be delivered and it is recommended that consideration be given to how these items might be tailored and centrally delivered. In this context it is suggested that OneLearning⁴ (the Civil Service Learning and Development Centre) be consulted for advice and support. Many training programmes can be successfully delivered online using different platforms and webinars which can be assessed by the attendees remotely. Greater use of technology will provide increased flexibility for the delivering and attendance of/at training.

5.4 Information Sharing and Networking

A number of suggestions were made that there should be a central repository for IR documents and information to help ensure that information is shared and is readily available for those that need it. Another suggestion relating to this was that quarterly IR briefing be arranged to provide IR executives in the Civil Service with updates on current IR matters. Furthermore, it was suggested that a center of excellence be established to provide advice and answers to queries arising.

The Civil Service Industrial Relations Network (CSIRN) was established in 2019. It provides a forum at which Civil Service HR/IR managers can receive updates, make contact with other HR/IR

⁴ OneLearning was established in 2017 and is the Civil Service Learning and Development Centre staffed by Civil Servants and based in the Dept. of Public Expenditure and Reform. Civil Service Learning and Development Business Partners from all organisations across the Civil Service have played and continue to play a key role in the design and priorities of OneLearning

Managers, and share experiences/knowledge. The forum meets on a quarterly basis to discuss collective IR matters arising in Civil Service Departments/Offices. The CSIRN agenda includes:

- a) Updates/presentations on central Civil Service pay policy.
- b) Updates/input regarding internal IR structures.
- c) Updates from HR/IR Managers on significant IR matters relating to collective agreements arising in Departments.
- d) IR matters of mutual concern across the Civil Service.

The recently established CSIRN is already delivering on some of the suggestions made but it is recommended that management for the CSIRN consider the aforementioned suggestions with a view to expanding the remit of the Network. For example, the idea of a central repository for IR documents and information has been raised and this idea should be explored further. The options available should be set out e.g. the different IT platforms that could facilitate the central information resource should be considered. In addition to informing current IR executives, the creation of a knowledge/information bank would help to address the loss of knowledge as staff leave IR areas. This resource will assist new staff in 'getting up to speed' in relation to IR matters.

Furthermore, the format of the CSIRN could be restructured to include more formal and detailed updates on current central IR matters arising. Further "advertising" of the network might need to be considered to ensure that all HR/IR executives are aware of the benefits the Network provides.

In order to utilise the already established CSIRN forum the following should be considered and explored:

- a) Although very well attended, how can attendance be maximised at CSIRN meetings?
- b) Should meetings be held more frequently (currently held on a quarterly basis)?
- c) How briefing and updates on current IR matters might be best delivered.
- d) The setting up of a central repository for IR documents and information.
- e) Could better use of email communication be made between meetings e.g. news bulletins to keep attendees updated?
- f) Expand the range of topics discussed and greater use of presentations by SMEs to develop IR knowledge.

5.5 Review

It is acknowledged that this research represents a 'snap-shot' of the current position particularly in relation to staffing resources and expertise within Civil Service HR Units in 2020. This is subject to change. Therefore, it is considered that the survey that issued to HR Managers should issue periodically so that it can be reviewed and trends identified. This will assist in evaluating the

impact of measures and initiatives implemented and will help in identifying additional measures if required.

6. Conclusion

Good IR underpins industrial peace, and promotes productivity and economic wellbeing. IR is recognised as a key activity of the HR function. In order to provide an effective and efficient IR service to the Civil Service Departments, IR expertise (experience, skills and knowledge) is required of IR executives. It is a challenging role and there is a broad range of knowledge required in such areas as: employment law; IR legislation; CS processes and procedures; central collective agreements and Government policy. In terms of skills and experience, these are required most notably in negotiations and conflict resolution.

While there is significant IR expertise in the Civil Service it is clear from the responses to the survey that issued to HR Managers that there is room for improvement. However, in terms of the question as to whether any shortcomings in IR expertise are impacting negatively on Management's ability to engage effectively with union officials within the Civil Service Industrial Relations processes and procedures, 69% of HR Managers indicated that they were very or extremely satisfied that this is not the case.

The HR Managers identified a significant number of measures already taken to develop IR expertise, and valuable input and suggestions were provided in relation to measures and initiatives that they consider should be taken to increase the level of IR expertise.

Areas identified are: the continued professionalisation of IR/ER; learning and development opportunities; knowledge/information sharing and networking. Within these overarching themes, specific suggestions have informed the recommendations made. It is worth noting that not only have recommendations been made, but suggestions on how these recommendations might be implemented have been put forward in this paper. This in itself suggests that the recommendations are "doable", and it is considered important that progress be evaluated periodically and interventions amended and augmented in order to help ensure that the important activity of IR is properly resourced and supported as required.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 - List of Government Departments Requested to Complete the Survey.

As at June 2020, there were 17 government departments, or departments of state as follows (The Office of the Revenue Commissioners was included for completeness).

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Department of Defence

Department of Education and Skills

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Department of Finance

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Department of Health

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Department of Justice and Equality

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Department of Rural and Community Development

Department of the Taoiseach

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

Office of the Revenue Commissioners

Appendix 2 - Copy of email that issued to HR Managers

Dear [name of HR Manger]

As part of the Professional Diploma in Industrial and Employment Relations being delivered by the Institute of Public Administration I am undertaking a work-based research project which examines the capacity of Human Resources Units to deal with their respective Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities.

In the context of the process and procedures of the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme, this research project aims to:

- a) assess current levels of Industrial Relations expertise available within Human Resources Units in Government Departments
- b) identify any deficits in skills and knowledge
- c) assess whether it is considered that any deficits in expertise identified are impacting negatively on Management-Union engagement
- d) make recommendations as to how Industrial Relations expertise might be best enhanced.

In order to deliver on the aims identified I am eager to get your views, and as part of this research I am contacting each Human Resources Manager in Government Departments to determine the following:

Do Human Resources Managers in Civil Service Departments consider that they have, within the Human Resources Units, the required Industrial Relations expertise (skills, knowledge and experience) in order for Human Resources Units to engage effectively in the Civil Service's Industrial Relations environment?

A short questionnaire of 9 questions is attached and I would be grateful if you would complete this questionnaire in respect of your area and return it to me, by email, by **Tuesday 7th July**.

Completed questionnaires will be treated in strict confidence. No Department will be named or identified in the research paper. Aggregate information will be used, and only where appropriate will Departments be grouped and categorised as being small, medium or large based on overall staff numbers.

The findings and recommendations arising from this research will influence measures and initiatives designed to support the Industrial Relations Executive in the Civil Service. Current initiatives include:

- The Industrial Relations Graduate Programme
- The Professional Diploma in Industrial and Employment Relations
- The Civil Service Industrial Relations Network

Your input will be invaluable to the enhancement of these initiatives and in identifying new measures/supports.

If you have any queries regarding the attached questionnaire or any aspect of the overall research paper please let me know and I will be happy to answer them.

Regards,

Niall Quinn, Public Service Pay & Pensions Division, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform,

Appendix 3 - Questionnaire that issued to HR Managers

Questionnaire (9 Questions)

Please note that completed questionnaires will be treated in strict confidence. No Department will be named or identified in the research paper. Only aggregate information will be used.

Q1 In terms of staff numbers and grading, to what extent do you consider that there are sufficient staff available within the Human Resources Unit to carry out the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities (please tick one box below)?

- Not At All Satisfied ☐
- A Little Satisfied ☐
- Somewhat Satisfied ☐
- Very Satisfied ☐
- Extremely Satisfied ☐

Q2 To what extent are you satisfied that, within the Human Resources Unit, the level of expertise (knowledge, skills and experience) is available to effectively carry out the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities (please tick one box below)?

- Not At All Satisfied ☐
- A Little Satisfied ☐
- Somewhat Satisfied ☐
- Very Satisfied ☐
- Extremely Satisfied ☐

Q3 To what extent are you satisfied that the staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with Industrial Relations matters are familiar and comfortable working within the formal processes of the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme e.g. Departmental Council, Adjudications/Arbitrations, (please tick one box below)?

- Not At All Satisfied ☐
- A Little Satisfied ☐
- Somewhat Satisfied ☐
- Very Satisfied ☐
- Extremely Satisfied ☐

Q4 To what extent are you satisfied that the staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with Industrial Relations matters have the capacity to engage effectively with staff representatives and union officials inside and outside of the formal Industrial Relations processes (please tick one box below)?

Not At All Satisfied ☐

A Little Satisfied ☐

Somewhat Satisfied ☐

Very Satisfied ☐

Extremely Satisfied ☐

Q5 To what extent would you agree with the following statement?

It is difficult to attract staff to Industrial Relations roles.

(please tick one box below)

Strongly Agree ☐

Agree ☐

Undecided ☐

Disagree ☐

Strongly Disagree ☐

Q6 To what extent would you agree with the following statement?

It is difficult to retain staff in Industrial Relations roles.

(please tick one box below)

Strongly Agree ☐

Agree ☐

Undecided ☐

Disagree ☐

Strongly Disagree ☐

Q7 In which of the following areas, if any, do you consider greater expertise (knowledge, skills and experience) would benefit staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities (select more than one area if you wish)?

- | | |
|---|-----|
| Employment Law | [] |
| Industrial Relations – Legislation | [] |
| Negotiations and Conflict Resolution | [] |
| Civil Service employment terms & conditions | [] |
| The Civil Service Conciliation & Arbitration scheme | [] |
| Public Service Agreements – provisions & implementation | [] |

Other areas (please specify):

Q8 What measures/actions/initiatives have been taken to acquire/maintain the optimum Industrial Relations expertise in the Human Resources Unit?

Q9 What measures, actions, initiatives, or supports, would you like to see put in place in order to reach/maintain the acquired Industrial Relations expertise in your Human Resources Unit?

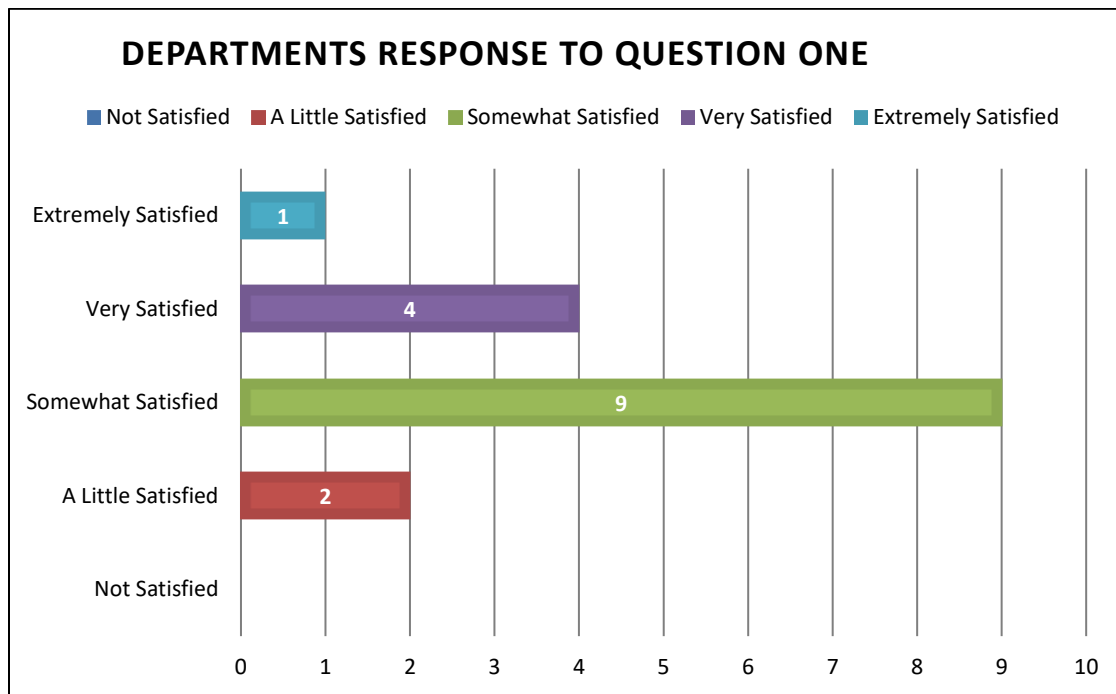
Please return, by email, completed questionnaire, niall.quinn@per.gov.ie by Tuesday 7th July. If you have any queries regarding this questionnaire or any aspect of the research paper I can be contacted by email or at 1 076 100 7260 or mobile 086 606165.

Niall Quinn
Civil Service Industrial Relations Unit
Public Service Pay and Pensions Division.

Appendix 4 – Survey Findings - details

Question 1 – Staff Numbers/Grading

In terms of staff numbers and grading, to what extent do you consider that there are sufficient staff available within the Human Resources Unit to carry out the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities?

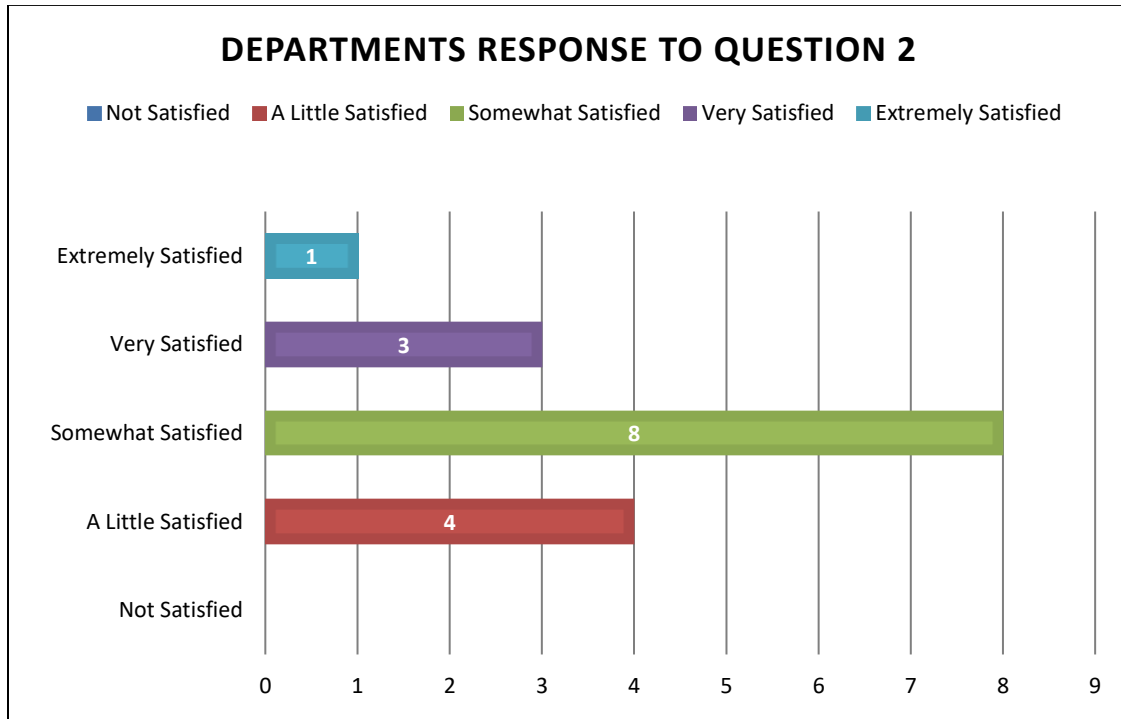


As recorded in the chart above;

- 69% of HR managers who responded were either a 'little satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' that there is sufficient staff at the appropriate grade available within the Human Resources Unit to carry out the Unit's industrial tasks and responsibilities. Therefore, only 30% are very or extremely satisfied that there are sufficient personnel.

Question 2 – knowledge, skills and experience

To what extent are you satisfied that, within the Human Resources Unit, the level of expertise (knowledge, skills and experience) is available to effectively carry out the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities?

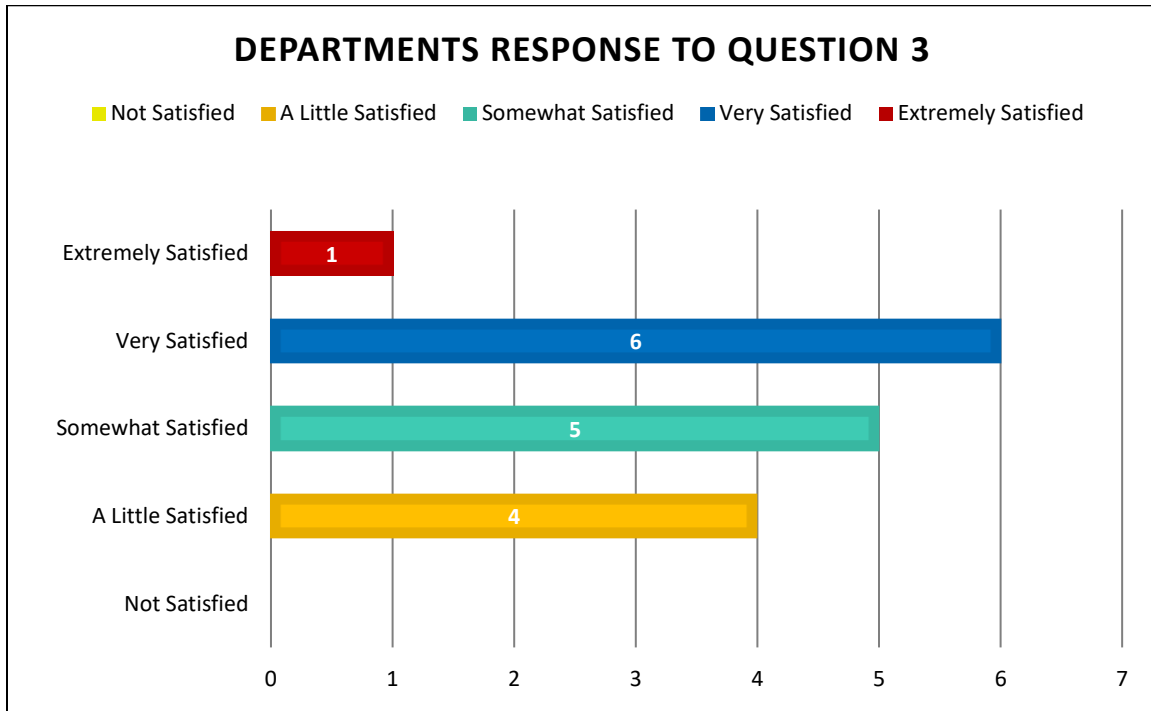


Responses to this question show:

- Only 25% of HR Managers who responded are very or extremely satisfied that their Human Resources Unit has the level of expertise (knowledge, skills and experience) available to effectively carry out the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities. No respondents were 'Not Satisfied', consequently 75% of HR managers were either a little or somewhat satisfied with the level of expertise in their Human Resources Unit.

Question 3 – familiarity working within the formal processes

To what extent are you satisfied that the staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with Industrial Relations matters are familiar and comfortable working within the formal processes of the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme e.g. Departmental Council, Adjudications/Arbitrations?

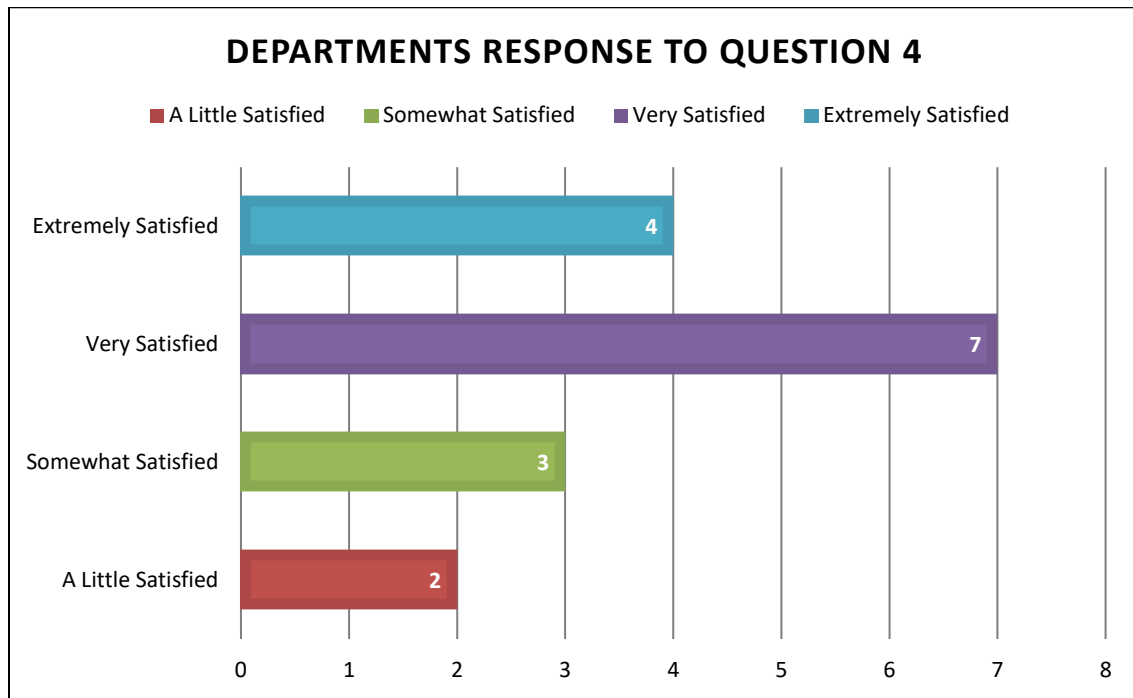


Responses received to this question show;

- 56% of HR Managers were either a little satisfied or somewhat satisfied that staff within the HR Unit dealing with industrial relations matters were comfortable working within the formal processes of the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme e.g. Departmental Council, Adjudications/Arbitrations. As no one responded 'Not Satisfied' this means 44% of respondents were very or extremely satisfied.

Question 4 – effective engagement with staff representatives and union officials

To what extent are you satisfied that the staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with Industrial Relations matters have the capacity to engage effectively with staff representatives and union officials inside and outside of the formal Industrial Relations processes?



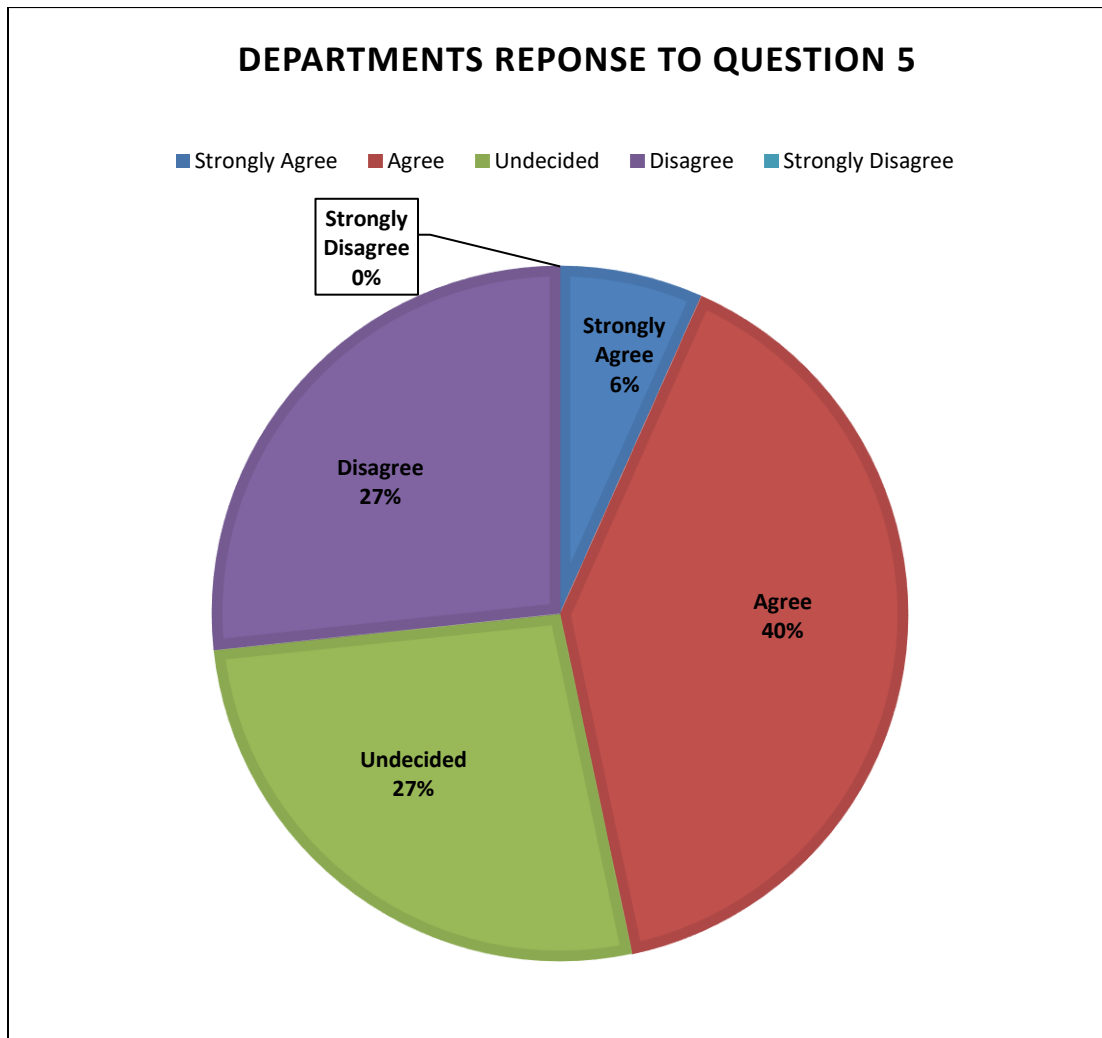
As recorded in the chart above:

- Responses received to question 4 show that 69% of HR Managers are very or extremely satisfied that the staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with Industrial Relations matters have the capacity to engage effectively with staff representatives and union officials inside and outside of the formal Industrial Relations processes. No one was 'Not Satisfied' and consequently 31% were either a little or somewhat satisfied.

Question 5 – attracting staff to IR roles

To what extent would you agree with the following statement?

It is difficult to attract staff to Industrial Relations roles.



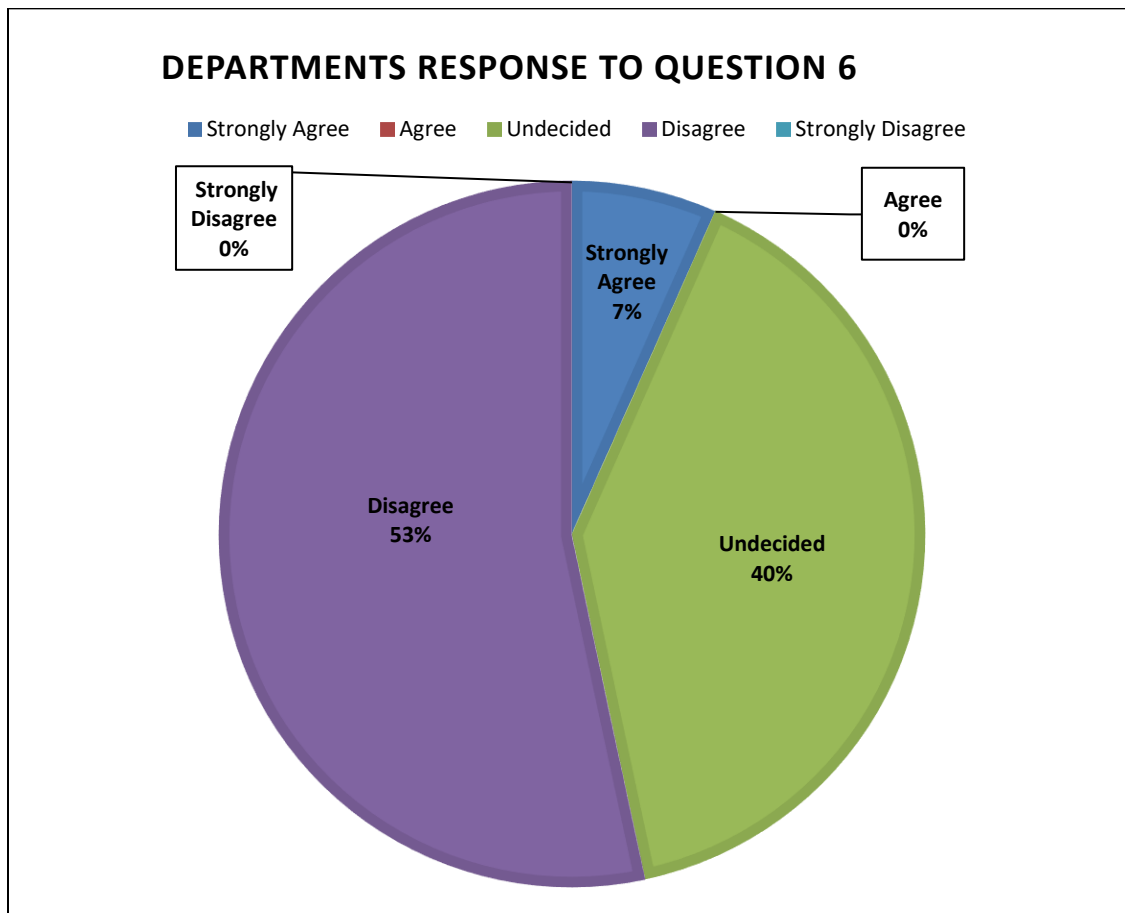
As can be seen from the pie chart above;

46% of HR Managers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that it is difficult to attract staff to IR roles while 27% disagreed. A further 27% were undecided and nobody strongly disagreed with the statement.

Question 6 - retaining staff in IR roles

To what extent would you agree with the following statement?

It is difficult to retain staff in Industrial Relations roles.

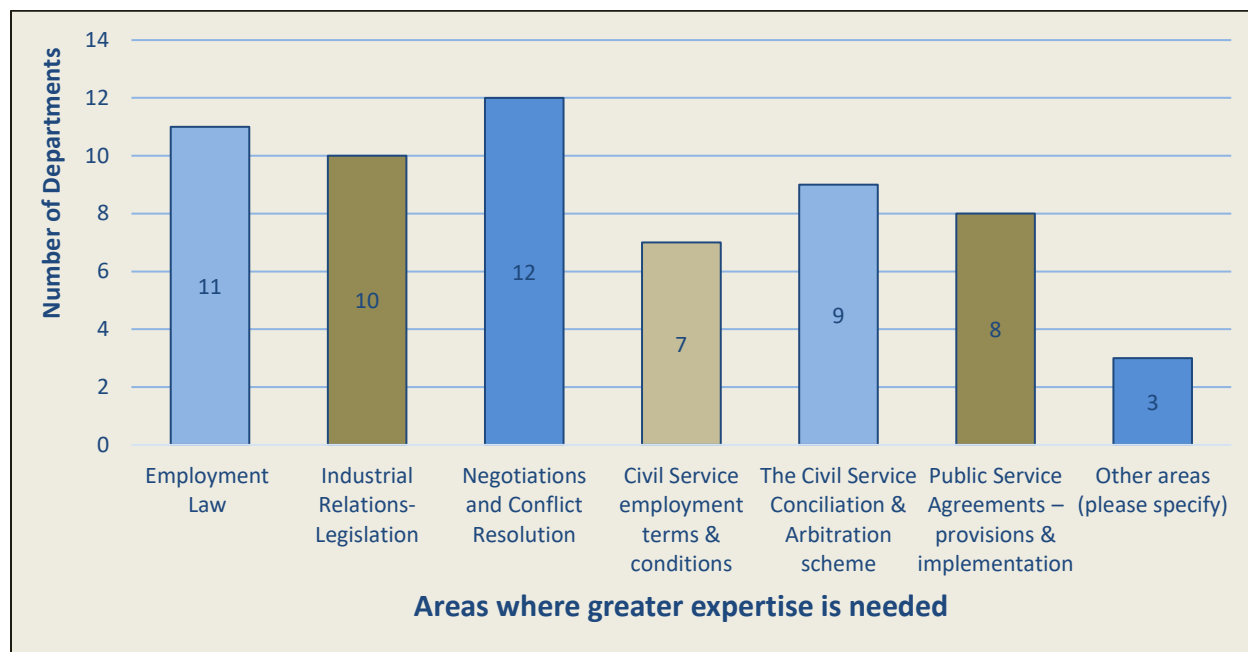


As recorded on the chart above;

- 53% of respondents disagreed with this statement that it is difficult to retain staff in IR roles while 7% strongly agreed. 40% were undecided.

Question 7 – areas where greater expertise is needed

In which of the following areas, if any, do you consider greater expertise (knowledge, skills and experience) would benefit staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities?



Other areas identified where greater expertise is needed were:

- *Staff should complete training in conducting appeals/investigation via eLearning modules to show the importance of the process and challenging scenarios. Staff in these areas should receive monthly e-bulletins on cases applicable to our sector, this could enhance the learnings by providing an opportunity to have discussions with their team.*
- *The employee relations environment in the Department that staff work in. Understanding culture of the organisation helps in the engagement on IR – some departments have a culture where staff will turn to the IR sphere immediately rather than liaise locally first – there is a need to build relationships locally and set out engagement arrangements locally that are agreed and understood by all parties.*
- *The value and benefits of Mediation as a dispute resolution mechanism.*

The information collated in respect of question 7 shows that:

- all HR Managers identified more than one area where they believed their staff would benefit from greater expertise. The requirement for greater 'Negotiation and Conflict Resolution' expertise came out on top with 75% of HR Managers identifying this area. The area least identified was 'Civil Service Employment Terms & Conditions' with 44%.

Question 8 – interventions taken to acquire IR expertise

What measures/actions/initiatives have been taken to acquire/maintain the optimum Industrial Relations expertise in the Human Resources Unit?

A full account, as reported by the HR Managers, of the measures already taken to enhance and develop IR expertise is provided at **appendix 5**. These have been collated as follows;

a) **Learning and Development**

- Support for staff to obtain third level qualifications such as the Professional Diploma in Industrial and Employment Relations delivered by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA).
- Shorter training sessions on specific topics e.g. webinars from employment law experts focusing on employment law.
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) membership and training courses.

b) **Recruitment**

- Recruiting specifically for HR roles – bringing in IR skills from outside the Civil Service.
- Conducting Expressions-of-Interest (EOI) from current staff to identify those qualified and interested in working in IR/ER areas.
- Succession planning to avoid gaps in staffing levels.

c) **On-the-job**

- Opportunities to learn and gain experience as matters arise.
- Handover from exiting staff to incoming staff.
- Exploit opportunities for staff to “sit-in” on meetings, hearings etc.

d) **Networking**

- Civil Service Industrial Relations Network (CSIRN).
- HR Managers Network.
- National Conferences e.g. Industrial Relations News (IRN) Annual Conference.

Question 9 - interventions proposed in order to acquire IR expertise

What measures, actions, initiatives, or supports, would you like to see put in place in order to reach/maintain the acquired Industrial Relations expertise in your Human Resources Unit?

A full account, as reported by the HR Managers, of the measures required to further enhance and develop IR expertise is provided at **appendix 6**. These have been collated as follows;

a) Professionalisation

- Ongoing professionalisation of the HR/IR role
- Wider use of the Administrative Officer (AO) IR Graduate Programme – more Departments should be involved.
- Greater use of the HR Business Partner model.
- Defined career pathway in HR for IR/ER specialists.

b) Learning and Development

- Centralised specialist training in all relevant areas e.g. negotiation skills; conflict resolution; negotiations; employment law.
- DPER policy areas to provide training/roadshows/forums including quarterly IR briefing sessions.
- Further DPER training on the processes and procedures of the CS C&A Scheme.
- Greater use of short focused training.
- Civil Service Human Resources Division (CSHRD) model for providing access to 3rd party employment law expertise.
- Training on WRC processes and mediation.

c) Recruitment

- Recruiting specifically for HR/IR roles – bringing in IR skills from outside the Civil Service – the establishment of specialist HR/IR panels.
- Formal succession plan should be designed.
- Need to meet incoming staff before they start to ensure best fit before assignment.
- Staffing levels need to be increased to ensure real depth of expertise in IR matters.

d) Knowledge Resource

- A central resource site for IR documents/information i.e. a central repository for knowledge.
- Centre of excellence as per the CSHRD model for IR queries and advice.

Appendix 5 – Record of Departments Response to Question 8 - interventions already taken to acquire IR expertise

Departments Response to Question 8	
Department 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some members of the team (PO and AP) have been hired in from the private sector and have brought IR experience from previous roles. Both are members of CIPD which keeps us up to date with developments in employment law. Some members of the team attended the recent Byrne Wallace webinars on Employment Law in the Civil Service which they found very useful and applicable to their roles. A team member who deals with industrial staff, attends central meetings with other HR colleagues and DPER – and through this forum stays up to date on IR developments.
Department 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing training such as Employment Law, Conducting Appeals/Investigations. Bringing staff along to cases where possible.
Department 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are engaged in CIPD programmes or are already CIPD accredited which are HR focussed, but there are no staff with IR qualifications and very little experience of this. The department has a good relationship with our employees and Unions meaning that many issues are resolved locally or via Departmental Council. Issues rarely go beyond this. As a result there is very little current expertise of dealing with issues that escalate as staff have not had the exposure to more complex IR issues. Should something arise, there will be a need for external support.
Department 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of staff are undertaking a variety of HR and IR courses to upskill. However, depending on the unions being dealt with, some require a greater focus on employment law, while others require significant negotiation skills.
Department 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HR manager has ensured their team is developed in their roles, support learning and also other supports that help staff in their roles, for example attending the DPER events relating to IR and also encouraging engagement with IR unit staff in other departments. There is a need for succession planning in the role and to have an opportunity to work in HR and the business areas of the department, as these give a more in-depth knowledge of the business of the department which is important working in this sphere.
Department 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each of the APs have responsibility for particular aspects of HR in relation to Industrial relations and legal issues in relation to IR. A

	<p>number of staff have undertaken courses run by DPER and outside groups/colleges on HR related topics. Staff also attend DPER industrial relations forum meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We have appointed an AO from the PAS HR panel (to find they have the qualification but no experience in an HR environment).
Department 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Active member of The Civil Service Industrial Relations Network ● Several staff members undertaking HR Studies in own time. ● Nominee put forward for the Professional Diploma in Industrial and Employment Relations Programme 2020-2021. ● Active members of HR Managers Networks at PO and APO Levels.
Department 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Succession Planning -HEO – AP internal HR Specialist Competition ● Expression of Interest system used for filling HEO and EO posts to ensure the right fit for the unit. ● Sponsor members of IR Team to engage in areas of HR and IR studies through the CIPD and IPA.
Department 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HR Manager has the required expertise but other staff do not and seem reluctant to take on this area. ● HEOs have been encouraged to attend the IR network. There has been some success with this. ● Staff have been encouraged to do the Professional Diploma in IR, but no take up!
Department 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Colleagues in DBEI HR attending D/PER HR IR networks ● 2 colleagues completed Employment Law Diploma in 2020, attendance at national conferences ● Working to ensure the Departmental Council is positively attended ● Strong engagement and communication mechanisms are in place for unions and staff reps.
Department 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our staff have the capability and learning and experience is gained on the job dealing with issues as they arise. ● As well as attending L&D programmes such as the Byrnes Wallace organised by CSHR.
Department 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Professional Diploma in Industrial and Employment relations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ One HR team member enrolled for current academic year. ➢ One HR team member identified for academic year 2020/2021. ● In addition, the Diploma will be offered other HR team members in the future. ● One team member has had previous extensive experience in the Conciliation and Arbitration field in the Civil Service.
Department 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Succession planning initiatives are in place across the HR Unit so that institutional knowledge is retained.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In addition staff are encouraged to and supported in undertaking further studies in HR related areas. ● Membership of and participation in the IR Network has maintained a certain level of awareness of IR within the HR team.
Department 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engagement with graduate programmes. ● Professionalisation of HR initiative. ● Introduction of the HR Business Partner model. ● Targeted training and development initiatives.
Department 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attendance at employment law seminars. ● Handovers between staff who are being replaced in that area. ● Mediation training for staff. ● CIPD qualifications for HR staff.
Department 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some staff have completed employment law and IR legislation training but are not specialised in those areas. ● Procurement of specialist legal advice.

Appendix 6 – Record of Departments Response to Question 9 - interventions suggested/proposed in order to acquire IR expertise

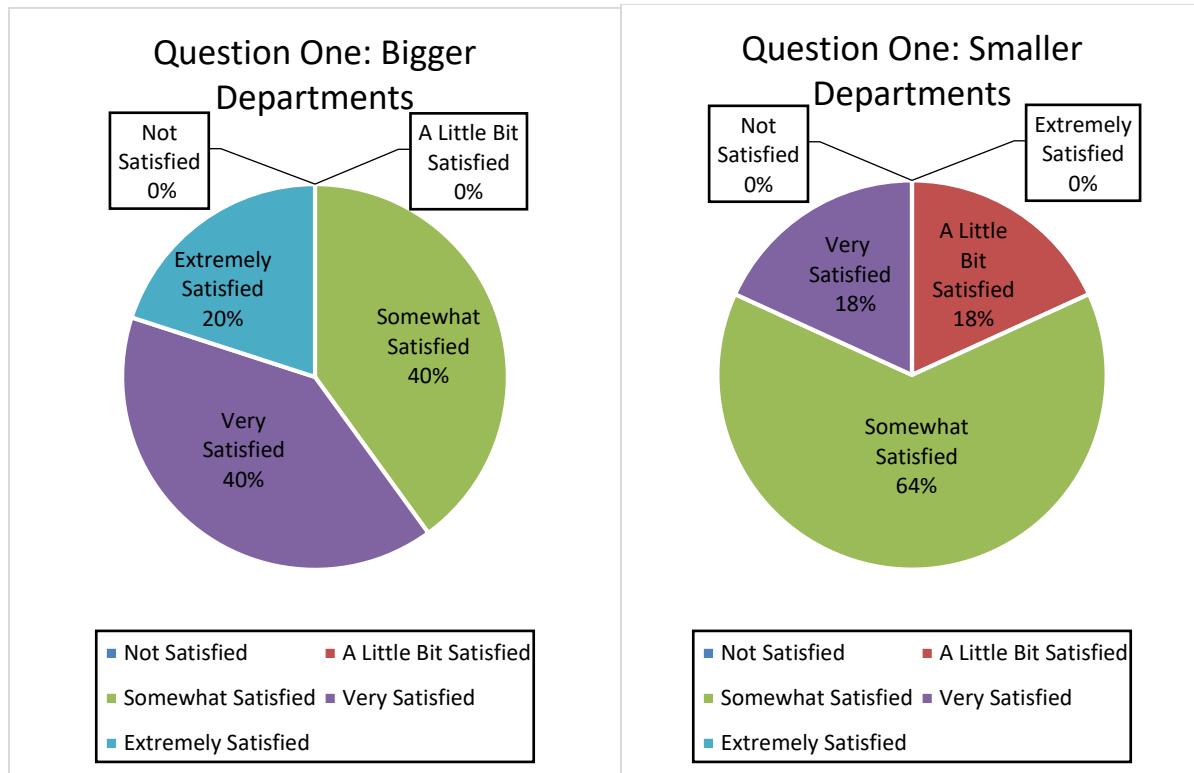
Departments Response to Question 9	
Department 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of the team members would benefit by improving their negotiating skills. • Having a better understanding of the dynamics of the IR structures within the Civil Service – i.e. Departmental Council and escalation procedures.
Department 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist Training. • Career Pathways within HR. • Ongoing Professionalisation of the Role. • Attracting Experienced staff via specialist Panels. • DPER Policy unit to continue to provide training/roadshows/forums • To have a specialist DPER site for all IR documents, information, frameworks, eLearning etc.
Department 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PAS panel at AP level and at HEO level, which individual Departments can access, where people with IR expertise can be brought into HR Units in Government Departments. • Formal training for HR staff on the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme, in addition to training on engaging with the WRC and other relevant bodies.
Department 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be useful to continue to build a central repository of knowledge which can be drawn from as the need arises. • The CSHR model for providing access to Byrne Wallace has proved useful and perhaps a similar access for IR issues/negotiations would be useful.
Department 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like the department to be part of the AO programme that is promoted under the IR sphere – staff would benefit from working with a big organisation. They could bring their knowledge to us and if they have had the opportunity to work in a few departments, policy and operational. • A formal succession plan in place for staff who wish to come into the role that also encompasses working in other areas of HR and the operational side.
Department 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recruitment process through PAS is not supportive in getting suitable staff for particular areas. No other employer sees there new member for the first time on the day they start work! We need to be able to access the required skills more easily (this applies not just to HR).
Department 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralised training on WRC processes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centralised training on mediation.
Department 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Already in place, professionalising HR/IR with qualification opportunities should ensure our levels are maintained.
Department 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is very hard in a small department to get deep expertise on this subject matter below the level of HR Manager who is closely involved in IR issues.
Department 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The support provided by D/PER CSHR, and the centre of expertise model has been a very valuable resource and the broadening of and sustainability of this centralised resource is of great value. Ongoing talent development in this area, and perhaps an AO IR stream would bring great benefits too, demonstrating the need and specialisation for this expertise in the sector.
Department 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a high turnover of staff through promotion in the department, so building expertise is a challenge. We need an expertise resource (knowledge centre) at the centre that is responsive and can deal with queries by phone/email.
Department 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly IR briefings for the HR Community. Continuous engagement with the Professional Diploma in Industrial and Employment relations. Bespoke training for managers in this area particularly Conflict Resolution.
Department 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil Service-specific IR training provided for staff new to HR across the Civil Service – even just a high level overview of the structures in place - like an induction session that could be run once or twice a year for junior staff who are promoted or new entrants to the Civil Service.
Department 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider use of the HR Business Partner model. More short term and frequent training as long term courses take quite an amount of personal commitment and this can be a deterrent.
Department 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central training on all of the areas set out in Q7.
Department 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The resource availability to specialise in these areas – not possible with current staffing levels.

Appendix 7 – Comparison of results between large and small Departments

Question 1 – Staff Numbers/Grading

In terms of staff numbers and grading, to what extent do you consider that there are sufficient staff available within the HR Unit to carry out the Unit's IR tasks and responsibilities?



Bigger Departments

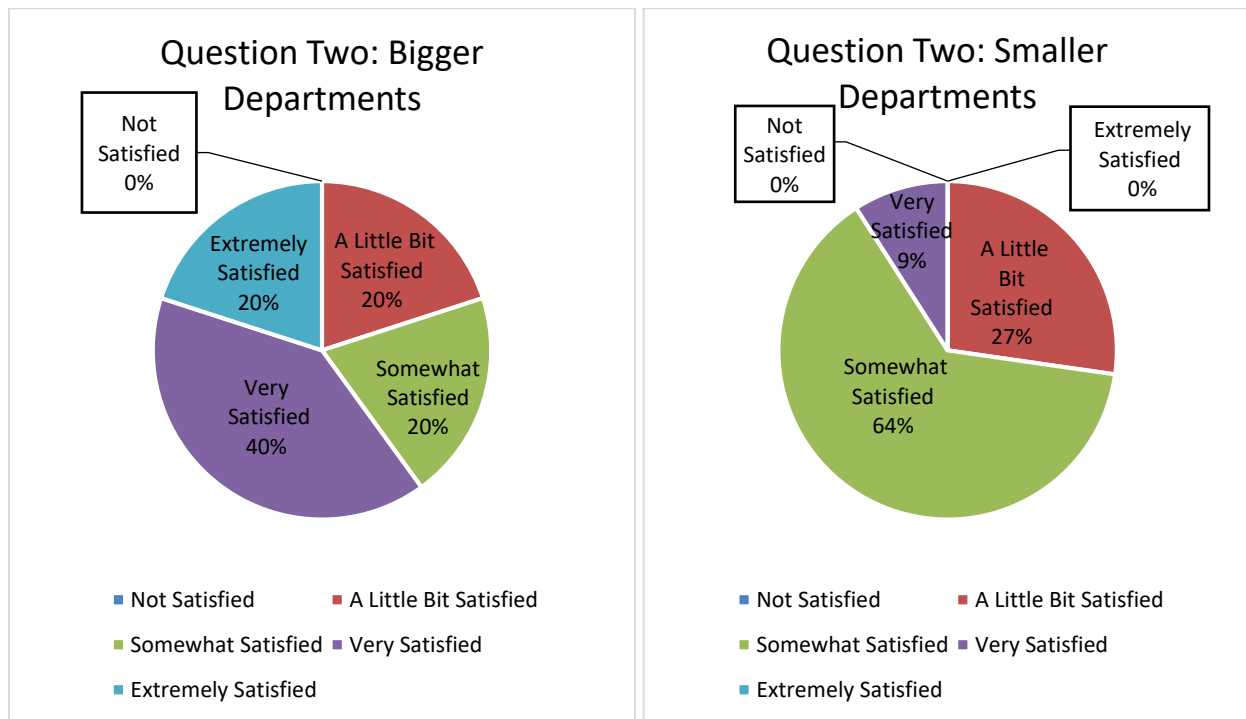
- 40% of Bigger Departments were very satisfied that there is sufficient staff available to carry out the units IR tasks and responsibilities.
- 40% of Bigger Departments were somewhat satisfied.
- 20% of Bigger Departments were extremely satisfied.
- 0% of Bigger Department were either not satisfied or a little bit satisfied.

Smaller Departments

- 18% of Smaller Departments were very satisfied that there is sufficient staff available to carry out the units IR tasks and responsibilities.
- 64% of Smaller Departments were somewhat satisfied
- 18% of Smaller Departments were a little bit satisfied.
- 0% of Smaller Departments were either not satisfied or extremely satisfied.

Question 2 – knowledge, skills and experience

To what extent are you satisfied that, within the Human Resources Unit, the level of expertise (knowledge, skills and experience) is available to effectively carry out the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities?



Bigger Departments

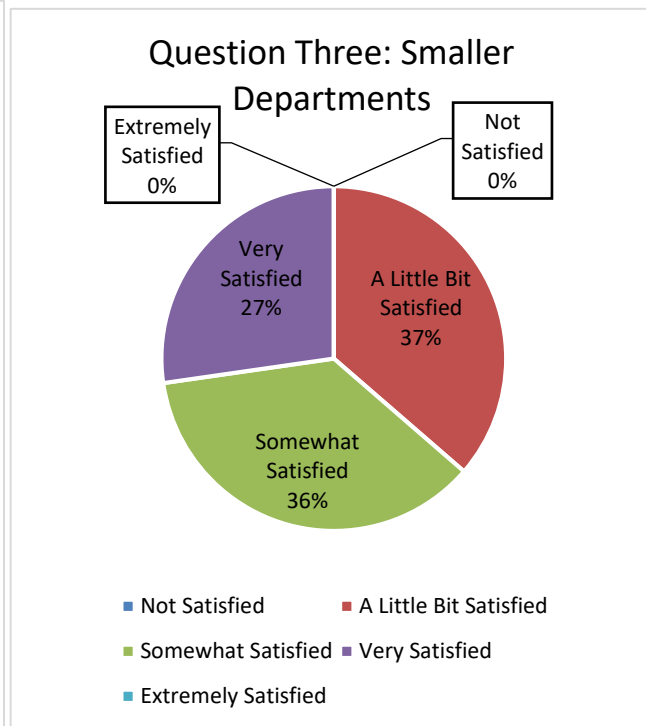
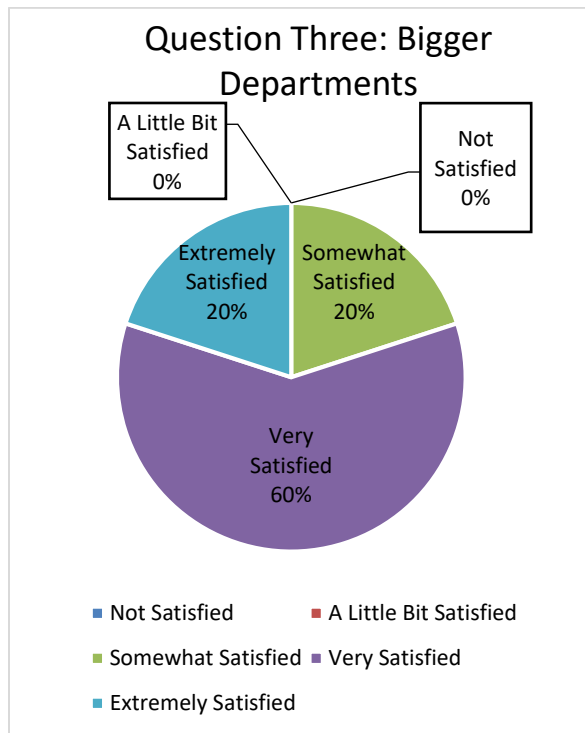
- 40% of Bigger Departments were very satisfied that there is a sufficient level of knowledge available to carry out the units IR tasks and responsibilities.
- 20% of Bigger Departments were somewhat satisfied.
- 20% of Bigger Departments were extremely satisfied.
- 20% of Bigger Department were a little bit satisfied.
- 0% of Bigger Department were not satisfied.

Smaller Departments

- 9% of Smaller Departments were very satisfied that there is a sufficient level of knowledge available to carry out the units IR tasks and responsibilities.
- 64% of Smaller Departments were somewhat satisfied
- 27% of Smaller Departments were a little bit satisfied
- 0% of Smaller Departments were either not satisfied or extremely satisfied

Question 3 – familiarity working within the formal processes

To what extent are you satisfied that the staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with Industrial Relations matters are familiar and comfortable working within the formal processes of the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme e.g. Departmental Council, Adjudications/Arbitrations?



Bigger Departments

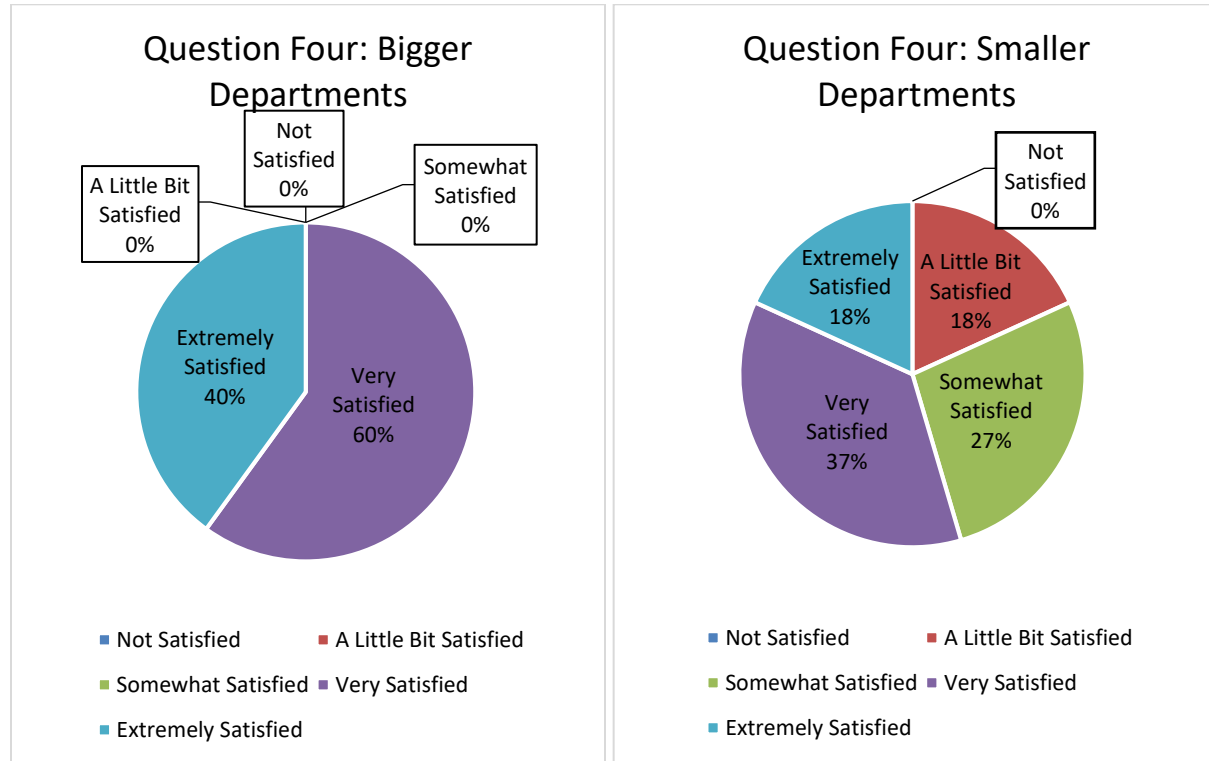
- 60% of Bigger Departments were very satisfied that HR staff are familiar and comfortable dealing with the process of the Civil Service C&A Scheme.
- 20% of Bigger Departments were somewhat satisfied.
- 20% of Bigger Departments were extremely satisfied.
- 0% of Bigger Department were either not satisfied or a little bit satisfied.

Smaller Departments

- 27% of Smaller Departments were very satisfied that HR staff are familiar and comfortable dealing with the process of the Civil Service C&A Scheme.
- 36% of Smaller Departments were somewhat satisfied
- 37% of Smaller Departments were a little bit satisfied
- 0% of Smaller Departments were either not satisfied or extremely satisfied

Question 4 – effective engagement with staff representatives and union officials

To what extent are you satisfied that the staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with Industrial Relations matters have the capacity to engage effectively with staff representatives and union officials inside and outside of the formal Industrial Relations processes?



Bigger Departments

- 60% of Bigger Departments were very satisfied that HR staff have the capacity to engage effectively with staff reps and unions inside and outside of the formal IR processes
- 40% of Bigger Departments were extremely satisfied.
- 0% of Bigger Departments were either not satisfied, a little bit satisfied or somewhat satisfied

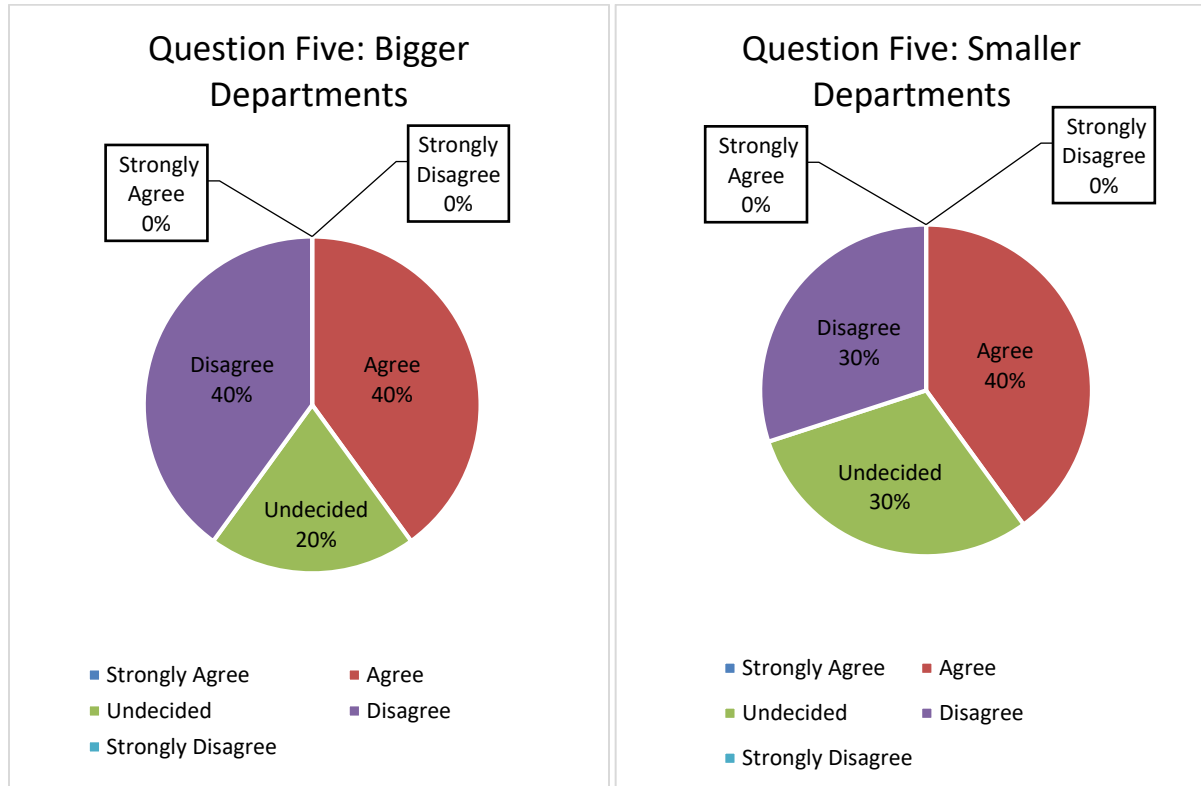
Smaller Departments

- 37% of Smaller Departments were very satisfied that HR staff have the capacity to engage effectively with staff reps and unions inside and outside of the formal IR processes
- 18% of Smaller Departments were extremely satisfied
- 27% of Smaller Departments were somewhat satisfied
- 18% of Smaller Departments were a little bit satisfied
- 0% of Smaller Departments were not satisfied

Question 5 – attracting staff to IR roles

To what extent would you agree with the following statement?

It is difficult to attract staff to Industrial Relations roles.



Bigger Departments

- 40% of Bigger Departments disagree with the statement 'It is difficult to attract staff to IR roles'
- 40% of Bigger Departments agree with the statement.
- 20% of Bigger Departments were undecided
- 0% of Bigger Departments either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with the statement

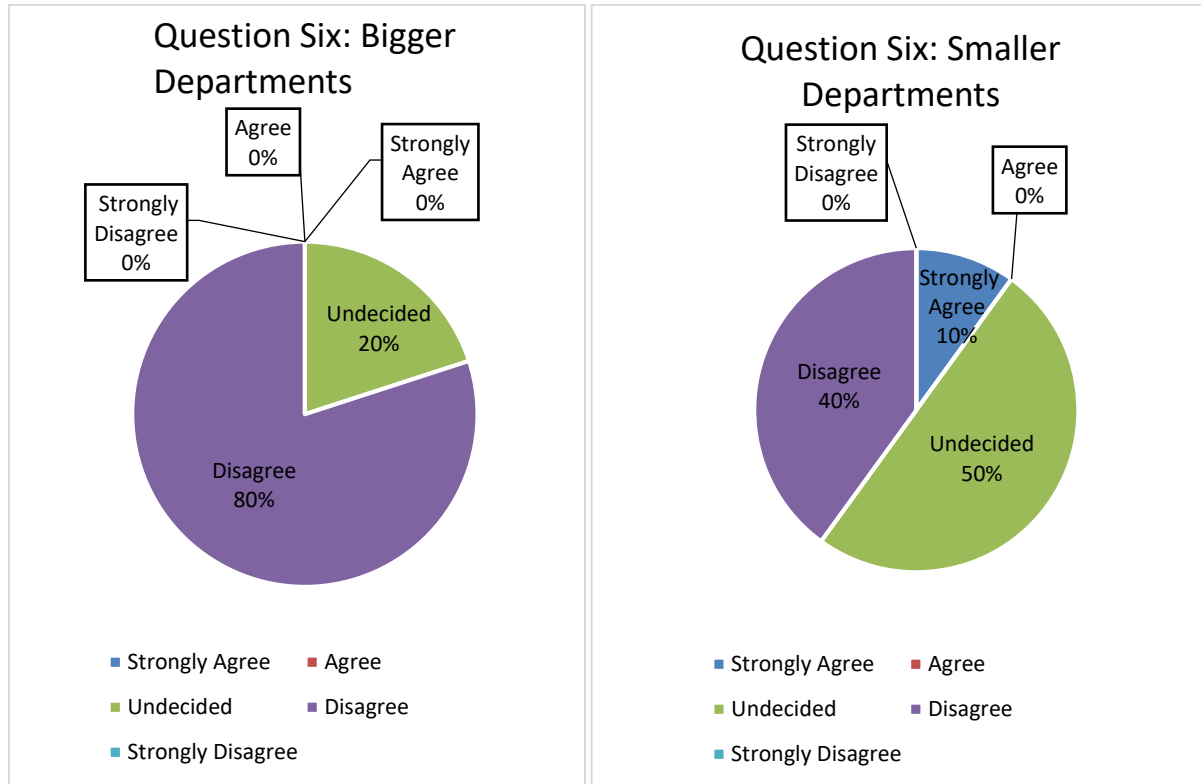
Smaller Departments

- 30% of Smaller Departments disagree with the statement 'It is difficult to attract staff to IR roles'
- 40% of Smaller Departments agree with the statement
- 30% of the Smaller Departments were undecided
- 0% of Smaller Departments either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Question 6 - retaining staff in IR roles

To what extent would you agree with the following statement?

It is difficult to retain staff in Industrial Relations roles.



Bigger Departments

- 80% of Bigger Departments disagree with the statement 'It is difficult to retain staff in IR roles'
- 20% of Bigger Departments were undecided
- 0% of Bigger Departments either agreed, strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with the statement

Smaller Departments

- 40% of Smaller Departments disagree with the statement 'It is difficult to retain staff in IR roles'
- 50% of the Smaller departments were undecided
- 10% of Smaller Departments strongly agreed with the statement.
- 0% of Smaller Departments either agreed or strongly disagreed.

Question 7 - areas where greater expertise is needed

In which of the following areas, if any, do you consider greater expertise (knowledge, skills and experience) would benefit staff within the Human Resources Unit dealing with the Unit's Industrial Relations tasks and responsibilities?

Employment Law []

Industrial Relations – Legislation []

Negotiations and Conflict Resolution []

Civil Service employment terms & conditions []

The Civil Service Conciliation & Arbitration scheme []

Public Service Agreements – provisions & implementation []

Other areas (please specify):

From examining the responses from question seven there does not seem to be much of a difference between the larger Departments and the smaller Departments. Some of the larger and the smaller Departments indicated that they could benefit from greater expertise in all areas. Whilst some of the other larger and smaller departments checked very few of the areas meaning they did not think they would benefit from greater training in most of the areas. Overall, there seems to be a difference between the 16 different departments with regards to their responses but not enough to find a trend between the larger Departments and the smaller Departments.

Question 8 - interventions taken to acquire IR expertise

What measures/actions/initiatives have been taken to acquire/maintain the optimum Industrial Relations expertise in the Human Resources Unit?

From examining the results from question eight there does not seem to be a distinguishable difference between the responses of the larger Departments and the smaller Departments. Many of the departments have taken part in training as well as attending different IR forums. There is a notable difference between the different responses from the individual departments but not enough of a difference between the larger Departments and the smaller Departments to compare one against the other.

Question 9 - interventions proposed in order to acquire IR expertise

What measures, actions, initiatives, or supports, would you like to see put in place in order to reach/maintain the acquired Industrial Relations expertise in your Human Resources Unit?

From examining the results from question nine there does not seem to be a distinguishable difference between the responses of the larger Departments and the smaller Departments. Many of the departments highlighted the need for more training and succession plans. There is a difference between the responses of the individual departments, but there are an inadequate level of differences between the larger Departments and smaller Departments to allow for comparison.



An Roinn Caiteachais
Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public
Expenditure and Reform