



Department
of Social
Protection

Annual
Report
2016

An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection



2016 ISSN 2009-4140

Government of Ireland 2016

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Foreword from the Minister

I welcome the publication of the Department of Social Protection's Annual Report for 2016.

Since being appointed Minister for Social Protection in 2016, I am very aware of the Department's significant and varied role. It is the largest Department in Government with 6,000 civil servants and a budget of almost €20bn. It is responsible for weekly and monthly payments to more than 1.5 million individuals and families, with more than half of our payments going to pensioners and children. It also provides income support to another 800,000 people with disabilities, carers, one-parent families and jobseekers.

To that end, through the wide range of services it provides, the Department impacts on the lives of almost every citizen in the State in the course of their life – from child benefit to the State pension and every contingency in between – maternity, paternity, illness, unemployment and redundancy.

The developments outlined in this report show the wide range of service and policy reforms implemented by the Department in 2016, to help unemployed people secure employment, to reflect the changing needs and wishes of families and to improve service delivery.

In 2016 I was particularly pleased to introduce paid paternity leave for fathers from September, to give fathers more opportunities to take an active role in the early stages of their child's life, and give the best start possible. Other highlights in 2016 included unemployment figures falling to 7.3% which exceeded the target to get 20,000 long-term unemployed into work. I secured a Budget package of €330 million, which enabled a €5 per week increase in the State Pension, and the first increases since 2009 in weekly payments to people with disabilities, carers, blind people, widows, one parent families and jobseekers, among others. I also secured agreement for the payment of the Christmas bonus at the increased rate of 85 per

cent.

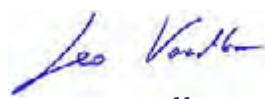
2016 saw the publication of the new Statement of Strategy for the Department of Social Protection for 2016 - 2019. This Strategy will implement the priorities as set out in the Programme for a Partnership Government.

The top priority for the next few years is to remain prudent in our approach to the economy and public spending and ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past, providing for modest and sustainable increases in incomes and improving public services and infrastructure. We want to ensure that everyone benefits from the recovery, with no one left behind.

My focus is firmly on employment, pension reform, and developing a Working Family Payment to reduce child poverty and ensure that no family is better off on welfare than in work. My goal is to ensure that people are rewarded for working by reforming the PRSI system and reinforcing the contributory principle.

I am also implementing a New Deal for the Self-Employed, who can now avail of optical and dental Treatment Benefits. Later this year they will have access to the safety-net of State income supports if serious illness or injury prevents them from working, without having to go through a means test.

Since my appointment as Minister for Social Protection I have been consistently impressed by the calibre of our staff. Together with my colleague, Mr Finian McGrath, T.D., Minister of State with special responsibility for Disabilities, I look forward to continued close co-operation in implementing the priorities set out in the Programme for a Partnership Government.



Leo Varadkar T.D.

Minister for Social Protection

Introduction by the Secretary General

This is the second Annual Report on the Department's Statement of Strategy 2015 to 2017 and sets out the progress made during 2016.

The role of the Department and the demand for the services it provides, has changed significantly over the last number of years. In 2016 we continued our programme of reform with an underlying focus on placing our customers at the centre of our operations.

Given the significance of the Department's role in providing financial supports, and delivering appropriate and timely services to those who depend on us, the principles of quality customer services remain to the fore in all we do. To this end the Department launched its 2016-2018 Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan.

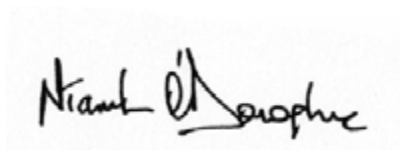
The Department is focusing on developing a range of secure, integrated online services with a view to meeting the needs of its customers through a new service channel, where appropriate. 'MyWelfare' is a portal through which customers can access and receive Departmental services online, at a time and place that suits them. The service is supported by a new secure online identity authentication service 'MyGovID', which is also available to other Government Departments and public services agencies, to facilitate their delivery of services digitally.

Against this background of change, the Department wishes to equip staff with the skills to enhance further the delivery of a professional service to

our customers. In 2016, the Department and the National College of Ireland became partners in the development and delivery of accredited educational programmes for the Department's staff, building upon the One DSP curriculum. These changes and innovations underway did not go unnoticed across the Civil Service.

I was particularly pleased that the Department was presented with two awards at the 2016 Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards. One, in the category of World Class Civil Service, for its 'MyGovID – SAFE' project, and the second, in the category of Leading Civil Service Renewal, for its 'Engagement and Innovation – Results Focused Partnership'. The Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards celebrate the many innovative projects carried out by civil servants throughout the country, and are highly competitive; so it was a huge honour to come away with two awards.

The Department's success at the awards reflects the talent and commitment of our staff to the people we serve. I would also like to acknowledge this and thank staff for their significant contributions in 2016 and wish them well in the future.



Níamh O'Donoghue
Secretary General

Department
of Social
Protection

Chapter
1

The Department: its business and organisation

Main functions of the Department of Social Protection

The Department supports the Minister for Social Protection in the discharge of governmental, parliamentary and departmental duties.

The main functions of the Department are to:

- advise Government and formulate appropriate social protection and social inclusion policies;
- design, develop, and deliver effective and cost-efficient income supports, activation and employment services and provide comprehensive, accurate information to all of its customers;
- work towards providing seamless delivery of services in conjunction with other Departments, agencies and bodies;
- control fraud and abuse in relation to social welfare payments.

Scale of the Department's business

The Department serves a wide and diverse group of clients including families, people in employment, unemployed people, people with illnesses and disabilities, carers and older people. In more recent times the Department has expanded its remit to provide a range of services to employers, and has invested significantly in developing relationships with employers, to position the Department as a partner of first choice for employers in relation to recruitment and employment support services.

The Department administers over 70 separate schemes and services which affect the lives of almost every household in the State. Key services include:

- the payment of a wide range of social insurance and social assistance income supports such as jobseeker payments, illness benefit and disability payments, pensions and supplementary welfare allowances, in addition to the universal payment of child benefit;
- the integration, through Intreo services, of employment services and benefit payments, to ensure that the payment of income supports to people who do not have a job is directly linked to the equally important task of supporting people in their pursuit of employment, training and education opportunities, in order to improve their life chances;
- the provision of a range of employment supports, internship opportunities, guidance and placement services to help jobseekers find and secure employment;
- the delivery of a range of employer services including recruitment services, online publication of job vacancies, employment supports (e.g. wage subsidy schemes available to people with disabilities) and redundancy and insolvency services;
- a range of community services which promote social inclusion and provide pathways to employment for those who are unemployed;
- the development of appropriate and robust policy in areas such as pensions, disability, child income support, jobseekers and activation;
- the co-ordination of the implementation of Government strategies for social inclusion under the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and the Europe 2020 strategy for jobs and growth.

2016 at a glance

FOCUS

ACTIVATION

251k
activation
interviews

National Jobs
Week 2016:

160

events
nationwide

125k

job opportunities
advertised

PAYMENTS

1.8m
applications
processed

1.4m
weekly
payment
recipients

80.7m

individual
payments
made

623k

monthly
Child Benefit
recipients

(1.2 million children)

CONTROL

950k
control reviews

6,400

SIU case
investigations

€506m

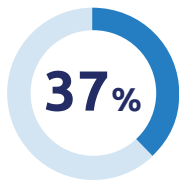
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BUDGET



2016 ALLOCATION

€19.8b



of gross current
government
expenditure



ADMINISTRATION

€582m

(3% of total allocation)

STAFF & SERVICES



7.3M

Phone enquiries
dealt with



600k

Public Services
Cards issued*

*2.35m Public Services Cards issued
in total to end of 2016



180k

PPS numbers
allocated to customers



122

INTREO CENTRES &
BRANCH OFFICES



6,436

STAFF



over **70**

SEPARATE SCHEMES
AND SERVICES

Organisation of the Department

At end 2016, the Department had a total of 6823 staff serving - 6436 whole-time equivalent posts, which include both permanent and temporary staff.

Centralised offices at various locations countrywide largely administer the Department's long-term schemes, many of its short-term schemes, and also have a range of policy responsibilities. Corporate services are also provided including human resources, staff development, budget and finance, internal audit, legislation and the provision of policy support and advice to the Minister.

In addition, the Department delivers schemes and services locally through a national network of Intreo centres and branch offices. Local services are managed through a regional/divisional management structure organised into two regions, with responsibility at Assistant Secretary level. Each division is headed up by a divisional manager, who has responsibility for the daily delivery of localised services to provide income supports and employment services across their geographical area of responsibility. Following a review of the Department's divisional structures, the number of divisions is being reduced from 13 to 11 divisions, with the new structure becoming operational in April 2017.

The General Register Office (GRO) is responsible for the registration of births, stillbirths, adoptions, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths in the State. Day-to-day delivery of the Civil Registration Service is largely provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE), through a network of local Civil Registration Service offices across the state. The GRO also operates a genealogical research facility.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office and the Social Welfare Tribunal are independently responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements and insurability of employment.

The Citizens Information Board (CIB), funded by the Department, is the national agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social and public services through

the Citizens Information Services (CIS), and for the provision of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS).

The Pensions Authority provides information, regulation and governance in relation to occupational and private pensions.

The Pensions Council advises the Minister on matters of relevance to pensions, with a particular focus on policies to support the future sustainability and adequacy of pension provision.

The Office of the Pensions Ombudsman independently investigates and rules on complaints and disputes from individuals about their occupational and private pension schemes, when maladministration and financial loss occur.

ORGANISATION OF THE DEPARTMENT

INTREO
CENTRES &
BRANCH
OFFICES



CENTRALISED
OFFICES

Administer schemes
& corporate services &
provide policy support

GENERAL
REGISTER
OFFICE



SOCIAL WELFARE
APPEALS OFFICE



SOCIAL
WELFARE
TRIBUNAL

CITIZENS
INFORMATION
BOARD



MABS



PENSIONS
AUTHORITY



PENSIONS
COUNCIL



OFFICE OF
THE PENSIONS
OMBUDSMAN



Management Board of the Department of Social Protection 2016



Back row, left to right:

Joan Gordon, Kathleen Stack, John McKeon, John Conlon,
Mick Bunyan, Oliver Egan, Tim Duggan, Teresa Leonard,
Simonetta Ryan

Front row, left to right:

Helen Faughnan, Anne Vaughan, Níamh O'Donoghue,
Patricia Murphy

Significant achievements and key developments in 2016

Minister of State for Disabilities

In May 2016 Finian McGrath T.D. was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection with special responsibility for Disability. The Minister of State also has statutory responsibilities at the Department of Justice & Equality and the Department of Health.

ISSA European Regional Social Security Forum 2016

The Department of Social Protection won the International Social Security Association (ISSA)¹ Good Practice Award for Europe 2016. The award

was announced at the ISSA Regional Social Security Forum which took place in April in Stockholm, Sweden.

The Department received the award for its work in developing the integrated welfare and employment service – Intreo. An independent, international jury met to decide on the winner from among 71 entries from 27 ISSA members in 19 countries.

The Jury also awarded a Certificate of Merit to each of the Department's other submissions: "Closed Certification Guidelines for General Practitioners" and "SUSI/DSP Claim, Entitlement and Payment Service".



¹ ISSA is an international organisation for social security institutions, government departments and agencies. It promotes excellence in social security administration through professional guidelines, expert knowledge, services and support to enable its members to develop dynamic social security systems and policy throughout the world.

Jobseeker Satisfaction Survey

In March an independent customer satisfaction survey of the Department's Intreo service found that three in four jobseekers (76%) believed that Intreo, the Department of Social Protection's jobseeker service, improved their prospects of getting a job.

89% of clients surveyed say staff are friendly, are very good at their job and do their best to help clients 86% feel that their claim is processed quickly and 76% say that the Intreo service helps to improve their prospects of getting a job.

JobsWeek 2016

In September, JobsWeek 2016 held more than 150 events nationwide, for employers and jobseekers.

More than 14,000 jobseekers attended. Organised events included jobs fairs, career advice workshops, job shadowing initiatives, networking events with employers, and briefings for employers on Department services.

The annual initiative, hosted by the Department, highlights the range of employment supports and services available to employers and jobseekers. A number of employers took part again this year including Dell, Atlantic Aviation Group, Phonewatch, the Irish Defence Forces, Last Minute Minders, Pepper Asset Servicing, Northern Trust, Virgin Media, Stryker, STL Logistics.



Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar, pictured with Corporal Mick O'Brien and Commandant Jayne Lawlor at the launch of National JobsWeek 2016

Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards 2016

The Department of Social Protection was presented with two awards at the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards 2016. The Department won awards for 'MyGovID – SAFE' and for 'Engagement and Innovation – Results Focused Partnership'.

The 'MyGovID – SAFE' project won a Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Award in the Winner Category of Leading Civil Service Renewal. 'MyGovID – SAFE' provides an identity authentication standard which delivers the Public Services Card and the MyGovID online identity and access management service. The Department aims to issue 3 million Public Services Cards to public service users aged 16 and over, and to provide single, secure card based access to all public services by the end of 2017. During 2016, over 600,000 Public Services Cards (PSCs) were issued. By the end of 2016, a total of 2.35 million PSCs have issued since their introduction.

The Engagement & Innovation Programme (Results Focused Partnership) won a Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Award in the Winner Category of Leading Civil Service Renewal. The Engagement and Innovation initiative seeks to make the best use of the Department's staff experience and expertise in solving problems and improving services. Change projects under the Engagement and Innovation framework are time bound, results focused, and are driven by leadership teams made up of all grades across the Department. A particular feature of the initiative is its collaborative structure which encourages further engagement through open and inclusive discussion. Over the last three years more than 100 projects have been undertaken, which have resulted in a wide variety of extremely useful and worthwhile outcomes benefitting customers and staff alike.

There were 30 projects shortlisted for a Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Award, with just one winner in each of 10 categories. A further 8 nominations were highly commended. The Department's joint project with the Department of Defence – 'Defence Forces Employment Support



L-R: Robert Watt, DPER, Sean Gaffney, Daragh O'Connor, DSP, Enda Kenny, An Taoiseach, Lisa Doyle, Ambrose Dunne, Sean O'Boyle, DSP, Paschal Donohue, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Scheme (DF ESS) Programme' was included as highly commended. The pilot involved 25 participants who took part from 20th June to 26th August 2016. The 'DF ESS' aimed to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to assist them to participate more fully in society, and to enhance their capacity to pursue employment, work experience or further educational opportunities. The Department was also nominated for the Paternity Benefit Delivery Project (in the category of Digital Excellence).

Statement of Strategy 2016 – 2019

A new [Statement of Strategy 2016 – 2019](#) was submitted to the Minister for Social Protection and, following his approval, was signed off by Cabinet on 6th December 2016, and before the Houses of the Oireachtas on 15th December 2016 in Irish, and in English.

It is the Department's tenth Statement of Strategy and sets out the mission, high-level objectives and key actions which will be pursued in delivering the policies and priorities as set down by the Minister for Social Protection and the Government, for the period 2016 – 2019. It is the culmination of a series of consultations to elicit views on any strategic and cross-departmental issues that should be addressed. Management Board Members, other Government Departments, Agencies under the aegis of the Department, the public and staff of the Department, along with union representatives, were invited to submit their views in this regard.

Customer Charter and Action Plan 2016 – 2018

The Customer Charter Initiative, which was launched in 2002, states that all government departments are required to publish charters which outline their commitment to clearly defined standards of service. These commitments are designed to lead to a more effective service provision and in line with this Government policy, the Department has produced Customer Charters since 2004.

In 2016, the Department released the [Customer Charter and Action Plan 2016 – 2018](#) which builds on the Department's previous customer action plans and charters. It sets out the level of service customers can expect when dealing with the Department and details its commitment to providing a professional, efficient, courteous and timely service to all customers.

The Customer Charter and Action Plan 2016 – 2018 was developed following extensive consultation with customers through surveys, customer panels and representative groups, and is built around the 12 principles of Quality Customer Service. Furthermore, the Customer Charter and Action Plan sets out how the Department will measure its performance against the service standards in the Customer Action Plan, outlines the Department's ongoing commitment to its customers, and informs customers of their rights and responsibilities when dealing with the Department.



Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities

The Government launched the [Comprehensive Employment Strategy \(CES\)](#) in October 2015 to ensure a co-ordinated approach to support people with disabilities to progress into employment. This Department has lead responsibility for over 20 actions under this Strategy's first three year action plan.

In 2016, the Department completed its rollout of the full Intreo service to people with disabilities who wish to avail of the service, on a voluntary basis. Training has been delivered to over 60 officers to enable them to interact effectively with people with disabilities.

The CES also provided for the setting up of an interdepartmental group, "Make Work Pay", under an independent chair, Professor Frances Ruane, to identify any significant disincentives for people with disabilities in taking up or returning to work, and to make recommendations on making work pay for people with disabilities. Minister of State McGrath participated and was invited to the consultation process organised by the Make Work Pay group in September. This group carried out its work during 2016 and the report will be published in early 2017.

Risk of Homelessness – Providing Support

In recognition of the vital role played by rent supplement in housing families and individuals, during 2016 the Department carried out a review of the rent limits in line with commitments contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government. In view of ongoing difficulties in the rental market, the Department continues to implement a targeted, case-by-case policy approach that allows for flexibility and reduces the risk of tenants becoming homeless. To date, approximately 10,900 persons at imminent risk of homelessness have been

supported through increased rent supplement payments. There has been a significant reduction in these cases following the introduction of the increased rent limits.

Protected Disclosures Act 2014

The Department is committed to fostering an appropriate environment for addressing concerns relating to potential wrongdoing in the workplace and to providing the necessary support for staff that raise genuine concerns. The Act requires public bodies to establish and maintain procedures for dealing with protected disclosures, and to provide written information relating to these procedures to workers. The Department has such procedures in place.

One submission was made to the Department under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 during 2016. The investigation by the Department was in progress at the end of 2016.

Paternity Benefit

The introduction of a new Paternity Benefit scheme was announced in Budget 2016 and took effect from September 2016. The new scheme provides for up to two weeks of paternity leave for new fathers who have the relevant social insurance contributions, to allow them spend time with their new baby.

NOW PARENTHOOD HAS ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

#paternitybenefit



- Get 2 weeks paid leave
- Entitlement of €230 per week
- Applies to births and adoptions
- Claiming your benefit is easy
- Payable to employees and self-employed

Legislation

In recent years the Department has delivered an extensive legislative programme, including secondary legislation. The Department's legislation programme for 2016 encompassed the enactment of one piece of primary legislation, and 22 statutory instruments.

The legislative provisions governing the application of habitual residence were amended in the Social Welfare Act, 2016. The amendments were to reference the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015 and the International Protection Act, 2015 in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005. There is no change to habitual residence policy arising from these amendments.

They continue to ensure that a person who is in the State in accordance with EU law or who has been granted international protection, has a right to access the social welfare schemes to which the habitual residence provisions apply, on the same basis as an Irish citizen.

A full list of legislation enacted during 2016 is available at [Appendix 2](#).

Learning and Development

In 2016, the Department and the National College of Ireland announced a new partnership to develop and deliver accredited educational programmes for the Department's staff, building upon the One DSP curriculum. A key strategic objective of the partnership aims to equip staff with the skills and education to enhance the delivery of a professional service to the Department's customers.

Also in 2016, the Department's Staff Development Unit was again awarded the 'Excellence Through People (ETP)' Award by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) under the National Human Resource Management Scheme.

Working with other organisations

Healthy You Initiative

In the Programme for Government, the Government indicated that it intends to pursue a programme to support more people to get back to work if they have an illness or disability. The commitment envisaged that the programme would be led by both the Departments of Social Protection

and Health working together, along with other stakeholders. The lead Departments have identified “Healthy You: Early Intervention” as the working title of the programme.

A stakeholder forum was held in December 2016 to obtain a range of views about the scope of the programme as well as identifying issues around delivery, financing and the piloting of possible approaches. Further work on identifying on the initiative will continue into 2017.



Abhaile

An innovative mortgage arrears resolution service, Abhaile, was officially launched on 3rd October 2016 by the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald T.D., and the Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar T.D. A key component of Abhaile is the scheme of Aid and Advice for Borrowers in Home Mortgage Arrears. Development of the scheme was coordinated by the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Justice and Equality and is implemented by the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, working closely with the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI), the Legal Aid Board, and the Citizens Information Board.

ABHAILE

FREE MORTGAGE ARREARS SUPPORT

Personal Micro Credit Scheme

2016 also saw the extension of the Personal Micro Credit (PMC) Scheme, which provides for small scale loans by Credit Unions to borrowers who have difficulty accessing low cost credit. The aim of the scheme is to move people from the use of high cost moneylenders to legitimate low cost, locally available alternative access to credit.

At the end of 2016, over 4,000 customers were making PMC loan repayments by way of deductions through the Household Budgeting facility operated by An Post, while others were making repayments through direct debit or standing order arrangements.

National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015 – 2017

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) was extended by one year, to 2017, in view of the current challenges in the areas of poverty and social inclusion compared to when NAPinclusion was drawn up in 2007. In addition, many new strategies have emerged that were not adequately reflected in the earlier Plan. Under these circumstances, it was recognised that an updating of the Plan was necessary.

Government Departments were invited to indicate how the high level goals might be reformulated to better reflect current issues and the interventions needed to tackle poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore, consultation with community and voluntary groups on the current poverty challenges, and the key priorities for the period 2015-2017 took place at the 2015 Social Inclusion Forum.

The updated Plan has 14 high level goals covering the period 2015-2017. They include revised goals from the existing NAPinclusion, along with additional goals based on new and emerging issues such as youth exclusion and affordable energy.

The goals also reflect the Statement of Government Priorities 2014-2016, and the poverty focus of the Sustainable Development Goals as agreed by the United Nations under its 2030 agenda.

The updated [NAPinclusion 2015-2017](#) was published in February 2016.

2016 in
context

Chapter
2

2016 in context

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and macroeconomic context

In 2015, Ireland's strong economic recovery continued. GDP grew by an estimated +5.2% in real terms², making it the fastest-growing economy in the EU for the third successive year. While the early recovery period was driven largely by exports and investment, more recently domestic investment and consumption have played an increasing part in Ireland's economic performance. Personal

consumption of goods and services, a measure of domestic economic activity, grew by 3.0% in the year.

This broadly-based recovery is expected to continue in 2017 with real GDP growth projected at +3.5%³. In the medium term, solid economic growth is projected to continue but, as a small open economy there are a number of external risks that make the pace of this growth uncertain, from the British EU exit to a slowdown of growth in our main trading partners.

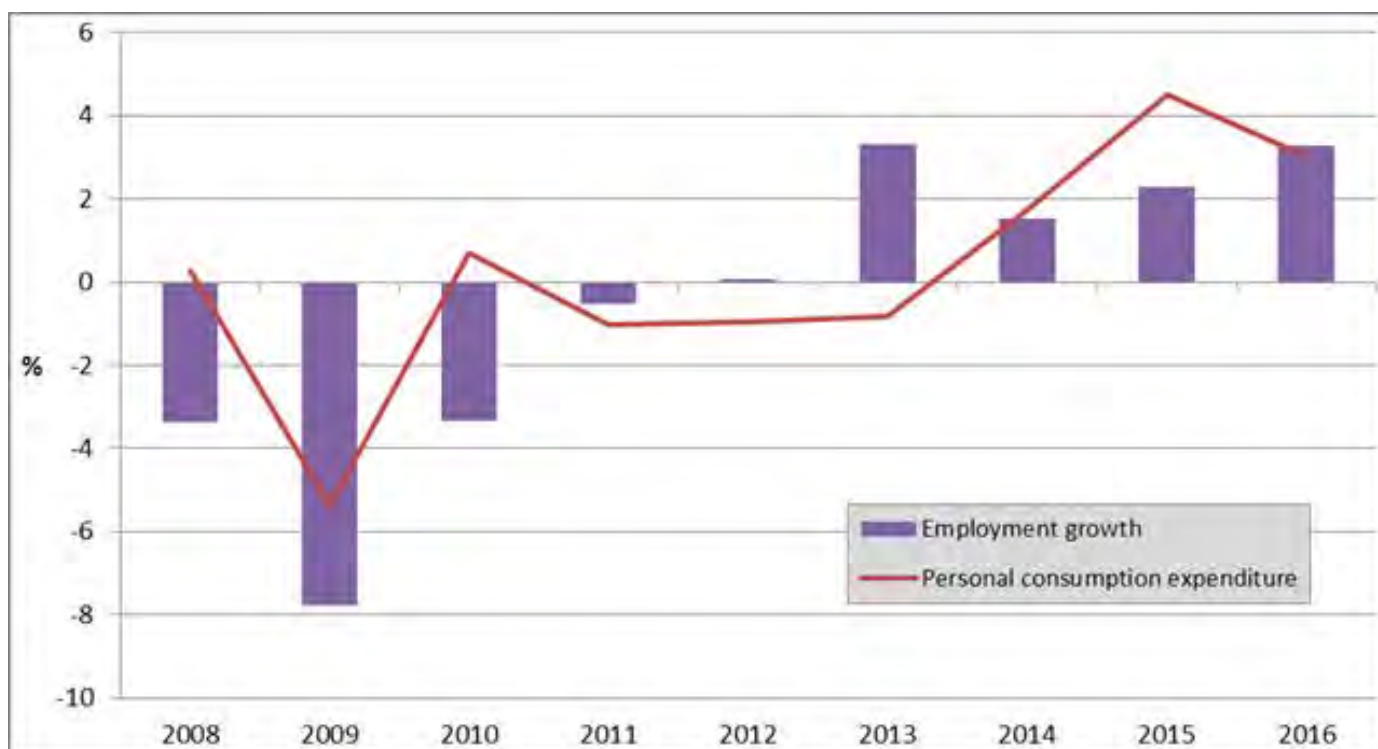


Figure 2.1: Annual change in numbers employed and Personal Consumption Expenditure, 2008-2016⁴

² Source: CSO. There was an unusually large + 26.3% increase in 2015 GDP due to the economic transfer to Ireland of certain high-value assets by multinational companies. This makes year-on-year comparisons difficult, and Personal Consumption Expenditure is used in this document as a more accurate reflection of domestic economic activity.

³ Source: DSP aggregation of available forecasts

⁴ Source: CSO

Employment, Earnings and Unemployment

After a prolonged and steep decline from 2008 to 2012, employment has been growing again for over four years. From Q4 2015 to Q4 2016, total employment increased by 65,100 to 2,048,000 – making Q4 2016 the first time since Q4 2008 that more than two million people were in work in Ireland. Moreover, the 2016 increase in full-time employment was larger still, with an increase in full-time jobs of +71,900 (+4.7%) offset by a decrease in part-time employment of 6,800 (-1.5%)⁵.

Current forecasts are for employment to continue to grow over the next few years, with this growth favouring the sectors and occupations that were worst hit in the downturn. Matching the progress made in creating new jobs, unemployment has fallen substantially—from a peak of over 15% to 7.1% in Q4 2016. This trend is also expected to continue throughout 2017.

Strong employment growth has also led to a very strong recovery in income tax and PRSI revenues, even as unemployment-related expenditure has decreased. These factors have contributed strongly to the recovery in the public finances.

Public Finances

The General Government Deficit for 2016 is estimated at -0.9% of GDP, the second successive year that the deficit was lower than the EU Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) limit of -3% of GDP. The projected deficit for 2017 is lower still at -0.4% of GDP, and by 2019 a small budgetary surplus is projected.

Along with this improved deficit position, the General Government Debt fell significantly in 2016, with end-year gross debt estimated at 76% of GDP⁶. This is a very significant fall from the Q2 2013 peak of over 125% of GDP. However, Ireland's debt is still nearly three times greater than its 2006 low of

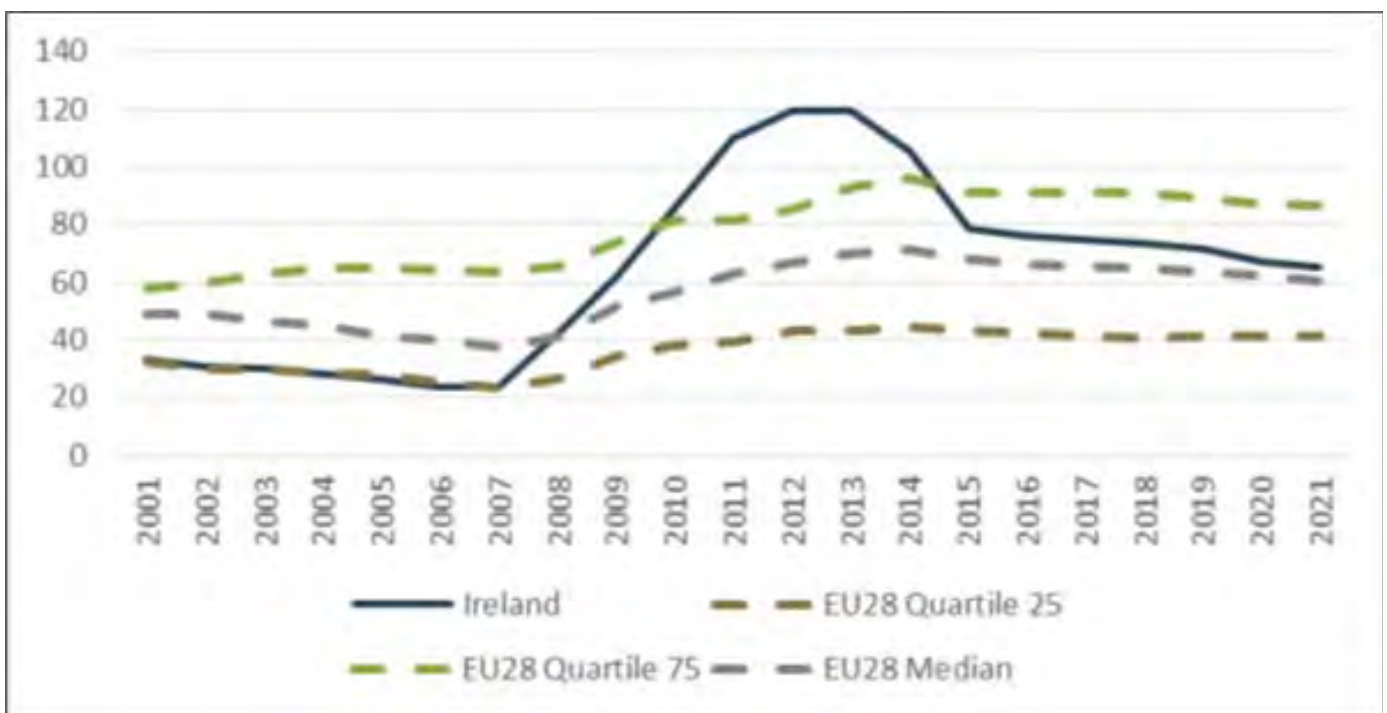


Figure 2.2: Irish and EU General Government Debt to GDP ratios, 2001-2021⁷

⁵ Source: CSO Quarterly National Household Survey.

⁶ Source: CSO

⁷ From Budget 2017 Economic and Fiscal Outlook. Source: CSO (2001-2015), Department of Finance and IMF forecasts (2016-2021). The large fall in the debt to GDP ratio in 2015 was partly caused by the once-off increase in GDP referred to in footnote 1.

23.6% of GDP and remains well in excess of the EDP limit of 60% of GDP. Recognising that this high debt burden reduces Ireland’s fiscal options and remains a source of vulnerability in the case of future fiscal shocks, the Government has set a new target debt to GDP ratio of 45% to be achieved by the mid-2020s.

The ongoing reduction in headline debt, and falling average yields on the outstanding stock of government bonds reduced government debt interest expenditure to 2.4% of GDP in 2015 from a peak of 4.3% of GDP in 2013. The debt interest burden is projected to fall further to 1.5% of GDP by 2021. Government investment spending remained steady in 2015 at 1.7% of GDP, still far below the 2008 peak of 5.3% of GDP.

Meanwhile, the Department’s expenditure accounted for just over a quarter of General Government expenditure in 2015, or nearly a third of current spending excluding debt interest. The latter ratio has been falling gradually in recent years from a peak of 34.5% in 2011 to 31.7% in 2016, due to the long term trends in social protection recipient numbers as discussed below.

PRSI receipts increased by about 9 percent in 2016. Rising PRSI receipts coupled with stable Social Insurance Fund expenditure brought the Social Insurance Fund into surplus in 2016 for the first time since 2007.

Long-term trend in Social Protection recipient numbers

The increase in the number of people in employment has reduced the numbers of people in receipt of the Department’s working-age income support payments. While a continued fall in numbers of jobseeker income support recipients is expected, in line with economic projections for 2016 and beyond of continued growth in GDP and employment, this trend remains vulnerable to future economic shocks.

Meanwhile, the strategic commitment to helping people move from welfare into work under the Pathways to Work programme has led to a continued high level of investment in working age employment supports in recent years, even as the unemployment rate has decreased.

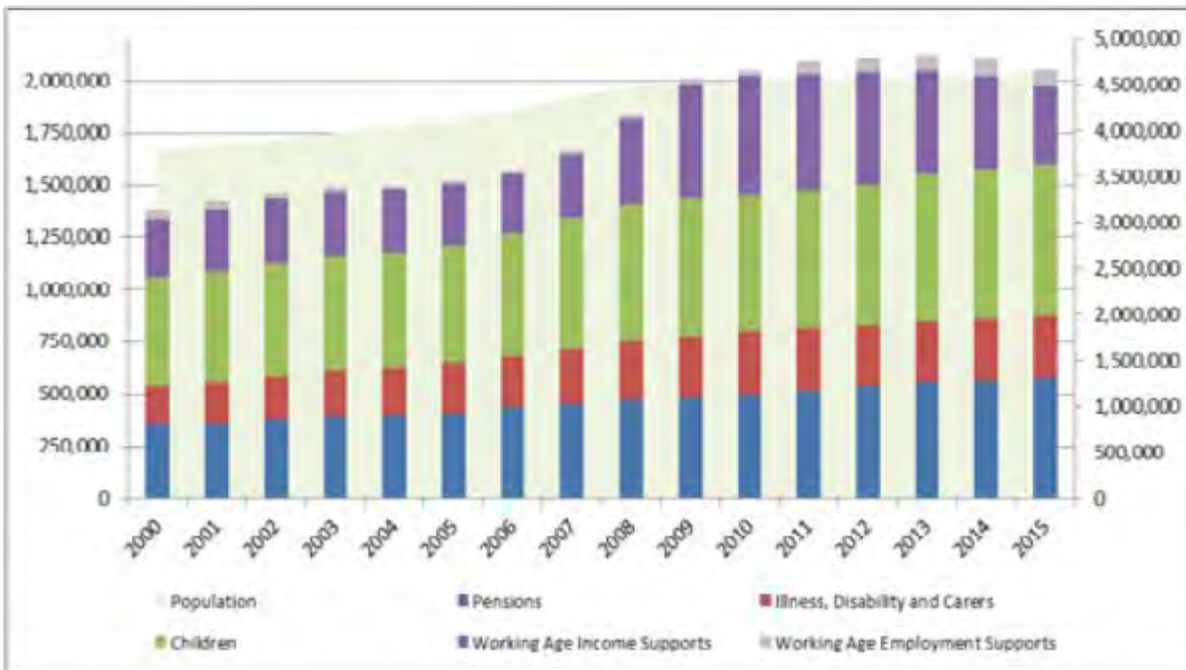


Figure 2.3: Number of recipients of Department of Social Protection payments, by programme group, 2000-2016⁸

⁸ Source: DSP. This is the total of recipients for each programme group at the end of each year. Some people may be recipients of more than one scheme.

More widely, demographic changes continue to create long-term demands on the Department's services. Since 2000, the rising number of older people in our society has contributed to an increase of two-thirds in the number of Pensions recipients, with a large increase in Illness, Disability and Carers payments, while our relatively high birth rate compared to other countries in Europe has resulted in a 40% increase in the number of recipients of Children's payments over the same period. These demographically driven pressures will continue into the medium and long term, and this will be reflected in the Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund which will be published in 2017.

National Social Target for Poverty Reduction

Progress made towards reaching the national social target for poverty reduction is reported annually in the Social Inclusion Monitor (SIM) which is based on the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) for 2015¹⁰.

Aligned with Ireland's continued economic and employment growth in 2015, the 2015 survey results show continued signs of social recovery impacting across the income distribution. This general improvement in living conditions is evident

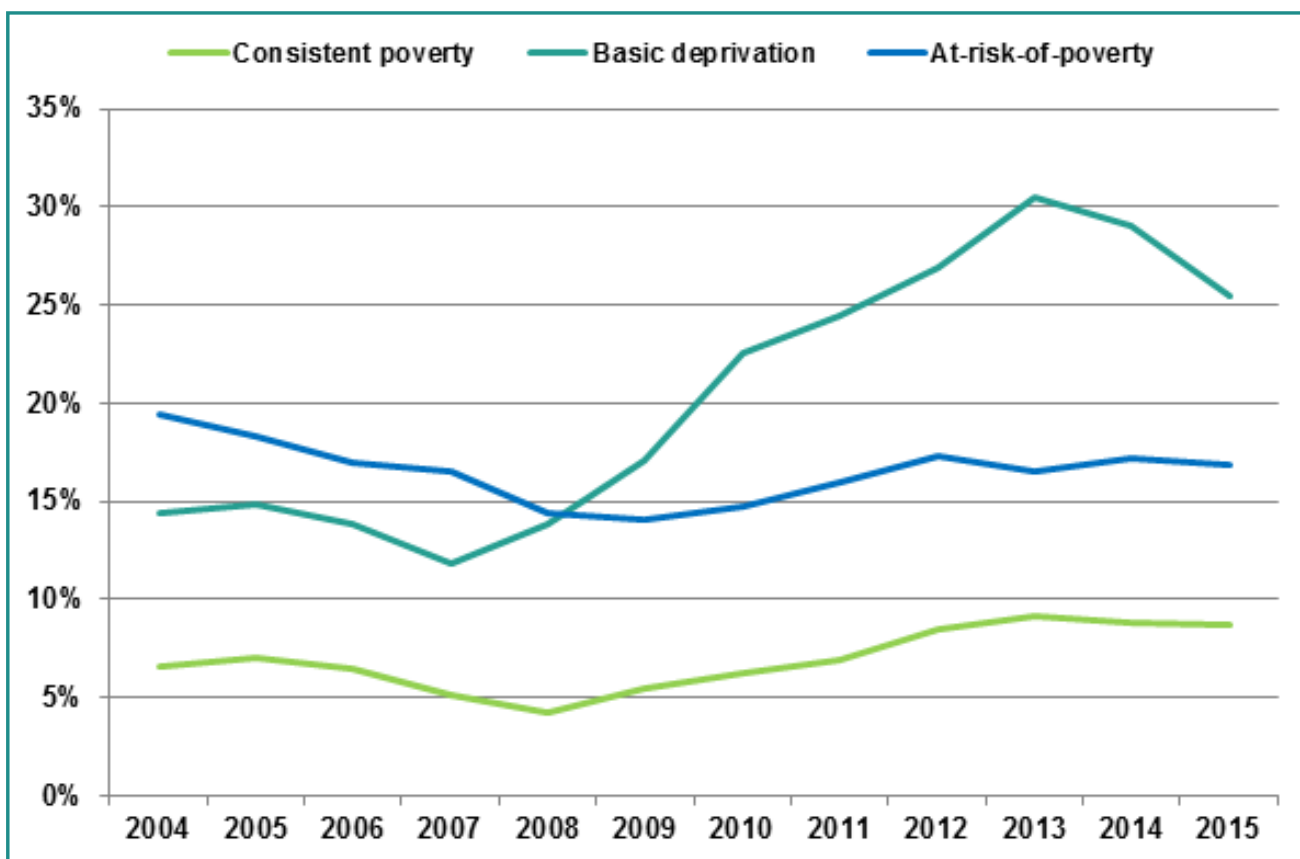


Figure 2.4: Poverty and deprivation rates by year¹¹

⁹ Source: CSO Quarterly National Household Survey

¹⁰ The published release is available at www.cso.ie. This includes data for 2015 and revised figures for 2012 to 2014. These revisions arose following the identification of a processing error during the production of data for 2015. The error related to the method used to calculate the Universal Social Charge (USC) and Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI). It resulted in disposable income being under estimated over this period, though trends in the revised series mirror those in the previously published data.

¹¹ Source: CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)

in the growth of 6.2% in real median disposable income, and reductions in basic deprivation and income inequality. The main changes included:

- Consistent poverty – a measure that combines relatively low income and deprivation –having fallen from 9.1% in 2013 to 8.8% in 2014, was essentially unchanged at 8.7% in 2015.
- Consistent poverty among children fell to 11.5% in 2015. This equates to 139,000 children in 2015, down from 152,000 in 2014
- There was also an improvement in the Irish contribution to the Europe 2020 poverty target. ‘Combined poverty’ – persons who are either at-risk-of-poverty or deprived – fell from 37.4% in 2014 to 33.7%.
- Basic deprivation decreased for the second successive year, falling by 3.5 percentage points to 25.5% in 2015.
- The at-risk-of-poverty rate fell from 17.2% to 16.9% in 2015, not a statistically significant change on the 2014 rate. This was despite an increase in the at-risk-of-poverty threshold from €217 to €230 per week for a single person in 2015.
- Social transfers continued to perform strongly in reducing at-risk-of-poverty and income inequality. The Gini coefficient – a measure of inequality – reduced from 32 in 2014 to 30.8 in 2015. This is the lowest it has been since 2009 (29.3).The gap between the rich and the poor is smaller in Ireland compared to the EU-28 average.

The full impact of the recovery is not reflected in these 2015 figures. Macro-economic and labour market indicators have shown continued economic and employment growth since then. The improvement in the economy together with new welfare measures, are likely to have supported a reduction in poverty since the period in 2015 to

which the SILC publication refers. This improvement is expected to continue with further rises in incomes and living standards.

Distributive Impact of Social Transfers

Analysis, based on data from the CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2015 shows that social transfers play an important income equalising role for low and middle income groups.

In 2015, social transfers represented a share of 23.1% of total gross income, while direct income accounted for the remainder. As a proportion of gross income, the impact of social transfers was highest for those in the bottom two income deciles (79% to 70%). The proportion then fell across the other deciles.

Social transfers in 2015 continued to perform strongly in reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate. Social transfers (excluding pensions) reduced the at-risk-of-poverty rate from 34.9% to 16.9%, an absolute reduction of 18 percentage points. In relative terms, this represents a poverty reduction effect of 52%.¹² Ireland is the best performing EU member state in reducing poverty through social transfers.

¹² If pensions are included, the reduction is from 46.3 per cent to 16.9 per cent, or 63.5 per cent in relative terms. Source: CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2015

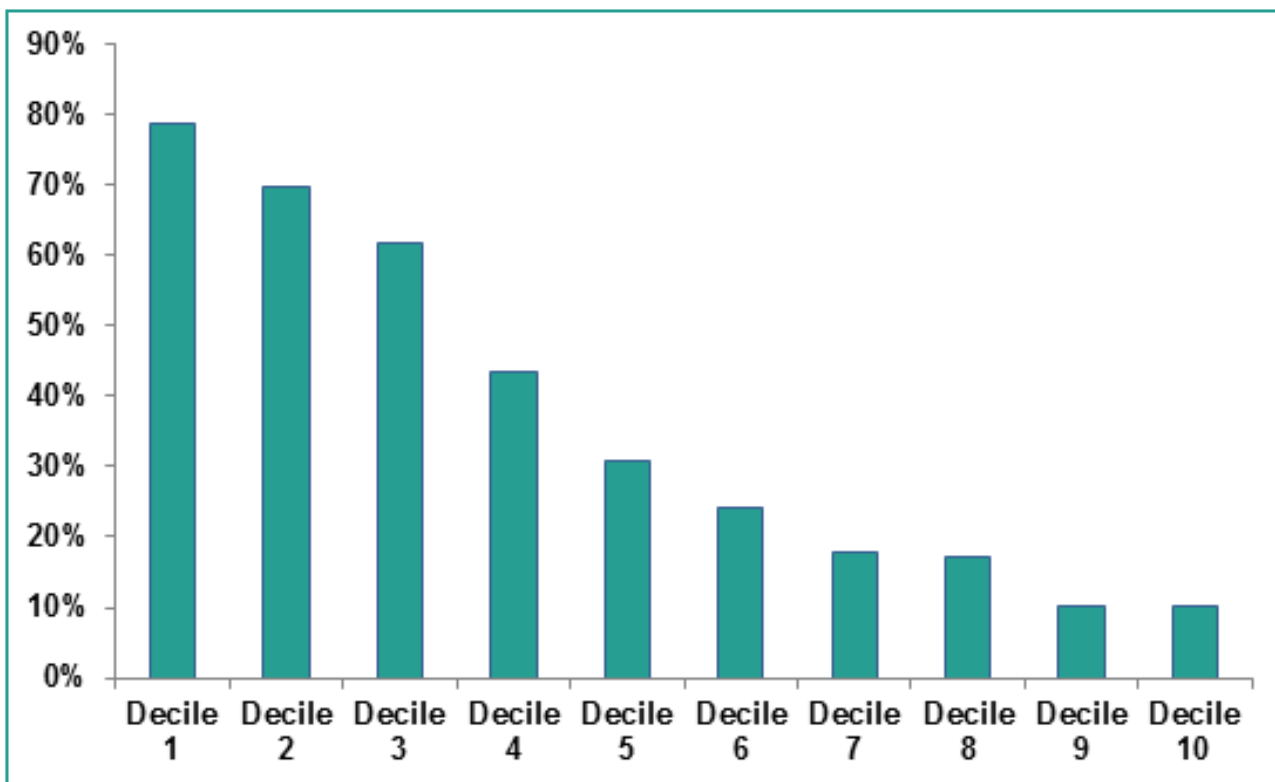


Figure 2.5: Trend in the poverty reduction effect of social transfers in 2015 Budget 2017¹³

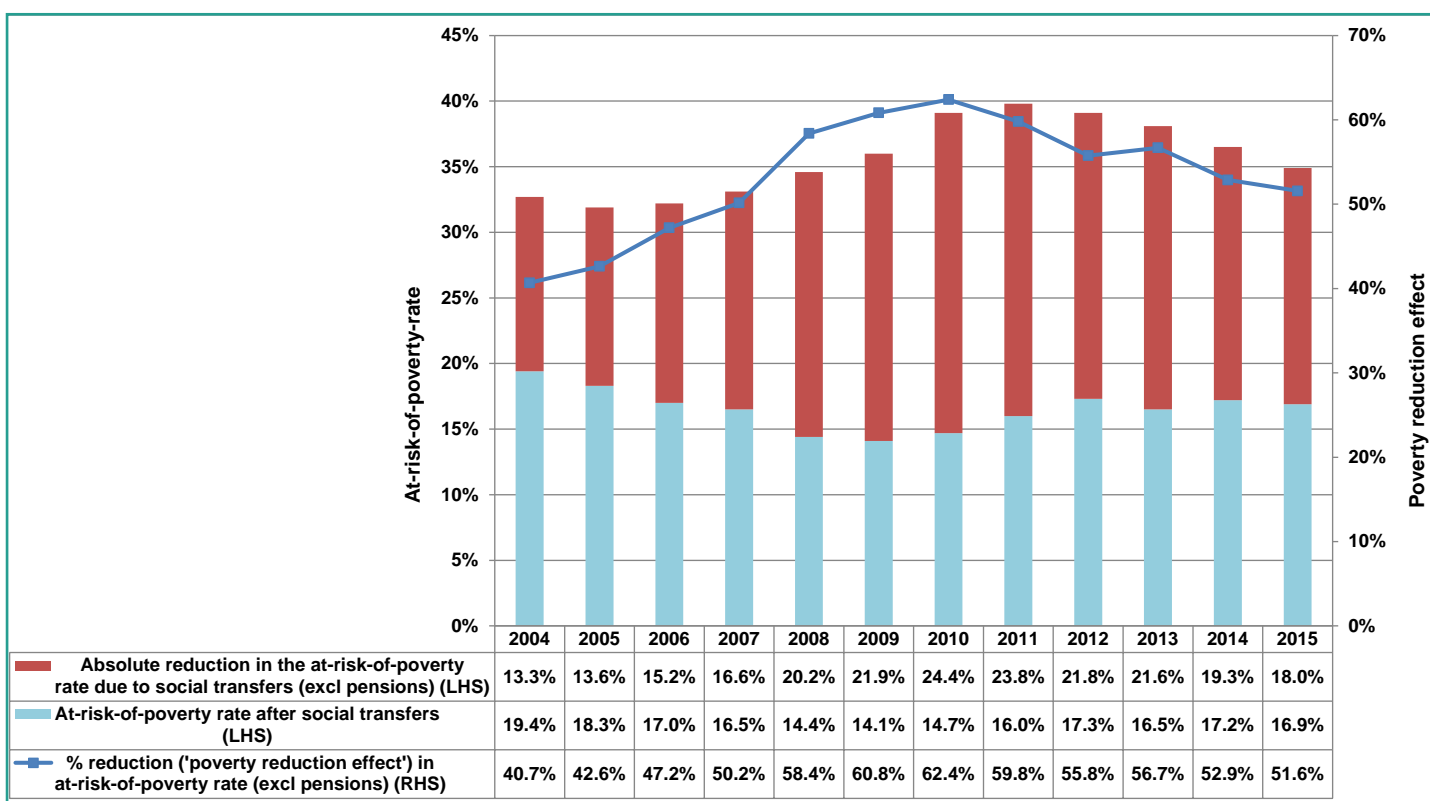


Figure 2.6: Trend in the poverty reduction effect of social transfers in 2015¹⁴

¹³ Source: CSO Quarterly National Household Survey

¹⁴ Source: CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2015

Budget 2017

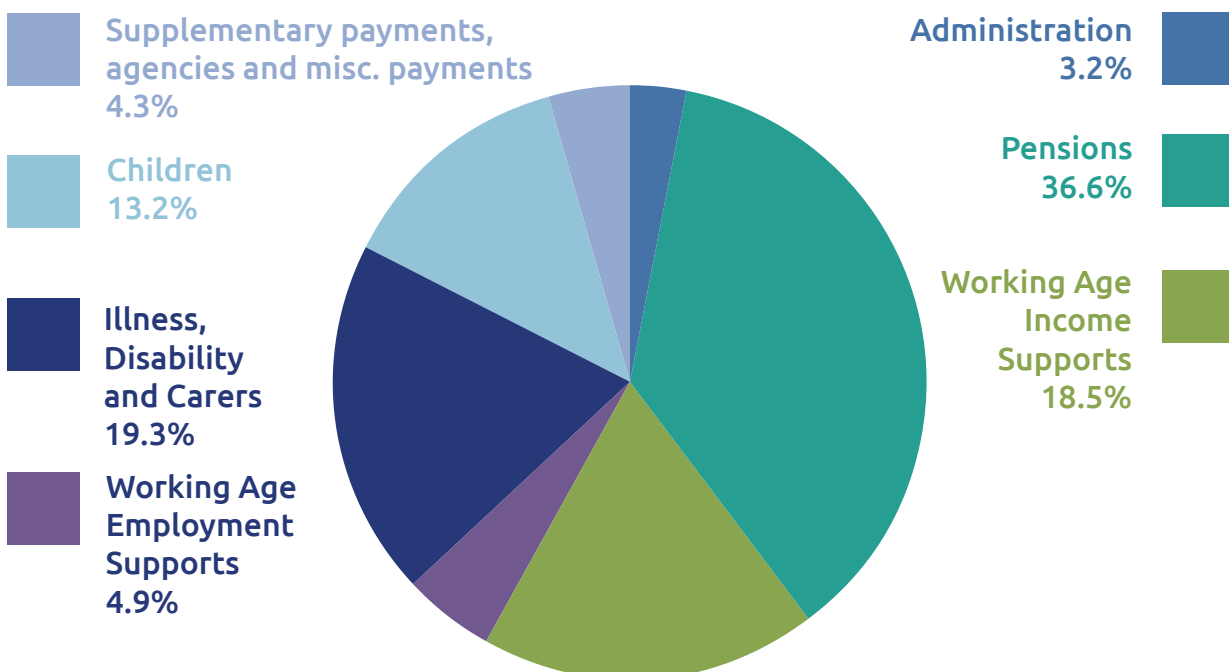
Expenditure 2016 and 2017

The provisional outturn or total expenditure for 2016 is €19,793 million. The 2017 Revised Estimates Volume (REV) provides for expenditure of €19,854 million on all departmental schemes, services and administration. This allocation reflects projected

trends in recipient numbers and payment values in 2017, as well as the impact of improvements announced as part of Budget 2017.

The Department's expenditure is spread across seven programme areas, as follows:

	2016 Provisional Outturn €m	2017 Rev Estimate €m	Percentage of Total Expenditure in 2017 REV
Administration	582	643	3.2%
Pensions	7,090	7,269	36.6%
Working Age Income Supports	3,947	3,666	18.5%
Working Age Employment Supports	1,015	966	4.9%
Illness, Disability and Carers	3,700	3,823	19.3%
Children	2,594	2,625	13.2%
Supplementary Payments, agencies and miscellaneous services	865	863	4.3%
Total Department expenditure	19,793	19,854	100.0%



Budget 2017

Budget 2017, announced in October 2016 aims to make sure that everyone benefits from the recovery. It sets out to make work pay through reforms to the PRSI system, including a new deal for the self-employed and it includes a number of targeted measures to assist lone parents, farmers and school children.

The measures announced in Budget 2017 are as follows:

Christmas Bonus

In 2016, an 85% bonus was paid in the first week of December to over 1.2 million social welfare recipients, including pensioners, people with disabilities, carers, lone parents and the long-term unemployed. This is an increase from the 75% bonus paid in 2015 (and the 25% bonus paid in 2014).

Weekly rates of payment

From March 2017, the maximum weekly rate of all social welfare payments increased by €5, with proportionate increases for qualified adults and those on reduced rates. The Programme for Partnership Government committed to an above-inflation rate increase for pensioners, and supported rate increases for people with disabilities and carers. This measure fulfils this commitment and will also benefit the full range of working age social welfare recipients, such as those in receipt of maternity and paternity benefit, lone parents, guardians, the unemployed and employment programme participants.

New deal for the self-employed

Budget 2017 extends the range of social insurance benefits available for up to 380,000 self-employed people who pay PRSI at the S class. From March 2017, class S contributors can avail of Treatment Benefit which includes free eye and dental exams,

and contributions towards the cost of hearing aids.

In addition and more significantly, self-employed contributors become eligible for the Invalidity Pension from December 2017. For the first time, this gives the self-employed access to the safety-net of a social insurance income support in cases where the person is assessed as permanently incapable of work because of illness or disability, without having to rely on means-tested payments.

These measures are part of the Government's policy of making work pay and encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Treatment Benefit

A range of dental and optical benefits have been restored and will be extended to the self-employed from March 2017. Subject to successful negotiations with dentists and opticians, the free scale and polish of teeth, and free spectacles from opticians (or a contribution towards the cost of upgraded spectacles), will be restored by October 2017.

Lone Parents

There are a number of measures supporting lone parents in the Budget. All lone parents on One-Parent Family Payment, Jobseeker's Transition and Jobseekers Allowance benefit from the €5 increase in the weekly rates of payment.

The income disregards for the One Parent Family Payment and Jobseeker's Transition payment increase by €20 from €90 to €110 per week, reversing in part previous reductions, to encourage one parent families to stay in and return to work. This will benefit lone parents earning more than €90 per week. For those earning €110 per week or more, the combined social welfare and earnings income increase by up to €15 per week.

A new €500 annual Cost of Education Allowance will be made available to Back to Education Allowance participants with children from the next academic

year in September. This will help parents, including lone parents, to return to education.

Children

Budget 2017 allocated additional funding to the Department's School Meals programme in 2017. This will enable the extension of school breakfasts to newly designated DEIS schools and significantly, to non-DEIS schools. Up to 35,000 children in non-DEIS schools will benefit from free breakfasts. This is in recognition that the majority of disadvantaged children do not attend a DEIS school and that school breakfasts have been shown to increase attendance and improve concentration.

There is also a special additional increase of €10 in Guardian's payment for people who take care of orphans or those children who cannot be cared for by their parents.

Rural Ireland

Budget 2017 improves the means testing arrangements for the Farm Assist scheme. From March 2017, an enhanced assessment of means from farming applies whereby 70% of farm income will be assessed as means (down from 100%). Additional income disregards for claimants with children also apply.

In recognition of the crucial work undertaken in rural communities under the Rural Social Scheme, an additional 500 places will be made available next year. This will bring the total number of places up from 2,600 to 3,100 in 2017.

People with disabilities

In Budget 2017, €2 million in funding has been allocated for the provision of pre-activation projects for young people with disabilities. These projects will provide a range of activities such as the

development of the participant's soft skills, work preparation, placements and sampling.

Young jobseekers

Young jobseekers under the age of 26 generally receive age-related reduced rates of jobseeker's payments of €100 or €144 per week. These rates increase proportionally with the general rate increases. However, in line with Government policy to help and encourage young jobseekers into employment and education, from September 2017, a young jobseeker who participates in the Department's Back to Education scheme, will be entitled to receive the full maximum rate of jobseeker's payment which will then be €193 per week, as against the 2016 rate of €160.

In addition, Rent Supplement requires that a single person pay a personal minimum contribution of €30 per week towards the cost of their rent. For a young person on the age related reduced rates of payment, this represents a significant proportion of his or her weekly payment. To alleviate this, the personal rent contribution for young jobseekers reduces from €30 per week to €20 per week for those on the €144 or €160 rate, and from €30 per week to €10 per week for those on the €100 rate.

Other measures

In other measures, an extra €1 million is being provided for the Community Services Programme to support social enterprises that provide local services to their communities.

Carer's Allowance is currently paid for an additional twelve weeks where the person being cared for dies. This is being extended to cases where the care recipient moves permanently into a nursing home.

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, which supports people who are unemployed to start their own businesses, will become available more quickly. The qualification period reduces to nine months down from 12 months.

In recognition of higher numbers in receipt of the Household Benefits package, funding for the Free Television licence element of the package increases by €1 million in 2017.

Social impact assessment

In November 2016, the Department published its social impact assessment of the main welfare and income tax measures in Budget 2017. This assessment builds on prior analyses prepared by the Department to inform ministerial deliberations on the Budget. This publication is intended to contribute to public understanding of the impact of budgetary policy.

Social impact assessment is an evidence-based methodology which estimates the likely effects of policies on household incomes, families, poverty and access to employment. It uses the ESRI tax/welfare model, SWITCH, to simulate the impact of budgetary changes on a representative sample of households drawn from the CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions. As well as the main welfare and income tax measures in Budget 2017, the assessment took account of the increase in the national minimum wage and the revised rent limits for housing support payments introduced to provide increased stability to tenants.

The principal finding is that average household incomes increased by 1% (€9.20 per week) as a result of Budget 2017. The bottom two income quintiles gain most, with smaller gains among the

middle and top quintiles.¹⁵ The bottom quintile gains over three times that of the top quintile (2.2% compared to 0.7%).

The welfare measures primarily benefit lower-income households. The bottom quintile also benefits most from the increase to rent limits for housing support payments. The income tax measures, though spread across all quintiles, are most beneficial to middle and higher income groups.

The assessment finds that non-earning lone parents and couples with children gain most from Budget 2017 (up to 4.5% more). Some other family types with above average gains include non-earning couples and single people with no children, retired couples and single people, and earning lone parents.

The Budget provides greater rewards for working, with over 80% of the unemployed substantially better off in work and almost 70% of the working population experiencing a reduction in their Marginal Effective Tax Rate.

This assessment shows that social transfers continue to perform strongly in reducing poverty with an estimated 0.8 percentage point reduction in the population at-risk-of-poverty.

Finally, compared to the previous year, Budget 2017 has a stronger progressive pattern with bigger gains for the bottom quintile and smaller gains in the remainder.

The full research briefing is available on the Department's website, www.welfare.ie.

¹⁵ The income range of the quintiles, using weekly equivalised disposable income, are as follows: quintile 1: <€285; quintile 2: €285–€403; quintile 3: €404–€521; quintile 4: €522–€671; quintile 5: >€672.



Strategic
Objectives

Chapter
3

The Department's Strategic Objectives 2015 to 2017

The [Statement of Strategy 2015 to 2017](#) is the Department's ninth Statement of Strategy and it sets out the mission, high-level objectives and key actions that it will pursue in delivering the

policies and priorities set down by the Minister for Social Protection and by the Government.

The Department's overall objective for 2015 to 2017 is to put its clients at the centre of all its operations, providing an integrated income support and activation-focused service.

It identifies three strategic objectives for the Department for the period in order to achieve its overall objective:

- 

01 Put the Client at the Centre of Services and Policies
- 

02 Drive Cost, Efficiency and Effectiveness
- 

03 Develop Staff Structures and Processes



Objective 1 - Put the client at the centre of services and policies

Objective 1 of the Department's Statement of Strategy 2016 to 2019 includes a commitment to put the client at the centre of its services and policies. High-level strategies identified to deliver on this objective include:

- delivering client-focused commitments in the Programme for Government and broader Government policy
- ensuring speedy access to accurate decisions, payment and reviews for all schemes and services, which are clearly communicated to the customer
- focusing on maximising employability by providing income support, targeted activation and training referral, development and employment services
- working with other Departments, and offices, agencies, employers and stakeholders in providing client-centred services
- attaining better outcomes in tackling poverty for children and families, people of working age, people with disabilities and older people, through the provision of appropriate income supports, and
- identifying client service requirements and establishing client satisfaction levels through regular surveys and the provision of feedback mechanisms.

Developments during 2016 aligned to Objective 1 are set out in this chapter.

Children

Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA)

The Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) scheme continues to provide an important support to parents/guardians who care for children with a disability. The number of applications for DCA continues to increase, with over 7,400 claims

received in 2016. At the end of 2016, a total of more than 34,500 children were in receipt of DCA.

Administrative changes implemented since 2014, continued to make an important contribution to an improved application process in 2016, which resulted in a higher number of awards on first application, and also on review of initial decisions. The changes implemented include more detailed application forms and forms for supporting documentation, with the emphasis on assisting parents/guardians in providing as much relevant information as possible on the care needs of their children, at the initial claim stage.

School Meals Programme

During 2016, funding towards school meals was provided in 1,400 schools and organisations, supporting 210,000 children, at a cost of some €40 million. The programme continues to be an important component of policies to encourage school and extra educational achievement.

From September 2016 additional funding is being provided to DEIS schools already participating in the scheme, to provide breakfast and lunch to pupils. An additional 17 DEIS schools joined the scheme for the 2016/2017 academic year. Additional funding of €5.7 million was allocated to the programme in Budget 2017 which includes provision towards the extension of the scheme to non-DEIS schools from September 2017. It is expected that up to 50,000 children will benefit from this expansion.

The Department has implemented an inspection programme to provide supports to schools to ensure that the scheme continues to provide maximum benefit to the children. To the end of 2016 approximately 430 organisations had been inspected. In addition, improved ICT systems have enabled the Department to expand the scheme, introduce increased controls, and allow for the

automatic and timely issue of payments which will be of significant benefit to participating schools and organisations in their ongoing planning and administration of school meals.

People of working age

Pathways to Work 2016 – 2020

The latest *Pathways to Work* (PTW) strategy for the period 2016-2020 was published in January 2016. The strategy considers how activation approaches, developed during a time of recession, should be adapted for a time of recovery and used as a tool of social/active inclusion during a period of improved economic conditions. Accordingly, it continues to focus on people who are registered as unemployed and especially on the long-term unemployed and youth unemployed. However, it also seeks to encourage other non-active cohorts to participate in the labour market. This *Pathways to Work* strategy takes a two-pronged approach:

- Consolidation: Consolidating the recent reforms to the Public Employment and Welfare Services and optimising provision to maximise outcomes for its clients.
- Development: Gradually expanding access to activation services, as resources allow, to other non-employed people of working age.

As of December 2016, almost 40% of the actions in PTW have been completed. These include: increasing the frequency of engagement with jobseekers at risk of becoming long-term unemployed; examination of measures to 'make work pay' for those with a disability and with the capacity to work; increasing the relative share of workplace-based interventions for the young unemployed; the completion of the first Defence Force Skills for Life Programme, which was 'highly commended' at the Civil Service Excellence Awards; the establishment of trained account managers; and on-going participation in Regional Skills Fora.

Under the Pathways to Work evaluations programme, the [JobBridge Evaluation Report](#) by Indecon was published in October 2016. Other on-going evaluations include: Intreo Process Reforms; the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance; the initiation of the JobPath interim evaluation; and a qualitative study to investigate the drivers of negative employment outcomes of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA).

In 2016, the Department undertook a customer satisfaction survey with jobseekers and JobPath customers, with results published in early 2017¹⁶.

Working age – income supports

Paternity Benefit

The introduction of a new Paternity Benefit scheme was announced in Budget 2016, and was implemented in September 2016. The scheme provides for up to two weeks leave for new fathers to allow them spend time with their new baby, to be taken within the first 26 weeks after the birth. The scheme reflects the same rates and social insurance qualifying conditions as maternity benefit.

In 2016, the Department implemented the necessary policy legislation and administrative changes to enable the scheme to take effect from 1st September. The Department also developed a new system to accept and process claims, including an application that facilitates online claims. The new system incorporates a high level of automation leading to swift automated decisions where a customer submits the required information online, and meets the qualification criteria. In tandem with this, the Department has also modernised the maternity benefit system to provide a similar online application facility.

In the period from 1 September to the end of 2016 some 7,000 paternity benefit claims were submitted to the Department, with over 5,500 claims awarded. Almost 20% of claims were submitted via the online application which resulted in automated decisions to approximately 50% of these applicants.

¹⁵ <http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/JobPath-performance-report-January-2017.pdf>

Family Income Supplement

In 2016, the number of working families in receipt of Family Income Supplement (FIS) rose by more than 1,500 to over 57,000 families, including some 127,000 children, at an estimated cost of €415.5 million.

Working age – employment supports

Employer Engagement Activity

During 2016, the Department enhanced the provision of services to employers including supporting recruitment campaigns, and the development of upskilling programmes for jobseekers aligned to job growth areas. The Department also worked with companies to leverage their Corporate Social Responsibility to enhance the job search skills and employability of jobseekers.

Recruitment campaigns ranged from assisting start-up companies, to identifying suitable candidates, to supporting well-established firms to fill vacancies. Dedicated Account Managers provided an intensive service to large employers, while divisional Employer Engagement staff supported local small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The Department also worked with other state agencies to maximise recruitment from the Live Register for Enterprise Ireland (EI) / Industrial Development Authority (IDA) client companies and Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects. In May 2016 the Department co-hosted an event with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Education and Skills, aimed at improving inter-agency collaboration and support for employers.

The focus on upskilling jobseekers continued throughout 2016. The Department collaborated with the IDA, the Construction Industry Federation, Irish Hotels Federation, SOLAS, the Education and Training Boards, Skillnets, and employers in the private sector to develop and implement new programmes. These programmes were in health

care, hospitality and accommodation skills, steel fixing, dry wall lining, formwork, med tech process technicians and quality analytics.

Over 100 new companies signed the Employment and Youth Activation Charter in 2016, bringing the total to almost 400. 31 companies participated in Feeding Ireland's Future 2016 to help young jobseekers enhance their job searching skills and advise them on careers in the fast moving consumer goods sector. 99% of participants said they were more confident about applying for a job afterwards.

JobBridge National Internship Scheme

JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme, was introduced in July 2011 in response to the sharp increase in unemployment.

From its commencement, JobBridge encouraged over 19,000 host organisations to provide work experience opportunities to over 48,000 participants. At the end of 2016 there were 2,000 participants in the programme.

During 2016 the Department commissioned an independent external evaluation of the programme to assess its suitability, relevance and effectiveness. The review was undertaken by Indecon International Economic Consultants and comprised of an econometric review, cost-benefit analysis and large-scale survey with almost 10,500 participants and over 4,500 host organisations responding. The findings of the report (published in October 2016) demonstrate that the programme has been very effective in improving the employment outcomes of jobseekers. 79% of participants (about 38,000 people) have had some period of employment since completing their internship; over 64% are still in employment; and a further 10% went on to further education or training.

However, the majority of participants were critical of the level of payment and support provided by the Department, and both Indecon and The Labour Market Council recommended that the programme be replaced by a new scheme that better reflected the improved labour market conditions and

legitimate criticisms of JobBridge. In launching the report, the Minister announced proposals for a new work experience programme to be introduced in 2017, following a consultation process with key stakeholders.

First Steps – the Youth Developmental Internship

First Steps is a variant of JobBridge targeted at young people aged 18-24 who face significant barriers to employment. This scheme was introduced in 2015 but take-up was low. A number of changes to the scheme were introduced in 2016 in an effort to increase take-up, including reducing the standard duration of work placement to 3 months and enhancing the level of support provided by the Department to Host Organisations and participants. Unfortunately the changes have not resulted in any significant improvement, and the scheme will be further reviewed in 2017 in parallel with the proposed new work experience programme, to replace JobBridge.

Jobs Ireland National Contact Centre

In 2016, the Department commissioned the re-development of the Jobsireland.ie service, a free online jobs site for employers and employees, to enable both employers and jobseekers to search for each other using competencies and skillsets, as well as the traditional job-type classifications. As part of the new redesigned service, candidate profiles are automatically matched to job specifications posted by employers, with both candidate and employer notified via email and/or SMS when a suitable match is found. Candidates can also use the site to apply for the jobs advertised. The system will integrate with the Department's Intreo service, and will include other new features such as allowing jobseekers to post CVs and video profiles if they wish.

The service went live on 28th July 2016 and is being implemented on a phased basis. The Department continues to work with the supplier to improve and add new functionality through 2017.

European Employment Services

The EURES Ireland website was launched in December 2016 as a central point of contact for employers experiencing difficulties recruiting staff in Ireland, and also assists Irish-based jobseekers seeking to pursue employment opportunities elsewhere in Europe.

A South East Region Job Fair was held by EURES Ireland in March 2016 which hosted over 40 exhibitors, attracting over 3,500 jobseekers, and resulted in 72 placements in jobs and training.

In 2016, EURES assisted a number of Irish-based companies to access suitably skilled candidates in Ireland particularly in the areas of ICT, language and nursing skills. In addition, assistance was provided to European employers seeking to identify Irish candidates for available positions.

In 2016, a key focus of the Experience Your Europe (EYE) programme, which provides financial and other support to assist young people to travel abroad to attend interviews, acquire skills or re-locate to take up employment, was the development of a return pathway to enable participants to acquire skills abroad to assist in fulfilling the skill requirements of vacancies in Ireland. Projects included placements in media/gaming companies in Germany, Poland and the Netherlands, and in the UK construction sector.

In addition, significant progress was made to integrate EURES within the Department's Intreo service.

Illness, disability, carers

Research to inform policy making

During 2016 the Department published a number of reports relating to illness and disability policy.

The results of an [Evaluation of the EmployAbility Service](#) to review the effectiveness of the service, was undertaken by Indecon International Economic Consultants. The results were presented to

representatives of the EmployAbility service at a seminar held in Dublin Castle in August 2016. The EmployAbility service provides job coach support to people with disabilities who wish to access jobs in the open labour market. [An Evaluation of the Disability Activation Project](#) was undertaken to assist in developing proposals to fund the next Disability Activation (DACT) programme under the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020.

The Department published its report on the [Disability Allowance Survey 2015](#). This study was undertaken to inform the design of supports and interventions which will assist people in receipt of this allowance to participate in the labour force, according to their capacity.

Supports for carers

The Department sponsors a measure supporting training for carers through the Dormant Accounts Action Plan (2014/2015). In excess of €900,000 has been provided to 16 groups including €300,000 to Family Carers Ireland. A further €500,000 is being provided under the Dormant Accounts Action Plan 2016, for a Department sponsored measure designed to support carers during the transition to life after caring. It is intended that Pobal will administer, monitor and evaluate the measures (to commence in 2017), on behalf of the Department.

The Annual Carers' Forum was hosted by the Department in 2016, which affords an opportunity for carer representative groups to meet and discuss issues with relevant Departments and State Agencies. Carers' groups have acknowledged that the forum, an action under the National Carers' Strategy which has been restructured in recent years, is making a real difference to family carers' lives.

Impact of Budget 2016 and 2017

In 2016, the Respite Care Grant was renamed the Carer's Support Grant to better reflect how this grant is used. In addition, this payment was increased to €1,700 and the period when Carer's Allowance can be paid, following the death of a care recipient, was extended from 6 to 12 weeks.

Budget 2017 provided for an additional €5 per week for recipients of Carer's Allowance and Carer's Benefit and provided that Carer's Allowance could be paid for a period of 12 weeks in circumstances where the recipient of care permanently enters a nursing home, thereby supporting the carer in transitioning from their full-time caring role.

In addition Budget 2017 provided funding of €2 million for projects which will deliver pre-activation supports for people with disabilities in 2017. The objective of this new scheme is to help bring people with disabilities who are not work-ready, closer to the labour market through engagement in training and personal development activities.

Budget 2017 also provided for the extension of eligibility for Invalidity Pension to self-employed persons, effective from the end of 2017.

Pensions

Since 2009, the continuing rise in the number of elderly people in society has contributed to an increase of approximately a fifth in the number of pensioners aged 66 and over receiving a payment from this Department.

Budget 2017 increased the incomes of pensioners aged 66 and over with an above-inflation increase of €5 a week. Pensioners also benefited from the 85% Christmas Bonus payment, which was issued in December 2016.

Universal Retirement Savings System

The rate of supplementary private pension coverage in Ireland is estimated at 35% of the working population when the private sector is considered in isolation. The Government considers

that if measures are not taken to address this low rate of coverage, many future retirees will suffer reductions in their living standards when they reach retirement.

Despite considerable efforts over many years to incentivise voluntary pension participation, a purely voluntary approach to participation is not achieving the desired goal of increasing coverage. To address this challenge, during 2016 the Department continued work to develop the required evidence base and social consensus, for a new supplementary retirement savings system for those workers without adequate savings. The Department engaged with consumers and sectoral interests from the pensions industry along with employers and employee representatives. Officials also engaged with a range of international/Irish subject matter experts.

In order to achieve the goal of increasing retirement savings coverage and adequacy levels, it is crucial that the design and structure of any system is appropriate and suited to the national environment. The development of a universal retirement savings system, the potential introduction of which would be a substantial multi-year programme of work, would mark the most fundamental reform of pensions policy in a generation.

Supplementary payments, agencies and miscellaneous services

Household Benefits

In 2016, there were more than 424,000 recipients of the Household Benefits Package, which is made up of electricity/gas Allowance, and a free television licence, and has a total annual value of €580.

Budget 2017 provided for an increase of €1m in the payment made to the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in respect of the television licences provided for customers in receipt of the Household Benefits package.

Free Travel

Since May 2015 the paper based free travel pass was replaced by the Public Services Card Free Travel (PSC-FT). To the end of 2016, 78% of eligible recipients (684,000) had been issued with the Public Services Card Free Travel stamp.

Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance

A total of almost 155,000 families with some 284,000 children, benefited from the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) scheme at a cost of over €39.8 million during 2016.

In July 2016, 108,000 eligible families received an automated payment under the scheme. A further 47,000 eligible families who did not meet the criteria of an automated payment, were also awarded payment under the 2016 scheme.

Humanitarian Assistance Scheme

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is the lead Department for severe weather emergencies, and the Office of Public Works has responsibility for capital flood relief activities. However, this Department provides assistance to householders in the immediate aftermath of emergency weather events through its Humanitarian Assistance Scheme. This means tested scheme is made available to assist people whose homes are damaged by severe weather and who are not in a position to meet costs for essential needs, household items and in some instances structural repair.

The Department activated the Humanitarian Assistance Scheme in December 2015 in response to the severe flooding experienced throughout the country, provided support to householders affected and were proactive in assessing and meeting the demand for assistance by the public, including providing emergency clinics and visiting the homes of persons affected as necessary. There was ongoing engagement with the local authorities, the Gardaí and other emergency personnel during this time to ensure a co-ordinated response.

Between December 2015 and the end of 2016, payments were made under the scheme to over 580 households with expenditure of over €1.93m. The main counties where households were supported were Galway, Cork, Westmeath, Mayo and Tipperary.

Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP)

As part of the Government's response to the migration crisis in central and southern Europe, in September 2015, the Government established the 'Irish Refugee Protection Programme' (IRPP) to provide a safe haven for persons seeking international protection. The Department of Social Protection participates in a Cross-Departmental Taskforce which is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the IRPP, and continues to engage with the Department of Justice and Equality to support the implementation of the programme.

The Department provides financial support to persons arriving in Ireland under the IRPP through the Direct Provision Allowance (DPA), or through the relevant social welfare payment once refugee status is granted. In addition, support is available under the Exceptional Needs Payments Scheme for costs such as clothing, travel and buggies/prams. The Department also provides registration for PPSNs and Public Services Cards.

Rent supplement

In 2016, the Rent supplement scheme supported approximately 48,000 tenants, consisting of families and individuals, at a cost of approximately €267 million.

During 2016 the Department carried out a review of the rent limits in line with commitments contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government. Increased limits were introduced throughout all areas of the country from 1 July 2016 at a cost of up to €12 million. In recognition of the ongoing difficulties in the rental market, the Department continues to implement a targeted, case-by-case

policy approach that allows for flexibility and reduces the danger of tenants becoming homeless. A protocol arrangement with Threshold operates in the areas where housing supply issues are particularly acute covering Dublin, Cork, Meath, Kildare, Wicklow and Galway City. This service provides advice and advocacy support to tenants who are renting and at risk of losing their homes. To date, approximately 10,900 persons at imminent risk of homelessness have been supported through increased rent supplement payments. There has been a significant reduction in these cases following the introduction of the increased rent limits.

Under the new Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), responsibility for the provision of rental assistance to tenants with a long-term housing need transfers from the rent supplement scheme to Local Authorities, under the auspices of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. HAP was rolled out on an incremental basis and by end 2016 was available in 28 out of 31 Local Authority areas. Officials in the Department of Social Protection are working closely with colleagues in the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and the Local Authorities to support the National roll out of the scheme during early 2017.

The Department also provides supports to tenants towards rent deposits under the Exceptional Needs Payment Scheme. In 2016, 2,800 payments were made towards rent deposits/rent in advance at a cost of €1.8 million.

Social inclusion

Social Inclusion Forum 2016

The Department convened the 12th Social Inclusion Forum (SIF) of stakeholders to address issues relating to poverty and social inclusion, in September 2016. The Forum gives people who are directly affected by poverty and social exclusion and those who work with them a voice in the development and implementation of policies that directly affect them. The event also provides a

forum for wider public consultation and discussion on social inclusion issues between officials from Government Departments, community and voluntary organisations, and people experiencing poverty in relation to the updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015- 2017.

The theme of the 2016 Forum was 'Growing an Inclusive Recovery'. Current issues related to this theme were discussed over four separate workshops. The agenda also featured a round table discussion on tackling poverty through labour market activation and related measures. The event highlighted and identified many common themes, including a number of overarching recommendations for the attention of policy makers.

Research on Poverty and Social Exclusion

A thematic report entitled [Social Risk and Social Class Patterns in Poverty and Quality of Life in Ireland](#) was published in November 2016. This study examined trends in poverty and deprivation in Ireland over the ten-year period, 2004 to 2013, looking at patterns across social classes and over the life-course. These groups include lone parents, people with a disability, and children among others. The study built on exploratory research on the *Measurement of Multidimensional Quality of Life in Ireland*¹⁷, published in July 2016, to develop an index and definition of quality of life (QoL) deficiency.

The extended analysis examined the significance of interactions between social risk and social class for poverty and QoL for the different groups in 2013, and which QoL deficits are most common. The findings highlighted the significance of lone parenthood and working-age disability as major risk factors for poverty, deprivation and multiple QoL problems. The study concludes that income support, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services are required to address the specific challenges faced.

The Office for Government Procurement co-ordinated a mini open competition for supplementary tenders, for a new multiannual research programme by the Department to measure and analyse household income and living conditions in July 2016. Following evaluation of replies, the contract was awarded to the Economic and Social Research Institute in December 2016.

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Councils

During the Netherlands and Slovakian Presidencies of the Council of the European Union, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumers Affairs Council (EPSCO) held formal meetings in Brussels on the 7th March and 8th December 2016, and in Luxembourg on the 16th and 17th June and 13th October 2016. An Informal Employment and Social Policy Council meeting was held on the 19th and 20th April in Amsterdam and on 14th and 15th July 2016 in Bratislava.

The National Social Report

Ireland's National Social Report 2016 was submitted to the European Commission on 5th August 2016 and published on the Department's website. It is one of the main mechanisms for Member States to report on their EU social Policy obligations. The Irish Report outlines Government policies relating to social protection generally with a focus on the areas of social inclusion, pensions, health and long term care. These policies are connected with and supported by the broader economic and employment policies and high level targets set out in the National Reform Programme. The Report documents key reforms in these areas, particularly developments in the period July 2015 to June 2016.

EU – UK Relations

Following the outcome of the UK referendum on 23rd June 2016, negotiations are due to commence on the UK's future relationship with the EU. The key social protection area that will be impacted by the UK's vote to leave the EU is the coordination of social security payments between the UK and

Ireland. This issue is integrally linked with the principle of free movement of people, goods and services. The future operation of the coordination arrangements for social security payments between the UK and Ireland will be a priority issue as part of negotiations between the UK and the remaining EU Member States, and bilaterally between the UK and Ireland. These negotiations will take at least two years to complete.

Customer Service

Customer service

The Customer Charter and Action Plan 2016 to 2018, sets out the level of service customers can expect when dealing with the Department and its commitment to providing a professional, efficient, courteous and timely service to all customers. The new Customer Charter is displayed in poster format in all the Department's public offices and is for the first time also available in leaflet format from the Departments public offices and on the Department's website www.welfare.ie.

If a customer is dissatisfied with the standard of service they receive, they can make a formal complaint to the Department. Complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and impartially. In 2016, 1,128 comments and complaints were recorded. The number of complaints, although representing a slight increase on 2015, is low in the context of the overall number of customers the Department interacts with. There is a strong focus on customer service training in the Department. Customer Service is included in all management development, induction and role-focused training.

One of the actions to promote customer service is the provision of periodic information updates to customer representative groups. In 2016, the topics covered included:

- JobPath
- Closed Certification
- Customer Charter and Action Plan
- Back to Work Family Dividend
- MyWelfare.ie
- Paternity Benefit

Provision of Translation and Interpretive Services

The Customer Charter and Action Plan sets out the Department's commitments to providing a professional, efficient, and courteous service to all of its customers. Specific commitments are included relating to the provision of interpretive and translation services and the provision of information in alternative formats such as Braille or Audio.

In 2016, the Department arranged for the translation of almost 600 documents into and from Irish. In addition, there were almost 3,200 translations into some 50 other languages. Almost 1,200 clients were provided with assistance from language interpretation services; 36 availed of the services of a Sign Language Interpreter and almost 40 received information in alternative formats.

During 2016, the Department embarked on the rollout of the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS) across the network of Intreo offices and by the end of the year the service was available from 13 locations, one in each Division. IRIS offers a video link to a live Irish Sign Language Interpreter. When the service is operational in all Intreo offices, Department staff will be able to request the service on behalf of a customer as an alternative to the in - person Sign Language Interpreter services currently in place. However, it is not intended as a replacement for the existing service where an in- person Sign Language Interpreter is considered more suitable to a customers needs.

¹⁷ The multidimensional index of quality of life (QoL) developed uses 11 indicators of QoL on 9 dimensions: material disadvantage, financial strain, health problems, mental distress, housing problems, neighbourhood problems, lack of social support, institutional mistrust and lack of safety, and the index is calibrated around the income poverty measure. An individual is defined as multiply deprived if s/he experiences 3 or more QoL deficits ('levels') of 11.).

Department's website www.welfare.ie

The Department's website, www.welfare.ie acts as the core information link between the Department and its customers and stakeholders. It is the central source of self-service information on the over 70 schemes and programmes provided by the Department. It provides dedicated areas within the site for jobseekers and employers.

The website represents a significant element of the Department's range of channels for the provision of information in clear and accessible formats, including an introductory video on the home page of the website, which includes subtitles, Irish Sign Language, and sound.

The number of visits to the site continues to increase with 7.8 million site visits in 2016, representing 3.8 million unique visits.

The website also promotes access to online application forms and information leaflets. These are presented in simple, clear, and easy to read formats having the principles of Plain English applied consistently and are accessible to people with varying levels of literacy.

Official Languages Act

The Department continued to provide a service through Irish in 2016 in line with the requirements of the Official Languages Act, 2003. The Department's Customer Charter and Action Plan states that the Department will 'provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages'.

The Department's Language Scheme 2015 to 2018 sets out the Department's commitments to customer service in Irish and advises of the availability of services through Irish.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Over the last few years the Department has seen a steep increase in the number of FOI requests received; 2,089 were received in 2016.

1,848 (88%) of requests received in 2016 were from members of the public requesting copies of their personal details whilst the remainder, some 241 FOI requests, were of a non-personal / mixed nature.

The Freedom of Information Act 2014 came into operation on the 14th of October 2014 repealing the 1997 and 2003 FOI Acts. The new Act introduces a number of changes to FOI and widens the range of bodies to which the FOI legislation applies. It also abolishes the up-front fee of €15 for non-personal requests. This has resulted in a significant increase in non-personal FOI requests into the Department.

As required under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, the Department's FOI publication scheme was published on our website in April 2015.

The Migrant Consultative Forum (MCF)

The Migrant Consultative Forum (MCF) was set up in 2012 to address issues raised in the 'Person or Number?' report, which had been prepared in February 2012 by 3 NGOs representing migrant groups. The Forum consists of representatives from FLAC, Crosscare, New Communities, Dublin City Centre CIC and a number of areas of the Department. In 2016 membership of the forum was extended to include OneFamily and the INOU.

During 2016 the work of the Migrant Consultative Forum continued. Revised terms of reference were agreed. The forum focused on advancing the 4 key areas identified in the workplan, namely, Training issues; Customer Action Plan & Customer Comments/Complaints; Arrears Payments; and Supplementary Welfare Allowance; and Exceptional Needs Payments administration.

Objective 2 - Drive cost, efficiency and effectiveness

The high-level strategies that were identified in the Statement of Strategy 2015 to 2017 which the Department will use to deliver on this objective include:

- continuing to improve cost-effectiveness in line with commitments in the Programme for Government and other key strategies
- working with other Departments, agencies, employers and stakeholders to address cross-cutting issues for the benefit of all stakeholders, and
- continuously improving:
 - control and compliance across all schemes to reduce fraud
 - corporate governance, financial management and reporting systems
 - information exchange with other agencies to improve efficiencies, and
 - implementation of reforms and evaluation to underpin the long-term sustainability of income support and activation services.

Developments during 2016 in pursuit of Objective 2 are set out in this chapter.

Identity Management and Secure Access to Services

The Department's client identity service (CIS) is responsible for providing a range of identity management functions internally to the Department and to other public bodies. It issues and manages the Personal Public Service (PPS) Number and the Public Services Card (PSC) and provides related data matching services to over 100 public bodies specified in legislation. The Department liaises closely with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and other public service agencies in the development and implementation of identity management policy.

Personal Public Service (PPS) Number

The Department provides identity management services to public service agencies facilitating the wider use of the PPS number in the delivery of public services, the development of eGovernment services, and in enhancing systems for control of fraud and abuse.

A total of 181,025 PPS numbers were allocated in 2016.

Public Services Card Project /Standard Authentication Framework (SAFE) Registration

The Public Services Card (PSC) has been introduced to enable individuals to gain access to public services more efficiently and with a minimum of duplication of effort, while at the same time preserving their privacy to the maximum extent possible.

During 2016, over 600,000 Public Services Cards were issued, bringing to 2.35 million the number of PSC's issued by end 2016. The PSC also, through the inclusion of a photograph, signature, and better security features, considerably reduces the potential for identity theft, forgery and fraudulent use. The Department together with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is engaged with multiple public bodies on the programme of registration and issue of PSC and will continue to do so.



Since March 2016 SAFE registration became a requirement for first time adult passport applicants in the state, and in September 2016 it was introduced as a requirement for applicants for citizenship.

SAFE Registration Stations are available in 100 locations nationwide. Some 1,625 staff have been trained to date and the Department has the capacity to register 15,000 people per week.

Facial Matching software

Facial Matching software has been in use since March 2013 to further strengthen the SAFE registration process which helps detect and deter duplicate SAFE registrations. During the course of the SAFE registration process, the software performs a search of the captured or imported customer photograph against existing photographs on the Department's database to ensure that the individual has not already been registered for a PSC using a different Personal Public Service number, or a different identity dataset. Where a match or a potential match for the probe photograph is discovered the relevant records are referred to officers in the Department's Client Identity Services for further examination and resolution. A process has been put in place to refer suspected cases of identity fraud to the Department's Special Investigation Unit (SIU). From its inception to the end of December 2016, a total of 144 possible match cases have been detected and referred for investigation; these cases are at various different stages of the investigation process. This work will continue to be implemented as part of the PSC project in 2017.

Online Identity and Access Management

From February 2016 all customers who have completed a SAFE registration process can authenticate their identities online and verify their MyGovID account using their Public Services Card. This enables users to access new personalised information and services provided on the Department's MyWelfare.ie portal. The MyGovID

service has been implemented so that it can also be used by other Government Departments and State agencies to authenticate customers online. MyGovID is now providing the client identity and access management service to the new JobsIreland website which went live in July 2016. Development is underway to integrate MyGovID on Revenue's myAccount online service, and this work is expected to be completed in Q1 2017.

The Implementation and Policy Group for Public Service Identity agreed to establish a sub-group to work on defining the Standards and Target Operating Model required for establishing MYGOVID as the Pan-Government Identity Access Management solution.

Control and Savings

Social welfare fraud undermines public confidence in the entire social protection system as well as being unfair to other recipients of social welfare payments and to taxpayers. Control of fraud and abuse of the social welfare system is one of the three key functions of the Department.

The vast majority of people on social welfare are claiming the correct entitlement due to them. However, a small minority are not and a range of measures are employed by the Department to ensure that social welfare fraud and abuse are minimised, and that its control and anti-fraud activity is appropriately focused.

It is in this context that the Department published in April 2014 a new Compliance and Anti-Fraud Strategy 2014 – 2018 which outlines a range of measures to prevent and detect fraud and to ensure effective debt recovery and deterrence measures are in place.

Preventing and detecting fraud

The Department's emphasis is on minimising the risk of fraud and eliminating incorrect payments. This involves appropriate checks at the point of claiming, strengthened by systematic reviews of claims in payment, and verification that the conditions for entitlement continue to be met, including means,

residency, and medical reviews. Overall it is vital that the Department continues to enhance its efforts to prevent fraud and error from entering the system in the first place.

Nearly 950,000 entitlement reviews were conducted right across the Department's schemes in 2016 which yielded €506 million in control and anti-fraud savings, €41 million of which were overpayments due to customer fraud. Investigations were conducted by social welfare staff, through direct enquiries and face to face interviews with customers. Short-term schemes generated the highest value savings with jobseekers schemes accounting for some €172 million alone. In most cases, savings arise when a person returns to work and does not inform the Department in a timely manner. Payments under Child Benefit and One Parent Family payments accounted for around 14% and 12% respectively of indicative savings, with pensions accounting for a further 12%.

Debt recovery and deterrence

Effective deterrence is necessary to ensure appropriate sanctions can be applied when fraud is detected. When an individual who commits social welfare fraud thinks that the potential penalty is minimal relative to the potential gain, then fraudulent activity will be encouraged and most likely continue. The Department is proactively targeting persons with overpayments to ensure that all persons with social welfare overpayments are making a contribution towards the repayment of their outstanding debt. The Department recovered a little over €82 million of monies overpaid to customers in 2016.

It is the Department's policy to consider for prosecution cases of fraud against the social welfare system. The Department ensures that all cases that merit prosecution are forwarded for consideration of legal proceedings. In considering or when referring, cases of social welfare fraud for legal proceedings, the Department applies defined and recognised best practice standards. In 2016, the

Department referred 181 cases to the Chief State Solicitor to initiate legal proceedings for breaches of the Social Welfare Acts. A further 160 cases were referred to An Garda Síochána for consideration for prosecution under Criminal Justice legislation relating to more serious forms of fraud, including identity fraud, falsification of documents and personation. The Department also lodged 18 civil actions for failure to adhere to statutory provisions.

Reporting fraud and abuse

Access channels, both online and dedicated phone lines, are available to citizens who wish to report incidences of suspected welfare fraud. All anonymous or confidential reports are examined and where relevant, are referred for follow-up action. A payment is not suspended or stopped solely on the basis of an anonymous report. The anonymous report, however, may act as a trigger to instigate a review of a customer's social welfare entitlement.

Reports from citizens continue to be an important source of information to the Department in identifying case of potential fraud. The Department received 19,000 such reports in 2016. The majority of reports related to people who were perceived to be working and claiming benefit, or not meeting the criteria for the one parent family payment. A high proportion of reports also related to potential abuses of the supplementary welfare allowance schemes.

Nearly three-quarters of reports contained sufficient information to warrant further examination and investigation. Some reports result in more than one investigation having to be undertaken. The remaining reports lacked adequate information or a claim was not in payment or the information reported did not impact on the customer's entitlement to their payment.

The main allegations that are reported are the following:

- Working & claiming: Where a person claims a payment, such as jobseeker's benefit/ allowance or an illness payment, but takes up employment and does not notify the Department.
- Cohabitation: People may be living as a "family unit" and fail to notify the Department of the situation in order to qualify for higher rates of payments, or payments to which they may not be entitled.
- Living abroad - Where a person is claiming a social welfare payment and is not resident in this jurisdiction but continues to claim the payment, without notifying the Department.
- Social Insurance and employer non-compliance: Where employers fail to maintain appropriate employment/wage records and where other non-compliance issues are present, or the employer fails to deduct or remit Pay Related Social Insurance to Revenue.
- Other reasons include:
 - Non-disclosure of means: Where a person claims a means tested payment, for example jobseekers allowance, but they do not fully disclose their means or sources of income to the Department which would include earnings, savings, investments, maintenance and compensation.
 - Multiple claiming or personation: Where a person makes a claim for more than one social welfare payment, or by falsely using the identity and PPSN of another person (which would include claiming benefit for a person who is deceased or claiming for a person who is in prison).
 - Life events: Where a person continues to claim a payment to which they are no longer entitled to, such as a lone parent who marries, enters into a civil partnership or is cohabiting, or someone who continues to claim carers allowance where caring duties have ceased.

Managing employer debt arising from redundancy and insolvency payments

When redundancy and insolvency payments are made by the Department, a debt is owed to the Social Insurance Fund by the employers concerned. A new employer debt management policy was introduced in 2015 which actively seeks the recovery of debt either directly from employers continuing to trade, or as a preferential creditor in liquidations/receiverships. In 2016, an estimated €10.6 million was recovered in employer debt.

Debt is written off where the Department has completed all appropriate checks and is satisfied that the debt is not recoverable, in line with C&AG requirements. Up to 90% of employer debt is unlikely to be recoverable as in the vast majority of cases redundancy and insolvency payments are made because employers are insolvent. In 2016, an estimated €12.4 million was written-off the employer debt figure.

Special Investigations Unit

The Department's Special Investigation Unit (SIU) carries out a wide range of control activities and projects to investigate social welfare fraud. In particular, it concentrates on the hidden economy, in sectors where social welfare fraud is most prevalent with an emphasis on direct intervention and engagement.

During 2016 SIU conducted 6,400 in-depth case investigations resulting in social welfare payments being stopped or reduced. Specific projects undertaken by SIU in 2016 included:

- Non habitual residency within the State;
- Hidden Economy
- Construction Sector
- Identity fraud
- The investigation of fraud cases arising from the application of facial recognition software
- Investigations arising from data matching with other agencies.

Data/Analytics

The key objective of the Department's analytics modelling project is the risk profiling of clients using large datasets focusing on the main working age schemes (jobseekers, one parent family payment (OFP) & disability allowance (DA)). The models are designed to increase the detection rate of possible non-compliant claims resulting from review activity.

As of the end of 2016, the following outcomes have been realised:

- Three predictive models have been built. The one family parent, disability allowance and jobseekers models have been rolled out as a primary source of control and anti-fraud reviews for these schemes, following successful testing and verification of the models in the field. Risk-based review models are now in place for these schemes identifying potentially higher risk cases.
- A specific database for Special Investigations Unit (SIU) has been developed. SIU business users have been trained in the Visual Analytics querying tool facilitating them to create their own targeted projects.
- In terms of a return on investment, the analytics project has generated over €15 Million in control and anti-fraud savings. This compares to a contract cost of just under €1.7 Million (when software and hardware costs are included).
- A key deliverable of the project has been the establishment of the Department's in-house Analytics Unit resulting from the skills & knowledge transfer work stream of this project.
- A network has been developed with Revenue to share findings and best practice with regard to analytics and data modelling.

Interagency Collaboration

As part of its approach to the prevention and detection of social welfare fraud, the Department has formed alliances and developed mutual assistance agreements with a range of enforcement and compliance agencies. This includes:

- Interagency collaboration with the Revenue Commissioners to prevent and detect social welfare fraud and tax non-compliance remains a key priority. This is manifested through direct engagement at the Joint High Level Group between this Department and Revenue. The group continues to prioritise and progress issues of mutual strategic interest, and five meetings of the group were held in 2016.
- At operational level there is structured and ongoing liaison between both organisations through the operation of the Joint Investigation Units. The focus of these units in 2016 was specifically on the shadow economy activity and the construction sector.
- Departmental investigators work closely and collaboratively on an ongoing basis with other agencies to ensure that social welfare fraud is comprehensively deterred and detected (e.g. Workplace Relations Commission, INIS, and Garda Síochána). Under its Anti-Fraud & Compliance Strategy, there is a greater focus on inter-agency co-operation and an emphasis on undertaking joint projects and on the pooling of knowledge.
- The Department is actively engaged in data sharing with other bodies as provided for in legislation and recognises that there is an increasing need to use existing data holdings particularly in other public bodies, to support better control and the effective provision of a range of services. The Department is working collaboratively with a range of Departments and agencies to ensure that appropriate channels of communication and contacts points are systematically in place for the sharing of data for control purposes, and to enable administrative efficiency in compliance with Data Protection Acts 1998/2003.
- A further strategic and cross-Departmental

issue is that of utilising the Department of Social Protection's robust client registration and identity management services and PSC rollout. The Department has issued some 2.3 million Public Service Cards and has developed a new online identity and access management facility (MyGovID) that utilises the Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE).

- The Department is working with the Department of Justice and Equality to address areas of mutual concern. In particular, the two Departments have been working towards integrating the EU Residence Permit (EURP) process with Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) registration.
- The Department is and will continue to fully support and assist GNIB and INIS in relation to specific operations through the provision of data exchange(s) and, where required, undertake joint inspection activity via its Special Investigation Unit.

Financial management

Prompt payments

During 2016 there were 169 late payments which amounted to 1.1% of payments to suppliers. Prompt payment interest and compensation amounted to €9,859.02

Payment methods

Social welfare recipients continue to be able to choose from a range of payment options offered by the Department including electronic payment to a local post office, bank or building society account, and credit unions which have financial regulatory approval. Provisional figures indicate that the level of payments issued to clients electronically has increased by approximately 4.6% in 2016, now standing at 53.26%, and making electronic payments account for over half of all of the Department's payments. Cash payments declined slightly by 2.55% to now account for 44.15% of all social welfare payments. Cheque payments to clients decreased sharply from 4.7% to 2.58%.

Project governance and procurement policy

The Project Governance Committee (PGC), a committee of the Management Board approves and prioritises programmes and projects, and monitors their progress and expenditure. Project proposals are evaluated and prioritised and budgets and resources assigned in line with the Department's Statement of Strategy and business plans. Particular focus is given to aligning priorities with the Programme for Government and the public service reform agenda.

The PGC exercises an oversight role to ensure that best practice is applied in the management of programmes, projects, and in all procurement matters. The Department aims to achieve value for money in the procurement of goods and services and is committed to participating fully in the public procurement reform initiatives of the Office of Government Procurement. Further information about the Department's procurement policy is available on the Department's website¹⁸.

In 2016, the Department published details¹⁹ of all public contracts awarded for ICT contracts over €10K, and over €25K for all other contracts, in accordance with Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014. In addition, the Department's procurement guidelines, request for tender (RFT) and contract templates were amended to incorporate two new EU Directives, transposed into Irish law on 5th May 2016.

A Project Management Leaders/Advisory Service (PMLAS) was established in 2016 and is chaired by the Department of Social Protection, comprising representatives from a number of departments and offices in line with Action 17 of The Civil Service Renewal Plan. The PMLAS has developed and published a Project Manager's Handbook/ Guidance Document for use within the Civil Service, established a [Project Managers' Network \(PMN\)](#) and has also established a web portal as a source of information and reference documentation.

The first PMN meeting was a conference held in

Dublin Castle on 19th December, 2016. Speakers included Martin Fraser, Secretary General to the Government and Department of An Taoiseach; Aidan O’Driscoll, Secretary General Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; and Maurice Quinn, Secretary General, Department of Defence. A further four networks are planned throughout 2017.

Working with other Organisations

Abhaile – Scheme of Aid and Advice on Home Mortgage Arrears

The Department has worked closely with the Citizens Information Board (CIB) and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) on the development of additional services targeted at supporting mortgage holders in arrears.

An innovative mortgage arrears resolution service, Abhaile, was officially launched on 3rd October 2016 by the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald T.D., and the Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar T.D. A key component of Abhaile is the scheme of Aid and Advice for Borrowers in Home Mortgage Arrears. Development of the scheme was coordinated by the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Justice and Equality and is implemented by MABS working closely with the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI), the Legal Aid Board, and the CIB.

The new voucher based scheme for which MABS is the gateway, provides access for people who are insolvent and in home mortgage arrears, to defined levels of independent expert financial and/or legal advice and assistance, free of charge. Qualification for help under the scheme is based on the borrower meeting the following four conditions:

they must be:

- (a) in mortgage arrears on their home
- (b) insolvent
- (c) at risk of losing their home because of their mortgage arrears and
- (d) reasonably accommodated

The new services are provided by professionals drawn from one or more panels of solicitors, personal insolvency practitioners or accountants. The scheme started in late July 2016 and is proving very effective. Up to the end of 2016 over 3500 vouchers have issued.

A communications campaign is planned for early 2017 to increase awareness of the services available through Abhaile.

Personal Micro-Credit Scheme

A Personal Micro Credit (PMC) Scheme, providing for small scale loans by Credit Unions to borrowers who have difficulty accessing low cost credit was piloted in 30 credit unions, for a six month period from November 2015. The aim of the scheme is to move people from the use of high cost moneylenders to legitimate low cost, locally available, alternative access to credit.

During the pilot, over 1,200 loans were drawn down under the Scheme with an overall value of over €720,000.

The Programme for a Partnership Government provides for the rollout and extension of the Personal Micro Credit Scheme.

While the pilot scheme was targeted towards social welfare customers with access to the Household Budgeting facility operated by An Post, the scheme has since been extended to social welfare recipients who receive their payment electronically into accounts in financial institutions, provided the loan repayments are made by direct debit or standing order to the credit union.

Incremental progress is being made towards extending the geographical coverage of the Personal Micro Credit Scheme through efforts to recruit Credit Unions to participate in the scheme.

Up to the end of 2016 94 Credit Unions have signed up to participate in the scheme, resulting in the availability of the It Makes Sense loan in over 170

local Credit Union offices. Over 65 additional credit unions have indicated interest in becoming involved in the scheme.

At the end of 2016 over 4,000 customers were making PMC loan repayments by way of deductions through the Household Budgeting Facility, while others are making repayments through direct debit or standing order arrangements.

The list of participating Credit Unions is updated regularly on the website for the It Makes Sense loan scheme at www.itmakessenseloan.ie/participating-credit-unions, and on the It Makes Sense Facebook page.

Energy efficiency and awareness

Throughout 2016, the Department continued to engage with the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the Office of Public Works (OPW), through its Optimising Power @ Work energy efficiency campaign. The Department has achieved energy savings through the rationalisation of its buildings portfolio, reduced from approximately

335 buildings in 2015 to 315 buildings in 2016, and through the provision of more efficient accommodation as part of the new Intreo service.

Up to the end of 2016, using the provisional information in the SEAI monitoring and reporting system, the Department has achieved an energy saving of 26%, and is ahead of target to meet the Public Sector target of 33% by 2020. The Department is also in discussions with the SEAI and the OPW in relation to its energy audit requirements, which are expected to be completed by the OPW as part of its Optimising Power @ Work and ISO-50001 energy efficiency quality standard in 2017.

The Department continues to ensure that procurement policies include provisions for Green Procurement. Energy efficiency criteria are included in Requests for Tenders (RFTs) where relevant, including IT equipment and non-IT equipment. Energy, including electricity, is procured centrally through the Office of Government Procurement to obtain savings through economies of scale.

¹⁸ www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Procurement-Policy.aspx

¹⁹ <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Contracts-Awarded.aspx>

Objective 3 – Develop staff, structures and processes

The high-level strategies that were identified in the Statement of Strategy 2015 to 2017 by which the Department will deliver on this objective include:

- implementing the commitments of the Public Service Reform Programme and the Civil Service Renewal Plan, and reflecting these in the Department's HR Strategy
- embedding organisational culture and values throughout the Department's activities and initiatives, and encouraging and promoting innovation
- delivering seamless services to clients by streamlining processes and procedures
- fostering an environment and providing supports that will encourage staff motivation, flexibility, and upskilling
- providing high-quality training for staff tailored to role requirements, and providing appropriate technological and organisational supports
- working with other Departments on the implementation of shared commitments in the Programme for Government.

The developments during 2015 towards achieving Objective 3 are set out in this chapter.

One DSP programme

Since 2013, the Department has engaged in a wide-ranging programme of organisational development called One DSP. This programme is designed to deepen integration, support staff, and to build organisational and staff capability to successfully manage change and provide excellent services to customers. Strands include the engagement and innovation programme; the implementation of the report on culture and values; workforce planning; a new HR strategy; and developing an accredited programme of a new learning and development strategy.

Engagement & Innovation

In 2016, the Department renewed its Engagement and Innovation (E&I) programme, a part of the One DSP initiative, through which staff and managers at all levels of the organisation work collaboratively to find solutions to problems and opportunities to improve services. Work continued throughout the year on a wide range of projects.

The first three year tenure of the E&I leadership teams expired in June 2016 and new team members were appointed through expressions of interest. A review of the E&I programme was carried out which showed that the E&I programme has been working positively in the Department.

The first E&I Event took place on 28th April 2016. Representatives from each of the completed project teams, members of leadership teams, the management board and staff who might champion E&I in their areas, were invited to attend. The event aimed to showcase E&I projects, publicise the programme and promote E&I as a way of working collaboratively. The event was very successful and is to become an annual event.

Culture and Values

The process of embedding these core values will continue during 2017 by ensuring that all staff are made aware of the core values and of their central position in all of the Department's activities via:

- All business areas which now have to identify an action in their business plans which contributes to the implementation of the culture and values of the Department
- The Engagement & Innovation programme some 100 Engagement and Innovation projects have been undertaken, many of which reflect the Department's values. In 2017 new projects will be required to consider if they reflect core values.

Learning and development

The Department's Staff Development Unit (SDU) has responsibility for the planning and provision of learning and development programmes to staff and management in the organisation. The unit develops, delivers, and oversees high quality training provision in the Department in order to ensure that staff are fully equipped to perform their functions effectively.

In 2016, Staff Development Unit was again awarded the Excellence Through People (ETP) Award by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) under the National Human Resource Management Scheme.

One DSP Curriculum and Accreditation

As part of the overall One DSP Programme, the Department embarked on a key initiative to review and redesign learning and development

programmes for staff in frontline roles. The One DSP curriculum comprises 70 classroom and e-learning modules reflecting the roles and functions across frontline services provided by the Department. Since its launch in 2015, there have been over 6,200 attendees at One DSP classroom modules and over 5,800 e-learning completions.

In 2016, the Department and the National College of Ireland announced a new partnership to develop and deliver accredited educational programmes for the Department's staff, building upon the One DSP curriculum. A key strategic objective, the partnership aims to equip staff with the skills and education to further enhance the delivery of a professional service to the Department's customers.

The first programme, a Level 8 Special Purpose Award in Employability Services, commenced in November. 27 case officers were enrolled with further student intakes onto the Programme to take place in 2017.



Gina Quinn, NCI President and Níamh O'Donoghue, Secretary General, Dept. of Social Protection

Further programmes are under development and will result in new accredited programmes coming on stream for Deciding Officers, Social Welfare Inspectors, designated persons, Managers in Intreo Centres and Appeals Officers.

New induction programme

SDU has developed a two-day induction programme for new staff in the Department. The induction programme includes a new e-learning module on data protection. The first run of the new programme was held in June. This two-day programme covers issues such as:

- Functions and structure of the Department;
- Information, advice and support areas;
- The Department's values;
- Main legislation and natural justice;
- Habitual Residence Condition;
- Stór, Peoplepoint, ePMDS;
- HR issues;
- Data protection (completion of new e-learning module);
- Control;
- Customer Service;
- Supports for Staff.

Other learning and development initiatives

The Annual Social Welfare Summer School, a joint initiative of the Department for Social Protection and the Department for Communities, was held in Queen's University, Belfast in August. 27 students from this Department attended. The theme of this year's school was Addressing Social Inequalities Across the Life Course: Challenges for Welfare. The School provides a unique learning and significant development opportunity for staff at SO, EO, HEO and AO level, particularly those who wouldn't normally have an involvement in policy development in the course of their day-to-day work. The Summer School provides an opportunity for staff to analyse and debate topical social policy issues facing both jurisdictions within a university environment and to gain valuable knowledge and understanding of the policy development process. It also facilitates an exchange of views and insights

between staff of this Department and their Northern Ireland counterparts.

The Refund of Fees scheme assisted and supported staff who wished to pursue third-level part-time education in their own time by offering full and partial support of fees.

The Department's Leadership 2020 course has been approved for accreditation by the Institute of Leadership & Management /City & Guilds.

The Department's first forum for Assistant Principals was held in Dublin Castle in January. It is intended that this will become an annual event.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) development

The Department's Information Systems Division (ISD) manages one of the largest ICT operations in Ireland, involving the delivery and maintenance of a wide range of custom-built and commercial software applications over a range of platforms. It maintains and operates a large, countrywide telecommunications network to support 6,500 staff in approximately 200 geographic locations. The network connects all Department of Social Protection offices countrywide, using over 10,000 PCs, to its primary data centres, and links in with the government network.

The primary service that the Information Systems Division supports is the running and maintenance of the Department's existing systems for scheme processing, payment, activation, control and administration, primarily through its main line of business system called the Business Object Model Implementation (BOMi). As well as holding details on all social welfare beneficiaries and claims past and present, in 2016 the systems supported the direct issuing of payments to over 2.1 million customers amounting to expenditure of almost €20 billion.

The Department uses standard commercial packages where these provide the most economical solution to its needs. These are mainly used for administrative systems such as payroll, accounts and office systems, while the applications that support its strategic systems; those systems that are specific to the Department, have been largely developed in-house, usually with assistance from contractors.

Major ICT projects in 2016

The Department is undertaking a major multi-year programme to modernise and transfer schemes from legacy platforms to the strategic BOMi platform. This work continued in 2016 and included the development of a new Paternity Benefit scheme. Significant new self-service platforms were launched in support of this scheme via the MyWelfare.ie platform, supported by the cross Government MyGovID.ie service. In addition, a major modernisation programme of ICT infrastructure is ongoing, to ensure business continuity and agility in future systems delivery. As part of this programme, a significant refresh of the supporting infrastructure in the Department's Primary Data Centre was implemented.

Paternity / Maternity Benefit

The Department announced the launch of a new Paternity Benefit scheme for September 2016,

committing to a 'Digital First' approach for this scheme in line with the Programme for Government and Public Service ICT Strategy.

The first release of this project went live on 2nd September 2016 on schedule, providing a digital-enabled service to facilitate claiming Paternity Benefit. The Maternity Benefit scheme has also been migrated from a legacy system and is live on our strategic platform from the same date. The second release went live in December 2016 and features two further schemes (Health & Safety Benefit and Adoptive Benefit) on our strategic ICT platform.

MyWelfare.ie & MyGovID.ie

The Department's MyWelfare online service continues to be extended and now allows online appointment booking; applications for Jobseekers payments, Paternity Benefit and Maternity Benefit; notifications of decisions and services; viewing of claims and benefits; activation services; closing jobseekers claims; and statement requests. Further services are being added on a continuous basis.

Identity services supporting MyWelfare.ie are provided by the Department's online identity and access management service MyGovID.ie which is built on the Department's robust SAFE processes,



and utilises the PSC for verifying accounts. This facilitates high value online services on MyWelfare.ie and will be integrated with the new Revenue myAccount online service in early 2017. The MyGovID.ie service won a Civil Service excellence and innovation award in December 2016.

School Meals

In August, the Department delivered a project to implement a new School Meals system on the strategic BOMi platform to support provision of school meals payments to over 1,000 school organisations countrywide. This system will support payments of the value of over €46m annually.

Data Sharing

The Department is providing an Application Programming Interface (API) to support and integrate data sharing, particularly around means data with other public service organisations including SUSI, HSE-PCRS and LGMA-HAP to modernise data sharing & improve customer

service in line with the Government ICT strategy. Discussions have also commenced with a number of other Public Service organisations with a view to engaging with them in relation to their utilisation of the API service in 2017.

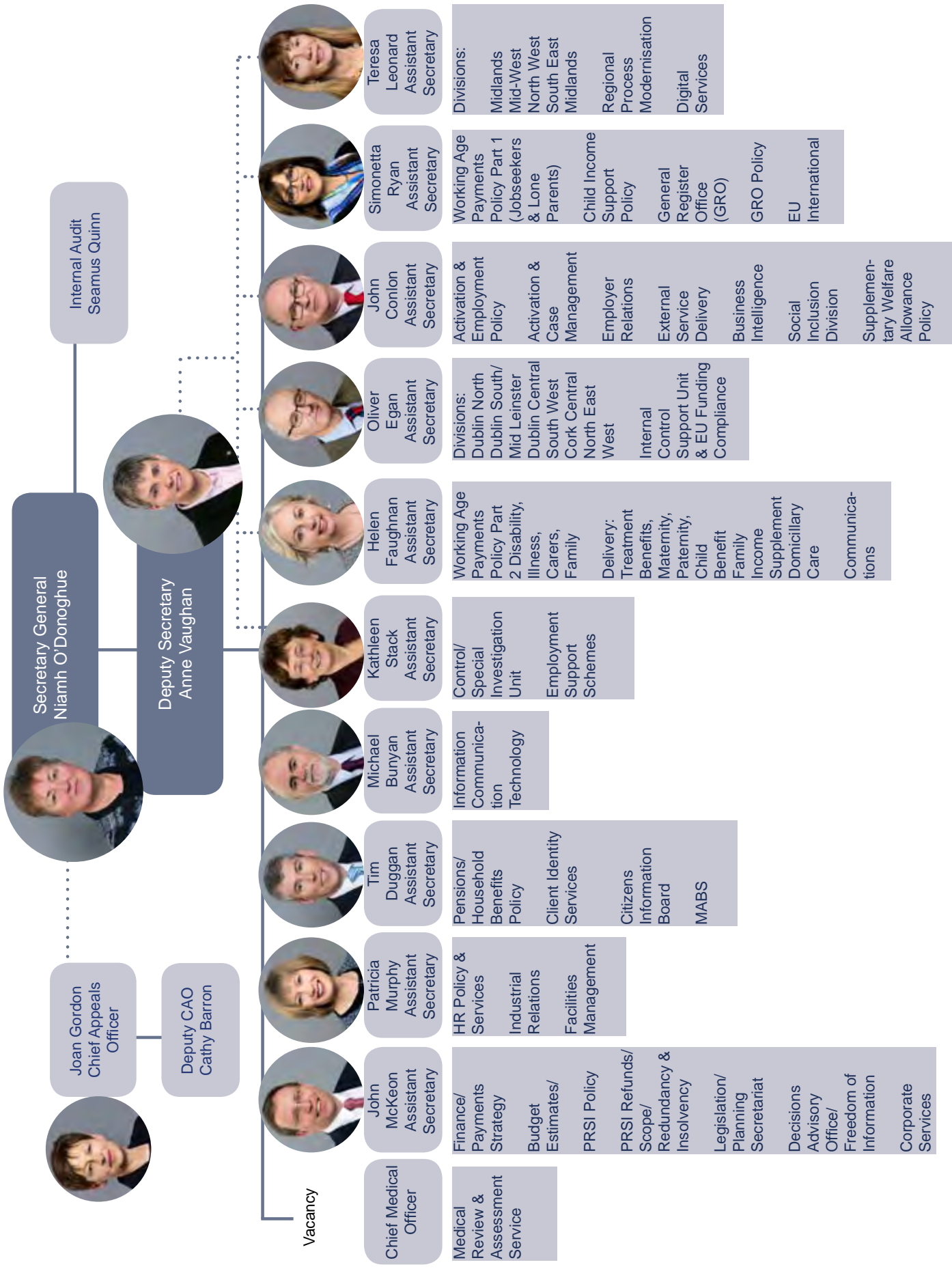
Ongoing Projects

The Department is continuing to work on a number of additional project deliveries into 2017, including PRSI Refunds, Community Employment, and Illness Benefit.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Organisation Structure as at end of 2016



Appendix 2: Legislation enacted in 2016

Social Welfare Acts 2016
Social Welfare Act 2016 (No. 15 of 2016)
Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Statutory Instruments 2016
Social Welfare (Rent Allowance) (Amendment) (No. 1) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 5 of 2016)
Occupational Pension Schemes (Revaluation) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 152 of 2016)
Occupational Pension Schemes (Section 48A) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 155 of 2016)
Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2015 (Part 3) (Commencement) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 229 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 1) (Exemption from Disqualification for Course of Study) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 327 of 2016)
Civil Registration (Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships) (Fees) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 331 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) (No. 1) (Rent Supplement) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 340 of 2016)
Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 (Commencement) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 359 of 2016)
Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016 (Sections 30 and 31) (Commencement) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 434 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 2) (Paternity Benefit) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 442 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) (Amendment) (No. 1) (Paternity Benefit) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 443 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Temporary Provisions) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 570 of 2016)
Civil Registration (Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships) (Fees) (No. 2) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 605 of 2016)

Social Welfare Acts 2016 (contd.)
Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 3) (Carer's Allowance) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 620 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 4) (Jobseeker's Transitional Payment) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 621 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Section 290A) (Agreement) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 622 of 2016)
European Union (Occupational Pension Schemes Investment) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 643 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) (No. 2) (Rent Supplement) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 669 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 5) (Prescribed Time) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 670 of 2016)
Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) (Amendment) (No. 2) (Excepted Emoluments) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 671 of 2016)
Social Welfare Act 2016 (Section 18) (Commencement) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 672 of 2016)
Social Welfare Act 2016 (Section 10) (Commencement) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 673 of 2016)

Appendix 3: Ministers of the Department since 1947

	From	To
James Ryan	22 January 1947	18 February 1948
William Norton	18 February 1948	14 June 1951
James Ryan	14 June 1951	2 June 1954
Brendan Corish	2 June 1954	20 March 1957
Patrick Smyth	20 March 1957	27 November 1957
Sean McEntee	27 November 1957	24 June 1959
Sean McEntee	24 June 1959	12 October 1961
Kevin Boland	12 October 1961	21 April 1965
Kevin Boland	21 April 1965	16 November 1966
Joseph Brennan	16 November 1966	2 July 1969
Kevin Boland	2 July 1969	6 May 1970
Joseph Brennan	6 May 1970	14 March 1973
Brendan Corish	14 March 1973	5 July 1977
Charles J Haughey	5 July 1977	12 December 1979
Michael Woods	12 December 1979	30 June 1981
Eileen Desmond	30 June 1981	9 March 1982
Michael Woods	9 March 1982	14 December 1982
Barry Desmond	14 December 1982	14 February 1986
Gemma Hussey	14 February 1986	10 March 1987
Michael Woods	10 March 1987	18 July 1989
Michael Woods	18 July 1989	13 November 1991
Brendan Daly	13 November 1991	11 February 1992
Charlie McCreevy	11 February 1992	12 January 1993
Michael Woods	12 January 1993	15 December 1994
Proinsias De Rossa	15 December 1994	26 June 1997
Dermot Ahern	26 June 1997	17 June 2002
Mary Coughlan	17 June 2002	29 September 2004
Seamus Brennan	29 September 2004	15 June 2007
Martin Cullen	15 June 2007	7 May 2008
Mary Hanafin	7 May 2008	23 March 2010
Éamon Ó Cuív	23 March 2010	9 March 2011
Joan Burton	9 March 2011	6 May 2016
Leo Varadkar	6 May 2016	

Appendix 4: Ministers of State of the Department since 1947

	From	To
Michael J.Kennedy	19 June 1951	24 April 1954
Michael J.Kennedy	24 April 1954	2 June 1954
Michael J.Kennedy	1 March 1957	23 June 1959
Michael J.Kennedy	24 June 1959	15 September 1961
John Geoghan	9 July 1969	5 February 1973
John Geoghan	2 March 1973	14 March 1973
Frank Cluskey	14 March 1973	25 May 1977
Tom Nolan	25 March 1980	17 December 1980
Tom Hussey	17 December 1980	30 June 1981
Mary Flaherty	30 June 1981	9 March 1982
Denis Gallagher	23 March 1982	27 October 1982
Rory O'Hanlon	27 October 1982	14 December 1982
Fergus O'Brien	16 December 1982	15 December 1983
John Donnellan	15 December 1983	14 February 1986
Seamus Pattison	14 February 1986	20 January 1987
Joan Burton	14 January 1993	17 November 1994
Bernard J.Durkan	20 December 1994	26 June 1997
Máire Hctor	11 July 2007	7 May 2008
Máire Hctor	13 May 2008	22 April 2009
Áine Brady	22 April 2009	9 March 2011
Kevin Humphreys	15 July 2014	6 May 2016
Finian McGrath	6 May 2016	