



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION ANNUAL REPORT 2011

Our mission is to promote active participation in society through the provision of income supports, employment services and other services.

ISSN 2009-4140
Government of Ireland 2012

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FOREWORD FROM THE MINISTER

The old Irish adage “Tús maith – leath na hoibre” tells us that a good start is half the work. I welcome this first report on the Department’s Statement of Strategy 2011–2014. The report documents many new initiatives in addition to existing schemes and services.

I also welcome staff who joined the Department with the Redundancy and Insolvency payments schemes from the former Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, staff of the former Community Welfare Service who were formally integrated into the Department in 2011 and former FÁS staff who joined the Department in January this year.



Earlier this year, the government announced the Pathways to Work initiative. This puts the needs of our unemployed people at the heart of the services the Department of Social Protection delivers.

We are integrating the provision of employment services and benefit payment services within the Department to ensure that the payment of income supports to people who do not have a job is directly linked to the equally, if not more important, task of supporting them in finding a job, education or training.

A key part of this service is the Employment Action Plan, under which some 16,000 unemployed people were placed in employment, training or education in 2011. The Department also helped almost 11,000 people through the Back to Work Enterprise Scheme. That is an increase of 35% on 2010.

The Department also provides education and training supports which also help move people from welfare to work. In 2010/2011, some 25,000 people availed of the Back to Education Allowance. This was an increase of 20.3% over the previous academic year. Over 85% of the people who availed of the schemes were previously unemployed.

Being unemployed can lead to great strain in families and cause intergenerational welfare dependency. Our Activation and Family Support Programme provides funding for initiatives to help people become more employable. In 2011, almost 9,000 people received education, training and personal development opportunities funded by this programme.

I am particularly pleased with the success of JobBridge, the national internship scheme I launched in 2011 which provided 5,000 internship opportunities to unemployed people. These internship places are open to jobseekers who were unable to obtain employment after training, apprenticeship or graduation. The aim of JobBridge is to help bridge the gap between unemployment and the world of work.

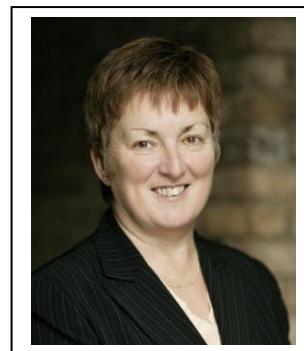
Finally, I would like to thank the staff in the Department of Social Protection for their help with the reform programme. Change is not always easy, but I believe that our work together in 2011 represents a key step on the road to securing our country’s economic recovery.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan Burton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joan Burton T.D.
Minister for Social Protection

INTRODUCTION FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

The year 2011 saw the election of a new Government, with new priorities and mandate provided by the Programme for Government, and witnessed significant change in both the remit and operations of the Department of Social Protection. In terms of the Department's history, the year certainly warrants mention because of the pivotal decisions in relation to the linkage of employment services and welfare payments in relation to the delivery of services to persons of working age.



Unemployment is the current major challenge facing our society. The work of our Department is central to supporting Government's activation measures that will assist unemployed people return to the workplace. Our understanding of the role of employment in terms of societal support is critically informed by the range of our services to people at all stages of the lifecycle. We understand, better than most, that, if Government is to continue to provide social protection supports in older life, childhood, sickness, unemployment or in an emergency, then the level of employment is a vital balancing factor for current and future sustainability.

Achieving the full and real integration of new staff and services is required so as to enhance the overall capability of the Department to support all its client groups. I, therefore, extend a warm welcome to our new colleagues from the former Community Welfare Service, the employment services and community employment services of FÁS, and those who joined us with the transfer of the redundancy and insolvency payments schemes during 2011. These integrations will give us a more extensive range of social welfare benefits, employment initiatives, enterprise supports and other services with which to help jobseekers improve their situation and support employers to maintain and create employment.

This Annual Report documents the work completed over the first year of our Statement of Strategy for 2011-2014. The skills and flexibility of staff within the emerging Department of Social Protection were vital in the completion of this work. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff for their co-operation, contribution and mutual support that will take us into the next period of the Department's history.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Niamh O'Donoghue". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Niamh O'Donoghue
Secretary General

THE DEPARTMENT – ITS BUSINESS AND ORGANISATION

Main Functions of the Department

The Department supports the Minister for Social Protection in the discharge of governmental, parliamentary and departmental duties. Our main functions 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, advice to clients and other related services; and
- work towards providing seamless delivery of services in conjunction with other Departments, agencies and bodies.

In January 2011, responsibility for the processing of claims under the Redundancy and Insolvency Payments Schemes transferred from the former Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation to the Department. On 1 October 2011, to give effect to a Government decision in 2010 regarding changes to Departmental functions and responsibility, the Community Welfare Services of the Health Service Executive (HSE) transferred to the Department. Responsibility for social inclusion, which had been assigned to the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs in 2010 was transferred back to the Department of Social Protection during the year. Employment services and community employment services of FÁS also transferred to the Department on 1 January 2012.

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 disabilities, carers and pensioners. The Department also provides a range of services to employers who are an important client group both in their own right and as 'partners' in the provision of employment opportunities to unemployed people. In delivering services to these clients, the Department administers over 70 separate schemes and services which impact on the lives of almost every person in the State. Services include:

- A wide range of social insurance and social assistance income support schemes for children, people of working age, carers, people with disabilities and pensioners, with payments such as child benefit, jobseekers payments, illness benefits payments and pensions;
- Employment support, guidance and placement services to help clients find and secure employment;
- A range of community services to promote social inclusion and provide a pathway to employment for people who are unemployed or otherwise at risk of poverty;
- Employer services including recruitment services, online vacancy publication, employment supports (e.g. wage subsidy scheme for people with disabilities) and redundancy and insolvency services;
- A range of services related to the administration of, and ensuring compliance with, the social insurance scheme;
- The provision of social welfare information, directly and through the Citizens Information Board (CIB) which also provides advocacy services for people with disabilities through the National Advocacy Service;
- The provision of budgeting and money management advice through the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) which operates under the auspices of the Citizens Information Board;
- The regulation of occupational and private pensions through the Pensions Board;
- The investigation of complaints of maladministration of pension schemes through the independent Office of the Pensions Ombudsman;

- The provision of an independent redress system through the Social Welfare Appeals Office;
- Adjudication by the Social Welfare Tribunal on cases where entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance is refused due to an involvement in a trade dispute;
- The administration of the Civil Registration Service (for the registration of births, adoptions, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths in the State) by the General Register Office (GRO).

Each week, over 1.4 million people receive a social welfare payment and, when qualified adults and children are included, over 2.2 million people benefit from weekly payments. Some 600,000 families receive child benefit payments in respect of over 1.1 million children each month. The total expenditure by the Department in 2011 was €21 billion (prov). The day to day activities of the Department included:

- 2.2 million applications processed;
- 87.6 million scheme payments made;
- 982,000 control reviews;
- 6.8 million telephone calls answered;
- 34,000 social welfare appeals finalised;
- 153,000 PPS numbers allocated.

Organisation of the Department

The Department had 6,247 staff (5,892 full-time equivalent posts) at the end of 2011. This includes over 1,000 Community Welfare Services staff formerly based in the HSE who transferred into the Department on 1 October 2011.

The organisation structure is set out in Appendix 1. In addition to headquarters offices located throughout the country, there is a nationwide network of some 125 social welfare local and branch offices as well as a number of former FÁS and HSE office premises which are now under the remit of the Department.

The **General Register Office (GRO)** manages the Civil Registration Service which provides for the registration of births, stillbirths, adoptions, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths in the State. Registration services are provided by registrars appointed by the Health Service Executive at various locations across the State. The GRO also operates a genealogical research facility. www.groireland.ie

The **Social Welfare Appeals Office** is independently responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements and insurability of employment. www.socialwelfareappeals.ie

Statutory Agencies under the aegis of the Department

- The **Citizens Information Board** is the national agency responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social services, the provision of advocacy services for people with disabilities through the National Advocacy Service and for the provision of the **Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)**. www.citizensinformationboard.ie and www.mabs.ie
- The **Pensions Board** is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Pensions Act which provides for the regulation of occupational and private pensions. The Board also advises the Minister in relation to pension policy. www.pensionsboard.ie
- The **Office of the Pensions Ombudsman** investigates complaints of financial losses, due to maladministration and disputes of fact or law, in relation to occupational and private pension schemes and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts. The Pensions Ombudsman is a statutory officer and exercises his functions independently. www.pensionsombudsman.ie

- The **Social Welfare Tribunal**¹ is a statutory body set up in 1982 to deal with cases where entitlement to Jobseeker's Benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance is refused due to an involvement in a trade dispute. Where a person feels that they have been unreasonably deprived of employment because their employer refused or failed to follow the negotiating machinery available for settling disputes, they may apply to the Tribunal for adjudication on the matter.

¹ <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/OperationalGuidelines/Pages/socweltrib.aspx>

MANAGEMENT BOARD



Back row, left to right: Helen Faughnan, Assistant Secretary; Brian Ó Raghallaigh, Assistant Secretary; Anne Vaughan, Deputy Secretary General; Niall Barry, Assistant Secretary; Alice O'Flynn, Assistant Secretary; Oliver Egan, Assistant Secretary; Geraldine Gleeson, Director, Appeals Office.

Seated, left to right: Orlaigh Quinn, Assistant Secretary; Clement Leech, Chief Medical Advisor; Niamh O'Donoghue, Secretary General; John McKeon, Assistant Secretary; Kathleen Stack, Assistant Secretary.

2011 IN REVIEW

Economic Context

The Irish economy is estimated to have contracted by 2.5% (GNP) in 2011, after a small positive increase in 2010. However, the rate of contraction was much lower than in 2009, which suggests stability is developing in the economy.

CSO statistics showed increases in unemployment during 2011, though also at a much reduced level of increase compared to earlier years. Recorded unemployment was at 14.3% in Quarter 4, compared to 14.1% at the same time in 2010. Employment fell by 15,400 or 0.8% over the year since Quarter 4 2010; on a seasonally adjusted basis, employment increased by 10,000 in the quarter, the first such increase since Q4 2007. Part-time employment increased over the year by 1,700 while full-time employment fell by 17,100. The largest decrease in employment was in education (-9,100), with all other sectors, including the construction sector, recording small annual decreases or increases.

TRANSFORMATION / CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Integration of services

The Department faced one of its biggest challenges with the transfer of over 1,000 Community Welfare Service (CWS) staff formerly based in the HSE who were formally integrated into the Department on 1 October 2011. This was followed by over 700 additional staff in the Employment Services and Community Employment Programmes of FÁS being formally integrated into the Department of Social Protection on 1 January 2012. This was a substantial undertaking for both DSP and CWS and was successfully achieved through the efforts of all involved in ensuring that the transfer took place as smoothly as possible and that clients did not experience any adverse impacts to the delivery and quality of services during the integration.

A significant body of work was involved in the planning and implementation of these transfers including:

- the management and completion of industrial relations negotiations;
- the identification and regrading of staff transferring and the consequential redesign/reassignment of work;
- the implementation of new salary and other financial arrangements, IT and network changes, implementation of new reporting structures;
- the development of services agreements with respect to some shared services with the HSE and FÁS;
- the implementation of a comprehensive communications programme to ensure that all those involved were kept informed about the logistics of what was happening as well as the policy reasons for these developments.

These two staff transfers represent the largest redeployment of public sector workers under the provisions of the "Croke Park" Public Service Agreement 2010-2014.

Supporting the transformation and change management programme

To support the transformation and change management programme, a number of initiatives were undertaken in 2011:

- A comprehensive communications plan to underpin the change management process was developed and a number of strands of this plan were implemented in 2011.

- The publication and circulation of a new staff bulletin - Transformation News.
 - Organisation of a series of meet and greet events for new staff joining the Department from the CWS and FÁS.
 - Welcome packs were given to all staff transferring to the Department.
 - A transformation team site is available on the Department's intranet.
- An employee attitudinal survey was conducted gathering data on employee's attitudes, perceptions and values across the three merging organisations, Department of Social Protection, FÁS and Community Welfare Service. This survey was designed to assess attitudes and commitment to change, levels of ownership and involvement in change as well as levels and commitment to innovation in the organisation. It also provides data on employee well-being measures such as job satisfaction, work/family conflict and job commitment and levels of stress. A report on the survey will be completed in 2012.

Establishment of the National Employment and Entitlements Service

The establishment of the National Employment and Entitlements Service (NEES), which integrates benefit payment and employment services within the Department, was approved by the Government in July 2011 and subsequently the NEES project plan² was published in August 2011. As outlined in the plan, the development and implementation of the NEES is a four year project spanning 2011-2014. Detailed implementation and delivery targets and key milestones are set out covering each area of the implementation process.

Considerable progress has already been made. Most significantly, in developing an integrated service combining income support and employment support, the appropriate institutional arrangements are now in place as FÁS Employment Services and Community Employment Programmes and the Community Welfare Services of the HSE have now merged into the Department of Social Protection. There has also been considerable development of the system capability to implement the new integrated service and to facilitate and encourage clients to return to employment. The following capabilities are currently in an advanced stage of development - client profiling tool currently being deployed on a pilot basis; caseload management system developed and deployed; group engagement sessions are in operation in many offices and will be rolled out nationally before the end of 2012; the National Employment Action Plan referral system has been developed and in pilot and penalties are now being applied to people not engaging with the activation process.

In addition, the integration of business activities to improve efficiency and effectiveness of operations is also underway. For example, the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance scheme, which had been administered by the community welfare service on behalf of this Department, was integrated into the Department in 2011 and the JobBridge initiative was developed on an integrated basis between the Department and FÁS.

PENSIONS POLICY

Work on the implementation of pension reforms continued during 2011. Legislation was introduced to increase State pension age to age 66 from 2014, 67 in 2021 and 68 in 2028, in line with the commitment in the agreement with the EU/IMF. Budget 2012 provided for changes to the rate bands associated with State pension (contributory).

Following detailed consideration of the issues associated with defined benefit pension provision and the consultation process with stakeholders, the Government decided to introduce a number of changes with regard to defined benefit provision. These include the introduction of a reformed and strengthened

² <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/AboutUs/Pages/NEES.aspx>

Funding Standard; a change in the way accrued pension benefits are revalued in order to ensure equity; and a change in the priority order in which funds are disbursed when a scheme winds up to allow for a better return to members who have not yet retired. In addition, the Pensions Board has published guidelines in relation to the sovereign annuity initiative. This will enable potential providers to develop these products which will make it easier for pension schemes to invest in Ireland.

Child Income Policy

In line with the commitments contained in the Programme for Government, the Minister established the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare in June 2011. The group is chaired by Ms. Ita Mangan, and has members with expertise from economic and social policy and other relevant areas from both within and outside the public sector.

The issue of family and child income supports was prioritised and a progress report on this issue was submitted to the Minister in advance of Budget 2012. Following the Budget, an additional issue relating to payments for young people with disabilities and long-term illness/injury was referred to the Advisory Group for review.

Fraud Initiative 2011 - 2013

The Programme for Government commits to a zero tolerance approach to social welfare fraud. It is a key priority for the Department to ensure that fraudulent activity within the social welfare system is vigorously prevented and combated. In September 2011, the Department launched Fraud Initiative 2011-2013³, which takes a revised and renewed approach to the challenges posed by social welfare fraud and abuse (see also page 26).

JobBridge

JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme, was launched in June 2011⁴. The aim of the initiative is to give individuals on the Live Register for at least three months the opportunity to undertake a quality internship in an organisation in the private, public or community or voluntary sectors for a six month or a nine month period. Interns receive an allowance of €50 per week in addition to their existing social welfare entitlement, payable for the duration of the internship.

The scheme was expanded in May 2012 to provide 1,000 extra places and the eligibility criteria were also broadened to include those in receipt of One-Parent Family Payment and Disability Allowance.

Budget 2012

A wide range of supports were maintained at 2011 levels for 2012, including:

- The Family Income Supplement scheme which benefits lower income families with children.
- Half-rate payments of Carer's Allowance to persons in receipt of another welfare payment and the value of the respite care grant at €1,700 per annum.
- The level of weekly payments to people under 66 years, including payments for pensioners' dependent spouses.
- The level of weekly pensions and other payments to people aged 66 years and over, including payments for pensioners' dependent spouses.
- The level of the extra allowances paid to pensioners and people with disabilities who live alone and those who are aged over 80 years.
- The Bereavement Grant and the Widowed Parent Grant.

³ <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/AboutUs/Documents/FraudInitiative2011.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.jobbridge.ie/>

The following changes were introduced in Budget 2012 as part of the overall expenditure reduction requirements and to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the social welfare system:

Children

- Child benefit rates applying to the third and each subsequent child will be standardised at €140 per child per month over the next two years. The grant of €635 paid at birth on all multiple births and further grants of €635 paid when the children are 4 years of age and 12 years of age was discontinued.
- The age at which a child is eligible for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance was raised from 2 to 4 years of age. The allowance was reduced from €305 to €250 for children aged 12 years or more and from €200 to €150 for children aged 4-11 years.

Working age – income supports

- The employer rebate of statutory redundancy payments was reduced from 60% to 15%.
- A Jobseeker's Benefit recipient working for part of a week will have their payment entitlement based on a 5 day week rather than a 6 day week from late July 2012.
- A person who gets a Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Pension or One-Parent Family Payment may have previously had an entitlement to half rate Jobseeker's Benefit, Illness Benefit or Incapacity Supplement if they satisfied the qualifying conditions. The entitlement to half-rate payments has ceased for new applicants for Illness Benefit, Jobseeker's Benefit or Incapacity Supplement.
- The upper age limit of the youngest child for new claimants of the One-Parent Family Payment will be reduced to 7 years on a phased basis over the period to 2015. It was reduced to 12 years with effect from May 2012.
- The amount of earnings disregarded for the purposes of the One-Parent Family Payment means test was reduced from €146.50 to €130.00 per week in 2012 for new and existing recipients.
- Income from weekly carers payments is now included for the purposes of calculating entitlement to Family Income Supplement in line with other welfare payments.

Working age – employment supports

- The Cost of Education Allowance, the annual grant which accompanies the Back to Education Allowance, was reduced from €500 to €300.
- New participants on Community Employment schemes are no longer able to claim another social welfare payment at the same time but they will receive the standard additional €20 per week paid to all other participants.

Pensions

- Additional rate bands for State Pension (Transition and Contributory), which will more fairly reflect the proportionality of attachment to the workforce by the claimant, will be implemented from September 2012.
- A reduction in the statutory backdating provision for 'late' claims, from 12 months to 6 months for full entitlement, and the removal of proportionate arrears provisions was implemented from April 2012 for State Pension (Transition and Contributory) and for Widow(er)'s and Surviving Civil Partners Contributory Pension applicants.

- The minimum qualifying contributions for State Pension (Contributory) has been increased from 260 to 520 with effect from April 2012. This was provided for in legislation in 1997.

Illness, disability and carers

- Where a person claiming Invalidity Pension, Carer's Benefit, State Pension (Contributory or Transition) or Incapacity Supplement has a spouse or partner with income of over €400 a week, payment of the half-rate increase in respect of a qualified child is being discontinued for new applicants from July 2012.
- New applicants for Disablement Benefit must have a disability classified at more than 15% in order to qualify for the payment.

Supplementary payments

- The Fuel Allowance season was reduced by 6 weeks from 32 weeks to 26 weeks for all recipients.
- The minimum contribution for the purposes of the Mortgage Interest Supplement scheme was increased by €6 to €30 per week for a single person. The minimum contribution payable by couples is €35 per week.
- From April 2012, new applicants for Carer's Allowance, who are not living with the person for whom they are providing care, are not entitled to the Household Benefits package. The person receiving care may be entitled to the Household Benefits package in their own right.

THE DEPARTMENT'S OBJECTIVES

The Department's Statement of Strategy 2011-2014 identifies three strategic objectives:

Department Services and Policies

Objective 1: Put the Client at the Centre of Services and Policies

Efficiency and Effectiveness

Objective 2: Drive Cost Efficiency and Effectiveness

Operational Capabilities

Objective 3: Develop Staff, Structures and Processes

Department Services and Policies

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

Claim Processing

Some 2.2 million customer claims were processed in the various scheme areas during the year. The Department is committed to ensuring that claims are processed as expeditiously as possible. As part of the Department's programme of service delivery modernisation, a range of initiatives aimed at streamlining the processing of claims, supported by modern technology, have been implemented in recent years. Operational processes, procedures and the organisation of work are continually reviewed to ensure that processing capability is maximised.

The following table gives a breakdown of claims processed in the main scheme areas during 2011 and the number of recipients of payments in December.

Type of payment	Claims processed 2011	Number of recipients December 2011
Child Benefit	151,000*	597,000**
Maternity; Adoptive; Guardians; Domiciliary	58,000	49,500***
Widow(er)s/Surviving Civil Partner; Deserted Wives; One-Parent Family Payment	27,000	216,500
Jobseeker's Benefit/Allowance	488,000	380,000
Family Income Supplement	46,000	29,000
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	350,000	34,500
State Pension Transition/Contributory/Non-Contributory; Pre-Retirement Allowance	71,500	410,500
Illness, Disability and Carers Payments	375,000	296,500
Treatment Benefit – dental, optical, medical	485,000	– ****
Household Benefits	101,500	405,000
Free Travel	11,000	726,000

* Includes some 113,000 claims for additional children and children over 16

** Payment to 597,000 families in respect of 1,136,000 children

*** This figure includes payment to 24,000 domiciliary care recipients in respect of 26,000 children

**** Over 416,000 treatment benefit payments were made during the year

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance provides assistance in respect of certain qualifying school-going children. The scheme operates from June to September each year and provides once-off lump sum payments in respect of eligible children.

As in 2010, the numbers qualifying for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) increased substantially in 2011. Over 195,000 families in respect of some 384,000 children qualified for the payment compared with 163,000 families and 325,000 children in 2010.

The administrative arrangements for the 2011 scheme were different from those that applied in previous

years. The scheme was previously administered on behalf of the Department by the Community Welfare Services division of the Health Service Executive. In 2011, the scheme was administered directly by the Department with the majority of entitlements being fully automated with no application form required from customers.

The automated process identified 127,000 households (243,000 children) that on the basis of the information available were qualified under the scheme and these payments were made in June 2011. Administrative efficiencies were achieved as a result of the automated process.

School Meals

The School Meals Programme includes the Urban School Meals Scheme, operated by local authorities and part-financed by the Department, and the School Meals Local Projects Scheme, which provides funding directly to schools and local groups. The budget for the School Meals Programme was maintained at €35m for 2011. Priority for funding is given to schools in the Department of Education and Skills' initiative for disadvantaged schools – "Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools" (DEIS). An additional 6 DEIS schools joined the School Meals Local Projects Scheme in 2011.

Child Income Support Policy

In November 2010, the Department published a value for money review on Child Income Support policies and associated spending programmes. Follow up activities relating to this review that took place during 2011 include:

- A consultation seminar with interest groups and stakeholders was held in March 2011. The report of the seminar was published on the Department's website.⁵
- A technical study of the feasibility of an integrated child income support payment was conducted to further examine an outline proposal to bring together the components of the various child support payments into a unified payment. The report of this study examines the technical, operational and financial issues of an integrated payment and considers the key design aspects of the payment and how it would work in practice.

PEOPLE OF WORKING AGE

One-Parent Family Payment

Changes were introduced to the One-Parent Family Payment scheme in the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2010. These came into effect on 27 April, 2011 and reduced the maximum age limit of the youngest child for receipt of the payment to 14 years. Special provisions were made for lone parents with children for whom the Domiciliary Care Allowance is paid and for those recently bereaved (married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting).

The reform of the One-Parent Family Payment scheme continued in Budget 2012, with changes proposed on a phased basis to the maximum age limit of the youngest child for receipt of the payment, from age 14 currently to age 7 in 2014. The scheme will also see a phased reduction, over five years, of the earnings disregard attached to the payment.

Activation – Customer Profiling & Case Management

- **Case Management system**

During 2011, a total of 20,756 people on a social welfare payment were invited to attend appointments with Department of Social Protection Facilitators. This is one of the key initiatives in providing a case management structure to support activation rollout to all customers of working age. The Facilitators work with social welfare recipients to identify appropriate training or development programmes which will enhance their skills and ultimately improve their employment chances, as well as help them to continue to develop personally.

⁵ http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Policy/CorporatePublications/Finance/exp_rev/Pages/CISReview_seminar.aspx

- **Employment Action Plan**

During 2011, 81,898 persons were referred to FÁS under the Employment Action Plan, which provides for referral to employment or training opportunities. A total of 65,446 (80%) were interviewed by FÁS and 15,872 of these were placed in jobs, training or education.

- **Reduced Rates of Payment for Jobseekers**

Arrangements for the reduction of payments to jobseekers who do not engage with the Employment Action Plan or who refuse offers of training were introduced and monitored. Penalty rates effectively became operational from 23 May. To the end of 2011, the number of penalty rates imposed was 372.

Employment and Education supports

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance and the Short Term Enterprise Allowance

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance and the Short Term Enterprise Allowance schemes are programmes designed to assist long-term unemployed people, lone parents, people with disabilities and other social welfare recipients to take up opportunities of self-employment.

At the end of December 2011, there were 12,227 participants on the back to work schemes:

- 10,751 people were on the Back to Work Enterprise scheme (an increase of 35% on the previous year);
- 1,294 were on the Short-Term Enterprise scheme (a decrease of 5% on the previous year);
- 182 were on the Back to Work Allowance (employee strand) (a decrease of 79% on the previous year). This scheme was closed to new applicants from 1 May, 2009.

Technical Assistance and Training Fund

This fund provides assistance towards the training and business related expenses of Back to Work schemes participants and other social welfare recipients. A total of 7,086 people were supported in 2011 under this fund and expenditure was €3.2m.

Employer Job (PRSI) Incentive Scheme

The Government agreed an extension of the Employer Job PRSI Incentive scheme to the end of 2011 in the context of the Budget and National Recovery Plan. Under the scheme, if an employer took on an additional member of staff in 2011 who had been unemployed for 6 months or more, they would be exempted from paying employers' PRSI for 12 months. The job must be new and additional, be for at least 30 hours a week and last for at least six months. During 2011, applications were received from 940 employers in respect of over 1,522 employees and exemptions awarded in respect of 923 employees. The scheme was further extended in 2012 with an exemption from employer's PRSI for a maximum of 18 months from the date of approval for the scheme for jobs created after 1 January 2012.

Education and Training Support Services

Back to Education Allowance

In the 2010/2011 academic year, some 25,000 people (almost 11,000 at 2nd level, 14,000 at 3rd level) were in receipt of a Back to Education Allowance, a 20.3% increase on the previous year. The scheme facilitates the long-term unemployed, lone parents and other social welfare recipients in gaining access to second chance education, either at second or third level, by payment of a weekly allowance. Expenditure on the scheme in 2011 was €201m.

Activation and Family Support Programme (AFSP)

The aim of the AFSP is to provide funding for programmes to assist individuals and families to enhance their employability through education, training and personal development opportunities and to improve their quality of life. The fund is operated in a manner that enables a quick response to any needs identified. The priority of the programme is to target people who find it most difficult to access employment and the means to achieving improved quality of life. Examples of activities funded under the

programme include parenting projects for young lone parents and disadvantaged families, support programmes for families of disabled persons, personal development courses and life skills. Some 8,500 individuals were supported under this programme in 2011 at a cost of €2.8m.

JobBridge/National Internship Scheme

The Government announced the introduction of a National Internship Scheme as part of its Jobs Initiative which was published on 10 May 2011. JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme, was launched by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Social Protection on 29 June 2011. The scheme came into operation on 1 July 2011 and is scheduled to run for a period of 2 years from the commencement date.

JobBridge provides those seeking employment with the opportunity to gain valuable work experience, maintain close links with the labour market and enhance their skills and competencies through a quality internship opportunity, thereby improving their prospects of securing employment in the future.

It provides internship places of 6 or 9 months for unemployed individuals who have been on the Live Register for at least 3 months in organisations in the private, public and community & voluntary sectors. Interns on the scheme will be paid their existing social welfare payments and a weekly top up of €50. The scheme is an important initiative aimed at assisting those seeking employment to successfully bridge their transition into employment. In May 2012, the Minister announced an increase in the number of places available in JobBridge from 5,000 to 6,000 places with immediate effect and, in addition, extension of eligibility to include those in receipt of One-Parent Family Payment and Disability Allowance with effect from 28 May 2012.

To the end of December 2011, in excess of 5,000 internships were posted on the JobBridge website. These internships were in a wide variety of sectors including the construction, IT, health & caring, hotel & catering and service sectors. Over 3,600 interns were selected by host organisations and, of these, some 3,160 had commenced their internship by the year end.

Rural Social Scheme (RSS)

In 2011, over 2,500 participants and 130 supervisors were engaged on the Rural Social Scheme, €46.8m was expended on the scheme and in excess of 2,600 community projects were supported.

Tús

Tús provides short-term, quality opportunities for unemployed people to work in community and voluntary bodies providing a broad range of services of benefit to communities. When fully operational, Tús will provide 5,000 short-term working opportunities for people who are long-term unemployed. The first participants joined Tús on 4 July 2011. €11.76m was expended on Tús in 2011 with over 2,000 participants and 150 supervisors on the payroll at the end of December.

Community Services Programme

In 2011, the programme supported in excess of 440 community based projects, 332 managers and 1,830 full-time equivalent posts. Expenditure on the programme amounted to €45.45m. During the year, work continued on assessing projects and authorising contracts for service providers where applicable for the period up to the end of December 2013.

Progression support initiatives for people with disabilities

The Department is actively engaged in supporting people of working age to avail of opportunities to get back to work, education or training, to help them provide for themselves and their families and participate in society. The Department recognises that people with disability face particular challenges in securing and availing of such opportunities. This recognition is reflected in the commitment made in the

Department's Disability Sectoral Plan⁶ to "engage meaningfully with persons of working age, particularly marginalised groups, and provide services directly and in co-operation with other relevant agencies to encourage and support these people in taking up relevant work, training and education or development opportunities."

Partial Capacity Benefit: Following on the enactment of the primary legislative provisions in 2010, 2011 saw finalisation of work on the development of the Partial Capacity Benefit scheme. This included the drafting of regulations envisaged by the legislation, the development of the medical criteria against which partial employment capacity will be assessed, training of the Department's Medical Assessors, the development of systems to cater for the scheme within the Department's IT framework and putting in place the necessary administrative processes and guidelines.

The introduction of the scheme marks a notable advancement in how the social welfare system caters for the real situations facing many people with disability. The traditional welfare system was inflexible in how it addressed the issue of employment capacity – people were categorised as 'fit for work' or 'unfit for work'. The Partial Capacity Benefit scheme seeks to recognise the reality that many people do not fall neatly into one or other category. Many people with a disability have a capacity to engage in the open labour market and the scheme provides an opportunity for recipients of Invalidity Pension or those in receipt of Illness Benefit for at least six months to have their capacity to work assessed and to receive an ongoing income support payment based on this assessment. The scheme is voluntary. There are no limitations to earnings from employment or to the number of hours worked. In the event that the work does not continue, the participant can revert to his or her underlying payment. The participant may remain on the scheme provided there continues to be an underlying entitlement to either Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension.

The scheme was introduced in February 2012.

Disability Activation Project: It was in the context of the wider policy environment influencing the future direction of training and employment policy for people with disabilities that in January 2008, the Department successfully obtained funding under the European Social Fund, Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2007-2013, for a cross agency programme to develop and assess new approaches to promoting participation in the economy by people with disabilities.

Activity under the Disability Activation Project in 2011 included a FETAC accredited organic gardening programme in County Roscommon and an up-skilling progression programme in County Longford. Both programmes were aimed at supporting people with mental health difficulties. A significant expansion of the Disability Activation Project across the Borders Midlands Western region will take place in 2012.

Review of Disability Allowance

A Value for Money Review of the Disability Allowance (DA) scheme⁷ was formally launched in November 2010. The review made a number of recommendations, some of which have been implemented, with others currently being progressed.

The recommendation that a clear guide to agency arrangements (where a person nominates someone/an agent to collect their social welfare payment) should be available has been addressed. Updated material on agency arrangements as they apply to the DA scheme and other welfare schemes has been published on the Department's website⁸. The 'risk-rating' control policy applied to the scheme is being constantly monitored as recommended in the review. A working group has been examining the issues associated with the fact that, in order to benefit from the earnings disregard under the DA scheme, the employment

⁶<http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Policy/CorporatePublications/HowWeWork/Disability%20Sectoral%20Plan/Pages/DisabilitySectoralPlanIndex.aspx>

⁷http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Policy/CorporatePublications/Finance/exp_rev/Pages/DAReviewFinal.aspx

⁸<http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Topics/payments/Pages/AppointmentofAgents.aspx>

involved must be deemed to be rehabilitative. The working group will report in 2012. Other issues, such as the recommendation to merge the DA scheme and the Blind Person's Pension, are being considered in the wider context of the development of a single working age payment.

One of the review's recommendations in relation to the structure of the scheme was that, in line with other social welfare working-age schemes, the minimum age of entitlement should be increased from sixteen years to eighteen years. The award of the payment at age 16 can create an incentive for young people with disabilities to exit the education system prematurely and carries with it the risk of creating a dependency on social welfare at a very young age. This proposal has been referred to the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare for consideration.

Disability Stakeholders Group Workshops Project

The Disability Stakeholders Group was established in 2008 to monitor the progress made by the Department in relation to the National Disability Strategy. The objectives of the group are to contribute to the goal of maximising the potential of every disabled person and ensuring that every person with a disability who wants to work is supported in doing so, and contributing to the goal of ensuring that every person with a disability has access to an income in line with the commitments made in *Towards 2016, Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015*. The group meets quarterly.

During 2011, in addition to the quarterly meetings held between the group members and Departmental officials, a series of four workshops were held covering three areas, as follows:

- Theme 1:** Training and Employment Programmes
- Theme 2:** Supporting those in employment
- Theme 3:** Income Support

Participants included members of the stakeholders group, specialists from across the disability sector, and FÁS and Department officials. The project was considered a worthwhile initiative that provided valuable learning through the sharing of views, concerns and suggestions. A number of options were identified for enhancing income and employment supports for people with disabilities which were presented to the Minister in November 2011.

OLDER PEOPLE

Pension Reforms

Following detailed consideration of the issues associated with defined benefit pension provision and consultation with stakeholders, the Government decided to introduce a number of changes with respect to defined benefit pension provision. These include the introduction of a reformed and strengthened Funding Standard; a change in the way accrued pension benefits are revalued in order to ensure equity; and a change in the priority order in which funds are disbursed when a scheme winds up to allow for a better return to members who have not yet retired. In addition, the Pensions Board will be given powers to wind up schemes in certain limited circumstances. Initially, the existing Funding Standard is being restored and this will give underfunded schemes 3 years in which to restore their funding levels to the current standard. In addition, the Pensions Board has published guidelines in relation to the sovereign annuity initiative. This will enable potential providers to develop these products which will make it easier for pension schemes to invest in Ireland.

Following an EU-wide tendering process, a panel of pension experts was established to assist the Department with the implementation of planned pension reforms. The first project to utilise this expertise – a study of pension charges – was initiated in 2011 and will provide an initial benchmark on the level of pension charges for different forms of funded supplementary pension arrangements and will provide information in relation to the transparency of pensions charges.

In line with the Programme for Government commitment to progressively achieve universal pension coverage, with a particular focus on lower-paid workers, work in relation to implementation issues associated with the development of a national scheme into which employees would be automatically enrolled continued during 2011.

The Department participated in an EU level working group (a sub-group of the Social Protection Committee) which is developing a Pensions Adequacy Report to complement the Ageing Report 2012⁹ which is produced by the Economic Policy Committee.

Developments in State Pension provision

The State pension age will be increased gradually to 68 years. This will begin from 1 January 2014 with the standardisation of State pension age at 66. State pension (transition) will no longer be payable to those who reach age 65 in 2014 or later. State pension age will be increased to 67 years in 2021 and to 68 in 2028. The legislation to underpin these changes are contained in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011.

The requirement to have a minimum of 520 paid contributions in order to qualify for a State pension came into effect from April 2012. During the year, legislative provision was also made for an increase from 156 to 260 in the contribution requirement for widow's widower's and surviving civil partner's contributory pension from December 2013.

Changes were also made to the provisions for backdating of late claims for contributory pensions. From April 2012, such claims may be backdated for a maximum period of 6 months.

National Carer's Strategy

One of the commitments in the Programme for Government, published in 2011, is to develop a National Carer's Strategy to support carers and to address issues of concern. In late 2011, the Taoiseach gave overall responsibility for co-ordinating the preparation of the Strategy to the Minister of State at the Department of Health with responsibility for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People. The Department of Social Protection has been and continues to be involved in a supporting role with the Department of Health in this work.

EU and International Activities

The Department participated in policy and social inclusion developments at EU and international level in 2011. This included attendance at Ministerial Council meetings, membership of the Social Protection Committee and relevant sub-groups which covered topics including pensions, active inclusion, and an assessment of the social impact of the financial crisis. The committee also contributes to monitoring the social dimension of the Europe 2020 Strategy¹⁰.

In 2011, the Department, through the Social Inclusion Division, hosted a peer review on the setting of national poverty targets. A report on the outcome of the peer review and a copy of the papers presented is available on the website¹¹.

Other Policy Developments

Rent Supplement – Transfer of tenants to local authorities

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), which was introduced in 2004, gives Local Authorities specific responsibility for meeting the longer-term housing needs of people receiving rent supplement for 18

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/european_economy/2011/pdf/ee-2011-4_en.pdf

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

¹¹ <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/peer-reviews/2011/the-setting-of-national-poverty-targets>

months or more. Local Authorities meet the housing needs of these individuals through a range of approaches including the traditional range of social housing options, the voluntary housing sector and, in particular, RAS.

At the end of December 2011, there were approximately 96,800 households in receipt of a rent supplement payment of which approximately 53,000 who have been in receipt of a payment for 18 months or longer are the target group for the rental accommodation scheme.

Figures for the end of December 2011 from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government indicate that local authorities have transferred 21,900 rent supplement cases to RAS units. Housing authorities have also transferred a further 15,800 recipients to other social housing options, a total of over 37,700 transfers since 2005 of which 6,337 occurred in 2011.

On 16 June 2011, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Minister for Housing & Planning published a new housing policy framework statement¹². The housing policy framework contains the announcement of the transfer of responsibility in providing housing needs for long-term rent supplement recipients to housing authorities on a phased basis. A multi-agency steering group has been established by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to give effect to the Housing Policy Initiative and this group is currently developing proposals and operational protocols for the transfer of tenants.

Rent Supplement – Maximum Rent Limits

The maximum rent limits for Rent Supplement were reviewed in December 2011 and new limits set from 1 January 2012. The purpose of the rent limit review was to establish new maximum rent limits regionally which were in line with the most up-to-date market data available.

As the Department currently funds approximately 40% of the private rented sector, it is essential that State support for rents are kept under review, reflect current market conditions and do not distort the market in a way that could increase rent prices for low paid workers and students.

The emphasis of the review was to ensure that people on Rent Supplement can find suitable accommodation whilst at the same time persons in low income employment are not priced out of the market for private rented accommodation.

Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare

In line with the commitments contained in the Programme for Government, the Minister established the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare in June 2011. The group was tasked with recommending cost-effective solutions as to how employment incentives can be improved and better poverty outcomes achieved, particularly child poverty outcomes. The Terms of Reference for the Advisory Group provide for any proposals for change to existing arrangements to be considered in a cost-neutral or cost-reducing context.

Between June and December 2011, the group held seven meetings. In line with the Terms of Reference, the issue of family and child income supports was prioritised. They took into account the considerable level of analysis that has already taken place in relation to family and child income supports, including the Department's Policy and Value for Money Review of Child Income Support payments¹³. A progress report on child income supports was submitted to the Minister in advance of Budget 2012. The Advisory Group also commenced its examination of the issue of social insurance cover for the self-employed. Following the Budget, an additional issue relating to payments for young people with disabilities and long-term illness/injury was referred to the Advisory Group for review.

¹² <http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/HousingPolicy/>

¹³ http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Policy/CorporatePublications/Finance/exp_rev/Pages/CISReviewFinal.aspx

Habitual Residence Condition

The Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) was reviewed in early 2011 and new guidelines were drawn up to take account of changing circumstances and recent national and international case law. The guidelines¹⁴ were rolled out across the Department during March/April 2011 with training sessions provided to staff on the application of the HRC, to ensure uniformity and consistency of treatment to clients seeking to access social assistance.

Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act, 2010

Civil Partnership was introduced from 1 January 2011. The legislative changes required to introduce civil partnership into the social welfare code were provided for in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act, 2010 and regulations were amended accordingly in 2011. The Department continued to support the implementation of the Civil Partnership Act, 2010 by engaging with Departments, agencies and relevant organisations relating to civil partnership during 2011.

Gender Recognition

The Minister for Social Protection established an interdepartmental group in May 2010, the Gender Recognition Advisory Group, following a High Court ruling that Ireland is in breach of the European Convention of Human Rights in not having a process to legally recognise the acquired gender of transgender persons. The report¹⁵ of the Group was submitted to Government and published in July 2011.

The report set out recommendations for legislation to give recognition, including birth registration, to the acquired gender of transgender persons. The Department is examining the implementation of the report, including the preparation of the required legislation, which includes engagement with relevant stakeholders and seeking legal advice from the Office of the Attorney General.

INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer Panels and Customer Representative Groups

In line with commitments in the Customer Action Plan 2009 to 2011, briefing was provided for customer panels and customer representative groups on current issues including the following:

- Integration of the Community Welfare Service,
- Rural Social Scheme,
- TÚS,
- One-Parent Family Payment changes,
- New Pensions Framework,
- Redundancy and Insolvency,
- National Employment and Entitlements Service,
- Public Services Card,
- Payments Strategy,
- Appeals System,
- Civil Partnership.

Customer Surveys

A number of customer surveys were carried out in 2011. While the overall level of response to these surveys was disappointing, most of those who responded expressed satisfaction with the quality of customer service provided to them.

¹⁴ <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/OperationalGuidelines/Pages/habres.aspx>

¹⁵ <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Policy/Legislation/Pages/gragreportjune11.aspx>

Comments and Complaints

The Department's comments and complaints system facilitates the processing of complaints in a timely and efficient manner. During the year 1,734 complaints were addressed. Of these, over 95% were resolved within 15 working days.

Providing Services through Irish

The Department continued to provide a service through Irish in 2011 in accordance with the requirements of the Official Languages Act, 2003. The Department has an official language scheme in place, the purpose of which is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish.

Translations

During 2011, the Department arranged for the translation of 421 documents to/ from Irish. In addition, there were 3,065 translations into other languages, 409 interpretations and 18 sign language interpretations.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

Objective 2 - Drive cost efficiency and effectiveness

CONTROL and SAVINGS

Fraud Initiative 2011 - 2013

The Programme for Government commits to a zero tolerance approach to social welfare fraud. A key priority for the Department is to ensure that fraudulent activity within the social welfare system is vigorously prevented and combated. Social welfare fraud undermines public confidence in the entire system as well as being unfair to other recipients of social welfare payments, taxpayers and businesses run on a legitimate basis. In September 2011, the Department launched a new fraud initiative, Fraud Initiative 2011-2013¹⁶.

This initiative takes a revised and renewed approach to the challenges posed by social welfare fraud. The ambition is to ensure that the public have confidence and trust in the Department's response to combating fraud and abuse in the social welfare system. There are a number of themes and approaches in this plan that can be summarized as follows:

- Greater inter-agency co-operation among public bodies at national and local level to combat fraud and abuse;
- Greater presence of social welfare inspectors on the ground;
- Target sectors where fraud is more likely to occur;
- New ways to recover overpayments to be examined;
- Increased penalties for those operating in the hidden economy to be examined;
- Greater liaison at national and, in particular, at local level with employers, their representative organisations and businesses generally to ensure good information exchange on emerging fraudulent trends in the labour market, and also to maintain a fair and level playing pitch for all enterprises.

Control savings and reviews

Control savings are an estimate of savings from various control activities across the schemes in payment. Control savings are not actual monies recovered by the Department. If this control work did not take place, social welfare expenditure would increase by this level over time.

The control savings target for 2011 was €540 million. €645 million control savings were recorded as achieved at the end of 2011. The 2011 target for reviews was 780,000 while some 983,000 cases were reviewed. The breakdown is as follows:

	Reviews	Savings (€m)
Child Benefit	393,000	87.65
Family Income Supplement	27,000	12.57
Jobseeker Schemes	222,000	82.54
One-Parent Family Payment	101,000	132.43
PRSI Inspections	3,000	10.22
State Pension Schemes	14,000	149.79

¹⁶ <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/AboutUs/Documents/FraudInitiative2011.pdf>

Widow(er)'s Pension	2,000	34.37
Household Benefit Schemes	26,000	17.66
Illness Schemes	192,000	92.13
Carers Allowance	3,000	11.27

In addition, control savings of €14.94 million were achieved on supplementary welfare allowance.

Control activity is also focused on the prevention of fraud and error at new claim stage. This is the most cost effective mechanism of reducing losses through fraud and error in social welfare schemes. Savings made from the prevention of fraud and error at application stage cannot be estimated as the claims in question will not go into payment.

Anonymous reports:

The number of anonymous reports increased significantly in 2011, with almost 17,000 reports made to Central Control Section compared to 12,600 in 2010. The majority of the reports received relate to jobseekers payments, one-parent family payments, illness payments and supplementary welfare allowance.

Data Matching:

In the last number of years, the Department has been engaged in data matching with other Government Departments and public bodies for control purposes. Data matching is viewed as a very efficient and effective mechanism to target control-related activity. Bodies that the Department of Social Protection exchanges data with include:

- Irish Prison Service
- Third Level Institutions
- General Register Office (GRO)
- Commission on Taxi Regulation
- Revenue Commissioners
- Department of Work & Pensions (UK State Pensions Match)
- Probate Office

Fraud and Error Surveys:

The Department is committed to undertaking two fraud and error surveys annually. During 2011, two fraud and error surveys were undertaken - one on One-Parent Family Payment¹⁷ and, in December 2011, Jobseekers Benefit¹⁸. Reports on these have recently been published on the website.

Court Proceedings:

During the year a total of 207 criminal cases and 2 civil cases were forwarded to the Chief State Solicitor's Office for the initiation of court proceedings. In addition, a further 174 cases of possible personation were referred by Social Welfare Inspectors to the Gardaí for consideration for prosecution under the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud) Act 2001. Civil cases are taken to facilitate (i) the recovery of scheme overpayments; (ii) the collection of PRSI arrears; and (iii) the enforcement of maintenance recovery orders against the liable relatives of One-Parent Family Payment recipients.

222 cases, including 4 civil cases, were finalised in 2011 with the following results:

Outcome	Number
Fined	134

¹⁷ http://www.welfare.ie/EN/AboutUs/Documents/OFP_Survey.pdf

¹⁸ http://www.welfare.ie/EN/AboutUs/Documents/JSB_Survey.pdf

Prison sentences	7
Suspended Sentence	18
Community Service	16
Probation Act	28
Struck out/dismissed/Withdrawn	16
Adjourned with liberty to re-enter	1
Decree obtained	2
TOTAL	222

Special Investigation Unit

The Department's Special Investigation Unit (SIU) carries out a wide range of control activities and projects to investigate social welfare fraud and abuse, concentrating on employers or individuals in the hidden economy and in sectors where social welfare fraud is most prevalent, with an emphasis on direct intervention and engagement. The unit works jointly with Revenue, the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA), and the Gardaí. High visibility operations by the unit are regularly and systematically undertaken. The following outcomes* were achieved in 2011:

- Total control savings in excess of €62m were generated.
- Over 30,000 fraud investigations were completed.
- A total of 750 employer inspections and site visits were undertaken.
- A national project was undertaken on individuals suspected of multiple claiming of social welfare payments and identity fraud yielding savings of €3.7m and 274 detections.
- A national project was undertaken on persons who were suspected of no longer being resident in the State and claiming social welfare payments yielding €6.5m and 605 detections.

*outcomes are included in the Control Savings and Reviews on previous page

Internal Control

The Department's internal control support unit monitors compliance with internal control procedures and investigates any suspected breaches of these procedures and possible fraud in the regions. The unit also investigates any reported possible breaches of data protection in the Department.

During the year, 14 complaints of alleged breaches of the Data Protection Acts involving the disclosure of confidential customer information were received in the Department. Following investigation, no evidence of a breach was established in 8 of the cases, while 5 cases are still under investigation. A report on the outcome of 1 investigation was referred to the Department's Human Resources Division for consideration regarding possible disciplinary action under the civil service disciplinary code. This case is still under consideration.

In addition, 2 investigations into alleged data protection breaches and 3 investigations into alleged breaches of procedure and possible fraud from 2010 were finalised in 2011. Of these, 1 case relating to an alleged data protection breach was referred to HR Division for consideration and has now been resolved. Official warnings were issued to the staff involved in this case. No breach was established in the remaining 4 cases.

A further 14 cases of suspected breaches of procedure and possible fraud were also investigated. Of these, 4 cases were found to be in order, 3 were referred to the Department's HR Division for consideration, 4 cases were referred to local management for follow up action and 3 cases are ongoing. Of the cases referred to HR Division, disciplinary action was taken against an officer in 1 case, and 2 cases are ongoing.

IDENTITY MANAGEMENT AND SECURE ACCESS TO SERVICES

The Department's client identity services (CIS) unit is responsible for providing a range of identity management functions internally to the Department and, increasingly, to other public bodies. It issues and manages the Personal Public Service (PPS) number 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 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 enhancing systems for control of fraud and abuse. A total of 153,050 PPS numbers were allocated in 2011.

Public Services Card Project / SAFE registration

The Public Services Card will facilitate easier access to Government services, with the rollout of the first cards having commenced - more than 4,000 issued in 2011. New registration and card management processes and systems have been developed and the Department is actively putting the detailed plans and facilities in place to support the accelerated roll-out of the card.

Currently, holders of a PPS number are registered to Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) Level 1 which requires a record of personal details, name, address and date of birth. Standard Authentication Framework Environment (SAFE) Level 2 provides for a higher level of authentication involving the addition of a verified photograph and signature. Pilot operation of the SAFE 2 registration process in three of the Department's local offices commenced in October 2011 and the process is currently being rolled out across the Department.

Authentication of Documentation

During 2011, authentication of documentation led to the detection of 122 invalid identity documents which had been presented by applicants for services and to the arrest of 21 individuals. In addition, CIS activities led to the detection of 271 suspect PPS records. Investigations into such detected cases by the Special Investigation Unit and by the Revenue Commissioners have led to very substantial financial savings for the exchequer.

Data matching for agencies

During 2011, the Department processed a total of 597,562 PPS number matching and validation requests from other Public Service Departments and Agencies. Assistance was provided to other agencies in 207,170 cases where issues arose and a manual intervention was required.

Rent Supplement – Landlord PPS Numbers

The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (No. 37 of 2010) contained a series of provisions in relation to landlord PPS numbers including a requirement for the landlord's tax reference number to be supplied to the Department from 1 January 2011, before a claim for Rent Supplement can be awarded. The deadline for full compliance for Rent Supplement tenancies to supply their landlord's PPS number was 31 March 2012 and 96% compliance was achieved by this date. This provision will assist Revenue in ensuring that landlords are in compliance with their tax obligations.

Rent Supplement – PRTB Registration

In order to ensure that landlords receiving Rent Supplement are registered with the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB), the PRTB in consultation with the Department has created a software solution allowing the PRTB to isolate rent supplement tenancies that it considers should be registered with the PRTB and where the landlords have yet to register. This is supported by the Department providing the relevant data to the PRTB on a quarterly basis and has proved to be a very effective cross checking control, significantly improving registration compliance for landlords in receipt of Rent Supplement.

Operational Capabilities

Objective 3 - Develop staff, structures and processes

ACTION PLAN UNDER THE PUBLIC SERVICES AGREEMENT 2010 – 2014

An action plan^[1] was prepared by the Department in accordance with the requirements of the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement 2010 – 2014. Action plans were also prepared by the agencies under the aegis of the Department, namely the Citizens Information Board and the Pensions Board. The Action Plans were prepared having regard to the economic and budgetary environment. Full implementation of the Action Plans requires major organisational change, involving changes in structures, business processes, administrative, operating and governance systems, practices and procedures, supported by significant human resource and ICT changes. The Department is striving to provide an effective service to its customers in the most efficient manner that can reasonably be achieved and is fully committed to delivering on the Action Plans in order to secure service improvements and efficiencies.

Two reviews of the implementation of the agreement have been undertaken. All targets to the end of September 2011 were met and all actions were on schedule for delivery in accordance with the specified timeframes.

The following is a summary of the main achievements to the end of September 2011:

- Development and publication of the plan for the establishment of the new National Employment and Entitlements Service (NEES), as provided for in the Programme for Government, on 3 August 2011. The establishment of the NEES is also a key commitment under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with the EU/IMF/ECB.
- Full transfer of 1,020 Community Welfare Staff to the Department on 1 October 2011. This represented the culmination of a very significant cross-sectoral effort by the Department of Social Protection, Department of Health, HSE and staff representatives and brought us a step closer to full integration and to the development of the NEES.
- Administrative savings of approximately €1m were realised in the implementation of a revised approach to the processing of Back to School Clothing and Footwear claims for 2011.
- A new ICT system was developed to cater for Redundancy and Insolvency Payments. The new system, which included online claiming for these payments, went live at the beginning of October 2011.
- The phased introduction of the Public Services Card commenced on 3 October 2011.
- The Department successfully negotiated a deal with a telephone service provider for the application of the telephone allowance administered under the Household Benefits Package to over 289,000 customers. The deal not only yielded significant annual savings of €17 million but also provided customers with additional value of over €55 per annum.
- Significant business process and IT development to support the operation of the revised National Employment Action Plan and the testing of a new online “sign-on” service for Jobseeker’s payments commenced in September 2011.

^[1] http://www.welfare.ie/EN/AboutUs/publicservicesagreement/Documents/DSPRevisedAction%20Plan_2012.pdf

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES DEVELOPMENT

Modernisation of Service Delivery

The modernisation of service delivery systems and processes continued during the year.

A number of projects were implemented to provide functionality on the Department's modern integrated system, the business object model implementation (BOMi), with the aim of delivering key business benefits and supporting the delivery of quality services to our customers. During 2011, the following key milestones were achieved:

- Processing of new Invalidity pension claims and the migration of existing claims from the old computer system to BOMi was completed in May 2011.
- Processing of new Carer's Allowance applications commenced on the BOMi from September 2011 with the migration of existing claims in early 2012.
- The project to modernise systems and processes for Disability Allowance new claims was completed in 2011 with new claim processing commencing on the BOMi from the end of Jan 2012.
- The Means Object Project was completed in 2011 for State Pension Non-Contributory. Means data for decisions made on Widow's, Widower's and Surviving Civil Partner's Non-Contributory Pension and Blind Person's Pension are now entered on the Means Object ensuring that the means data in relation to these customers can be accessed by other scheme areas as required to facilitate quicker and more effective decision making.
- A project to cater for the business requirements of the transferred Redundancy Payments Scheme and the Insolvency Payments Scheme was successfully implemented on the BOMi in September 2011.

These developments allow the Department to be more agile in responding to changes in Government policies and customer needs. The aim is to have comprehensive service delivery, based around efficient customer centric transaction processing and integration of services, for the benefit of the customer, while also providing a much improved working environment for staff.

Expenditure on all BOMi related projects in the period since commencement some ten years ago, amounts to just over €82m.

Building In-House Capacity

The Department continues to develop its people and grow skills and capacity to support business transformation and modernisation initiatives. The roles and associated training plan for the software development competency, focusing on developing in-house design and build capabilities on the business object model implementation (BOMi) platform, was completed and will form the basis for staff development in this area in the coming months and years. Department staff are involved in all aspects of the development of new systems on the BOMi application and on the migration of schemes from legacy systems. The Information Systems Division (ISD) has a dedicated training and development unit that organises information and communications technology (ICT) specific training courses and seminars. As well as in-house seminars and technology briefings, a total of 25 separate technology training courses were arranged for 161 ISD staff during the year.

Local Office Process Modernisation (LOPM)

The downturn in the Irish economy since 2007 led to a sharp increase in unemployment with the live register rising from just under 200,000 in March 2008 to 455,000 in August 2010. The sharp rise in the level of jobseeker claims put considerable pressure on staff and facilities in our system of local offices which manage these claims. The LOPM project was set up to help to address this situation by making the BOMi available to staff in the local offices and developing facilities on the system to assist staff in dealing with jobseeker claims.

The main focus of the project is to reduce footfall in local offices to provide time and space to enable staff to interact with customers in a more focused manner. Work completed under the project included the development of a range of signing options for customers (electronic signature capture, automated certificate pattern creation for casuals, online signing capabilities). Other features delivered included the ability to generate bulk communications to customers and facilities to deal with customers working in the education sector to ease the claim-taking burden in local offices during academic holiday periods.

The system has been rolled out to 50 local offices to date. Interactive versions of the main claim forms for Jobseeker's Allowance and Jobseeker's Benefit will be available on the Department's website in the coming months. Other facilities developed under the LOPM project are currently being piloted in selected local offices and will be rolled out over the coming months.

- **Fully Unemployed Clients**

- An electronic certification facility was trialled in 3 local offices - Ballymun, Sligo and Kilkenny. Clients declare their unemployment by signing their normal signature on a digital signature pad. This reduces the dependency on paper and introduces greater flexibility into the signing process. Offices are better able to manage queues on signing day thereby considerably reducing the waiting times for clients and providing an enhanced customer service. This initiative will be extended to other offices during 2012.

- **Casual/Part-time Workers**

- The streamlined process for certifying casual/part-time workers was migrated to BOMi for all local offices with sufficient bandwidth capacity. Approximately 55,000 clients are now certified weekly in this streamlined fashion.

- **Communications**

- The streamlined procedure for clients moving to Jobseeker's Allowance when their Jobseeker's Benefit expires was introduced in 60 local offices and extended to 32 branch offices. This process also includes an online option for clients.
- A revised communication for all educational sector workers which removes the need for them to call to the local office was introduced during the year.

- **On-line services**

- A new facility was introduced during 2011 which allows clients to submit their jobseekers' claims on-line. This service will also issue the client with an appointment to attend the local office to register their jobseeker's claim.
- An on-line service to submit a work pattern was made available to a limited number of casual clients in quarter 4 of 2011.
- Both of these services will be extended in 2012.

Activation, Profiling and Case Management (APCM)

The information technology system developed to replace the existing employment action plan selection and referral system, which includes the facility to schedule individual or group appointments with FÁS or other agencies, continued to be rolled out to social welfare local offices during the year. The system was

further enhanced to cater for new initiatives, such as internship, facilitating the speedy introduction of these initiatives across the local offices. In conjunction with the profiling system, these new facilities assist in providing for more targeted interventions for jobseekers.

Integration of staff from other Departments/Agencies

Following the integration of staff from the HSE and FÁS, continued development and roll-out of the National Employment and Entitlements Service in the local offices will ensure that the Department can deliver seamless services to clients in a pro-active, efficient and effective manner. As part of these developments, the trial of “one stop shop” locations in Kings Inns/Parnell Street, Tallaght, Arklow and Sligo is being progressed. The consultation process regarding the possible partnership of the Department with private sector providers will continue and the Department will bring proposals to Government concerning these partnerships in due course.

Office Systems Modernisation

Department of Social Protection Intranet

At the end of 2011, all staff, including those that recently joined the Department, had been provided with access to the Department’s corporate portal – Stór.

During 2011, applications were developed and implemented on Stór to improve business processes and enhance productivity. This included the roll-out of a new parliamentary questions tracking application; local office team sites with automated customer appointment features; a staff training application to automate registration and tracking of training courses; a stores requisitions application; conference and meeting room booking facilities; customised team sites with report libraries and associated document templates; project governance supports with an on-line tracking and reporting system; and a single integrated business plan and risk management application.

Human Resources

HR Shared Service Centre

The establishment of a HR Shared Service Centre (HRSSC) for the Civil Service is one of the commitments in the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement 2010–2014. The Department’s Human Resources (HR) Division has been centrally involved in planning the development of this shared service which is aimed at delivering a more efficient service for staff. During 2011, this work included membership of a cross-departmental committee tasked with developing a Request for Tender to engage external consultancy support for this flagship project and the evaluation of tenders received. The Department is represented on the project’s Management Board and Design Authority which will oversee the development and delivery of the service.

Centralised Employee Assistance Service

Significant progress was made during 2011 in developing a centralised Employee Assistance Service for the Civil Service. The Department is represented on the Management Board which oversees this shared services project.

Review of Performance Management and Development System

The Department’s HR Division is also represented on the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) Sub-Committee of General Council which is reviewing performance management in the Civil Service. Phase 1 of the review, completed during 2011, provided for the simplification of the process; revised and integrated forms; increased compliance and a focus on more effective management of performance and underperformance.

Framework for Redeployment

The Department's HR Division is actively involved in working with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in developing a more effective framework for the redeployment of staff across Government departments and agencies to give effect to commitments in the Public Sector Reform programme.

Staff Training and Development

The Department is committed to providing staff with developmental opportunities and the skills necessary to deliver a high quality customer service. In 2011 significant resources were invested in the development and provision of training for staff leading to the delivery of 5,229 training days to 4,925 staff. Among the range of courses delivered were:

- Management development for front-line and middle managers;
- Induction training for new staff (including 1,033 former CWS staff);
- Training under the Department's Disability Sectoral Plan, including Disability Awareness, Diversity Awareness and Mental Health Awareness;
- Training for designated persons in accordance with the National Guidelines for the Protection of Children and the Department's Child Protection Policy and Guidelines;
- Business process improvement training for staff involved in managing change.

As part of the Good Friday Agreement a cross-border Summer School was established to discuss social policy issues between the Department of Social Protection and the Department for Social Development, Northern Ireland. The twelfth Summer School took place in NUI Maynooth between 14 and 20 August 2011. The theme for the school was "Balancing Welfare and Work: Balancing Continuity and Change". The Summer School has run successfully since its inception with enthusiastic participation by employees from both jurisdictions.

Project Governance and Procurement Policy

The Project Governance Committee, a Committee of the Management Board, monitors project progress and expenditure on an ongoing basis and ensures best practice is followed in the management of major programmes and all procurement matters. A structured project prioritisation process, together with an enhanced project governance process supported by an on-line reporting system, was implemented in 2011.

Project proposals are evaluated and prioritised, and budgets and resources assigned in line with the Department's Statement of Strategy and business plans. During 2011, particular focus was given to reviewing and aligning priorities to the Programme for Government, the Department's transformation programme, and the Public Service Reform agenda. Also, as required under the Public Service Reform plan, a change delivery team was established in the Department charged with responsibility for departmental initiatives. An integrated reform delivery plan was developed and submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and Cabinet Committee of Public Service Reform, in December.

The focus in the procurement of goods and services to support the work of the Department is in achieving value for money while operating in a transparent manner in line with legislative requirements and best practice. The Department participates fully in the initiatives of the National Procurement Service (NPS), including availing of centrally procured frameworks for common goods and services, and staff engage in NPS continuing professional development activities.

The Department has worked closely with the NPS in the development of the first framework agreement established in 2011 for the supply of electricity to Government departments and agencies. NPS frameworks established for the purchase of oil/ kerosene and natural gas are utilised. The Department also avails of interdepartmental framework agreements for purchasing personal computers and laser

printers, and in April 2011 committed to purchasing office supplies under a further NPS framework agreement.

In line with government policy to advance opportunities for the SME sector to compete for government contracts, all Department procurements in excess of €25,000 are now advertised on the e-tenders website¹⁹. Further information about the Department's procurement policy and contracts in 2011 is available on www.welfare.ie²⁰.

Financial Management – Prompt Payments

During 2011, there were 112 late payments which amounted to 0.64% of payments. Prompt payment interest amounted to €530.

Energy Efficiency

The Department continued its involvement in the OPW Energy Awareness Campaign which aims to reduce energy consumption by raising staff awareness. An additional three offices were included in the campaign during 2011, bringing the total number of participating offices to 33.

During 2011, the Department implemented a range of initiatives to improve energy performance. These included the alteration of heating and hot water time schedules based on staff occupancy hours; the introduction of power management policies for personal computers; the replacement of windows in the Letterkenny Headquarters building to conserve energy usage; as well as the periodic distribution of information notices to encourage staff to be energy aware in the workplace.

Information received from our energy providers indicates the following energy usage by the Department in 2011.

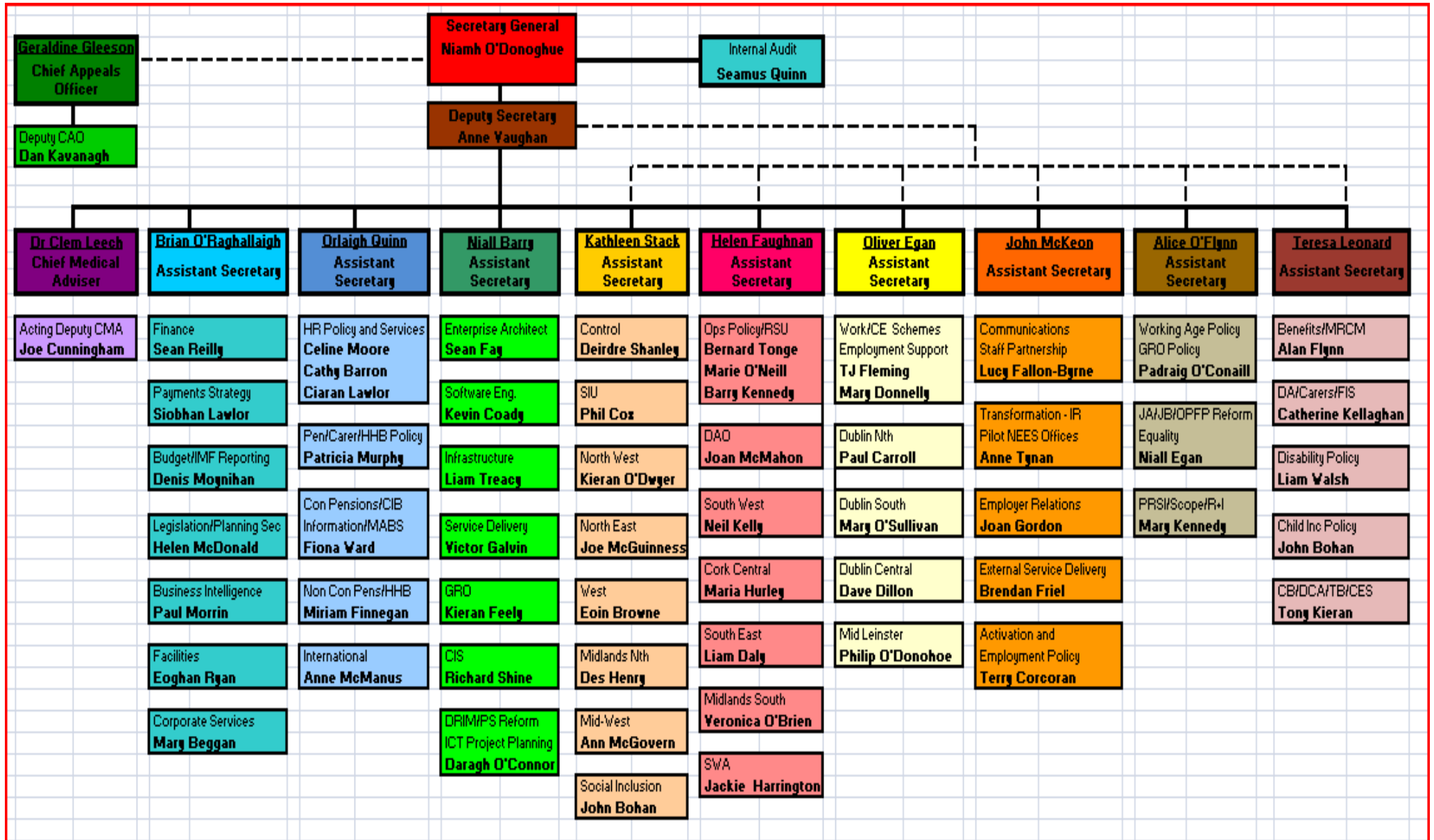
- Kerosene / GAS Oil 364,068 litres
- Electricity 7,724 MWH
- Natural Gas 6,512 MWH

This represents a reduction in usage across all energy sources except natural gas.

During 2012, the Department plans to develop and put in place a system to track, on an ongoing basis, the Department's energy usage, taking into account the complex and dynamic nature of arrangements in place with a range of energy providers across a large number of locations.

¹⁹ <http://www.etenders.gov.ie/>

²⁰ <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/AboutUs/Pages/ProcurementPolicy.aspx>



Appendix 4**Legislation enacted in 2011**

SOCIAL WELFARE ACTS 2011	
Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 - No. 9 of 2011	
Social Welfare Act 2011 – No. 37 of 2011	
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS 2011	
S.I. No. 38/2011	Occupational Pension Schemes (Revaluation) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 89/2011	Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010 (Section 25) (Commencement) Order 2011
S.I. No. 90/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (One Parent Family Payment) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 320/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 2) (Jobseekers Payments) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 387/2011	Occupational Pension Schemes (Regulatory Own Funds Scheme) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 392/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No.3) (Overpayments) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 393/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) (Rent Supplement) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 461/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No.4) (Overpayments) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 462/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) (No. 2) (Rent Supplement) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 471/2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (Part 4) (Commencement) Order 2011
S.I. No. 494/2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (Section 10) (Commencement) Order 2011
S.I. No. 495/2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (Section 11(1)) (Commencement) Order 2011
S.I. No. 496/2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2008 (Sections 18(2), 18(3) and 18(4) (Commencement) Order 2011
S.I. No. 498/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 5) (Administrative Responsibility for Supplementary Welfare Allowance) Regulations, 2011
S.I. No. 499/2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (Section 37) (Transfer Day) Order 2011
S.I. No. 502/2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (Section 38) (Appointment Day) Order 2011
S.I. No. 504/2011	Protection of Employees' (Employers' Insolvency) Procedure Regulations 2011

S.I. No. 505/2011	Social Welfare (Appeals)(Amendment) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 514/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) (No. 3) (Administrative Responsibility for SWA) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 572/2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (Sections 28, 31, 32 and 33) (Commencement) Order 2011
S.I. No. 600/2011	Social Welfare (Rent Allowance) (Amendment) (Civil Partnership) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 601/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Occupational Injuries) (Amendment) (Civil Partnership) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 602/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Contributions and Insurability) (Amendment) (Civil Partnership) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 603/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) (Civil Partnership) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 604/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 6) (Civil Partnership) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 611/2011	Adoption Act (Abridged Certificate) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 616/2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 7) (Qualified Adult) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 639 of 2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (Section 38) (Appointment Day) (Amendment) Order 2011
S.I. No. 703 of 2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (Sections 29, 30, 34 and 35) (Commencement) Order 2011
S.I. No. 704 of 2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 (Section 16(6)) (Commencement) Order 2011
S.I. No. 717 of 2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act (Section 32) (Transfer Day) Order 2011
S.I. No. 718 of 2011	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010 (Section 33) (Appointment Day) Order 2011
S.I. No. 719 of 2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 10) (Homemakers) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 720 of 2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 9) (Treatment Benefit) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 728 of 2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) (Amendment) (No. 8) (Family Income Supplement) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 729 of 2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Supplementary Welfare Allowance) (Amendment) (No. 5) (Rent Supplement) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 730 of 2011	Social Welfare (Consolidated Occupational Injuries) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2011
S.I. No. 731 of 2011	Social Welfare (Employers' Pay-Related Social Insurance Scheme) Regulations 2011

Appendix 7

Ministers in Charge 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	