



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection

Corporate Governance Framework for the Department of Social Protection 2022 - 2023

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Foreword by the Secretary General

I welcome the publication of this updated Corporate Governance Framework for the Department of Social Protection. It is a living document undergoing regular reviews and updates since it was first published in 2016.

As a Department, we deliver a wide range of services that touch on the lives of almost everyone in the State. We constantly strive to do so to the highest standards. This document provides a comprehensive summary of the main aspects of corporate governance in the Department. It is intended as a guide to employees and to the people we serve on how we do our work and why we do it in the way that we do. It also sets out our standards of conduct, our values and the governance systems by which we operate. This framework is part of a common approach to best practice in governance shared across the civil service.

Governance is concerned with having in place appropriate structures, policies and processes for directing and managing our organisation so that all stakeholders can be assured that the organisation is operating effectively and efficiently in the delivery of priorities, achieving objectives, behaving with integrity and acting in the public interest. It is about transparency, accountability and operating in a participative environment.

The ongoing support and co-operation of all staff serve to strengthen the governance structures that underpin this framework.

I am confident that the values of innovation and engagement in our organisation will enable our governance structures to be dynamic and responsive with the capacity to improve delivery of our services.

It will help to guide the organisation towards a future that will evolve with the changing needs of the department and of our stakeholders.

John McKeon
Secretary General
2023

Good Governance

Good governance is central to the effective operation of the Department of Social Protection. It is crucial in effectively discharging its statutory and policy obligations. Best practice in corporate governance ensures that a framework of structures, policies and processes are in place to deliver on these obligations. It also allows for an objective assessment of performance in delivering these commitments.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

The principles of governance in a Government Department are derived from the Constitution in the first instance as well as the relationship between the Oireachtas and the Executive (Government) that has been developed over time, and several initiatives adopted by Government to promote strategic management, in particular, the Public Service Management Act 1997.

This framework encompasses and has regard to aspects of corporate governance that already exist within the civil service, for example, in the Cabinet Handbook, the Public Financial Procedures, the Public Spending Code, the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour and the recommendations of the Report of the Working Group on the accountability of Secretaries General and Accounting Officers.

Governance Principles

Governance Principles

This Corporate Governance Framework is based on a number of high-level principles that underpin the governance arrangements in this department.

1	Good governance supports a culture and ethos which ensures behaviour with integrity, a strong commitment to ethical values and respect for the rule of law.
2	Best practice in governance helps to define priorities and outcomes in terms of sustainable economic and societal benefits and to determine the policies and interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of these. It means implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, communications, audit and scrutiny to deliver effective accountability.
3	Good governance means developing the department's capacity including the capability of the leadership team, management and staff.
4	Managing risks and performance through robust internal control systems and effective performance management practices is also part of good governance.
5	Good governance ensures openness, effective public consultation processes and comprehensive engagement with domestic and international stakeholders.

Overview of Governance Framework

The table below outlines the framework within which the Civil Service operates:

Civil Service and Ministerial Accountability

- The Minister is in charge of the Department and is responsible to the Oireachtas for all elements of the exercise of the Department's responsibility.
- The Department's relationship and communication with the Minister, Ministers of State and advisers is an essential part of the governance process. The successful delivery of business priorities and programmes is contingent on these relationships operating effectively.
- The Secretary General of the Department is responsible and accountable for managing the Department, providing advice to the Minister and monitoring and implementing Government policies within its remit in accordance with the Public Service Management Act 1997.
- The Secretary General, as Accounting Officer, is personally responsible for and accountable to the Oireachtas for regularity and propriety in the Department's accounts, the efficient and economical use of resources and for the control of assets held by the Department in accordance with the Comptroller and Auditor General Acts 1866 to 1998.

Overview of Governance Framework

This Corporate Governance Framework is structured around a number of chapters, setting out the core elements as follows:

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Title</i>
1	Overview of Department
2	Ministerial and Senior Management Roles and Assignment of Responsibilities
3	Management Board and other Governance Structures
4	Audit, Assurance and Compliance Arrangements
5	Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Chapter 1: Department Overview

Governance Principle 1

Good governance supports a culture and ethos which ensures behaviour with integrity, a strong commitment to ethical values and respect for the rule of law.

Mission of the Department

Our Mission is:

To promote active participation and inclusion in society through the provision of income supports, employment services and other services.

Our overall objective, as set out in the Statement of Strategy 2023-2026, is to continue putting our clients at the centre of all our operations, providing an efficient and effective service and to continue developing our staff, structures and processes.

Our [Customer Service Strategy 2020-2022](#) guides our efforts to provide a high-quality service to customers.

The Department was established by the [Ministers and Secretaries \(Amendment\) Act 1946](#) and its ensuing [Commencement Order](#), which provided for the establishment of the Department of Social Welfare with effect from 22nd January 1947. The Department supports the Minister for Social Protection in the discharge of government, parliamentary and statutory duties and plays a key role in two major government policy areas which are the:

- distribution of income to assure social cohesion and improve equity of economic outcomes; and
- efficient operation of the supply side of the labour market.

Its main functions are:

- advising the government on legislation and policies about employment services, the labour market, social protection and inclusion;
- formulating policies on employment services, labour market, social protection and inclusion;
- designing, developing and delivering effective and cost-efficient income supports;
- providing employment services;

Chapter 1: Department Overview

- providing comprehensive and accurate information to all its customers;
- providing seamless delivery of services with other Government Departments, agencies, and bodies; and
- investigating and prosecuting suspected fraud and abuse within the social protection system.

Organisation of the Department

It has a permanent staff complement of approximately 6,000 supplemented periodically by additional temporary and seconded staff.

The Department serves a wide and diverse group of customers including families, people in employment, unemployed people, people with illnesses and disabilities, carers, older people and employers. Its remit also requires a significant level of engagement with employers and has invested significantly in developing relationships with employers to position itself as the preferred partner for recruitment and employment service support.

The Department administers over 90 separate schemes and services. Key services include:

- payment of a wide range of social insurance and social assistance income supports such as pensions, jobseeker payments, illness benefit, disability payments, carers payments and supplementary welfare allowance in addition to the universal payment to parents (usually mothers) of children under 18 of child benefit;
- through Intreo, the integration of employment and benefit payment services to ensure that the payment of income supports to people who do not have a job is directly linked to the important task of supporting people in their pursuit of employment as well as training and education opportunities to improve their life chances;
- delivery of a range of employer services including recruitment services, online publication of job vacancies, employment supports for example wage subsidy schemes for people with disabilities and redundancy and insolvency services;
- delivery of client identity services, including the awarding of PPSNs and Public Services Cards;
- co-ordination of the [Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025](#);
- a range of community services to promote social inclusion and provide a pathway to employment for those who are unemployed; and supporting and leading analysis and the development of policy in areas including income distribution, social transfers,

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pension provision, social inclusion, labour market participation, public employment services.

These activities are supported by engaged Corporate Service Units such as Human Resource Management, Staff Development and Training, Information Systems Development, Budget and Finance, Facilities Management, Internal Audit, Legislation and the provision of policy support and advice to the Minister.

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

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

Strategic Planning, Decision Making & Performance Management

Statement of Strategy 2023-2026

Policy formulation and service delivery are informed by the Department's Statement of Strategy 2023-2026.

The Statement of Strategy has three key strategic objectives:

1. Put the client at the centre of policy and service delivery
2. Drive cost, efficiency and effectiveness
3. Develop staff, structures and processes.

The document sets out the high-level strategies for these objectives, the outcomes to be achieved and the performance indicators to be used to measure their achievement.

The goals and objectives set out in the document take account of the priorities and commitments contained in the Programme for Government, the Public Service Reform Plan, the Civil Service Renewal Plan as well as a range of other Government strategies and policies.

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In accordance with the *Public Services Management Act 1997* a new strategy statement is prepared every three years or within six months of a new Minister taking office.

Business Planning and Risk Management

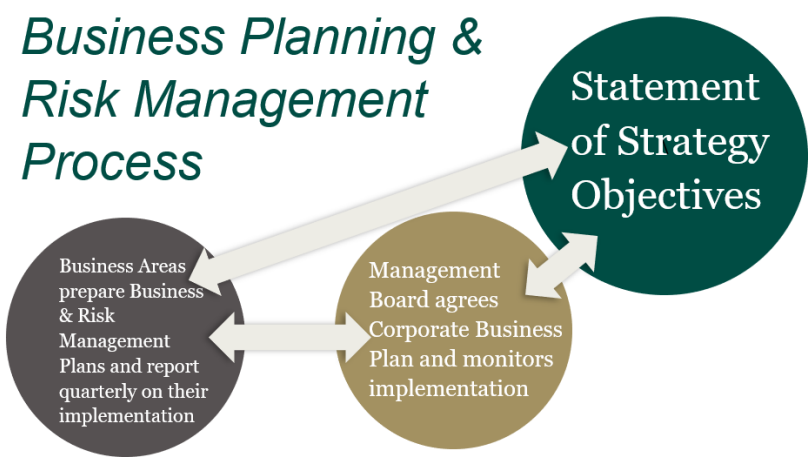
The strategic objectives and actions outlined in the Statement of Strategy inform and are reflected in the annual Business Planning and Risk Management (BPRM) process carried out by each business area. These contain specific targets which each business area is expected to deliver on each year, the aggregation of which should ensure that the commitments outlined in the Statement of Strategy are met. Risks to the achievement of business plan activities are identified together with controls to mitigate the risks.

Performance Management and Development System

Each member of staff's role in the attainment of strategic objectives is clearly defined and is encompassed within the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

The BPRM process and the PMDS process involve consultation between management and staff to ensure that everyone in the organisation is aware of their role in the attainment of the Department's strategic objectives.

Heads of business areas are required to report progress on BPRM on a quarterly basis as well as at the end of each year. A bespoke BPRM application was developed to support this process.



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Monitoring of Progress with Ministers

Monitoring of progress is also achieved by the Department's [Annual Report](#) as well as by the Minister's/Minister of State's attendance at Management Board meetings, through the monthly provision of updates on the Minister's list of priorities and periodic updates on the relevant commitments in the Programme for Government.

Values, Behaviours and Culture

The Department of Social Protection has identified five core values. Our values were subject to thorough consideration and reflect a strong consensus among staff and stakeholders as to the values which underpin excellent service from this Department.

These values were formulated based on the input of a majority of staff as well as customers, employers and staff from other Government Departments who provided their perspectives and opinions by way of structured interviews, interactive workshops and an online survey deployed to all staff.

As a Department we value:

Public Service	We are dedicated to serving the people of Ireland in an efficient and impartial manner.
Customer Focus	We are totally committed to the positive difference we can make to our customers' lives and Irish society.
Total Professionalism	We are proud of our professionalism and commitment to quality in everything we do.
Engaged Staff	We believe that our effectiveness as an organisation is dependent on a highly skilled and engaged workforce.
Innovation	We believe that having the attitude and environment to adapt and innovate is core to our future success.

The five core values are aligned with the *Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviours* and the *Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001*. They are also aligned with the [Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy](#), which is underpinned by a collective commitment to achieve the vision to be “an innovative, professional and agile Civil Service that improves the lives of the people of Ireland through excellence in service delivery and strategic policy development”.

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All staff are accountable and it is the duty of all staff, guided by senior managers, to familiarise themselves with codes, rules and legislation governing the Civil Service including:

- Civil servants must be impartial in the performance of their duties.
- The use of their official positions by civil servants to benefit themselves or others with whom they have personal or business ties is not allowed.
- Civil Servants above the grade of Clerical Officer are debarred from political activity to ensure public confidence in political impartiality.
- Civil servants should not receive benefits of any kind from a third party which might reasonably be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity in relation to their work as a servant of the State.

This includes the application of requirements in relation to official secrecy which also apply to former staff and Special Advisers. Incoming staff undergoing induction training are provided with clear guidance on their obligations. In addition, under the *Ethics in Public Office Acts*, all Civil Servants at Principal Officer level and above are automatically considered "designated positions of employment". Certain staff in less senior positions, e.g., staff dealing with contracts or in commercially sensitive areas, are also considered "designated positions of employment" for the purposes of the *Ethics in Public Office Acts*. On an annual basis, it is mandatory for all staff of the Department who hold a "designated position of employment" to submit a return on potential conflicts of interest.

Reinforcing a culture of public service values is important to the Department. Staff will be regularly reminded, primarily through training, notifications on the intranet portal (Stór), annual declarations of interests, of their rights and responsibilities as public servants.

Complaints Handling Procedure

Customers

The Department aims to always deliver high-quality customer service. There is a formal process for dealing with customer compliments and complaints which can be accessed through [Customer Service Form](#).

Guidelines are available to staff to assist in their dealing with complaints. These guidelines have been written with reference to the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform's *Key Principles for Complaints Systems for Customers and Staff*.

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Compliments and complaints are a valuable source of feedback by which service delivery standards can be monitored and reviewed.

Staff

A positive working environment is an essential foundation to delivery of the Department's services. In addition to supports such as the Employee Assistance Service, a wellbeing programme is available to support staff and enhance their resilience and welfare.

Communication and Customer Service

The **Communications/Press Office** and the **Customer Service Unit** create public information campaigns and provide important information in customer-friendly formats to ensure that clients and stakeholders are aware of the supports and services that are available to them as well as any changes, which may affect them including the Department's social media presence as well as design and branding for publications. The units also support better internal customer service.

Engagement with Internal Stakeholders

As explained in Chapter 3, the Management Board hosts meetings with all Principal Officers twice a year in addition to the usual day-to-day engagement.

In turn, Principals and managers at all levels are expected to engage in dialogue with staff in relation to work practices.

Staff members are informed of relevant developments through day-to-day engagement with managers at all levels, through the Department's Intranet portal (Stór) and the use of other channels of communication including all-staff emails, the Staff Magazine (Social Affairs), bulletins and newsletters and using messaging (including video messaging) from the Secretary General on issues of importance.

Staff at all levels are also invited to attend large-scale staff fora/townhall meetings where senior managers present to staff on key topics and host discussion groups to receive input and feedback on the topics discussed.

Staff are also surveyed on a regular basis both through the Civil Service Employee Engagement process and through the use of 'pulse surveys'.

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Stór is a major communication and collaboration tool and supports the everyday work of staff, providing them with document management facilities, collaborative working on shared sites, as well as access to line-of-business applications. Exchange of views, best practice and queries emerge on the discussion board on Stór.

Staff are encouraged to become involved and contribute to change in the Department through the Engagement and Innovation Programme. This is a programme, which aims to encourage as many staff as possible to become involved in projects which will bring about improvements to processes and the work environment. Projects established under the programme focus on achieving specific goals in a specified timeframe - generally three to four months after commencement. The team usually comprises of approximately 15 staff members representing a broad cross section of roles and grades.

Where any scheme/service area is making changes to service processes (e.g. with the implementation of a new IT system) staff from the area are included in workshops/planning games/project teams to help design, develop and user test the new process/system.

Engagement with External Stakeholders

The Department engages with a range of external stakeholders including the following:

- The Oireachtas (Elected representatives and political parties);
- The public (including those experiencing poverty and/or social exclusion);
- Customer representative bodies;
- Community and voluntary sector;
- NGOs;
- Policy institutions, researchers and academics;
- Government Departments, Local Authorities and other public bodies;
- The European Institutions (Commission and Parliament);
- Media;
- Social service delivery organisations;
- Education and Health sectors;
- Employers.

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The Oireachtas

The Department is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas through parliamentary questions and through the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands.

The Secretary General also appears, as required, before the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee (PAC), following the publication of the Annual Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

On a monthly basis, the Department provides briefing material to the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) on the previous month's expenditure, outlining any significant variances from profiled expenditure and the reason for same. The Department also responds to ad-hoc requests from the PBO. The information provided in these responses is then incorporated into PBO publications which are distributed to all Oireachtas members.

When a Social Welfare Bill is being published, the Department arranges a briefing on the Bill for Opposition spokespersons. Bills, other than the Budget Bill, are subject to pre-legislative scrutiny.

Every six months, the Department provides the Oireachtas with a report on EU developments. Where a Directive to be transposed emerges from the European Commission a scrutiny note is provided on same to the Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands.

Quality Customer Service Initiative

The Department:

- Ensures regular communication with approximately 30 customer representative groups on significant service changes through hosting a Customer Representative Forum four times per year;
- Invites the views of customers on the standard of our service delivery through participation in various consultation fora;
- Seeks feedback and suggestions from customers, including through service design labs and hackathons on ways in which we can improve the delivery of our services and acts on it;

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- Engages proactively with customers in advance of the development of new policies, schemes and programmes.
- Commissions independent regular (usually twice yearly) surveys of Intreo and Intreo Partners client satisfaction, conducts regular surveys of employer satisfaction and also commissions/undertakes detailed impact evaluations of particular schemes and programmes, often including bespoke client surveys.

Pre Budget Forum

A Pre-Budget Forum, hosted by the Department, has been held annually since 1988. The purpose of the Forum is to give the community and voluntary sector, employee and employer representatives an opportunity to express their views and priorities in relation to social protection expenditure in the context of the forthcoming Budget. Approximately 60 stakeholder organisations are invited to participate. An independent moderator is engaged to chair the forum.

Social Inclusion

The Department hosts an annual Social Inclusion Forum attended by community and voluntary sector groups, people experiencing poverty and/or social exclusion, academics, senior officials and policy-makers. The Forum allows for a robust debate between the attendees about poverty and social inclusion policy and the related issues that most concern them. A report of the findings of the forum is produced and published online.

Community and Voluntary Pillar

The Department also holds two bilateral meetings each year with representatives from the community and voluntary pillar. Prior to the meetings, the Pillar poses written questions on a range of issues relevant to the work of the Department to which written responses are provided.

Employers

Employer Relations services were restructured from divisional teams across the country to a single unified National Employer Relations Team from 1st January 2022. The Division is responsible for national delivery of employer relations services including recruitment support and financial assistance for specific recruitment initiatives of jobseekers and jobseekers with disabilities. Other elements of services to employers and jobseekers include

- EURES: the EU/EEA recruitment and jobseekers trans-mobility service,

Chapter 1: Department Overview

- Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP); a funded work experience programme for jobseekers with host businesses
- Cross Border Partnership for Employment Services: a collaboration with the Department for Communities, Northern Ireland and other employer and jobseeker representative stakeholders
- JobsIreland; the online recruitment and job matching services which also provides information on recruitment and training events
- FutureBuilding Initiative a dedicated recruitment and activation service to support recruitment to the construction sector as part of the Housing for All Initiative.

The Division also engages with sectoral representatives and works with other government services including amongst other the Education Training Boards (ETBs) and Local Employment Offices (LEOs) in their work.

www.gov.ie/dsp

The Communications/Press Office Unit manages the Department's site on www.gov.ie, which acts as the core information link between the Department and the general public. It also signposts the Department's digital services available through its online digital portal at MyWelfare.ie.

Included on www.gov.ie/dsp are:

- Information on the Department's schemes and services;
- A running consolidation of the *Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005* to reflect the legislative amendments to same;
- Corporate publications e.g. Annual Reports, Statement of Strategy;
- Public consultations;
- Statistical Information Reports.

The Media

The Press Office provides a service by managing all queries and requests for interviews from the media and issuing press releases on the Department's initiatives, schemes and services to the regional and national media.

Chapter 1: Department Overview

Engagement at International Level

The Department is involved in a range of EU-level groups, including the Social Protection Committee and the Network of Public Employment Services. These cover a variety of activities – developing policy and legislation, reporting on progress and good practice in relation to the co-ordination of social security rules and the delivery of public employment services.

The headquarters of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is based in Ireland. Eurofound activities focus on providing European Union institutions and bodies, Member States and the social partners with evidence that can be used to inform EU policy initiatives in the social and employment area. The Department is an alternate member on the Governing Board of Eurofound.

Beyond the EU, the Department is also engaged with several international bodies such as the Council of Europe (the department is responsible for co-ordinating Ireland's reporting in relation to the European Social Code), the OECD and the International Social Security Association.

The main standing committees and groups at EU and at international level at which the department is represented are listed in the Appendix.

Chapter 2 Ministerial and Senior Management Roles and Assignment of responsibilities

Governance Principle 2	Good governance helps to define priorities and outcomes in terms of sustainable economic and societal benefits and to determine the policies and interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of these priorities and outcomes. It means implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, communications, audit and scrutiny to deliver effective accountability.
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Minister

The Minister is in charge of the Department and is responsible to the Oireachtas for all elements of the exercise of Departmental responsibility.

This Governance Framework does not replace or usurp the Carltona Doctrine whereby powers vested in the Minister may be exercised, without any express act of delegation, by officials of certain seniority and responsibility. The Minister is legally responsible for every action of the Department¹.

The Minister attends and chairs meetings of the Management Board on a periodic basis (typically every 4th meeting) to review progress on priority items and to receive a briefing on other issues and activities ongoing within the department.

Recording of Minister's Decisions

Formal submissions, seeking a Minister's decision or requesting the Minister to note a position, from officials are submitted to the Minister through the Minister's Private Secretary using the e-submissions system. Submissions are cleared by the relevant Head of Division prior to being submitted to the Minister's private secretary. Submissions are copied to the Minister's Adviser(s). The decision or position taken by the Minister is noted by officials on the relevant file. The Minister may also meet with officials where decisions are conveyed and positions noted. These are recorded in a file note.

¹ Article 28.4.2 of the Constitution provides that the Government shall be collectively responsible for Departments of State 'administered' by the Members of the Government. Under Article 28.12 of the Constitution Ministers are 'in charge of Departments of State. The principal legislative provisions governing the Minister's powers are the Ministers and Secretaries Act 1924-2013 and the Public Services Management Act 1997.

Chapter 2: Minister and Senior Management Roles and Assignment of Responsibilities.

Minister of State

The Minister retains full responsibility for all areas of the Department's work. However, a Minister of State may be appointed by the Government on the nomination of the Taoiseach. The Government may choose to delegate certain ministerial duties to the Minister of State, subject to Ministerial supervision. Such delegated duties may therefore be performed by either the Minister or the Minister of State.

Relationship with the Ministers of State

The Department operates a similar system in its communication and relations with the Ministers of State as with the Minister.

Leadership and Organisation Capacity

The management team leads on the implementation of the systems, processes and behaviours necessary to promote good corporate governance across the organisation so that all staff work together as a high-performing team. It is the responsibility of Senior Management, led by the Secretary General and the Management Board, to set the tone for effective governance by embracing and promoting best practice and behaviours. Senior Management actively communicates its commitment to achieving Government objectives through accountable processes, thereby setting a clear example for all staff.

Secretary General

The Secretary General is the administrative head of the department and has overall management responsibility for the quality of advice submitted to the Minister.

The [Ministers and Secretaries Act 1924](#) outlines the statutory responsibilities of the Secretary General. Under the Public Service Management Act 1997, certain duties are assigned to the Secretary General within the Department including but not limited to:

- managing the Department;
- implementing Government policies appropriate to the Department;
- delivering outputs as determined with the Minister;
- providing advice to the Minister and using resources so as to meet the requirements of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993 in relation to regularity and propriety as well as to economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- preparing Strategy Statements for submission to the Minister;

Chapter 2: Minister and Senior Management Roles and Assignment of Responsibilities.

- providing progress reports to the Minister on the implementation of the Strategy Statement;
- ensuring proper use of resources and the provision of cost-effective public services;
- Making sure arrangements are in place to maximise efficiency in cross-departmental matters;
- Preparing an outline of how specific responsibilities are to be assigned so as to ensure that the functions performed on behalf of the Minister are performed by an appropriate officer, or an officer of an appropriate grade or rank, and
- Managing matters relating to appointments, performance, discipline and dismissal of civil servants below the grade of Principal or its equivalent.

Accounting Officer (Secretary General)

The Secretary General also serves as Accounting Officer for the Department. The role of the Accounting Officer is outlined in detail in the Comptroller and Auditor General Acts 1866 to 1998, [A Memorandum for Accounting Officers](#) and the Public Financial Procedures.

The Accounting Officer is responsible for the safeguarding of public funds and property under their control; for the regularity and propriety of all the transactions in each Appropriation Account bearing their signature; and for the efficiency and economy of administration in their Department. In this regard, the Accounting Officer is personally answerable to the Public Accounts Committee for regularity, propriety and value for money through rigorous post-factum examination of the manner in which Accounting Officers have discharged their responsibilities by means of independent audit and examinations by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Accounting Officer is responsible for and must personally sign the appropriation account (an account of expenditure and receipts) for each 'Vote' for which he or she is responsible. The Secretary General of the Department of Social Protection is responsible for Vote 37 and for the Social Insurance Fund (SIF). Section 9 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 sets out the responsibilities of the Minister for Social Protection and the Minister for Finance with regard to the SIF.

The SIF consists of a current account and an investment account. The Minister for Social Protection is responsible for the current account and the Minister for Finance is responsible for the investment account.

Chapter 2: Minister and Senior Management Roles and Assignment of Responsibilities.

The current account records all SIF related receipts and payments and consolidates investment account related financial transactions and balances. This account is signed by this Department's Secretary General.

The Appropriation Accounts are presented to Dáil Éireann by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The SIF account is laid annually before the Oireachtas.

Special Advisers to the Minister

The primary functions of Special Advisers are to secure the achievement of Government objectives and to ensure effective co-ordination in the implementation of the Programme for Government.

The role and duties of Special Advisers are described in Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997. In summary, Special Advisors are to assist the Minister or the Minister of State by:

- providing advice;
- monitoring, facilitating and securing the achievement of Government objectives that relate to the Department, as requested; and
- performing such other functions as may be directed while being accountable to the Minister or the Minister of State in the performance of those functions. The Special Adviser performs their role alongside the senior civil servants in collectively supporting the Minister and the Government of the day. Special Advisers are not part of the line management system of the Department.

To ensure that there is clarity around the interaction between Special Advisers and civil servants, briefing is provided to Special Advisers, on their appointment, on matters such as governance arrangements, information flows and procedures for decision-making.

Ministerial Liaison Officer (MLO)

As well as having overall responsibility for the Minister's Office, the role of the MLO is to support the Minister in discharging their responsibilities in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

The MLO reviews briefing papers and memoranda, with a view to ensuring that high-quality briefing material is provided to the Minister in time. The MLO also works closely with the Minister's advisers to ensure effective co-ordination of the Minister's agenda.

Chapter 2: Minister and Senior Management Roles and Assignment of Responsibilities.

The role also involves working with senior management to anticipate issues arising and to ensure that the Minister and advisers are aware of these issues and liaising with the Minister of State to provide support in relation to their responsibilities in the Department.

Assignment of Senior Management Roles & Responsibilities

Section 4(1) of the Public Service Management Act 1997 empowers the Secretary General to assign to other officers of the Department (or grade or grades of officer) responsibility for the performance of their functions. This is regularly updated on www.whodoeswhat.gov.ie

Human Resource Management

To ensure that it is in a position to fulfil its mandate, the Department has developed a workforce planning framework so that management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. This is being complemented by a HR strategy, [People Strategy 2020-2023](#) which reinforces the Department's ability to meet current and future workforce challenges.

ICT Governance and Security

The administration of the Department's schemes and services is underpinned by a programme of work to continually improve service delivery, meet the changing needs of customers and maximise the benefits of new technology. Through the project governance process (see Chapter 3), project proposals and initiatives are approved and prioritised and budgets and resources are assigned.

The provision of secure computing systems is a key principle for the operations of Information Systems Division (ISD). The Department recognises that specific ICT measures are an important part of an overall strategy to protect strategic systems from failure. The security of the Department's ICT infrastructure is addressed at many levels and detailed in the ICT strategy.

The ISD Information Security Unit works in association with the Data Protection Unit and Facilities Management Unit (which is responsible for physical buildings including the data centres) to ensure the security of the department's systems.

Chapter 2: Minister and Senior Management Roles and Assignment of Responsibilities.

Record Keeping, Data Management and Information Management

The Department is obliged to make and maintain records of all its activities and decisions and to have an established and effective system of records management. Making, keeping and maintaining records is an essential part of the work of all staff. Each member of staff is responsible for making and keeping records of their own work. The Department has a dedicated records manager.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that appropriate structures and governance are in place to manage records in their areas to meet the requirements of National Archives, Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation as well as both internal and external audit and scrutiny.

Chapter 3: Management Board and other Governance structures.

Governance Principle 3

Good governance means developing the Department's capacity, including the capability of the leadership team, management and staff.

Management Structures in the Department

In accordance with the assignment of functions made by the Secretary General, it is the responsibility of the Deputy Secretary and the Assistant Secretaries to manage the delivery of the operational functions of the Department and they are accountable for these responsibilities to the Secretary General (Management Board). The Management Board may establish sub-committees and/or programme boards to consider issues requiring more detailed examination before decision by the Management Board itself.

The Deputy Secretary or Assistant Secretary with functional responsibility for a particular area has responsibility for managing all processes relating to the development and delivery of proposals and activities within their area.

As Accounting Officer, the Secretary General remains ultimately responsible and accountable. The Secretary General is assisted by a Management Board which acts as a team and a unifying force, providing leadership and direction and driving change across the organisation. It is the Management Board's responsibility to ensure that the Department is being managed in a way that achieves its objectives effectively, efficiently and economically as well as conforming to all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.

Management Board

The role of the Management Board is to:

- Give leadership and drive strategy and innovation;
- Define control mechanisms to safeguard public resources;
- Supervise the overall management of the business of the Department (operational, policy development and support functions);
- Report on stewardship and performance;
- Set and drive strategic priorities. Approve, review and oversee the development and implementation of the Statement of Strategy, Public Service Reform Plan, Civil Service Renewal Plan, and Business Planning and Risk Management processes;
- Review and monitor the performance of the organisation;
- Review and confirm high-level resource allocation (financial and human);

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- Ensure Organisational Capacity & Capability Reviews are conducted periodically;
- Adjudicate on high-level internal cross-divisional issues, including significant operational matters;
- Ensure effective communication throughout the organisation including dissemination of information on the role and decisions of the Management Board;
- Drive engagement with staff and communication with external stakeholders;
- Consider and debate major policy issues and wider external issues of significance;
- Ensure that opportunities exist to exploit and embrace technology and innovation to transform how services are delivered; and
- Maintain strong governance arrangements.

Composition of the Management Board

Membership of the Management Board is a matter for the Secretary General but includes appropriate representation from all areas of the Department. The Management Board is chaired by the Secretary General and comprises the Deputy Secretary and all of the Department's Assistant Secretaries, the Chief Appeals Officer and the Chief Medical Officer.

Key Relationships of Management Board

The key relationships for the Management Board are with the Minister, Minister(s) of State, the Minister(s)' Special Advisers and CEOs of bodies under the aegis of the Department.

The minutes of the Management Board are published on the DSP intranet (Stór).

The Management Board endeavours to visit offices of the Department outside of Dublin. Opportunities are sought to engage with the maximum number of staff through various fora.

The Secretary General may invite CEOs of agencies under the Department's remit to present on relevant issues to the Management Board.

Operation and Roles of the Management Board

The Secretary General is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the Management Board in all aspects of its role and functions and in reviewing its performance.

The Secretary General ensures that all new members of the Management Board are briefed on their roles and responsibilities. The Management Board usually meets at least twice per

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month as the Management Board with a further meeting held as the Project Governance Committee (See below).

The Secretary General chairs and sets the agenda for Management Board meetings in consultation with the Secretary to the Management Board. The Secretary General determines what issues are appropriate for discussion, the priority of each item, the level of time afforded for discussion and what briefing material is required to be circulated in advance.

Attendance by all members is expected for the full duration of all meetings except in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Secretary General. Management Board members are expected to have read the briefing material and to be in a position to contribute to discussions.

Assistant Secretaries with functional responsibility for a particular area have responsibility for oversight of all processes relating to the development and delivery of proposals and activities within their area, including raising items that need to be discussed and decided at Management Board. They are expected to participate fully in the management of the whole Department, providing leadership and strategic direction as well as driving the implementation of strategies outside of their own areas. The establishment of committees is appropriate in relation to issues of a cross-departmental nature or where particular issues require more detailed examination by the Management Board.

The Management Board agrees on a range of topics that they would like to be briefed on during the course of the year and agrees an appropriate timeframe. This is reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Periodic/Standing items include:

- EU matters;
- Review of major reports and other published documents such as Statements of Strategy, Annual Reports, Reports of Audit and Risk Committee;
- Action points from previous Management Board meetings;
- Business performance and risk management;
- Financial performance, Estimates and Budgets;
- Operational performance;
- Policy and legislative developments;
- Human Resources;

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- Customer service;
- Data protection;
- The status of major projects (i.e. those of strategic importance).

Members of the Management Board who wish to table items must forward precise details of the issue for discussion to the Secretary to the Management Board at least a week in advance of the next scheduled meeting.

Committees of the Management Board

The Management Board establishes sub-committees to consider issues requiring more detailed examination before decision by the Management Board itself. There are currently two sub-committees of the Management Board:

1. The Project Governance Committee (PGC)

The PGC is a committee of the Management Board chaired by the Secretary General and including the Deputy Secretary and all Assistant Secretaries. The PGC meets approximately every 6 weeks. The PGC has responsibility for corporate governance in the evaluation, prioritisation and oversight of programmes, projects and proposals in line with the Statement of Strategy, the Programme for Government and business plans. It oversees procurement processes and approves significant procurements.

The Project Office supports the efficient and effective running of the PGC. It is responsible for the development and implementation of a project management framework and procurement policy for the Department.

The Project Office promotes best practice in project management and procurement and supports project managers and staff involved in procurement through the provision of procedures and templates.

Individual projects are aligned to a Programme Board. Each Programme Board is sponsored by an Assistant Secretary and each project is managed by a Principal Officer (for example, Data Management, Digital Services, Control, Activation and Service Delivery).

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2. The Legislation Committee

The Legislation Committee is chaired by the Secretary General.

Legislation Unit and legal advisors attend and provide support as required. All Assistant Secretaries who have proposals on the legislative agenda are required to attend the meetings of the Committee.

The purpose of the Legislation Committee is to:

- Review proposals for quality, completeness, readiness for implementation and compliance with overall policy objectives;
- Highlight issues for resolution (policy, operational, legal, cross-departmental);
- Prioritise proposals;
- Update Management Board as appropriate.

3. The Policy Committee

Policymaking is set by Government and the Minister consistent with budgetary resources and constraints. The Minister may establish advisory groups, such as the Pensions Commission to harness expert opinion and experience and provide a forum to which the Minister may refer specific issues. Recommendations to the Minister are evidence-based.

Policy making is supported by a Policy Committee, which provides advice and support to the Management Board, Programme Boards and Divisions in considering challenging issues or advising on policy at a strategic level.

The primary function of all the committees is to assist the Management Board in the discharge of its responsibilities. All recommendations emerging from the committees are included in the committees' minutes to be circulated to the Management Board in advance of its meetings.

Review of Performance

A review of the Management Board's performance is carried out periodically. Effectiveness is measured against the role, function and operation of the Management Board. This is done on a self-assessment basis.

A more comprehensive review will be conducted every three years which will include a self-assessment on the Board's objectives, relationships with stakeholders, ethical considerations, risk management, audit and board expertise and dynamics.

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Support to the Management Board

The Secretary to the Management Board reports directly to the Secretary General on Management Board business. The Secretary ensures that all appropriate documentation is provided to members on time, records the minutes of meetings and drives the Management Board's business in between meetings.

Governance across Organisational Boundaries

The Secretary General is a member of the Civil Service Management Board and is on the Advisory Board of the National Shared Services Office.

A number of staff across the Department service inter-departmental senior official groups which contribute to wider civil service coordination and policy formation. The Department emphasises the importance of this engagement in delivering broader Government priorities and commits to an interdependent and collegiate approach in all its dealings with other Government Departments and agencies.

Senior Officials support the work of the Cabinet Committee on COVID-19 and Cabinet Committee on Social Affairs and Equality.

The Department is also represented and serves on several EU and international bodies (see Appendix).

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Governance Principle 4

Good governance means managing risks and performance through robust internal control systems and effective performance management practices.

Audit and Assurance Arrangements

The Secretary General arranges for the preparation of an annual statement of Internal Financial Control. When satisfied as to its accuracy it is signed by the Secretary General and submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General so declaring the approach to, and responsibility for, risk management, internal control and corporate governance.

As Accounting Officer for Vote 37, the Secretary General arranges for the annual preparation of the appropriation account for the Vote and for the account of the Social Insurance Fund. When satisfied as to the accuracy of the accounts it is signed by the Secretary General and submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General for audit.

As Accounting Officer, the Secretary General ensures that:

- An effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the department and the system and its effectiveness are kept under ongoing review;
- A positive financial control environment is maintained in place through a number of elements:
 - financial responsibilities are assigned at management level with corresponding accountability;
 - reporting arrangements are established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned;
 - formal procedures are established for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action; and
 - there is an Audit and Risk Committee to advise the Secretary General in discharging responsibilities for the internal financial control system.

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- A framework of administrative procedures and regular management reporting is in place including segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability and, in particular, that:
 - there is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management;
 - there are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts;
 - a risk management system operates within the department;
 - there are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems;
 - there are appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management disciplines; and
 - there is an appropriate focus on good practice in purchasing and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines.

As Accounting Officer, the Secretary General ensures that assurance arrangements, regarding internal controls and audit arrangements, are in place and maintained with the Accounting Officer for the National Shared Services Office (NSSO), consistent with relevant Service Management Agreements in respect of HR Shared Services Centre (PeoplePoint) and the Payroll Shared Service Centre. Assurance arrangements will be put in place with the appropriate Accounting Officer in the event of any other shared service arrangements being entered into in the future.

There is an established **Audit and Risk Committee** which has its own Charter and has agreed terms of reference with the department. The Audit and Risk Committee is independent in its role of providing assurance to the Secretary General.

- The role of the Audit and Risk Committee is, as part of the ongoing systematic review of the business control and corporate governance procedures within the department, to oversee and advise on matters relating to (a) the operations and development of the internal audit function; and (b) the business control, risk management and governance environment;
- The Audit and Risk Committee is not responsible for any executive functions and is not vested with any executive powers;
- The Audit and Risk Committee exercises an advisory role in relation to its duties and functions within the department;

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- The Audit and Risk Committee consists of a Chairperson and not less than four ordinary members appointed by the Secretary General by virtue of their experience in fields of expertise relevant to the functions of the Committee. At least half of the members are external to the department and appointments to the Committee are, unless otherwise decided by the Secretary General, for a period of three years;
- The Chairperson is appointed by the Secretary General from the external members of the Committee. A vice-Chairperson is appointed by the members;
- Within three months following the end of each calendar year, the Audit and Risk Committee formally reports in writing to the Secretary General outlining its activities during the year together with such advice and recommendations as it may deem appropriate;
- The Chairperson meets with the Secretary General of the Department at least on an annual basis.

The Department has an **Internal Audit Unit (IAU)** which conducts its activities in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Practice of the Institute of Internal Auditors (UK & Ireland) as well as in accordance with internal audit standards and guidelines of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The role of IAU is to assist in the achievement of department goals and objectives and enhance and protect organisational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight to the Secretary General and Management of the Department. It is independent and objective, bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of control and governance.

The IAU derives its authority from the Secretary General, to whom the Head of Internal Audit has the right of direct access. The Head of Internal Audit Unit reports quarterly, or otherwise if requested, to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Following an audit, Internal Audit observations and recommendations are communicated to the appropriate business area management and copies of final audit reports are made available to senior management, and the Comptroller and Auditor General team responsible for the Department's audit.

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Overall responsibility for implementing legislation, policies and guidance pertaining to **protected disclosures** rests with the Management Board.

The Department has a **Protected Disclosures Group** which has responsibility for considering protected disclosures and referring cases for investigation.

The Department has an **Internal Investigations Unit (IIU)** which is responsible for:

- Investigating cases of suspected data protection breaches at the request of the Data Protection Unit;
- Carrying out internal control and fraud investigations across all DSP schemes at the request of Internal Audit Unit
- Carrying out investigations on behalf of the HR Manager.

The IIU may also investigate Protected Disclosures.

The EU Funding Compliance Unit (EUFCU) ensures compliance with EU regulations for the drawdown of the European Social Fund (ESF) funding within the department. The EUFCU is the designated Intermediary Body to liaise with the ESF Managing Authority based in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, who are the designated National Body for submitting all ESF claims for Government departments/agencies within the State. The EUFCU's role within this structure includes the issue of guidance on relevant EU regulations to the Scheme areas within the department approved for ESF funding (including the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) scheme), and to carry out reviews of systems and expenditure included in claims prior to final submission to the ESF Managing Authority.

The Department funds **Community Employment Schemes, Rural Social Schemes and Tús**. A contract between the Sponsor (usually a community organisation or charity) and the Department is signed emphasising the responsibilities on both sides and that the Department is a stranger to these employment contracts. The Sponsor shall at all times be an independent contractor for all purposes and the relationship of principal and agent shall not exist between the Department and the Sponsor and all persons recruited by the Sponsor shall be the Sponsor's sole responsibility.

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Compliance and Anti-Fraud Strategy

The work of the Department is broad in scope, supporting people throughout the life cycle, from the payment of child benefit to the provision of income supports when people reach pension age. Services are delivered through around 90 separate schemes and programmes. Some are delivered in partnership with third party organisations, other government departments and state agencies.

Control of fraud and non-compliance is a critical part of the work of the Department. Safeguards are built into our processes to secure payment systems, detect and prevent wrongful claiming of benefits. Where non-compliance with our various schemes arises, the full powers at our disposal will be used to safeguard the integrity of the welfare system. This will ensure that the high standards which the Irish taxpayer and the Oireachtas demand and expect from us are maintained.

The Department's approach in this area – set out in the current [Compliance and Anti-fraud Strategy 2019-2023](#) - lays a strong emphasis on minimising the risks of fraud and eliminating incorrect payments. This involves appropriate checks at the point of claim, strengthened by systematic reviews of claims in payment and verification that the conditions for entitlement continue to be met. It also includes an annual programme of control surveys which allows the department to identify risks and address any control weaknesses across the various scheme areas. Under the Strategy, the department publishes an Annual Report and an Annual Target Statement each year.

Members of staff who are involved in the administration of social welfare schemes are aware of the need to implement appropriate controls at every stage of the process of administering claims from receipt through to payment. Control work across the Department is overseen and monitored by the Control Programme Board which includes representatives from the main scheme areas as well as Control Division and the Special Investigations Unit. The Management Board also receives quarterly reports on progress towards achieving targets.

Finance Unit

The Department's internal Finance Unit is comprised of two business units, Budget & Finance Unit and Accounts Branch.

(1) The Budget and Finance Unit is responsible for:

- The preparation, co-ordination and monitoring of Estimates for the Department's schemes, services, Social Insurance Fund income and Vote 37 receipts;

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- The preparation and co-ordination of the Department's Budget proposals;
- Directly assisting and briefing the Minister in the Estimates/Budget process, including for Oireachtas Committee meetings and
- Means-testing policy.

As stated in Chapter 2, the Department's expenditure is funded from two sources namely the Exchequer via Vote 37 and the Social Insurance Fund (SIF) – funded mainly by PRSI contributions. SIF income (from PRSI receipts) and expenditure on all the Department's schemes, services and administration is monitored against spending profile

Each month, an estimate of expenditure and SIF income is prepared and provided to the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform on the third last working day. This estimate of the overall expenditure is published by the Department of Finance in the monthly Exchequer Statement on the 2nd working day of the next calendar month.

(2) The primary role of Accounts Branch is to reconcile all of the Department's payments and receipts and bring them to account. The Branch prepares the statutory accounts for the department. The two statutory accounts are the Appropriation Account for Vote 37 and the Social Insurance Fund (SIF) Account. The Oireachtas votes income and expenditure to the Appropriation Account, with such expenditure covering department administration and non-contributory payments. Income to the SIF account is mainly derived from PRSI contributions made by employers, employees and the self-employed, with expenditure incurred for insurance-based payments and associated administration costs.

Since October 2017, salary and travel and subsistence payments transferred to the Payroll Shared Service Centre. All expenditure is recorded and reported to Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform on a monthly basis. The Branch is responsible for facilitating, co-ordinating and overseeing the management of the Administration Budget and related processes within DSP. The Branch is also responsible for payment delivery services and payment strategy in the Department.

Risk Management

The Department has an established Risk Management Policy to assist business areas in identifying, assessing, mitigating, monitoring and reporting on the risks to which the department may be exposed. It also enables the achievement of the Department's strategic

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objectives through well-managed governance structures. The Department's Risk Management Policy has been prepared in accordance with Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform guidelines.

In the risk identification process, risks are classified by type, i.e., whether they pose a strategic, financial, operational, reputational and compliance or other type of risk to the department. Risks are then evaluated, taking account of the current controls in place to mitigate the risk, along with an assessment of the possible impact of the risk and also the likelihood of the risk event occurring. Arising from this evaluation, a high, medium or low ranking is given to the risk and an action plan to mitigate the risk is prepared. All risks identified are held in risk registers on the Business Planning and Risk Management (BPRM) application.

The Management Board identifies General Corporate Risks, i.e., significant risks to the organisation which may encompass a number of activities and business areas. Quarterly progress update reports on risks and what is done to mitigate them are examined by the Management Board. Each Quarter, the Management Board assesses the adequacy of the progress made and decides whether further action is required. The risk management policy is embedded throughout each business area of the Department.

Procurement Policy and Procedures

The procurement of supplies and services is essential to support the department in providing high quality service to the public in a cost effective and efficient manner. Public procurement is governed by a comprehensive regulatory, legal and procedural framework and, in particular, is governed by Directive 2014/24/EU, supported by procurement guidelines published by the Office of Government Procurement. The guiding principles are transparency and openness of competition.

In line with the Department's Statement of Strategy, its procurement policy focuses on maintaining robust financial management and reporting systems and achieving value for money. As outlined in Chapter 3, the Department has a dedicated Project Office to support good governance of major projects and to promote best practice in procurement across the Department. The Project Governance Committee (PGC), a sub-Committee of the Management Board and chaired by the Secretary General, approves significant procurements and all major projects, including procurement of supplies and services associated with the projects.

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The Department participates fully in ongoing initiatives by the Office of Government Procurement and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer to ensure best practice in public procurement is implemented.

Chapter 5: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Governance Principle 5

Good governance ensures openness, effective public consultation processes and comprehensive engagement with domestic and international stakeholders.

External Governance and Oversight of Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

As per the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the Department and the bodies under its aegis have Oversight Agreements and Performance Delivery Agreements in place. These agreements act as a performance contract between the Department and the body in which an agreed level of performance is formalised and which will ultimately result in the improved effectiveness and efficiency of public services. The agreements allow for the adoption of both annual and multi-annual targets, and the development of output indicators.

The [Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies](#) is adhered to.

Bodies under the aegis of the Department:

	Body	Accountable Person	Principal in DSP with liaison responsibilities	Exchequer Funding Source	Governing Legislation
1	Pensions Authority	Chief Executive Officer of the Authority Brendan Kennedy	Principal with responsibility for Pensions Policy Colum Walsh	DSP Vote and fees from schemes	Pensions Act 1990 (As amended)
2	Pensions Council	Chairperson of the Council Roma Burke	Principal with responsibility for Pensions Policy Colum Walsh	DSP Vote – expenses and research funds	Pensions Act 1990 (As amended)
3	Citizens Information Board	Chief Executive Officer of the Board Fiona Coyne CEO	Principal with responsibility for communications Anne Kearney	Annual State Grant from DSP	Comhairle Act 2000, Citizens Information Act 2007, Social Welfare Act 2008 and the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011
4	Social Welfare Tribunal	Chairperson of the Tribunal Vacancy	Principal nominated by the Secretary General Máirín Haran	Expenses only	331-333 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005

Chapter 5: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

The individuals listed in the table above are the people appointed or acting in the relevant roles as of August 2021.

1. Pensions Authority

The Pensions Authority monitors and supervises the operation of the Pensions Act and pension developments generally. It regulates occupational pension schemes; trust Retirement Annuity Contracts and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs) in Ireland. It has a statutory responsibility to provide advice to the Minister for Social Protection on pension matters. The Authority aims to be a valued source of pension advice and knowledge for the Department of Social Protection and for Government generally.

The Pensions Authority consists of a three person Board, a Chief Executive (the Pensions Regulator) and staff.

Principal Ministerial and Department Functions

- Provide sufficient oversight to ensure the effectiveness of the body while not impacting or impinging on its independence;
- Make any necessary changes to primary and secondary legislation in relation to the Pensions Authority;
- Appointment of members of the Board of the Pensions Authority;
- Request advice as required;
- Request tasks to be performed;
- Provide consents/approvals as necessary and appropriate;
- Confer additional functions on the Authority and make necessary provisions in connection with the conferral;
- Make orders, regulations, etc., relating to the role and function of the Pensions Authority and lay them before the Houses of the Oireachtas;
- Determination of allowances for expenses of the Pensions Regulator;
- Request/approve/direct/review accounts, reports, statement of strategy.
- Laying of documents (reports, statement of strategy, etc.) before the Houses of the Oireachtas;
- Removal of members of the Board in specified circumstances;
- Determine payment of remuneration and allowances to the Chair of the Board.

Chapter 5: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Accountability

The term of office for Authority members is five years. One ordinary member is nominated by the Minister and is an officer and representative of the Department of Social Protection. One ordinary member is nominated by the Minister for Finance and is an officer and representative of the Department of Finance.

The Pensions Regulator is the accountable person of the body and is required under legislation to report to the PAC as necessary.

Reporting Obligations

Section 22(1) of the Pensions Act, 1990 (as amended) requires the Authority to prepare financial statements in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Social Protection with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform. In preparing the financial statements, the Authority is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Authority will continue in operation;
- disclose and explain any material departures from applicable accounting standards.

The Authority is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Authority and for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Section 23(2) further provides that the Pensions Authority must, within a specified period after the end of each financial year, provide the Minister for Social Protection with a report on its activities during the year.

Codes of Business Conduct

The revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies requires all state bodies to have written Codes of Business Conduct for Directors and employees. It requires that the requirements of the Companies Acts, which relate to the behaviour of Directors should be implemented even where their legislation does not reflect these requirements. Members of the Authority are considered 'Directors' for the purposes of the code. The code for

Chapter 5: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

employees should embrace such matters as duty to the state body, avoidance of conflict of interest, limits on outside activities, acceptance of gifts and honesty in dealings.

The Code of Business Conduct for Authority members and staff of the Pensions Authority is available [here](#).

A periodic critical review of the Pensions Authority will be conducted as a matter of course.

2. Pensions Council

The Pensions Council was established with the sole function of providing pension policy advice to the Minister for Social Protection with a particular focus on policies to support the future sustainability and adequacy of pension provision. Its membership ensures that the relevant skills, knowledge and experience are available to provide the necessary advice and information in the development of pension policy.

The Council consists of a chairperson and between eight and twelve ordinary members appointed by the Minister for a period of not exceeding five years. The members serve on a part-time capacity and there is no remuneration paid to members. The ordinary members must include the Pensions Regulator, one member nominated by the Minister as a representative of the Department of Social Protection, one member nominated by the Minister for Finance as a representative of the Central Bank and one member of the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform as a representative of that Minister.

Under the legislation governing the Council, the Minister for Social Protection determines its procedures.

Principal Ministerial and Department Functions

- Provide sufficient oversight to ensure the effectiveness of the body while not impacting or impinging on its independence.
- Make any necessary changes to primary and secondary legislation in relation to the Pensions Council.
- Appointment of members of the Pensions Council and designation of Chairperson.
- Removal of members of the Pensions Council in specified circumstances.
- Request advice as required.
- Determine procedures of the Pensions Council.

Chapter 5: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Codes of Business Conduct

Members of the Council are considered 'directors' for the purposes of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The Code of Conduct for Members and Staff of the Pensions Council is available [here](#).

Members of the Pensions Council are unpaid. Travelling & subsistence costs, where they arise for the Chairperson, are covered by the relevant Civil Service circular and paid by the Department. The Pensions Authority provides administrative support to the Pensions Council under a Memorandum of Understanding at the request of the Minister

3. Citizens Information Board

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is the statutory body responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice (including money and budgeting advice) and advocacy on a broad range of public and social services.

CIB provides some services directly to the public through the citizensinformation.ie website and a number of microsites. It also funds 22 independent Service Delivery Companies:

- 8 Citizens Information Service regional companies
- 8 Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) regional companies
- National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities
- Citizens Information Phone Service
- MABS Support
- National Traveller MABS
- Sign Language Interpreting Services
- Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters

The Service Delivery Companies are established as companies limited by guarantee under the Companies Act 2014. Exchequer funding is provided to these companies by CIB which works with the companies to deliver on its statutory functions.

Through MABS, CIB also partly administers Abhaile, the national mortgage arrears resolution service overseen by the Department of Justice as well as this Department and delivered through several different public organisations.

Chapter 5: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

CIB is governed by the [Social Welfare \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 2008](#), the [Citizens Information Act 2007](#), and the [Comhairle Act 2000](#) (as amended). The functions of CIB are:

- (a) to support the provision of or, where the Board considers it appropriate, to provide directly, independent information, advice and advocacy services so as to ensure that individuals have access to accurate, comprehensive and clear information relating to social services and are referred to the relevant services;
- (b) to assist and support individuals, in particular those with disabilities, in identifying and understanding their needs and options and in accessing their entitlements to social services;
- (c) to promote greater accessibility, co-ordination and public awareness of social services and of information, advice and advocacy services;
- (d) to support, promote and develop the provision of information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services and to highlight issues which are of concern to users of those services;
- (e) to promote and support the development of voluntary bodies providing social services including, where the Board considers it appropriate, the provision of financial or other resources such as integrated information, training and development services;
- (f) to furnish advice, information and assistance to the Minister in relation to the development of any aspect of social services;
- (g) whenever the Minister so requests, to design schemes relating to social services to address needs identified by the Minister concerning such services, and, where the Board considers it appropriate to do so, to provide such services directly;
- (h) to promote, develop, encourage and assist, through the provision of financial or other resources, the work in relation to social services of such bodies as the Minister may specify;
- (i) to prepare strategic plans.

Principal Ministerial and Department Functions

- The CIB Board is responsible to the Minister for the operation and proper functioning of CIB.
- The Minister is responsible for the appointment of members the CIB Board.
- The Minister has a Departmental representative on the CIB Board at Assistant Secretary level.

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- The Minister approves a three-year strategic plan which is laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.
- The Department provides a funding allocation to the CIB to discharge its statutory responsibilities.
- DSP examines monthly funding drawdown requests received from the CIB and expenditure reports submitted by the CIB.
- CIB conducts a formal Mid-Year Review of its overall expenditure, results of which are presented to the Board of CIB for consideration and approval and subsequent submission to DSP.
- CIB Accounts are subject to audit by Comptroller & Auditor General.

Accountability

The CIB Board comprises of 15 Board Members including the Chairperson. All members, including the Chairperson, are appointed by the Minister. The term of office of members of the Board of the CIB Board is five years. The Chief Executive Officer is the accountable person of the body; she is accountable to the Board and is required under CIB's governing legislation to report to the PAC or other Oireachtas committees as necessary.

Reporting Obligations

The Comhairle Act outlines CIB's reporting arrangements, including an annual report, a three-year strategic plan and annual financial statements - all of which must be presented to and approved by the Minister. An Oversight Agreement and a Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) are in place between the DSP and CIB. These agreements are reviewed on an annual basis and ensure robust and effective governance arrangements are in place. CIB is required to return a Quarterly Progress Report to the Department providing a summary of progress and detailing the developments that have taken place in the preceding quarter in relation to the agreed activities and services as set out in the PDA.

In accordance with the provisions of the Code, a Periodic Critical Review (PCR) of the CIB was completed in 2022. The findings from the PCR are currently under consideration.

Finances

Annual financial reporting is provided through the Annual Report and Annual Financial Statements. In accordance with its governing legislation, CIB is required to prepare its accounts for approval by the Board and submission to the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) for audit not later than three months after the financial year to which they relate.

Chapter 5: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

A copy of the accounts and the certificate issued by the C&AG, together with any report of the C&AG on the accounts, is presented to the Board and to the Minister as soon as practicable and laid by DSP before each House of the Oireachtas. As provided for in the Code, the Chairperson furnishes a comprehensive report by way of a confidential letter to the Minister each year, in conjunction with the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

Meetings

DSP officials meet the CEO and senior management within the relevant areas of responsibility in CIB on a regular basis. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss progress and issues relating to the implementation of the goals outlined in the PDA, including governance, financial control and any issues arising in relation to the operation of the agreements or emerging issues of common concern. At least one formal meeting is held per year between senior DSP officials and representatives of CIB to review the PDA and to strengthen the relationship between the two organisations. The Chairperson and CEO of CIB, when requested, attend a meeting with the Department's Management Board.

Codes of Business Conduct

A Code of Business Conduct for all directors and employees of the CIB which takes into account the implications of the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995 is available [here](#).

4. Social Welfare Tribunal

The Social Welfare Tribunal 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 s/he has been unreasonably deprived of employment because their employer refused or failed to follow the negotiating machinery available for settling disputes, s/he may apply to the Tribunal for an adjudication on the matter.

The Tribunal is made up of a Chairperson and four ordinary members. The members of the Tribunal are appointed by the Minister for Social Protection and must consist of an independent Chairperson, two members nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and two by the Irish Business and Employer's Confederation (IBEC).

Chapter 5: Bodies under the aegis of the Department

Accountability

The Tribunal acts as an independent body. A person interested (including the Minister) may apply to the Tribunal for a review of its decision. Where the Tribunal is satisfied that a material change has occurred in the circumstances of the stoppage of work, or of the trade dispute which caused the stoppage of work, or that there is new evidence which in the opinion of the Tribunal could have affected its decision, it may review its decision and such a review shall be treated as an Adjudication.

Adjudication by the Tribunal members is final and conclusive except an Appeal may be referred to the High Court on a point of law.

A member of the Tribunal may be removed from office by the Minister.

Reporting Obligations

The adjudication of the Tribunal is recorded in a document setting out the arguments of both sides followed by the determination of the Tribunal, signed by the Chairperson and sealed appropriately.

Codes of Conduct

There are no directors or employees. Expenses are paid per sitting only.

EU and International Groups on which the Department is represented

Executive Board on the implementation of Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI)

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)

Employment Committee (EMCO)

Social Questions Working Party

Administrative Commission for the Coordination of Social Security Systems

Technical Commission for Data Processing (attached to the Administrative Commission on the Coordination of Social Security Systems)

Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Social Security Systems

Mutual Information on Social Security Systems of EU/EEA countries (MISSOC)

Governing Board of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)

Council of Europe Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter and European Code of Social Security

Bureau of the Governmental Committee

European Jobs Network (EURES)

European network of Public Employment Services (PES)

Advisory Committee on the Free Movement of Workers

Advisory Group on the European Labour Authority

Committee on the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)

International Labour Organisation

Social Protection Committee (SPC)

Relevant Committees of the United Nations

International Social Security Association

Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee of the OECD (ELSAC)

“Windsor Conference” (group of social security experts from six English-speaking countries)

North South Ministerial Council

Border People Advisory Group

Ireland & United Kingdom Social Security Working Group

Forum on the International Dimensions of Social Security Co-ordination

Common Travel Area Plenary.