

Plan to update performance management system in civil service

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**DPER plans to update the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) in the civil service this year, as well as develop a new probation policy, a temporary deployment policy and an updated grievance policy as part of the reform of the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme.**

A briefing prepared by the Department for the new Minister, Jack Chambers, said that the updating of the PMDS “will enhance the focus on behaviour, skills, strengths, knowledge, values, motivation, and interests to better align with the framework”.

Under a heading ‘Workforce Relations Policy’, the brief says the project will provide “a more in-depth analysis of performance and productivity across the civil service”.

The PMDS currently grades civil servants on a 1 to 5 basis with staff requiring to at least be marked at ‘3’ or ‘fully achieved expectations’, to receive their annual incremental increase. However, in reality only a tiny minority (less than 1%) have been denied their increment under PMDS. This led to calls for an overhaul of the system, something which has been on the agenda for the last number of years.

The briefing also says that the Department will progress the Civil Service Regulation and Public Service Management (Amendment) and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill, 2024.

It says this Bill “seeks to modernise the disciplinary processes by permitting disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, at levels below the head of an organisation, and it includes additional amendments to align with contemporary employment practices”.

As with PMDS, this has also been on the ‘to do’ list for quite some time, particularly given the extremely low number of dismissals in the civil service and the fact that a dismissal requires sanction at the very highest level, sometimes at Ministerial level.

## **PROGRESSIVE POLICIES**

The briefing notes that the Department’s plans to develop a new probation policy, a temporary deployment policy and to update the grievance procedure as part of the overall reform of the C&A scheme “will involve extensive stakeholder engagement and consultation with the trade union representatives”.

In terms of wellbeing policy initiatives, the brief notes that in 2023/2024 the Department introduced a policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse as well as a Menopause in the Workplace Policy framework which has been developed in 29 (83%) of Government departments.

In terms of employing people with a disability, the brief notes that currently 6.84% of civil service employees identified as disabled, up from 5.74% in 2022. (Under the Disability Act, 2005, the public sector must ensure that a minimum of 3% of staff are people with disabilities.)

Regarding the Government’s commitment to create inclusive pathways to permanent employment for underrepresented or marginalised groups, the brief notes the success of the Willing, Able Mentoring Programme or WAM, the Oireachtas Work Learning Programme (OWL) for those with an intellectual disability and the internship for Traveller and Roma communities.

It notes that OWL has created 17 part-time permanent roles since 2021. It pointed out that in 2024, five of the eight Traveller and Roma interns secured permanent positions in the civil service and the intention is to increase these places to 24 this year.

The brief says that the Public Service Apprenticeship Plan (PSAP) was launched in August 2023 with a target to reach 750 apprentice registrations per year by 2025 in the public service and a target of 225 in the civil service, also by 2025.

In terms of commitments to upskill and reskill for the future of work, the Department works closely on training and mentoring programmes with the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD).

### **IPA RELOCATION**

In regard to the IPA, the briefing notes that the Institute will be relocated to a new fit for purpose building.

In terms of risks and challenges facing Minister Chambers, the brief mentions the reform programmes in the Justice and Defence sectors and ensuring such reforms achieve value for money.

The brief also mentions maintaining positive industrial relations in the context of the ongoing reform of the civil service C&A scheme which, it says, “serves as an opportunity to maximise constructive engagement with employee representative groups”.

There is also mention of the risk of staff turnover through promotions, mobility and retirement which “will have a direct impact on knowledge management within the division”.