

Official Languages Act 2003

Scheme as required under Section 11 of the Act

Effective from 1 June 2007



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Contents

Chapter 1

Background and scope of scheme

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The scheme of the Department of Social and Family Affairs
- 1.3 Scope of the scheme
- 1.4 Context
- 1.5 Demand for service in Irish

Chapter 2

Mission, functions and service delivery

- 2.1 Mission statement of the Department
- 2.2 Main functions of the Department
- 2.3 Customer contact
- 2.4 Service delivery
- 2.5 Service delivery in Irish at present

Chapter 3

Statement of services available to the public

- 3.1 Direct service provision to the public
- 3.2 Indirect service providers to the public
- 3.3 Cross-sectional issues

Chapter 4

Provision of service in Irish to our customers

- 4.1 Direct service delivery sections which provide service in Irish
- 4.2 Direct service delivery sections which provide limited service in Irish
- 4.3 Direct service delivery sections providing service in English
- 4.4 Indirect service providers
- 4.5 Reach
- 4.6 Service delivery in the regions
- 4.7 Irish service in Gaeltacht Areas
- 4.8 Irish as the working language in Gaeltacht offices
- 4.9 Information technology
- 4.10 Enhancement of services in offices of the Department

Chapter 5

The Irish Scheme in operation

- 5.1 Publicising the scheme
- 5.2 Integration of scheme in annual Business Plans
- 5.3 Implementation and monitoring of scheme

Appendix A: Summary of submissions

Appendix B: Forms in Irish and associated booklets available on Department of Social and Family Affairs web site

Appendix C: Categories of scheme/payment operated by the Department and their present location

Chapter 1 - Background and scope of the Scheme

1.1 Introduction

The Official Languages Act 2003 (Section 11) requires that a scheme be prepared by nominated public bodies detailing the services which each public body, including Government departments, intends to provide for customers within the three year term of the Scheme.

The scheme will specify what services will be provided

- a) through the medium of Irish
- b) through the medium of English, and
- c) through the medium of Irish and English.

In addition, a public body's scheme will demonstrate what measures it will take to provide services in Irish, which are not currently available in that language, within the timeframe of the agreed scheme.

1.2 The scheme of the Department of Social and Family Affairs

This scheme is drawn up in accordance with the requirements of Section 11 of the Act and taking into account the guidelines circulated by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The timeframe of the scheme is three years commencing 1 June, 2007.

1.3 Scope of the scheme

The scheme spells out the range of services which the Department aims to deliver to its customers between 2007 and mid-2010. In addition, the service delivery methods are identified. The constraints on the delivery of the scheme are also included.

1.4 Context

It has always been the policy of the Department to provide service in Irish on request. In order to provide this service staff have been encouraged and facilitated to attend Irish training courses. Since 2001 specialised training courses, designed to increase participants' knowledge of terminology relevant to their jobs, have been provided for front-line staff. While the training provided was of a very high standard, staff have had very little opportunity to use Irish in the work situation. Therefore, in making commitments in the scheme we are conscious of the limited capacity of staff in spoken and written Irish. We are also conscious of the fact that the provision of service in Irish will depend on the capacity of existing staff and that the recruitment of additional staff for this purpose is not an option. The impact of organisational change through, for example, the Civil

Service decentralisation programme is difficult to judge at this point but may affect the operation of the agreed scheme as trained front-line staff move from their current area.

1.5 Demand for service in Irish

Demand for service in Irish has also influenced the scheme content and its subsequent implementation. The demand has been surveyed in the recent past. The following is a summary of the findings of the surveys:

- a) In the course of a nationwide MRBI survey in 2001 to establish customers' views on the quality of service provided by the Department a question on their preference for dealing with staff in Irish was included. Two per cent of respondents indicated that they would prefer to deal with staff in Irish.
- b) In October 2004 a survey of customers carried out in all local offices included a question on customers' preference for using Irish. Four per cent responded positively.
- c) Information collected by questionnaire in the Department in November 2004 reflects a very low, and, in many cases, an absence of demand for Irish service from customers.
- d) A recent attempt in a Gaeltacht area to organise a customer panel to deal with topics which included the use of Irish was unsuccessful.
- e) Responses to the Request for Submissions advertised in the press in respect of the scheme, published in both Irish- and English-language newspapers in November 2004, attracted four submissions from organisations and seven from individuals (see summary of submissions in **Appendix A**).

Chapter 2 - Mission, functions, and service delivery

In this chapter the mission, functions, and service delivery methods of the Department will be clarified.

2.1 Mission Statement of the Department

The Department's Mission Statement is: "to promote a caring society through ensuring access to income support and other services, enabling active participation, promoting social inclusion and supporting families".

2.2 The main functions of the Department are:

- To formulate appropriate social protection policies;
- To administer and manage the delivery of a range of statutory and non-statutory social and family services; and
- To work with other Departments and agencies in the delivery of Government priorities

These functions are translated into service to customers in four main areas:

- a) By providing a range of income supports, both insurance and assistance based, to a range of customers including those who are unemployed, ill, on maternity leave, widowed, in retirement, or elderly. Child Benefit is generally paid in respect of children in the State up to a certain age and secondary benefits such as Free Travel and Free Electricity are paid to certain pensioners.
- b) More recently customers in the active age groups who are unemployed are encouraged and facilitated through educational opportunities and other supports to return to work.
- c) By co-ordinating the Government's National Anti-Poverty Strategy and by developing policy in support of families.
- d) By providing identity management services to other agencies in their use of the Personal Public Service Number (PPS number)

2.3 Customer contact

Service to customers at a local level is delivered mainly through a network of fifty-eight local offices and sixty-eight branch offices nationwide which deal mainly with unemployment-related payments and services.¹ Based in the Department's local offices are Social Welfare Inspectors, who have direct contact with claimants and employers through investigating entitlement to schemes and services and ensuring compliance with the PRSI system. The Facilitator service, which is also based in local offices, addresses both employment and family support activities and assists people to return to work, training or education.

Local services are structured on a nine-region basis with regional offices in Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Sligo, Dundalk and three in the Dublin area. Each Regional Office supports all levels of management in the region. At national level, the Regional Director's Office in Dublin supports the delivery of service in the regions by the promotion and management of change and provides operational/administrative support to local levels of the Department.

Other services are administered on a national basis by headquarters offices in Dublin, Letterkenny, Sligo, Longford, Dundalk and Waterford. These offices, in some cases, deal directly with customers through public offices, by telephone, or in writing. Other headquarters' services deal mainly with planning, information technology, and internal administration issues and have only limited direct contact with the general public.

2.4 Service delivery

Service delivery in the Department may be described as 'direct' or 'indirect'. *Direct service* is delivered mainly through face-to-face contact which may, in turn, be followed by telephone or written communication in the course of administering various payment schemes.

Indirect service to the public is characterised by infrequent contact with individuals and groups, although there may be extensive consultation with public representatives, interest groups and the social partners. Full details of these direct and indirect services are in Chapters 3 & 4 of this Scheme.

In addition to direct and indirect contact with the public, the Department's web-site (www.welfare.ie) is a critical information service to customers, providing application forms and details of available schemes and services.

¹ Branch Offices are operated on a contract basis for the Department by private individuals and are usually located in a town/village where it would not be practical for the Department to have a Local Office.

2.5 Service delivery in Irish at present

The following is a description of service in Irish through the various methods in use at present:

a) Face-to-face and telephone communication

In offices in or serving Gaeltacht areas a higher standard of Irish is available than elsewhere thanks to Irish-speaking staff from those areas being employed there. *The* specific services are set out in paragraphs 4.6 – 4.8 inclusive. In other areas the level of Irish depends mainly on individual capacity and a willingness to participate in, and benefit from, specialised training courses designed to train staff in the use of terminology relevant to their specific job. For details of service delivery in specific areas see Chapter 4 – *Provision of service in Irish to our customers*.

b) Forms and information leaflets

Over half of the primary forms, i.e., those used to apply for the various schemes and services of the Department, are available in English and *are also available in Irish on the Department's website at present*. A range of follow-up forms used in communication with customers who have used Irish application forms is also available on the Department's internal website. A wide range of information leaflets relating to the Department's activities is also available in *Irish on the website and in hardcopy*. See Appendix B for details of forms and leaflets which are currently available

c) Automatic issue of language-of-choice forms

At present electronic transfer of birth registration data from the General Register's Office to the Department's Client Identity Services and subsequently to the Child Benefit system via the Service Delivery Model (SDM) is in operation. Using the birth data, a claim form is issued by Child Benefit to the claimant. This form includes a question on language preference. If the claimant indicates that Irish is the language of choice this is noted and all subsequent communications issued to the claimant will be in Irish. It is proposed to use a similar methodology for the pensions system as it becomes covered by the SDM in the near future.

Chapter 3 - Statement of services available to the public

This chapter lists the schemes and services available to the public, both directly and indirectly.

3.1 Direct service provision to the public

In drawing up this scheme we have prioritised direct service delivery, i.e., those sections providing a direct service to members of the public. Within this category there are seven broad payment classes, each consisting of a range of schemes and supports, administered by the Department, as follows:²

- a) Child related payments**
- b) Illness, Disability and Caring**
- c) Unemployment Supports**
- d) Employment Supports**
- e) Widows, Widowers, and One-Parent Families**
- f) Retired and Elderly**
- g) Extra Benefits**

In addition to the above payment classes there are also sections which deal directly with the public in relation to other aspects of the business of the Department, viz.,

- **Client Eligibility Services**
- **Client Identity Services**
- **Scope, Refunds, Overpayments and Debt Management Sections**
- **Information Services**
- **Office for Social Inclusion**

The level of contact between the general public and staff of the above listed sections varies greatly. For example, staff in claim-processing sections such as Illness Benefit or a Social Welfare Local Office are in regular contact, both written and oral, with the public while staff in Overpayments Section have only occasional contact with customers.

² See Appendix C for a breakdown of each category by scheme/payment

3.2 Indirect service providers to the public

The following sections have indirect and infrequent contact with the general public because of the nature of work carried out in the areas, i.e., internal administration, policy development or accounts issues:

- **Personnel**
- **Planning**
- **Corporate Development**

In all service delivery areas the Department is committed to providing a quality Irish service to the public within the constraints of staff availability and demand for service in particular areas.

3.3 Cross-sectional issues

There are aspects of service in Irish which cannot be delivered by one section alone; the co-operation of at least one other section is required to deliver a satisfactory service. An example of this is the provision of trained staff to deal with customers in Irish. This can only be achieved by co-operation between Staff Development Unit, which is responsible for staff training throughout the Department, and the section requiring training for its staff. Likewise, Information Services is responsible for all primary forms in English and in Irish for the various scheme sections and is also responsible for the development of the Department's website. Facilities Management Unit, which does not provide service directly to external customers, is responsible for the provision of signage at/in all offices of the Department.

Chapter 4 - Provision of service in Irish to our customers

The present position in respect of service provision in Irish by service providers in the Department follows. Some sections can provide full service in Irish, i.e., face-to-face, telephone and written replies while other sections can provide limited service in Irish or service in English only. 'Limited service' means that all of the services listed under 'full service' (above) are provided on a part-time basis only in the offices in question. The hours of availability of Irish service may vary from time to time and customers are advised to contact the relevant office to schedule attendance. This approach takes account of available resources, the spirit of the Act and the preferences of the customers of the Department. These definitions of 'full' and 'limited' service apply in all instances in which they are used in the sections following.

4.1 Direct service delivery sections which provide full service in Irish

The schemes in sections a) – e) inclusive provide all services in Irish at present and will continue to do so on a full-time basis:

a) *Schemes administered in Letterkenny decentralised office*

- **Child Benefit**
- **Maternity Benefit**
- **Adoptive Benefit**
- **Health and Safety Benefit.**

All four schemes are administered from the Department's office in Letterkenny. Child Benefit is a monthly payment normally paid to the mother or step-mother of a child living with them. Maternity Benefit is paid to employed or self-employed women around childbirth who satisfy certain contribution conditions. Adoptive Benefit is paid to an adopting mother or single male who adopts a child while Health and Safety Benefit is paid to women who are granted Health and Safety Leave under the Maternity Protection Act 1994.

b) *Illness Benefit and Injury Benefit*

Both of these schemes are currently administered in Dublin. Illness Benefit is paid to insured people who are unable to work due to illness. Injury Benefit is a payment made to people who are unable to work due to an accident at work or because they have contracted a disease due to the type of work they do.

c) *Money Advice and Budgeting Service, Dublin*

The Department's services to the fifty-three Money Advice and Budgeting Service companies countrywide, which provide advice to individuals and families on the management of debt is provided by the staff of this office. Contact with customers is mainly by phone.

d) *Schemes administered in Longford decentralised office*

The following schemes/allowances are administered in the decentralised office in Longford:

- Disablement Benefit
- Disability Allowance
- Carers Allowance and Benefit,
- Invalidity Pension,
- Bereavement Grant
- Family Income Supplement.

Trained staff are available to provide all services in Irish.

e) *Unemployment Schemes central support*

Located in Dublin this section provides a customer help-desk to local office staff and to the public on all issues relating to unemployment assistance, benefit, and income support.

4.2 Direct service delivery sections which provide limited service in Irish

The following direct service sections can provide limited service in Irish at present and for the duration of the scheme, subject to the definition of *limited service* at the beginning of this chapter.

a) *Client Identity Services, Dublin*

The allocation of the Department's Personal Public Service Number is co-ordinated in this office. Communication with the public is mainly by telephone and in writing.

b) *Employment Support Services*

Located in Dublin, and administering the Back to Work Allowance, the Back to Education Allowance, and the Employers PRSI Exemption Scheme, these sections deal with customers mainly by phone.

c) *Information Services*

This section is located in Sligo and is responsible for the provision of information on all of the Department's schemes and services. In addition to organising information seminars for departmental staff, speakers from this section also deliver talks on social welfare matters to external groups. As a central-service provider, it is responsible for the provision of all primary forms.

Information Services will deliver the following improvements in its services over the duration of the scheme:

- i)** All primary forms and information leaflets will be available separately in Irish and in English on the website of the Department by mid 2007. In addition, secondary forms, i.e., forms used in response to application forms received in the various scheme sections, will be available in Irish where the initial application form was completed in Irish.
- ii)** There is regular telephone and written communication between this section and the general public and face-to-face contact with customers in the public office. Limited Irish service is available at present. To improve these services specialised training in the use of Irish will be provided for staff of the section. Because of decentralisation of the section in early 2007 it is not possible to commit to further improvements at this stage.
- iii)** Information Services are responsible for the Department's website; it is planned to have an Irish website developed by the end of 2007.

d) *Medical Assessors*

The Medical Assessors are all qualified doctors, the majority (13) of whom are based in Dublin while two are based in Cork and one each in Galway, Longford and Kilkenny. They medically assess claimants of the various illness schemes. Desk assessments of medical reports submitted by our customers' doctors are also carried out. At present there are two assessors who can deal with customers in Irish. They are based in Dublin but may attend at offices countrywide if requested.

e) *Social Welfare Services Office (formerly Pension Services Office), Sligo*

Old age and widow(er)s pensions are administered from this office, together with household benefits, free travel, one-parent family payment, guardians allowance and pension, and blind pension. There is face-to-face contact with customers through the public office while the majority makes contact by phone. Limited service will be provided for the duration of the scheme.

f) *Social Welfare Appeals Office, Dublin*

This independent office includes Appeals Officers, who are responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements, and administrative staff. At present there are two Appeals Officers who can carry out appeals in Irish. Administrative staff are not in a position to provide service in Irish at present but training is being provided and it is intended that this service will be available during the timeframe of the scheme.

4.3 Direct service delivery sections providing service in English

The following sections can provide service in English only or, with the aid of staff from other areas, may provide service in Irish. Except where otherwise stated it is intended to have staff trained and available to provide service in Irish within the timeframe of the scheme.

a) *Freedom of Information Unit, Dublin.*

Staff in this section co-ordinate the implementation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acts throughout the Department and also deals with FOI requests and reviews, if appropriate. Contact with the public is mainly by telephone or written request.

b) *Office for Social Inclusion, Dublin.*

The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) is responsible for developing, co-ordinating, and driving the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion. Set up in 2003, the Office deals with the public by telephone, electronic mail, in writing, and via their website. While some of their documents are available on the OSI website in Irish, at present there is no capacity to provide other services in Irish.

c) *Medical Review and Assessment Section, Dublin*

This section operates the main control mechanism for illness and disability schemes in the Department and co-ordinates the activities of medical assessors. It also provides a major customer service element in the assessment of eligibility for illness and disability schemes.

d) *Scope, PRSI Refunds, Homemakers Scheme, Client Eligibility Services*

With the exception of the Self Employment Section, located in Waterford, the remaining sections are based in Dublin.

Scope: Decisions on the insurability of employment and self-employment are given in this section. There is regular contact, mainly written and by phone, with customers.

PRSI Refunds: Refunds of PRSI contributions, paid to the Department in error, are processed in this section. Contact is mainly in writing and by phone.

Client Eligibility Services: This section is responsible for the maintenance of social insurance records, including PRSI contributions and claim information. Service to the public involves both written and telephone contact with employers, employees, and others.

Homemakers Scheme: This section maintains a record of people who are entitled to have periods spent caring for children or elderly or incapacitated relatives taken into account for old age contributory pension. Contact is mainly through written application or by phone.

Self-employment Section (Waterford): This section administers the PRSI scheme for self-employment and the collection of special categories of employments/self employment. Contact with customers is mainly in writing.

e) *Press Office*

The Press Office deals with the media on all aspects of Departmental business. At present there is no capacity to provide service in Irish in the Office; specialised training in Irish will be sought for staff within the duration of the scheme. This training will be provided with a view to preparing staff to provide a bilingual press service in the period of the second and future schemes.

4.4 Indirect service providers

The following sections of the Department have infrequent contact with the public:

- **Personnel**
- **Planning**
- **Corporate Development**

Contact between staff in those sections and the public is infrequent and mainly consultative. For this reason, improving service in Irish is lower priority than for the sections at 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3. At present all published documents and information leaflets or posters used in information campaigns and the Annual Report of the Department are produced bilingually.

4.5 Reach

Reach is an agency set up by the Government to improve the quality of service to customers of the Irish Public Service. This involves building the Public Services Broker to provide a standard means of access to public services. This will be facilitated by the **reachservices** website which will act as a single point of access to the full range of public services in Ireland. **reachservices** is designed to give easy access to services and to information about services. It presents a “home page” for each service that gives the basic information needed to access the service through the provision of links to online or downloadable forms and/or information on other websites.

The **reachservices** portal is available in Irish and in English. Telephone service, electronic mail, and information leaflets are also available bilingually.

4.6 Service delivery in the regions (including local offices)

There is a high level of contact - including face-to-face, telephone, and written - between staff of social welfare offices and branch offices in the regions and the customers of the Department. In addition to local and branch office staff, social welfare inspectors and staff (facilitators) of the Social and Family Support Services also deal with customers. The availability of limited service will be advertised bilingually in each office where applicable and customers wishing to be dealt with in Irish may schedule their visits accordingly.

4.6(i) Services to be provided in local and branch offices

The services to be provided in Irish and in English in the nine regions of the Department³ are detailed below and section 4.7 gives more detail in relation to Gaeltacht areas. Where local or branch offices do not provide a service in Irish at present the Department will explore, over the coming months, the possibility of setting up alternative points of contact for customers who wish to avail of service through Irish.

Dublin North region

In the Dublin North region there are seven local offices and one branch office.

Of this total, two local offices can provide full service in Irish, one office can provide limited service while the remainder can provide service in English only. At Inspectorate locations, one of the total of eight can provide limited service in Irish while the remainder can provide service in English only. Facilitators in the region can provide service in English only.

³ At present the number of regions is being reduced from ten to nine and a further reduction will take place in 2007. SWLOs and BEOs will be redistributed on the adjacent regions.

Dublin South region

In the Dublin South region there are six local offices and one branch office. Of that total, five local offices can provide a part time service in Irish while the remainder can provide service in English only. There are fifty-two inspectors (including three Facilitators) in the region. Of these, six are competent to provide a part-time service in the Irish language at three locations. Arrangements have been made to ensure that the Inspectors and Facilitators will be available at the most appropriate locations, i.e., where demand for service in Irish is greatest

Dublin West region

There are five local offices and three branch offices in the region. Of that total, two local offices can provide limited service while the remaining local and branch offices can provide service in English only. At the eight Inspectorate locations, limited service can be provided at five while at the remaining three, service in English only is available. Full service in Irish can be provided by one member of the Regional Management Team. Facilitators of the Social and Family Support Services in the region can provide service in English only.

Mid-West region (counties Clare, Limerick, Tipperary North, Offaly, and Laois)

There are five local offices and eight branch offices in the Mid-West region.

Of that total, one local office and four branch offices can provide service in Irish, the remaining offices can provide service in English only.

There are thirteen Inspectorate locations in the region. Of these, full service in Irish can be provided at one location, limited service can be provided at four locations while at the remainder service in English only can be provided. Full service in Irish can be provided at one of the four Facilitator locations and limited service can be provided at another location.

North-East region (counties Cavan, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Westmeath (part of)) and Roscommon (part of)

There are eight local offices (including two signing/information offices) and twelve branch offices in this region. Full service in Irish is available in two local offices (including one serving a Gaeltacht area) and three branch offices while one branch office can provide limited service in Irish. The remaining offices can provide service in English only. Of the sixteen Inspectorate locations, limited service in Irish can be provided at five locations; service in English only is available at the remainder, while full service in Irish is available at one of five Facilitator locations.

North-West region (counties Donegal, Leitrim, and Sligo)

In this region there are eight local offices and five branch offices. Of that total, four local offices, including one located in a Gaeltacht area and one serving a Gaeltacht area, can provide services in Irish on a full-time basis, while one branch office can provide full service. The remainder can provide services in English only.

Of the eleven Inspectorate locations, services in Irish can be provided at two on a full-time basis while limited service can be provided at three locations. Service in Irish can be provided at three of the four Facilitator locations.

Southern region (counties Cork and Kerry)

There are nine local offices (including one signing/information office) and sixteen branch offices in the Southern region. Of that total, one local office can provide service in Irish on a full time basis. while two local offices and one branch office can provide limited service. One of the branch offices is located in a Gaeltacht area. The contractor at this office has conversational Irish and has also attended a specialised training course and can provide limited service in Irish. At the remaining offices service in English only is available. Full service in Irish can be provided at four of the twenty-one Inspectorate locations on a full-time basis while at the remaining locations service in English only is available. Facilitators of the Social and Family Support Services can provide full service in Irish at one location, a limited service at another location and service in English only at the three remaining locations.

South East region (counties Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South, Waterford, and Wexford)

There are six local offices (including one signing/information office) and thirteen branch offices in this region. Of that total, one local office can provide service in Irish on a full-time basis; two local offices and three branch offices can provide limited service in Irish while the remainder can provide service in English only. There are twelve Inspectorate locations; at one location service in Irish can be provided on a full-time basis, while at four others limited service is available. The remainder, including the Facilitators, can provide service in English only.

Western region (counties Galway, Mayo, Roscommon (part of), Offaly (part of), and Westmeath (part of))

There are eight local offices and eight branch offices in the region. Of that total, four local offices, including one which is located in a Gaeltacht area and two which serve Gaeltacht areas, and three branch offices can provide limited service in Irish while the remainder can provide service in English only. There are sixteen inspectorate locations in the region. Of this total, service in Irish is available at four locations on a full-time basis, at five others limited service is available while at the remaining locations service in English only is available. Limited service in Irish can be provided at one of the three Facilitator locations in the region.

4.7 Irish service in Gaeltacht areas

The following offices are located in Gaeltacht areas:

- An Clochán Liath (Dungloe, Co. Donegal) Local Office
- Béal an Mhuirthead (Belmullet, Co. Mayo) Local Office
- Acaill (Achill, Co. Mayo) Local Office
- An Daingean (Co. Kerry) Branch Office

Service in Irish can be provided in An Clochán Liath, Béal an Mhuirthead, Acaill and in the branch office in An Daingean.

Local Offices of the Department serving Gaeltacht areas:

There are social welfare local offices, serving Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas, in the following locations:

- a) Dunfanaghy, Letterkenny, Tralee, and Navan
- b) Clifden, Cahirciveen, Galway, and Waterford
- c) Donegal, Mallow, and Bantry

All the local offices at a) above can provide full service in Irish, those listed at b) can provide limited service while the offices listed at c) can provide service in English only. In the case of the Clifden and Galway offices every effort will be made to improve the level of Irish service available through staff training, provision of Irish forms and information leaflets, and attempting to fill vacancies which arise with Irish speaking staff but this cannot be guaranteed because of the need for continuity of service in these offices.

Branch Offices serving Gaeltacht areas

The following offices, while not located in Gaeltacht areas, provide services to customers from Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas:

Killybegs, Bantry, Dunmanway, Skibbereen, Macroom, Mallow, and Dungarvan

Full service in Irish can be provided in the office in Killybegs; the other offices listed provide service in English only.

4.8 Irish as the working language of offices in the Gaeltacht

By the end of 2020 Irish will be the working language in offices located in the Gaeltacht.

4.9 Information Technology

The Department has four types of system. These are:

- a) Application systems developed under the Service Delivery Model (SDM) programme
- b) Older production systems developed 'in-house'.
- c) New on-line web-based services
- d) Externally sourced systems (typically administrative systems and 'infrastructure systems' such as e-mail).

a) Application systems developed under SDM

These systems are being developed with enhanced language-handling capability and are capable of handling the Irish language. Full support of all relevant application areas in the Department is a long-term, multi-year programme. During the period of the scheme it is intended to address several of the pensions' applications and also the main customer system.

b) Older 'in-house' production systems

At present there is not the capacity available to significantly develop these systems to support the Irish language without critically affecting the ability to support payments and service modernisation. Successor systems will be catered for as set out under (a) above.

c) New on-line web-based services

Systems development is carried out in English. The initial versions of applications are consequently in English although they will allow for entry for Irish-language data on release.

Where additional Irish language processing is required it will be included in the planning for release of all new services.

d) Administrative services

The Department's policy is to source these through open procurement. A request will be made as part of relevant Requests for Tenders that the systems to be provided will be able to handle Irish-language data and that the 'user-customisable' aspects are capable of supporting the use of the Irish language. An example of this will be the replacement of the internal-mail system during the period of the scheme and ensuring that it can handle standard messages and notices in Irish.

4.10 Enhancement of services in offices of the Department

Given the high level of contact between departmental staff and customers the need to improve on service delivery in Irish is evident, particularly at those locations providing service in English only at present. Every effort will be made in the future to improve delivery of service, as follows:

- a) By identification of staff with sufficiently high standard of Irish, improvable by specialised training, so that quality service may be delivered.
- b) By providing technical support to Irish speakers through in-service updating on terminology, sources of information available electronically, and other supports as deemed appropriate by service providers.
- c) By encouraging a culture which recognises the customers' right to service in Irish and welcomes communications in the language.
- d) By investigating further the ways in which Service Officers and Telephonists can be supported to direct Irish-speaking customers to staff members who can provide service in Irish.

Chapter 5 – The Irish Scheme in operation

5.1 Publicising the scheme

The agreed scheme will be publicised internally and externally

a) Internal publicity

A copy of the scheme will be circulated to all staff members as soon as possible after completion. In addition, a summary will be published in the internal staff magazine which is circulated to all staff members. Updates will be provided as appropriate.

b) External publicity

A bilingual version of the agreed scheme will be available on the web-site of the Department.

5.2 Integration of scheme in annual Business Plans

The annual request for statements of business actions in each area will include request for inclusion of each sections' commitments in the Irish scheme as part of the plan.

5.3 Implementation and monitoring of scheme

Responsibility for implementing the agreed scheme will rest with local management. The scheme will be monitored by the Management Advisory Committee in discussion with section heads. An existing working group on Irish in the Department will also have a role in monitoring the operation of the scheme and making proposals for the follow-on scheme.

Appendix A: Summary of submissions

Background to submissions received:

As required under Section 13(1) (a) of the Official Languages Act 2003 a Request for Submissions was published in the press in November 2004.⁴ The total number of responses to the Request was eleven. This included four submissions from official organisations and seven submissions from private individuals.

Key points of submissions received:

The delivery of services in accordance with the provisions of the Act was mentioned by most respondents. The main delivery areas referred to were;

Requests for service in Irish should be welcomed by the staff of the public body and nobody requiring such service should be at a disadvantage as a result of their language choice. An Irish language culture should be developed in the public body so that customers feel welcome to deal in Irish at all times.

Technology, including telephone systems, websites, electronic mail and computer systems should recognise the primacy of Irish and use it as the default language.

Printed material, as in documents, reports and forms, should use Irish or Irish and English.

Where the latter combination is used, Irish should always appear on the left-hand side. The Irish should be quality assured before the document etc is published.

In public offices, Irish-speaking staff should be easily identified by personal or area identification. All signage in public offices should be Irish or bilingual.

Competency in Irish should be taken into account when staff are being recruited in the future, particularly for offices in the Gaeltacht or offices serving Irish speakers populations. A reward system should be introduced for such staff.

Public meetings should be organised bilingually including signage, presentation and speeches, particularly if the meeting is being held in a Gaeltacht area or an area of concentration of Irish speakers. The public body should have an officer who can be interviewed by the media in Irish and discuss all issues relevant to the public body.

⁴ Bilingual notices appeared in the Irish Times, Irish Independent, Irish Examiner, The Star, Lá and Foinse

Appendix B: Forms in Irish and associated booklets available on Department of Social and Family Affairs web site (www.welfare.ie):

Form Number	Form Available In Irish	Form Description	Associated Information Booklet	Booklets in Irish Irish
HM 1	Yes	Homemakers Scheme	SW 1 (GA)	Yes
MB 10	Yes	Maternity Benefit	SW 11 (GA)	Yes
PRSI 15	Yes	Volunteer Development Worker	SW 15 (GA)	Yes
SPNC 1	Yes	State Pension (Non – Contributory)	SW 116 (GA)	Yes
NFS 1	Yes	National Fuel Scheme	SW 17 (GA)	Yes
SPT/SPC 1	Yes	State Pension (Transition) and State Pension (Contributory)	SW 118	Yes
WP 1	Yes	Widowed / Widowers (Non-Contributory) Pension	SW 26 (GA)	Yes
GP1	Yes	Guardian’s Payment	SW 115	Yes
DA 1	Yes	Disability Allowance	SW 29 (GA)	Yes
OB 21	Yes	Disablement Benefit and/ or Incapacity Supplement	SW 31 (GA)	Yes
OB 61	Yes	Death Benefit	SW 32 (GA)	Yes
AB 1	Yes	Adoptive Benefit	SW 37 (GA)	Yes
AL CREDITS	Yes	Adoptive Leave Credit Application Form	SW 37 (GA)	Yes
CR 1	Yes	Carer’s Allowance	SW 41 (GA)	Yes
CB 1	Yes	Child Benefit (up to age 16)	SW 42	No
CB 2	Yes	Child Benefit (aged 16 and over)	SW 42	No
CB56	Yes	Child Benefit (notice of change)	N/A	N/A
CARB 1	Yes	Carer’s Benefit	SW 49 (GA)	Yes
BTE 1	Yes	Back to Education Programme	SW 70 (GA)	Yes
PRETA 1	Yes	Pre – Retirement Allowance	SW 80 (GA)	Yes
OFP 1	Yes	One Parent Family Payment	SW 82 (GA)	Yes
BTW 1	Yes	Back to work allowance scheme	SW 93 (GA)	Yes
HB 1	Yes	Household Benefits Package	SW 107 (GA)	Yes
CARL CREDITS	Yes	Carer’s Leave Credit		
CSCOM	Yes	Customer Service Comment Form	None	Not applicable
BG1	Yes	Bereavement Grant Application	SW 47	Yes
BTW 2	Yes	Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	None	N/A
WCP1	Yes	Widows/Widowers(Con) Pension	SW 25	No
HSB 1	Yes	Health & Safety Benefit	SW 100	Yes
IA 70	Yes	Authority to collect payment through an agent	None	N/A
SE 3	Yes	Registration form for Self Employed	SW 74	Yes
SWSO 1	Yes	Replacement Social Services Card or Pension/ Benefit/ Allowance Book	None	Not applicable
N/A	Yes	Artists Declaration of Income	None	N/A
FT1	Yes	Free Travel Pass	SW 40 (GA)	Yes
LA1	Yes	Living Alone Increase	SW 36	Yes
VC1	Yes	Voluntary Contributions	SW 8	Yes

Appendix B (contd.)

Publications in Irish available on the Department of Social and Family Affairs web site:

<http://www.welfare.ie/>

Information Booklet	Booklet Number	Booklet in Irish
Employer's PRSI is your responsibility	SW 88 (GA)	Yes
Employer's guide to PRSI	SW 63 (GA)	Yes
Occupational Injury /Illness Benefit Late Claims Possible further payments	SW 101 (GA)	Yes
Family Employments and PRSI	SW 102 (GA)	Yes
Checklist for Pensioners	SW 10 (GA)	Yes
Budget Factsheet 2007	N/A	Yes
Back to school clothing and footwear allowance	SW 75 (GA)	Yes
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	SW 54 (GA)	Yes
Smokeless Fuel Allowance	SW 17 a (GA)	Yes
Worksharing	SW 105 (GA)	Yes
Recovery of Social Welfare Overpayments	SW 2 (GA)	Yes
Treatment Benefit	SW 24 (GA)	Yes
Injury Benefit	SW 30 (GA)	Yes
Illness Benefit	SW 119 (GA)	Yes
Guide to Social Welfare Services 2005	SW 4 (GA)	Yes
Your Personal Public Service Number	SW 100 (GA)	Yes
Family Income Supplement	SW 22 (GA)	Yes
Medical Care	SW 34 (GA)	Yes
Blind Pension	SW 76 (GA)	Yes
Invalidity Pension	SW 44 (GA)	Yes
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	SW 92 (GA)	Yes
Employers PRSI Exemption Scheme	SW 73 (GA)	Yes
Health and Safety Benefit	SW 21 (GA)	Yes
Rent Allowance	SW 58 (GA)	Yes
Disability Bill 2004	N/A	Yes
Disability Sectoral Plan 2006	N/A	Yes
National Action Plan Against Poverty & Social Exclusion – 1 st Annual Report on implementation of Action Plan	N/A	Yes
Customer Action Plan 2004-2007	N/A	Yes
Customer Charter	N/A	Yes

Appendix C: Categories of scheme/payment operated by the Department and their present location

SCHEME/PAYMENT TYPE	LOCATION
A. Child Related Payments	
Child Benefit	CTBO Letterkenny
Maternity Benefit	SWSO Letterkenny
Adoptive Benefit	SWSO Letterkenny
Health and Safety Benefit	SWSO Letterkenny
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	SWSO Sligo
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)	SWSO Sligo
School Meals Programme (Administered by national & secondary schools, local groups, voluntary organisations and local authorities)	Dublin
B. Illness, Disability and Caring	
Illness Benefit	Dublin
Invalidity Pension	SWSO, Longford
Disability Allowance	SWSO, Longford
Blind Pension	SWSO, Sligo
Carer's Benefit	SWSO, Longford
Carer's Allowance	SWSO, Longford
Injury Benefit	Dublin
Disablement Benefit	SWSO, Longford
Medical Care	Dublin
Death Benefit	SWSO, Longford
Respite Care Grant	Dublin
C. Unemployment Supports	
Jobseekers Benefit	SWLOs
Jobseekers Assistance	SWLOs
D. Employment Supports	
Family Income Supplement	SWSO, Longford
Farm Assist	SWLOs
Back to Work Allowance (Employees)	Dublin
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (Self-Employed)	Dublin
Part-Time Job Incentive Scheme	SWLOs
Employers' PRSI Exemption Scheme	Waterford
Back to Education Programme (BTEA)	Dublin

E. Widows, Widower's & One-Parent Families

Widow's or Widower's (Contributory) Pension	SWSO Sligo
Widow's or Widower's (Non-Contributory) Pension	SWSO Sligo
Widowed Parent Grant	SWSO Sligo
One-Parent Family Payment	SWSO Sligo

F. Retired or Elderly People

State Pension (Transitional)	SWSO Sligo
State Pension (Contributory)	SWSO Sligo
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	SWSO Sligo
Pre-Retirement Allowance	SWLOs
Homemakers (Administered by CES)	Dublin

G. Extra Benefits

Treatment Benefit	CTBO Letterkenny
Bereavement Grant	SWSO Longford
National Fuel Scheme	SWSO, Sligo/SWSO Longford/all LOs
Smokeless Fuel Allowance	Office dealing with SW payment
Free Travel	SWSO Sligo
Household Benefits Package	SWSO Sligo
Living Alone Increase	Section dealing with SW payment
Island Increase	Office dealing with SW payment
Rent Allowance for Tenants affected by the De-control of Rents	SWSO Longford