

**Towards a New Generation  
of Partnership:**  
Change and Modernisation  
in the Civil Service

# Foreword

Ireland's economy succeeded in increasing its levels of innovation and organisational performance in recent years, with very positive effects on our society as a whole. The public service, through its policy development and service delivery, contributed to Ireland's achievements in no small way. However, the country is now in a critical period of transition and once again, employees, managers and trade unions across the public sector are facing into a significant period of change. This must lead to increased productivity across the sectors generally, and to the completion of the next phase of the modernisation agenda in the civil service.

Change in the civil service is often driven by the need to reduce overall operating costs. In addition, the application of information and communication technologies, the increasingly complex needs of clients, and the urgent need to improve the delivery of public services are also key change drivers. A major challenge for the civil service is how to operate efficiently in a reduced cost environment and deliver effective public services, while at the same time motivating staff to embrace change for the future.

There are opportunities now to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the civil service by linking current financial, technical and human resources to organisational objectives, and to meet the needs of a changing workforce by modernising how the Department or Office is managed and organised.

Above all, the civil service has the opportunity to fully embrace its dual role: in assisting the development of the knowledge economy and the knowledge society, and in the sector's ability to manifest its key characteristics. To achieve this, it needs to recognise that innovation, dynamism, adaptability and openness to change are the keys to organisational success and improved services in the 21st century.

However, these are not characteristics that are innate to most organisations. They are traits that need to be deliberately developed and encouraged through changes in thinking, structures and work practices. This new paradigm in workplace relations is based on the idea of a new relationship where employer, trade union and employee work together to create the organisation of the future, one that thrives on change instead of shying away from it, one where old dogmas take a back seat, one where flexibility replaces rigidity.

This new paradigm will ultimately benefit workers, in terms of rewards, work satisfaction and lifestyle. It will benefit employers in terms of creating a new way of working designated to deal with a new way of doing business. Ultimately, it will benefit the Irish economy by enhancing long term competitiveness, profitability and survival in organisations that are innovative and highly adaptive to change.

While there are many factors that effect this country's future prosperity that are outside our control, future prosperity does, to a large extent, depend on the development of high skilled, productive, flexible managers and workers in modern, adaptable public service organisations.

It is, therefore, very much up to us to make it happen by adopting a more radical approach to workplace change.



Lucy Fallon Byrne  
Director, National Centre for Partnership & Performance

## Executive Summary

This report is the result of extensive consultation and case study work undertaken by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance. The report describes the experience to date of partnership committees in the civil service and outlines partnership's role in the implementation of the modernisation agenda. It lists the various reviews of partnership and modernisation that have taken place in the last two years and outlines the role partnership committees will play in the implementation of the Public Service Benchmarking Report and *Sustaining Progress*.

The report presents the outcomes of the Centre's extensive consultation process and outlines the consensus that emerged on the characteristics and benefits of partnership structures and processes as they currently operate. The report examines a number of strategic issues and identifies recommendations for action that can assist the parties to revitalise partnership approaches at departmental level.

### **The benefits of partnership approaches to change**

The Centre's consultation process and preparation of five case studies of good practice partnership approaches to change helped to develop a consensus on the benefits partnership has brought to the modernisation and change agenda in the civil service:

- Promote an open and inclusive agenda for change, as it provides a methodology to address key strategic and operational issues
- Promote innovative approaches to problem solving – using consultation, joint problem solving, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- When combined with proactive and ongoing support from top-level management, partnership can build organisational-wide commitment to strategic objectives
- Deepen communication structures and processes: enhance information and consultation mechanisms
- Enhance and improve relationships within the IR arena, and support a more co-operative and constructive IR environment, which can, in turn, underpin the development of a more robust form of partnership by providing opportunities for the parties to engage in joint problem solving.

### **The characteristics of good practice partnership approaches**

The Centre's consultation process and examination of good practice in five departments identified a number of characteristics that exist when partnership approaches work effectively with organisational culture and structures, to tackle key change issues in the organisation:

- The process occupies a meaningful space in the organisation's culture and is visibly linked to the modernisation agenda and to other change processes
- The issues under consideration are concerned with important strategic and operational issues, focusing on the customer, organisational performance, or the quality of working life. The relevant individuals and representatives are involved, using a suitable problem-solving process
- There is a strong emphasis on developing a partnership approach to improving organisational performance, with the use of formal partnership committees and structures as a mechanism to achieve this
- There is a recognition that outcomes, rather than process or structures, are what matter, and a realisation that many change initiatives are undertaken using good practice partnership approaches, even though they are not directly branded as such
- Where partnership is encouraged to evolve at local level in response to local needs and opportunities, innovation levels increase
- The managers and trade union representatives involved are visibly committed to the partnership process

- The group has a shared understanding of, and has agreed the degree to which, processes such as information, consultation, implementation, decision-making, or monitoring will be utilised (i.e. agreed the boundaries) in solving the problem
- The problem solving processes being utilised (see above) include mechanisms to ensure input from other staff and managers
- There is visible management follow through (active listening) on information and consultation undertaken with staff
- The rationale of the decision (whoever takes it) is explained effectively and in a timely fashion. The decision is disseminated accurately to managers, staff and their representatives
- The group has a follow up role, e.g. monitoring, or evaluation to oversee effective implementation
- The process solves a problem that would traditionally have signalled a potential confrontation. Sometimes, a subsequent decision is taken in the IR arena, regarding the implementation of the partnership decision (e.g. new rotas, introduction of flexible work practices).

### **Challenges facing a New Generation of Partnership**

The Centre undertook an extensive consultation process with key individuals in the civil service. The interviews identified a number of issues that have an impact on partnership approaches to change in the civil service:

- The impact of civil service values and culture on partnership processes
- Partnership's influence as a driver of civil service change
- Revitalising the partnership agenda
- Developing a shared understanding of key concepts
- Clarifying partnership 'protocols'.

In addition to the views outlined in the consultation outcomes listed above, the Centre drew from the extensive interviews undertaken at departmental level for the case studies. In many cases, the interviews echoed the views outlined above. In addition, the issues of partnership resourcing and of building a shared understanding between the parties were common themes.

The challenges facing the further integration, or mainstreaming, of partnership approaches with organisational processes in the civil service become evident when good practice approaches, outlined in this document, are rendered ineffective by the impact of the challenges listed above. A purely departmental approach to the revitalisation of partnership will not facilitate the participative approach to change necessary to support the next phase of modernisation. The parties, in particular General Council and its Sub-Committee should consider a number of strategic questions:

- How do we change the perception that partnership is a self-contained, representative forum for discussing change issues to a realisation that partnership is a process that drives organisational change, leading to improved client satisfaction, high performance and mutual gains?
- How do we develop pathways and a mutually beneficial relationship between management decision-making, industrial relations processes and partnership processes?
- How do we increase visible commitment to partnership as an effective change driver, among key managers and trade unionists, and promote participative management practices across the civil service?
- How do we build effective communication loops throughout each of the parties' sphere of influence?
- How do we establish a shared understanding of the tools and processes that are the core of the partnership approach, and build consensus on their scope? (Information, consultation, Joint Problem Solving, monitoring, implementation)?

### **Taking action at sectoral and departmental levels**

In its work with the public sector, the NCPP is primarily concerned with how a partnership approach to the modernisation agenda can contribute to high performance and mutual gains. In this context, the NCPP is committed to supporting the civil service as it engages with the next phase of modernisation. The shaping of a vision of the civil service to 2007 offers an exciting opportunity to undertake initiatives to improve organisational performance, further increase levels of customer satisfaction, and provide mutual gains for employers, staff and their trade union representatives. The factors underpinning successful change in the civil service (committed leadership, supportive networks and effective communications, local solutions to local issues) match or 'fit' closely with the principles underpinning a partnership approach to change. It follows then that a workplace partnership approach is the best model for tackling the challenges facing the civil service.

The NCPP has consulted widely in the course of this analysis and believes that the commitment and the ability exists to move to 'second generation partnership', and to promote this approach to the wider civil service. However, the challenges are significant and require the commitment of all the parties to ensure they are tackled effectively. There are a number of critical success factors, which must be facilitated, if workplace partnership processes and activities are to be aligned with the renewal of the modernisation agenda:

- Successful meshing of top down supports with bottom up change;
- Effective resourcing of partnership activities by unions and management;
- The inclusion of all stakeholders in meaningful communications and consultation processes;
- Ensuring that key issues, such as the evolving relationship between industrial relations, management styles and partnership, are tackled effectively at central and departmental level;
- Mainstreaming partnership activities to encompass a broad range of organisational activities.

### Recommendations for action at sectoral level

The Centre proposes a number of recommendations for action at sectoral level. The Department of Finance and the Department of the Taoiseach, together with General Council (the centre), can assist the revitalisation of partnership in a number of ways, providing ‘top down support for bottom up change’.

- The establishment of the Performance Verification Groups under *Sustaining Progress*, and the role departmental partnership committees will play offers an exciting opportunity to mainstream partnership with important strategic and operational business processes. The parties should jointly develop an information campaign that will outline partnership’s role in the benchmarking process, the rationale behind its involvement, and the benefits this approach creates for managers, staff and trade union representatives;
- The current phase of modernisation has seen a lot of activity in the area of Human Resource Development. The parties should ensure that the new Training and Development Strategy, the review of the Performance Management Development System, and the ongoing reform of human resource strategy development support the development of partnership. In particular, HR modernisation should support a significant increase in the incidence of participative management approaches at all levels of the civil service, and the development of the relevant competencies in line managers and senior management teams;
- Good examples of organisational practices that encompass employee involvement (e.g. the five case studies) should be identified and promoted by the Centre as exemplars of ways in which high performing organisations can operate in the civil service;
- The centre should promote understanding of partnership’s important role in the organisation;
- The centre should identify the competencies necessary to implement a partnership/participative approach to management (the Centre has developed a competency framework that will assist with this) Line Departments and Offices should ensure that those competencies are included in management grade requirements and in annual PMDS reviews. If existing managers do not appear to have these competencies, Line Departments and Offices should ensure they have opportunities to develop them in a supportive environment through the PMDS or other management development programmes that are suitable to their own organisations;
- The civil service trade unions should encourage officials to develop strong facilitation and joint problem solving skill sets, in tandem with their industrial relations expertise. In this way, unions will be able to reposition their resources to support a partnership approach to modernisation more fully;

- The centre should support the development of a partnership culture through the various networks and other fora that have been established in the civil service. This will increase awareness of examples of good practice and foster a community of practice that will assist in developing the skill set of new committee and sub-group members;
- The centre should encourage Line Departments and Offices to develop guidance on effective communication of partnership activities to the wider staff and ensure that all partnership committee and sub-group members receive training in effective communications. The creation of effective feedback loops between those engaged in formal partnership activities and the staff they represent is critical to the future of partnership as an effective approach to change;
- Secretaries General and their senior management teams, and senior trade union officials should engage in reflection and debate in a non-formal setting to foster consensus and a shared understanding of partnership processes such as information, consultation, joint problem solving, monitoring and implementation.

### **Recommendations for action at departmental level**

The following recommendations, if implemented, can assist departments to operate their partnership committees, as well as policy and organisational problem solving groups, more effectively:

- Ensure that stakeholders are consulted and that the partnership agenda is relevant to their concerns. Discuss issues at a level of organisation that can facilitate effective problem solving (i.e. if it is a local issue, involve local staff locally, if it is a strategic issue, ensure the key decision-makers are present);
- Give groups the authority to deal with strategic issues and create visible linkages with decision-making bodies such as the MAC and with IR processes such as Departmental Council (linkages can be in the form of briefings, members in common (e.g. Secretary General), joint meetings/ events);
- All change issues should appear on the partnership agenda. If agreement cannot be reached in the partnership context, issues can then move over to the industrial relations context;
- Develop clarity regarding the role of the group;
  - Build a shared understanding about partnership processes (e.g. information, consultation, implementation, evaluation);
  - Build a shared view on boundaries, i.e. on the decision-making powers of the group;
- Promote good attendance/ regular meetings by ensuring group members are supported in terms of time, skills, communications activities;
- All partnership committee and sub-group members should have their duties included in the annual PMDS review. These duties should be supported in the same way as more traditional departmental duties are;
- Increase the emphasis on partnership's role in problem solving. This can be done in a number of ways. Reduce the emphasis on representation as a key criterion for partnership committee membership and ensure there is space for key



managers, staff and trade union representatives to get involved in issues of concern to them. Alternatively, develop the joint problem solving capability of committee Sub-groups, and increase the incidence of short-term problem solving teams. Integrate partnership sub-groups with relevant departmental policy groups;

- Senior managers should be seen to be committed. Provide managers with the skills necessary to prove their commitment (e.g. listening skills);
- Involve middle managers more in the formal partnership process; keep them in the loop about proceedings, perhaps through grade networks. Use case studies and other evidence to convince middle managers of the benefits of staff/ union inputs in helping them to make good decisions;
- Remove perceptions that the group is ‘rubber stamping’ policy/other initiatives by ensuring that staff inputs remain visible through the decision-making process. Develop consultation processes that are questions-based and not perfunctory;
- Avoid situations where decisions are arbitrarily taken out of context of the group joint problem solving process, because ‘managers must manage’: emphasise the importance of buy-in to decisions. Middle managers should be encouraged to engage in participative management generally, through their PMDS review;
- Trade union representatives should be visibly committed to partnership processes. Departments can support this in a number of ways:
  - Support the development of departmental trade union communication structures to ensure they are promoting partnership;
  - Ensure that opportunities for staff and trade union input into strategic issues/ agenda items are timely;
  - Build staff representatives/ union representatives’ confidence to contribute through training and peer support (networking)

- Tackle perceptions that partnership groups are elitist/ irrelevant;
  - Develop group communications strategies, to ensure that communications work is not left up to a few;
  - Create and support feedback loops for staff representatives to use;
  - All language and documentation used should promote inclusion.
- Review partnership’s formal structures regularly to ensure they aren’t limiting opportunities for innovative problem solving;
- Encourage the group to think about follow up activities and ensure that evaluation is considered an important issue by the group. Convince other stakeholders that the group should hold a monitoring/evaluation role;

### **The role of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance**

The NCPP has an important role to play in supporting the civil service parties to meet these challenges. It will fulfill that role using a multi-stranded approach:

1. Facilitating national deliberation on organisational change and high performance in the Forum on the Workplace of the Future, which will in turn inform and support deliberation and the development of a shared understanding at sectoral level;
2. Undertaking consultation and analysis to identify barriers to partnership among parties in the civil service, and supporting efforts to reduce those barriers when required;
3. Providing innovative learning tools, including case studies, training materials, competency frameworks and networking opportunities to individuals and organisations across the civil service;
4. Promoting the successes that already exist in the civil service to other organisations and sectors.

# Towards a new generation of partnership

## 1. Introduction

This report is the result of an extensive consultation process facilitated by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance. The report describes the experience to date of partnership committees in the civil service and outlines partnership's role in the implementation of the modernisation agenda. It lists the various reviews of partnership and modernisation that have taken place in the last two years and outlines the role partnership committees will play in the implementation of the Public Service Benchmarking Report and *Sustaining Progress*.

The report presents the outcomes of the Centre's extensive consultation process and outlines the consensus that emerged on the characteristics and benefits of partnership structures and processes as they currently operate in the civil service. These interviews were undertaken in addition to four case studies of partnership approaches to change in the civil service. The views of the individuals involved in those case studies are also taken into consideration. The document then outlines the challenges facing partnership structures and processes if they are to become robust enough to drive the next phase of the modernisation agenda.

The report examines a number of strategic issues and identifies recommendations for action at central level to ensure that partnership approaches can be integrated fully with other organisational change drivers, such as HR reform. It also outlines several recommendations that can assist the parties to revitalise partnership approaches at departmental level.

## 2. Background and Context

### **Modernisation and partnership in the civil service**

The civil service modernisation programme was formally launched in 1994 with the unveiling of the Strategic Management Initiative, and the subsequent publication of *Delivering Better Government* in 1996. In response to the participative management approaches outlined in DBG, the civil service adopted a partnership approach to change and modernisation. Partnership was formalised in the civil service in *Partnership 2000*. Each department has a formal Partnership Committee, with balanced representation from management, staff and trade unions. Departments generally ensure that the committee adequately represents the grading structure, gender balance and office locations of the department as well.

Partnership committees can establish Sub-Groups to tackle issues that appear on the committee agenda. In many departments, employees from across the department have taken part in partnership activities through these sub-groups. In some departments, particularly those with a widely dispersed organisational structure, (e.g. Department of Social and Family Affairs) also have a decentralised partnership structure, with committees operating at regional and local level.

## Reviewing modernisation and partnership

The last two years have seen a number of reviews of both partnership and modernisation activities in the civil service, leading to calls for the revitalisation of both agendas.

### *PA Evaluation of the Strategic Management Initiative*

A major review of the success to date of the modernisation drive in the civil service was undertaken by PA Consulting in 2001. The overall findings of the PA Evaluation of the Strategic Management Initiative show that progress has been made on the modernisation programme, directly and through partnership, and that the Civil Service in 2002 is more effective, better managed and a better place to work in than it was a decade ago. The reports show, however, that progress has been slow, both centrally and in a number of departments, on key issues, including the development of a new approach to human resource management.

The next phase of modernisation will provide enormous opportunities for the Civil Service to provide high quality support for the Government and a high quality service to all of its clients. It will also offer management and unions an opportunity to address the changing needs and concerns of civil service employees. One of the keys to exploiting these opportunities successfully is the type of process used to bring about change. That process should be one that supports and reinforces effective change and encourages continuous organisational improvement, better human resource development and a rewarding work environment.

### *O'Dwyer Review of Partnership in the Civil Service*

General Council commissioned JJ O'Dwyer Consulting to undertake a review of partnership structures and processes in the civil service, which was published in January 2002. Among its many conclusions, the JJ O'Dwyer Review found that:

- Partnership has not yet integrated with other organisational processes and can be viewed by some managers as an imposition, leading to a culture of compliance, rather than one of commitment;
- Partnership has not yet established itself as a key organisational process in the civil service;
- Communications between representatives on committees and their broader constituencies are weak.

### **Establishment of the NCPP**

In March 2002, the National Centre for Partnership and Performance launched its strategy statement *Modernising our Workplaces for the Future: A Strategy for Change and Innovation 2002 – 2005* in 2002. The strategy states:

*It (the Centre) will be available to play a strategic facilitation role in circumstances deemed to be of national significance, where partnership initiatives affect the economy as a whole, arise in key sectors, companies, organisations, or in the context of major and radical change programmes.*

In this context, the Dept of the Taoiseach and the Dept of Finance asked the Centre to undertake a major strategic facilitation process concerning partnership in the civil service. A comprehensive report on the consultation process and its outputs is contained in this document.

### **Public Service Benchmarking Body Report**

(June 2002)

The Public Service Benchmarking Body devoted a chapter to modernisation and concluded that:

*“the Body expects that public service employers, trade unions and staff will, as a matter of course, work together in a partnership context to promote flexibility of working and to identify and eliminate practices which may tend to foster inefficient delivery of services.”*

It continued by stating:

*“The Body strongly recommends that implementation of its pay awards should be made conditional ... upon agreement on the issues at the appropriate local bargaining levels. It will be a matter for managements and unions/ associations to determine the agenda for this local bargaining but it is the firm expectation of the Body that real outputs will be delivered. Further, the Body recommends that an appropriate validation process be established to ensure that agreements on issues such as adaptability, change, flexibility and modernisation are implemented in accordance with their terms.”*

### **Sustaining Progress**

(January, 2003)

*Sustaining Progress*, the current social partnership agreement, renews the parties' commitment to workplace partnership, stating that the partners 'recommit themselves to extending and deepening the partnership process at the workplace in accordance with commitments under previous national agreements'.

In the Civil Service sector, management, staff and trade unions are asked for increased flexibility and modernisation. Along with other sectors, the civil service has established a Performance Verification Group (PVG), at sectoral level, to ascertain whether the sector reaches:

*“satisfactory achievement of the provisions on co-operation with flexibility and ongoing change; satisfactory implementation of the agenda for modernisation set out, the maintenance of stable industrial relations and absence of industrial action in respect of any matters covered by this Agreement.”*

Sustaining Progress, page 119

Civil service partnership committees will play a central role in the performance verification process. Each departmental committee will agree the department's action plan, prepared by the Secretary General, and following agreement, will submit it to the sectoral PVG, who will decide if the plan is appropriate or not. Progress reports on the implementation of the action plan will be submitted by the Secretary General to the partnership committee, which will forward them to the Secretary General, Public Service Management and Development, Department of Finance, who is the Secretary General responsible for the sector.

The Secretary General, PSMD, will submit all departmental reports, and a report on the sector, which will report progress on the implementation of initiatives at central level, to the Civil Service Performance Verification Group. Before doing so, he will consult with General Council concerning the contents of the report.

### **General Council Review of Partnership**

Finally, *Sustaining Progress* states that the Review of Partnership in the Civil Service will be 'considered by a sub-group of General Council which will present proposals for the development of partnership to General Council.' The Centre's analysis of the challenges facing partnership in the civil service, set out in this document, will be submitted to the sub-group to assist it in its deliberations. The Centre believes that the key challenge facing the General Council sub-group is that of ensuring partnership approaches are robust enough to support the implementation of the modernisation agenda.

### 3. The benefits of partnership approaches to change

The Centre's consultation process comprised interviews with key manager, staff and trade union representatives, as well as four case studies of innovative partnership approaches to change and modernisation. During these interviews, and throughout the consultation process, a consensus emerged that partnership in the civil service has been successful on a number of levels. Partnership committees and other structures are up and running and, generally, are functioning efficiently. Positive results have been achieved on issues both at organisational (flexible working hours, parking and no smoking policies) and strategic (development of Strategy Statements, implementation of PMDS) level. The partnership approach enjoys support from managers, staff and trade union representatives across the civil service. Specifically, it was agreed by most of the interviewees and workshop attendees that the arrival of partnership has resulted in the following innovations with regard to tackling change issues:

- Partnership can promote an open and inclusive agenda for change, as it provides a methodology to address key strategic and operational issues;
- Partnership can promote innovative approaches to problem solving – using consultation, joint problem solving, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;

- When combined with proactive and ongoing support from top-level management, partnership has built organisational-wide commitment to strategic objectives;
- Communication structures and processes have been deepened and widened: information and consultation mechanisms have been enhanced;
- Partnership can enhance and improve relationships within the IR arena, and supports a more co-operative and constructive IR environment, which can then underpin the development of a more robust form of partnership, by providing opportunities for the parties to engage in joint problem solving;

There was some divergence about whether partnership has been the key driver of increased levels of participative management in the civil service. Some individuals interviewed felt that the SMI business planning process is the key driver; others feel that the management culture is changing naturally, as new ideas percolate the service, while others felt partnership has had a positive impact on managerial style, by 'legitimising' a participative approach. Generally, most individuals consulted agreed that a key benefit of partnership has been the establishment of a structured space to introduce change to the civil service in an inclusive and non-confrontational manner.

## 4. The characteristics of good practice partnership approaches

A key outcome of the consultation process undertaken by the Centre was the emergence of a consensus on the characteristics of effective partnership approaches in the civil service. The majority of case study interviewees indicated that where partnership approaches are working well in the civil service, some or all of the following characteristics were in place:

- The process occupies a meaningful space in the organisation's culture and is visibly linked to the modernisation agenda and to other change processes;
- The issues under consideration are concerned with important strategic and operational issues, focusing on the customer, organisational performance, or the quality of working life. The relevant individuals and representatives are involved, using a suitable problem-solving process;
- There is a strong emphasis on developing a partnership approach to improving organisational performance, with the use of formal partnership committees and structures as a mechanism to achieve this;
- It is recognised that outcomes, rather than process or structures, are what matter, and a realisation that initiatives are undertaken using good practice partnership approaches, even though they are not directly branded as such;
- Where partnership is encouraged to evolve at local level in response to local needs and opportunities, innovation levels increase;
- The managers and trade union representatives involved are visibly committed to the partnership process;
- The group has a shared understanding of, and has agreed the degree to which, processes such as information, consultation, implementation, decision-making, or monitoring will be utilised (i.e. agreed the boundaries) in solving the problem;
- The problem solving processes being utilised (see above) include mechanisms to ensure input from other staff and managers;
- There is visible management follow through (active listening) on information and consultation undertaken with staff;
- The rationale of the decision (whoever takes it) is explained effectively and in a timely fashion. The decision is disseminated accurately to managers, staff and their representatives;
- The group has a follow up role, e.g. monitoring, or evaluation to oversee effective implementation;
- The process solves a problem that would traditionally have signalled a potential confrontation. Sometimes, a subsequent decision is taken in the IR arena, regarding the implementation of the partnership decision (e.g. new rotas, introduction of flexible work practices).

Table 1 Characteristics and examples of good practice partnership approaches

Characteristics of effective partnership approaches	Good examples of effective partnership approaches in the civil service
<p>The process occupies a meaningful space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The group is dealing with an important strategic or operational issue.</li> <li>■ The relevant staff/ managers/ trade union reps are involved, using a suitable problem solving process.</li> <li>■ There is a strong emphasis on developing a partnership approach to improving organisational performance, with formal partnership committees and structures as a mechanism to achieve this;</li> <li>■ It is recognised that outcomes, rather than process or structures, are what matter.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Department of Transport:</b> the new department's Strategy Statement was developed using a consultative approach with staff, who were also encouraged to identify the 'thread' that linked their role to a specific part of the Statement. Staff ideas and inputs were included in the final draft of the Strategy Statement.</p>
<p>The managers and trade union reps involved are committed to the partnership process;</p>	<p><b>Department of Social and Family Affairs:</b> When local partnership committees are formed divisions/ units, the initial information briefing is always taken by a senior manager and a trade union representative in the office or unit.</p>
<p>The group has agreed the degree to which information, consultation, implementation, or monitoring processes will be utilised (i.e. agreed the boundaries) in solving the problem;</p>	<p><b>Department of Transport:</b> During the Strategy Statement development process, senior management teams drafted position papers on a range of issues. These provided a basis for consultation with staff. After consultation, staff input was recorded. Final decisions were taken by the MAC.</p>
<p>The problem solving processes involved (see above) include input from other staff and managers</p>	<p><b>The Courts Service:</b> The issues around worksharing were tackled by a partnership Sub Group. It undertook a staff survey to ascertain demand for the various options.</p> <p><b>Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission:</b> 50% of the membership of the partnership sub groups are not on the partnership committee.</p>
<p>There is visible management follow through (active listening) on information and consultation undertaken with staff</p>	<p><b>Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission:</b> Staff input into the design of the CSLAC Careers Store and the 'kit out' of the new headquarters was included in the final design and layout of both projects.</p>
<p>The rationale of decisions is explained effectively and in a timely fashion.</p> <p>The decision is disseminated effectively to managers, staff and their representatives;</p>	<p><b>Department of Social &amp; Family Affairs:</b> The use of a partnership approach to the explanation and introduction of the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) had a positive impact on staff knowledge of and buy-in to the new system.</p>
<p>The partnership committee/ group has a follow up role, e.g. monitoring, or evaluation;</p>	<p><b>Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission:</b> The partnership committee has a monitoring and evaluation role with regard to the successful implementation of the Commission's HR strategy and Strategy Statement.</p>
<p>The process solves a problem that would traditionally have signalled a potential confrontation. A subsequent decision is taken in the IR arena, regarding the implementation of the partnership decision (e.g. new rotas).</p>	<p><b>Department of Social and Family Affairs:</b> division of Navan Rd. SW office into two local offices, including division of case work, staff allocation &amp; work design, was achieved through partnership.</p>

## 5. The challenges facing a new generation of partnership – consultation and analysis

As part of its extensive consultation process, a group of key individuals undertook an in-depth interview with a Centre executive. The interviews posed a series of questions to ascertain individual and organisational views on the effectiveness of partnership approaches, in particular with regard to the implementation of the modernisation agenda. The interviews identified the challenges facing the parties as they examine the role of partnership approaches to change in the next phase of the modernisation agenda. The following outlines the key issues raised by interviewees during this part of the consultation process:

### 1 The impact of civil service values and culture on partnership processes

As in every sector, the values and culture of the civil service impact on the characteristics of the partnership process in a number of ways:

- There is a perception that the legal responsibilities that exist within the departmental decision-making process mean that a hierarchical culture will always exist in the civil service. The civil service needs to examine how it can operate effectively alongside the team-based approach to decision-making that will eventually evolve out of the partnership process;
- In order to deal with the ‘mainstream’ agenda (the work of a department), partnership needs to develop a relationship with the MAC, the principal decision-making body of the department. Currently, that relationship is embodied in the Secretary General. Tensions exist between the MAC and the Partnership Committee in many departments, primarily due to communication gaps. These tensions need to be examined and resolved if mainstreaming is to occur;

- The hierarchical culture which currently exists in the civil service leads to difficulties in increasing employee voice and encouraging input, from lower grades in particular, in partnership-driven activities.
- A number of interviewees mentioned the potential offered by the use of facilitators in the partnership process in other sectors;
- Some interviewees mentioned a ‘dependency culture’ that exists in some parts of the civil service and acts as a barrier to partnership approaches;
- The current structures are a centrally based support for partnership. But they can also a control mechanism, particularly if partnership approaches to change are under-resourced.

### 2 Partnership’s influence as a driver of civil service change

There is some debate about whether partnership is the key driver of increased levels of participative management in the civil service. Some individuals interviewed feel that the business planning process that arose from SMI is the key driver; others feel that the management culture is changing naturally, as new ideas percolate the service. However, most individuals agree that a key benefit of partnership has been the ability to introduce change to the civil service in an inclusive and non-confrontational manner.



### 3 Revitalising the partnership agenda

Many of the individuals interviewed felt that partnership is at a critical stage and that revitalisation will depend to some extent on an invigoration of the agenda for partnership. There are three strands to the partnership agenda:

- The modernisation (management) agenda – primary source of agenda items to date (SMI, PMDS, QCS, HR development);
- The ‘democratic’ or bottom up agenda – issues of concern to employees, such as improved well-being and increased input into deliberation and decision-making. It appears that these issues are slow in coming to the table, for a number of reasons;
- The union agenda – issues of concern to trade union members and officials. It appears these issues remain, to a large extent, in Departmental Council;
- It was stated on a number of occasions that only one agenda is utilising the partnership approach to a large extent. We need to examine why this is the case and ask ourselves how we can redress it.

### 4 Developing a shared understanding of key concepts

At present, there is limited shared understanding of key partnership concepts, including:

- The definition of information and consultation, and the difference between the two activities;
- The definition of joint problem-solving, and its relationship to decision-making;
- The relationship between the role of the partnership committee and its relationship with Departmental Council.

### 5 Clarifying partnership ‘protocols’

Confusion exists about a number of housekeeping issues in the partnership approach, including committee terms and succession, input into the agenda, process review and revitalisation, and the communication of partnership outputs and outcomes to the wider employee audience. We need to identify who is responsible for developing ‘protocols’ or best practice in these areas and to ensure that the resources necessary (time, people, money) are available to ensure that the process of partnership runs smoothly. Other suggestions made included ensuring there was:

- More input into agenda-setting for partnership meetings from staff and trade unions;
- Responsibility taken for undertaking and resourcing communications activities;
- Guidelines introduced to assist committees with issues such as members’ terms of office/ turnover/ keeping flock knowledge.

In addition to the views outlined in the consultation outcomes listed above, the Centre gathered information from partnership committee members and support staff. Extensive interviews were undertaken at departmental level for the five case studies. In many cases, the interviews echoed the views outlined above. In addition, the issue of partnership resourcing and of building a shared understanding between the parties were common themes.

## 6. The challenges facing a new generation of partnership – conclusions

The challenges facing the further integration, or mainstreaming, of partnership approaches with organisational processes in the civil service become evident when good practice approaches or characteristics, as outlined above, are rendered ineffective by the impact of existing structures, processes or organisational culture on the process itself. The challenges can be clustered under three headings:

- The impact of current organisational culture on the partnership process, which is itself a cultural innovation;
- Process resourcing, in terms of time, human resources and individuals with facilitation and joint problem solving skills;
- The absence of a shared understanding of key elements of the partnership approach and the boundaries within which partnership operates, or should be allowed to develop.

### 1 Organisational culture should support innovative partnership approaches

If partnership is to be mainstreamed as an important strategic and operational organisational process, concerned primarily with driving change and improving performance, then a number of challenges concerned with the impact of current organisational culture on participative approaches, should be examined. Issues that can arise from the impact of the civil service culture on partnership's joint problem solving approaches include the following:

- There are structured decision-making processes in existence, to which partnership is not formally linked (e.g. the MAC). Partnership's role in departmental decision-making is unclear and committees don't have the authority to make decisions on core organisational issues. Partnership is subsequently viewed as a talking shop.
- An over-emphasis on representation, rather than problem solving, in current partnership committees, can lead to the exclusion of relevant stakeholders during discussion of certain issues;
- If consultation is perfunctory and not questions based, if managers are not seen to be listening, the perception arises that the agenda is purely management driven and that the group is 'rubber stamping' policy/ other initiatives;
- Some managers are not involved in the process and are not kept in the loop about proceedings. Others are holding up the process by not engaging in participative management generally. Their fears and concerns can block effective partnership;
- The language used during meetings and in circulated documentation can often contain jargon and increase the perception that partnership is an exclusive process;
- The formality of the structures through which partnership operates in the civil service limit the opportunity for innovative problem solving approaches.

## 2 Partnership approaches should be resourced in a number of ways

Generally, when the issue of resources arose in the Centre's consultation process, it was in the context of project budgets or training programmes. It is important to note that there are resourcing issues for partnership approaches in a number of areas, including time, financial resources, skills development and experience. Common manifestations of resourcing issues affecting partnership include the following:

- Partnership suffers from poor attendance at meetings, or from irregular meetings;
- Managers don't have the skills necessary to prove their commitment to partnership (e.g. active listening);
- There is a need to examine the development of staff involved in partnership activities, as staff representatives often don't feel confident enough to contribute;
- The group has no communications strategy or budget. Communications work is left up to a few people in the group and feedback loops are not created by or for staff representatives;
- Internal trade union communication structures are not adequate to support communication about partnership between representatives, officials, head office and members.

## 3 A shared understanding of key elements of the partnership approach, including process and the boundaries within which partnership operates, should be developed

Reaching shared understanding can be difficult for groups struggling with a complex brief. Building shared understanding takes commitment on all sides and an ability to listen to other points of view. The key areas for building a shared understanding regarding partnership in the civil service include the following:

- If there are different views on the decision-making powers of the group, perceptions can develop that the process is overstepping the mark, because 'managers are required to manage', or that the group has no teeth and is therefore irrelevant. The development of clarity regarding the role of the group is required in these circumstances;
- The development of feedback loops for staff representatives, to minimise the perception that the group is elitist;
- Developing a shared vision of the pathway or relationship between partnership and industrial relations and partnership and decision-making groups;
- There can be a lack of experience of team-based/ multi-disciplinary Joint Problem Solving approaches, which results in the need for a shared understanding about partnership processes (eg information, consultation);
- Sometimes the partnership committee is not encouraged to think about follow up activities, such as evaluation or monitoring. This can be because such activities are not considered important, or because they are considered too important to be left to the group to manage. Clarity regarding monitoring or evaluation should be reached if the terms of *Sustaining Progress* are to be met successfully

## 7. Questions for the parties to consider

During its consultation process, the Centre facilitated stakeholders in the civil service to identify the benefits of partnership to date. A consensus emerged regarding the characteristics of an effective partnership approach to change within a civil service context, and the challenges that limit partnership's effectiveness. The Centre proposes several recommendations regarding the revitalisation of partnership processes at departmental level, based on good examples of practice identified in five major case studies. However, a purely departmental approach to the revitalisation of partnership will not facilitate the participative approaches to change necessary to support the next phase of modernisation. The parties, in particular General Council and its Sub-Committee should consider a number of strategic questions:

- How do we change the perception that partnership is a self-contained, representative forum for discussing change issues to a realisation that partnership is a participative management process that drives organisational change, leading to improved client satisfaction, high performance and mutual gains?
- How do we develop pathways and a mutually beneficial relationship between management decision-making, industrial relations processes and partnership processes?
- How do we increase visible commitment to partnership as an effective change driver among key managers and trade unionists and promote participative management practices across the civil service?
- How do we build effective communication loops throughout each of the parties' sphere of influence?
- How do we establish a shared understanding of the tools and processes that are the core of the partnership approach, and build consensus on their scope? (Information, consultation, Joint Problem Solving, joint decision-making, monitoring, implementation).

## 8. Taking action at sectoral and departmental levels

In its work with the public sector, the NCPP is primarily concerned with how a partnership approach to the modernisation agenda can contribute to high performance and mutual gains. In this context, the NCPP is committed to supporting the civil service as it engages with the next phase of modernisation. The shaping of a vision of the civil service to 2007 offers an exciting opportunity to undertake initiatives to improve organisational performance, further increase levels of customer satisfaction, and provide mutual gains for employers, staff and their trade union representatives. The factors underpinning successful change in the civil service (committed leadership, supportive networks and effective communications, local solutions to local issues) match or 'fit' closely with the principles underpinning a partnership approach to change. It follows then that a workplace partnership approach is the best model for tackling the challenges facing the civil service.

The NCPP has consulted widely in the course of this analysis and believes that the commitment and the ability exists to move to 'second generation partnership', and to promote this approach to the wider civil service. However, the challenges are significant and require the commitment of all the parties to ensure they are tackled effectively. There are a number of critical success factors, which must be facilitated, if workplace partnership processes and activities are to be aligned with the renewal of the modernisation agenda:

- Successful meshing of top down supports with bottom up change;
- Effective support for partnership activities;
- The inclusion of all stakeholders in communications and consultation processes;
- Ensuring that key issues, such as the evolving relationship between industrial relations, management styles and partnership, are tackled effectively at central and departmental level;
- Mainstreaming partnership activities to organisational objectives.

### Recommendations for Action at Sectoral Level

The Department of Finance and the Department of the Taoiseach, together with General Council (the centre), can assist the revitalisation of partnership in a number of ways, providing 'top down support for bottom up change':

- The establishment of the Performance Verification Groups under *Sustaining Progress*, and the role departmental partnership committees will play offers an exciting opportunity to mainstream partnership with important strategic and operational business processes. The parties should jointly develop an information campaign that will outline partnership's role in the benchmarking process, the rationale behind its involvement, and the benefits this approach creates for managers, staff and trade union representatives;
- The current phase of modernisation has seen a lot of activity in the area of Human Resource Development. The parties should ensure that the new Training and Development Strategy, the review of the Performance Management Development System, and the ongoing reform of human resource strategy development support the development of partnership. In particular, HR modernisation should support a significant increase in the incidence of participative management approaches at all levels of the civil service, and the development of the relevant competencies in line managers and senior management teams;
- good examples of organisational practices that promote employee involvement (e.g. the five case studies) should be identified and promoted by the Centre as exemplars of ways in which high performing organisations can operate in the civil service;
- The centre should promote understanding of partnership's important role in the organisation;
- The centre should identify the competencies necessary to implement a partnership/ participative approach to management (the Centre has

developed a competency framework that will assist with this) Line Departments and Offices should ensure that those competencies are included in management grade requirements and in annual PMDS reviews. If existing managers do not appear to have these competencies, Line Departments and Offices should ensure they have opportunities to develop them in a supportive environment through the PMDS or other management development programmes that are suitable to their own organisations;

- The civil service trade unions should encourage officials to develop strong facilitation and joint problem solving skill sets, in tandem with their industrial relations expertise. In this way, unions will be able to reposition their resources to support a partnership approach to modernisation more fully;
- The centre should support the development of a partnership culture through the various networks and other fora that have been established in the civil service. This will increase awareness of examples of good practice and foster a community of practice that will assist in developing the skill set of new committee and sub-group members;
- The centre should encourage Line Departments and Offices to develop guidance on effective communication of partnership activities to the wider staff and ensure that all partnership committee and sub-group members receive training in effective communications. The creation of effective feedback loops between those engaged in formal partnership activities and the staff they represent is critical to the future of partnership as an effective approach to change;
- Secretaries General and their senior management teams, and senior trade union officials should engage in reflection and debate in a non-formal setting to foster consensus and a shared understanding of partnership processes such as information, consultation, joint problem solving, monitoring and implementation.

### **Recommendations for action at departmental level**

The following recommendations, if implemented, can assist departments to operate their partnership committees, as well as policy and organisational problem solving groups, more effectively:

- Ensure that stakeholders are consulted and that the partnership agenda is relevant to their concerns. Discuss issues at a level of organisation that can facilitate effective problem solving (i.e. if it is a local issue, involve local staff locally, if it is a strategic issue, ensure the key decision-makers are present);
- Give groups the authority to deal with strategic issues and create visible linkages with decision-making bodies such as the MAC and with IR processes such as Departmental Council (linkages can be in the form of briefings, members in common (e.g. Secretary General), joint meetings/ events);
- All change issues should appear on the partnership agenda. If agreement cannot be reached in the partnership context, issues can then move over to the industrial relations context;
- Develop clarity regarding the role of the group;
  - Build a shared understanding about partnership processes (e.g. information, consultation, implementation, evaluation);
  - Build a shared view on boundaries, i.e. on the decision-making powers of the group;
- Promote good attendance/ regular meetings by ensuring group members are supported in terms of time, skills, communications activities;

- All partnership committee and sub-group members should have their duties included in the annual PMDS review. These duties should be supported in the same way as more traditional departmental duties are;
- Increase the emphasis on partnership's role in problem solving. This can be done in a number of ways. Reduce the emphasis on representation as a key criterion for partnership committee membership and ensure there is space for key managers, staff and trade union representatives to get involved in issues of concern to them. Alternatively, develop the joint problem solving capability of committee Sub-groups, and increase the incidence of short-term problem solving teams. Integrate partnership sub-groups with relevant departmental policy groups;
- Senior managers should be seen to be committed. Provide managers with the skills necessary to prove their commitment (e.g. listening skills);
- Involve middle managers more in the formal partnership process; keep them in the loop about proceedings, perhaps through grade networks. Use case studies and other evidence to convince middle managers of the benefits of staff/ union inputs in helping them to make good decisions;
- Remove perceptions that the group is 'rubber stamping' policy/ other initiatives by ensuring that staff inputs remain visible through the decision-making process. Develop consultation processes that are questions-based and not perfunctory;
- Avoid situations where decisions are arbitrarily taken out of context of the group joint problem solving process, because 'managers must manage': emphasise the importance of buy-in to decisions. Middle managers should be encouraged to engage in participative management generally, through their PMDS review;
- Trade union representatives should be visibly committed to partnership processes. Departments can support this in a number of ways:
  - Support the development of departmental trade union communication structures to ensure they are promoting partnership;
  - Ensure that opportunities for staff and trade union input into strategic issues/ agenda items are timely;
  - Build staff representatives/ union representatives' confidence to contribute through training and peer support (networking)
- Tackle perceptions that partnership groups are elitist/ irrelevant;
  - Develop group communications strategies, to ensure that communications work is not left up to a few;
  - Create and support feedback loops for staff representatives to use;
  - All language and documentation used should promote inclusion.
- Review partnership's formal structures regularly to ensure they aren't limiting opportunities for innovative problem solving;
- Encourage the group to think about follow up activities and ensure that evaluation is considered an important issue by the group. Convince other stakeholders that the group should hold a monitoring/ evaluation role;

Table 2 Strategic Questions &amp; Recommendations for Action

Strategic questions to consider	Recommendations for Action
<p>How do we change the perception that partnership is a self-contained, representative forum for discussing change issues to a realisation that partnership is a process that drives organisational change, leading to improved performance and mutual gains?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The establishment of the Performance Verification Groups under Sustaining Progress, and the role departmental partnership committees will play offers an exciting opportunity to mainstream partnership with important strategic and operational business processes. The parties should jointly develop an information campaign that will outline partnership's role in the benchmarking process, the rationale behind its involvement, and the benefits this approach creates for managers, staff and trade union representatives;</li> <li>■ The current phase of modernisation has seen a lot of activity in the area of Human Resource Development. The parties should ensure that the new Training and Development Strategy, the review of the Performance Management Development System, and the ongoing reform of human resource strategy development support the development of partnership. In particular, HR modernisation should support a significant increase in the incidence of participative management approaches at all levels of the civil service, and the development of the relevant competencies in line managers and senior management</li> </ul>
<p>How do we develop a mutually beneficial relationship between management styles, industrial relations processes and partnership processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Good examples of organisational practices that encourage employee involvement (e.g. the five case studies) should be identified and promoted by the Centre as exemplars of ways in which high performing organisations can operate in the civil service;</li> <li>■ The centre should promote understanding of partnership's important role in the organisation;</li> </ul>



Table 2 continued

Strategic questions to consider	Recommendations for Action
<p>How do we increase visible commitment to partnership, as an effective change driver, among key managers and trade unionists?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The centre should identify the competencies necessary to implement a partnership/ participative approach to management (the Centre has developed a competency framework that will assist with this) Line Departments and Offices should ensure that those competencies are included in management grade requirements and in annual PMDS reviews. If existing managers do not appear to have these competencies, Line Departments and Offices should ensure they have opportunities to develop them in a supportive environment through the PMDS or other management development programmes that are suitable to their own organisations;</li> <li>■ The civil service trade unions should encourage officials to develop strong facilitation and joint problem solving skill sets, in tandem with their industrial relations expertise. In this way, unions will be able to reposition their resources to support a partnership approach to modernisation more fully;</li> <li>■ The centre should support the development of a partnership culture through the various networks and other fora that have been established in the civil service. This will increase awareness of examples of good practice and foster a community of practice that will assist in developing the skill set of new committee and sub-group members;</li> </ul>
<p>How do we build effective communication loops throughout the parties' spheres of influence?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The centre should encourage Line Departments and Offices to develop guidance on effective communication of partnership activities to the wider staff and ensure that all partnership committee and sub-group members receive training in effective communications. The creation of effective feedback loops between those engaged in formal partnership activities and the staff they represent is critical to the future of partnership as an effective approach to change.</li> </ul>
<p>How do we establish a shared understanding of the tools and mechanisms of partnership, and build consensus on how and when to use them? (Information, consultation, Joint Problem Solving, implementation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Secretaries General and their senior management teams, and senior trade union officials should engage in reflection and debate in a non-formal setting to foster consensus and a shared understanding of partnership processes such as information, consultation, joint problem solving, monitoring and implementation.</li> </ul>

## Report on consultation process undertaken by the NCPP

National Centre for Partnership and Performance executives held an initial consultation with representatives of the Department of the Taoiseach in November 2001. It was agreed that the NCPP would take a lead role in facilitating a consultation process to gather opinion on the success of partnership approaches to date and on the role of partnership with regard to the civil service modernisation agenda. The NCPP consulted with a comprehensive sample of management, trade union and support agency representatives in the first instance. Following that, an analysis of the data collected informed the structure and content of two significant consultation seminars, which engaged with a wider sample of civil service employees and other representatives.

### 1. Interviews undertaken with key individuals

A group of key individuals agreed to and completed an in-depth interview with a NCPP executive. The interviews posed a series of questions designed to ascertain the interviewee's (and their organisation's) views on partnership, the civil service modernisation agenda and the role of the NCPP. These views are outlined earlier in the document.

## 2. Seminar Towards Second Generation Partnership: delivering the civil service change and modernisation agenda

Following the initial interviews, the NCPP facilitated a seminar, entitled *Towards Second Generation Partnership: Delivering the civil service change and modernisation agenda* in February 2003. The seminar gave stakeholders in the civil service an opportunity to hear the initial outcomes of four case studies of good practice, undertaken in the following departments:

- The Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission;
- The Courts Service;
- The Revenue Commissioners;
- The Department of Social and Family Affairs;
- The Department of Transport.

The seminar also provided an opportunity for participants to listen to the views of keynote speakers representing managers and trade unions.

### 2.1 Seminar Attendees

The Department of the Taoiseach identified 180 civil service managers, trade unionists and employees and invited them to attend the seminar. Over 150 representatives attended the seminar – the high attendance underlines the commitment of civil service stakeholders to engage with the challenges ahead. Participants included:

- Secretaries General, Assistant SGs and other senior civil service managers, including Change Managers and HR Managers;
- National and regional trade union representatives from unions including CPSU, AHCPS, Impact, PSUE and FUGE;
- Partnership committee members;
- Corporate Services staff who act as Secretaries to Partnership Committees;
- Representatives of the Public Service Modernisation Section, Department of the Taoiseach and Department of Finance PSMD;

### 2.11 Opening plenary session

The NCPP was anxious to ensure open and honest deliberation on the day. Therefore, the seminar opened with a plenary session, chaired by NCPP Director, Lucy Fallon Byrne, during which four keynote speakers outlined the opportunities and challenges facing partnership in the context of the health service.

- An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD, launched the conference and said *Sustaining Progress* represents a key element in the Government's broad strategy to improve national competitiveness, to deliver an improved level of service to consumers while at the same time ensuring that the public service remains a rewarding and stimulating place to work. He said that the Civil Service must modernise the way it manages human and financial resources. This requires greater devolution of decision-making to Departments and to managers within Departments – so that they have greater freedom to deliver results while ensuring accountability for resources used. This accountability in turn requires better systems of financial and management information.

He added that the partnership process has provided a valuable forum for staff and management to discuss issues of mutual interest away from the traditional industrial relations environment. It has provided an opportunity to tackle issues in a spirit of co-operation rather than confrontation. It has also helped foster a stronger corporate identity in organisations and enable a spirit of trust to develop between participants who have approached problems in more innovative and creative ways.

Of course, a partnership approach, in which staff at all levels are consulted and involved in the management and development of an organisation, is basically just good management. It is common sense that we should access the knowledge and experience of staff at all levels when tackling problems and improving how we do our work.

- Peter Cassells, Executive Chairperson of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance, spoke of the environmental and change context in which the case studies being discussed are set: the changing needs of the public, of civil service staff, and of government. He asked, how can we combine disciplined efficiency with freedom to innovate and how can we ensure that staff can contribute to thinking, problem solving and decision-making.

He spoke of the centralised, command and control nature of the civil service and asked how it should be changed to ensure a partnership approach could be mainstreamed and become ‘the way we do things’. It is necessary to focus on the relationship between partnership and IR, and partnership and decision-making.

- Eddie Sullivan, General Secretary, Civil Service Modernisation and Development, Department of Finance, said that progress in implementing modernisation was greatly helped because partnership structures were given the role of developing agreed specific performance indicators, on which the final pay element of the PPF were dependent. He stated that it was clear that the degree of involvement of partnership committees in developing performance targets for their own organisations and subsequently in monitoring and reporting progress, was strongly correlated to the level of performance achieved.

He added that, in its final Report the CSQAG referred to partnership in concluding that the quality assurance process had “*helped to mainstream the departmental partnership structures and approach*”.

Eddie Sullivan added that when the new vision and strategy are put into effect later this year, it is likely that they will have a significant impact on the operation of partnership in the civil service. This is because - notwithstanding the details of the new vision and strategy – the key

theme for the next phase of the modernisation process which emerged from the evaluation of the SMI was “*the challenge of implementation*”, and effective partnership arrangements at Department/Office level will be a key element in ensuring successful implementation of both the existing and new modernisation agenda.

He listed the characteristics of healthy partnership arrangements as :

- An active relationship between all concerned based on a common interest in achieving the strategic goals and objectives of the Department/Office;
- Commitment by staff at all levels to improvements in quality and efficiency;
- Acceptance by management of staff as stakeholders with rights and interests to be taken into account in the context of major decisions affecting their work;
- Common ownership of the resolution of challenges, involving the direct participation of staff and their representatives; and
- Investment in training, development and the working environment.

- Peter McLoone, Chairperson, ICTU Public Service Committee and General Secretary, Impact spoke of the role partnership committees will play in the implementation of *Sustaining Progress*. Committees will be required to agree action plans to achieve performance targets, and to deliberate on progress reports in this regard. They will be formally tied to service improvement through a direct relationship with the ‘Performance Verification Groups,’ which will include representatives of service users.

And because this verification process triggers the release of both benchmarking and general round pay increases, the partnership process will be directly linked to most of the pay increases on offer under the new Programme. He said that it was difficult to see how partnership can continue to be seen as marginal in this new situation. He

added that it was impossible to see how existing partnership structures can meet these new responsibilities, to the public and to the people who serve them, without some radical change and improvement.

He said, there will have to have a consistent approach to partnership. To be credible in a 'new generation', partnerships must be in the business of decision-making, in a culture where staff and unions are seen as equal partners in the decision-making process. If staff and their representatives are to be equal partners in this process, we also need to take a different approach to resourcing partnership.

Staff would also see the process as more valuable if it were dealing with bigger issues. Over the last few years, management and unions have tended to protect 'real' industrial relations issues from the partnership process, perhaps a little too rigidly. This has often engendered a tendency to leave big, important issues off the partnership agenda. No wonder people sometimes question the relevance of partnership. It is time for a new approach, where big issues *are* placed on the partnership agenda, and removed to more traditional IR structures if partnership proves unable to resolve them satisfactorily, or if the partnership approach is deemed unsuitable.

### 2.III **Second Plenary Session: Five case studies of Good Practice**

The second plenary session opened with Dr. Damian Thomas, NCPP, outlining the initial conclusions drawn by the Centre from the five case studies undertaken. He spoke about key lessons and challenges for partnership in the civil service. Key lessons learned about partnership include the following:

- Partnership can address key strategic and core operational issues;
- It can promote an open and inclusive agenda;
- It needs proactive and ongoing support from top-level management to achieve organisational wide commitment;
- Partnership can deepen and widen communication and enhance Information and Consultation; Partnership has the capacity to enhance and improve relationships within the IR arena and to support a more co-operative and constructive IR environment;
- Consequently, a *more* co-operative IR climate underpins a more robust form of partnership, with a problem-solving and strategic focus;
- Partnership provides trade unions with an opportunity to have a more proactive role.

He added that some of the challenges facing partnership going forward were:

- To promote Innovative Approaches;
- To maintain and develop partnership's diverse roles – *consultation, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation*;
- Sustaining momentum, due to partnership's inherent fragility;
- To promote reflection and debate, and the renewal of commitment & identification and dissemination of 'good practice';
- Foster a deeper shared understanding of the capacity of partnership to deliver organisational change and mutual gains.

#### **2.IV Third Plenary Session**

The third plenary session comprised a question and answer session with an invited panel, as well as closing remarks by Dermot McCarthy, Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach.

#### **2.V Seminar evaluation**

The NCPP provided evaluation sheets to assess the contribution of the seminar to the development of a shared understanding among participants. One in four responded. In general, the feedback was positive with 80% stating that they felt they had an adequate opportunity to contribute to the discussion. The plenary sessions were considered interesting and thought provoking and the majority of respondents enjoyed the workshops.

### 3. Consultative Conference

## Towards a New Generation of Partnership: Delivering the Civil Service Change and Modernisation Programme

Following the February seminar, the Centre synthesised the information gathered by the case study and consultative interviews, and prepared a further set of questions for civil service managers, staff and trade union representatives to consider. The Centre facilitated this process through a consultative conference, containing workshops. The conference was held in Royal Hospital Kilmainham in May 2003. Its purpose was to offer key partnership activists an opportunity to address the common challenges facing partnership across the civil service, and to develop initial responses to those challenges.

#### 3.1 Opening Session

Chaired by Peter Cassells, who also addressed the conference, the opening session was designed to prepare participants for the workshops that took up most of the morning. Dermot McCarthy, Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach spoke of partnership and the modernisation agenda in the context of *Sustaining Progress*.

Following the workshops, the conference returned to plenary session to hear rapporteur reports and to engage in a Q&A session with the panel.

#### 3.11 Consultative Workshops

There were five workshops, each based on one of the themes arising from the initial consultative process. Each workshop discussed a single theme – their discussion was structured around four questions:

*Question 1:* Is there a shared commitment to achieving this goal (theme)?

*Question 2:* What obstacles stand in our way/ what is blocking shared commitment?

*Question 3:* How do we remove these blockages?

*Question 4:* Workshop recommendations for key stakeholder groups

The outcomes from each workshop were outlined below.

#### 3.111 Workshop One: How do we integrate partnership further into the implementation of the modernisation agenda?

*Is there a shared commitment?*

- It was agreed that there was a low moderate level of shared commitment, but that clarity is the forerunner of commitment and clarity must be improved.

**Obstacles/ Blockages** to integrating partnership further into the modernisation agenda. Some of the obstacles mentioned included:

- The pressures of partnership workload;
- Confusion, lack of clarity about the added value of partnership;
- Fear of speaking out/ civil service conditioning;
- Lack of trust between the stakeholders;
- Management styles affect the level and quality of staff input;
- A lack of intellectual effort into partnership;
- Management fear/ Staff inertia regarding partnership;
- Partnership viewed as elitist;
- Huge communication barriers between partnership committee and other staff;
- Managers and staff abusing partnership;
- Difficult issues are not being addressed;
- Staff representatives have no structure to their feedback loop.

**It was agreed that opportunities for mainstreaming partnership existed:**

- Local partnership on local issues is very effective, because you have to have a relevant agenda;
- The top down agenda can be very problematic;
- Partnership must show demonstrable added value;
- Push partnership activity down to local levels;
- The protocols of partnership slow it down;
- The development of inclusive management styles would assist partnership.

**Recommendations regarding the integration of partnership with the modernisation agenda**

1. Make the agenda relevant at national and local level. Tackle the meaty issues, create added value.
  - Build capacity to deal with issues through resourcing/ training;
  - Ensure people understand their role/ the agenda;
  - Hire full-time facilitators.  
Good recruitment will build trust;
  - Reposition the structures of partnership to increase input;
  - Reduce the impact of industrial relations processes in partnership discussions;
  - Define the pathways between IR and partnership processes and kick issues over and back;
  - Clarify the role of the staff reps;
  - Management must demonstrate that they are taking views on board.

2. Turbo-charge the changes needed in civil service culture to reduce fear/ inertia/ lack of communications

- Survey staff;
- Introduce rotating chairs;
- Bring a partnership approach to day-to-day business;
- Brand participative approaches and successes as partnership;
- Celebrate success jointly;
- Examine language and processes to ensure that they promote inclusion;
- Broaden the parameters of representation – individuals represent more than one group.

3. Interlink the national and the local agenda

- Inform staff about partnership;
- Put upward input pathways in place;
- Decentralise partnership;
- Have open chairs at meetings;
- Discuss the idea that unions are representing members, not unions and that managers are representing the organisation, not managers.



### 3.IV **Workshop Two:** **How do we make partnership a more flexible and innovative process for change?**

#### *Is there a shared commitment?*

Yes – in theory there is, but not really because there is no relation to real issues; formal structures limit innovation; softer issues are easier to address in innovative way - as strategic issues are taken on, innovation scope declines, and there is a lack of trust in the process. In addition, there is poor attendance at meetings.

**Obstacles/ Blockages** to making partnership a more flexible and innovative process for change. Some of the obstacles mentioned included:

- A lack of understanding of partnership (inside and outside);
- Agendas imposed from the centre – action plans, etc;
- Fear of loss of control in decision-making;
- Lack of speed in decision-making.

**Opportunities** for making partnership a more flexible and innovative process for change included:

- Ensure commitment from summit players, and support commitments with resources;
- Encourage growth and development of organic partnership;
- Make successful partnership visible, celebrate success;
- Developing a shared understanding of the issues to be dealt with through partnership;
- Rotate partnership chair and members;
- Redefine relationship between partnership and industrial relations processes.

#### **Recommendations**

- Partnership needs to be allowed to grow within its own environment;
- Recognise that partnership is not just limited to what the committee does – that partnership should and can emerge organically throughout the organisation;
- Build trust and understanding – take new risks.

### 3.V **Workshop Three:** **How do we revitalise partnership and increase staff and trade union input?**

#### *Is there a shared commitment to achieving the goal under discussion?*

The Group agreed that, overall, the answer was yes. Some members of the Group felt that it was premature to assume that there was a shared commitment to revitalising partnership as the first phase had not been very successful.

#### **Obstacles/blockages** were:

- Communication - staff are not aware or clear of what the objective of partnership is;
- Time – Staff may be interested in pursuing partnership activities but “day job” must be given priority;
- Process – What is the purpose of the Partnership Committee?

#### **Recommendations for future action**

- **Communication:** The Group agreed that, in addition to circulating minutes of meetings by e-mail, efforts should be made to take a more innovative approach to promoting partnership. Suggestions made included using intranets, publishing regular features in staff magazines and Committee members themselves proactively promoting partnership be it a tea breaks, canteen discussions or visiting Sections /Units. All new staff should receive material on partnership in their induction pack.
- **Time:** The Group agreed that senior managers must make a greater commitment to Partnership by allowing staff time to pursue partnership activities. Some members of the group referred to their experience of not having been allowed time off work to attend Union meetings. The Group felt that, if there was a choice between completing a job in the section/unit or attending a partnership activity, managers generally would opt for the former. One way to overcome this difficulty would be to reflect partnership activities in the individuals’ Role Profile forms. The group also agreed that all concerned i.e. unions, management and staff would have to make a greater effort to devote more time to partnership related tasks.

- **Process:** The Group agreed that there was a need to sell partnership to staff, to explain its purpose and to enable them to identify it working in “daily life” in a Department/Office. This could be achieved by resorting to greater advertising/ publicity; having “open” chairs at meetings so that staff can see how the process works and, in turn, may express an interest in becoming a member of the Committee or a sub group; rotating senior management representatives (preferably at Asst Sec Level) as Management Representatives to ensure that Partnership obtains the profile it requires; and, providing training at appropriate levels to heighten awareness of partnership and its role for implementing change in the workplace.

### 3.VI **Workshop Four:** **How do we develop a shared understanding of key partnership concepts?**

This workshop was slightly different in that it tried to discuss a number of key partnership concepts, about which there is confusion. The workshop attempted to build some common ground. It was agreed that the concepts under discussion would be:

- Information and consultation;
- Joint problem-solving and consensus;
- Partnership and IR – a new relationship.
- Participatory decision-making;

#### *Information and Consultation:* *Key characteristics/ issues/ problems*

- Variable experiences of the processes
- Engagement/ summit
- Information = informing only
- Consultation = options/ dialogue
- Timing – opportunity (role/ profile)
- Level/ Quality

#### *Joint problem solving and consensus:* *Key characteristics/ issues/ problems*

- Understanding of position/ mutual respect;
- Shared understanding in problem solving;
- Interdependence, emphasis on communications/ listening;
- Open agenda and openness to arriving at a solution;
- Training to participate;
- Consensus – stop/ go;
- Key role for the chair – open/ listening

*Partnership and IR –  
building an evolving relationship*

- Issues are kept separate, often an early veto;
- Often miss out on holistic view and opportunity to discuss issues;
- Uniform procedures and guidelines;
- Flexible enough to deal with IR;
- There is a need for training for IR specialists in partnership and vice versa;
- IR full-time/ partnership part-time
- Needs to be a willingness to be open

*Participatory decision-making:  
Key characteristics/ issues/ problems*

- Lip service is being paid to it by management and unions;
- The tendency is to inform rather than to encourage participation;
- Level of participation needs to be right–right people and right issue;
- Quality of information is important;
- Sub-groups work well;

It was agreed that elements of Best Practice in partnership processes included:

- Circulation of information in a timely manner allowing for opportunity for feedback on a topic;
- Exploring issues as a group, using questions-based consultation;
- The value of training, particularly for the chairperson, leads to increased empowerment for other committee members.

**3.VII Workshop Five:  
How do we mainstream partnership  
into core organisational processes?**

*Shared commitment*

The group expressed different opinions on this question. They did not agree that there is general shared commitment as they suggested that commitment is a function of a number of critical factors that vary across departments. The factors include communications and structures, in particular the approach to IR, in place in various departments. However, all agreed that the potential for partnership to become part of mainstream organisational processes exists. There is also a need to examine what is mainstreaming — the question raised is just how far partnership can go, what is the potential range of applications for partnership.

A key point discussed by the group was that progress with partnership is dependent on the concept of a shared understanding about what is meant by partnership, what is meant by mainstreaming and the objectives and outcomes of all parties. Examples of effective partnerships, which have penetrated mainstream processes, was the success of customer service and worksharing initiatives in a number of departments.

*Demonstrating potential*

The key to success and to mainstreaming was seen to be this shared understanding that would provide a clear rationale for the partnership process in the civil service. There is a need to further highlight what is being achieved? What is going on now, what work is in progress, how is it impacting on day-to-day work, on organisational processes? There is a need for much greater communication about the potential and the achievements of partnership in this respect.

There was a feeling that results and successes are being achieved but the level of awareness and understanding is too low. There is a need to support a bottom-up approach to highlight the achievements. This should help to show the role of partnership, the tangible and visual gains. In turn this will help to reduce the sense of detachment that members believe is prevalent among many of their colleagues in relation to partnership.

**Obstacles:** What are the obstacles to mainstreaming partnership?

The members of the group mentioned several barriers to the development of partnership. These included:

- The need for more clarity about the purpose of partnership initiatives and the roles and changing roles of individuals
- Traditional positions are threatened and this means that there is greater need for inspired leadership and trust. Fear of change and the uncertainty that often surrounds partnership is important.
- Experience of participants in formal partnership is often low and further training especially among new members is required
- Lack of resources
- Lack of engagement/ apathy among wider body of colleagues
- Communication while improving remains a barrier to positioning partnership as a mainstream and more effective and equitable approach to change
- Many felt that the lack of accountability/ responsibility undermined the credibility of partnership.

**Opportunities:** How to we remove these barriers?

A key issue is the need to build and improve communication systems. A critical issue raised and discussed by the group was the need to achieve greater clarity. For example, the need achieve greater clarity about the role of staff representatives, definition of staff representatives, around the ethos of partnership and the notion of flexibility. Further the role of unions and acceptance that different approaches may exist in different departments. Finally, General Council's role and its provision of guiding frameworks was discussed and acknowledged as key influence on the development of partnership.

**Recommendations**

- Employees, unions and managers must be willing to take greater ownership of partnership and its potential. The feeling among many of the members that it is time for people to make it happen;
- A key consideration is the need to encourage engagement across the general body of civil service workers. The need to market partnership to the masses, to make it relevant to all people in every department is a critical if partnership is to continue to grow;
- Threats must be clearly acknowledged;
- Benefits associated with partnership should be highlighted;
- People need to be more creative in how they attempt to use and develop partnership;
- Need to make greater effort to integrate partnership with existing structures;
- Networking should be carried out because excellent potential for learning exists across departments;
- Need to encourage greater middle management involvement and support;
- Need to encourage greater trade union involvement and support;
- Mainstream across all civil service.

## Appendix

### Commitments by the parties to Partnership and the Modernisation Agenda, 1997 – 2003

While the depth and consistency of this commitment, has been questioned, arising in particular from a reluctance to address institutional barriers to change, the parties have jointly committed themselves to this process on a number of occasions.

#### Partnership 2000 (Dec 1996)

The parties committed themselves, in return for the composite agreement on pay and tax, to “full and ongoing co-operation with change, continued adaptation and flexibility and the delivery, through specific action programmes, of the modernisation programme in the public service ....” It was recognised that successful change must be based on a partnership approach and agreed that, in order to achieve joint ownership by management, unions and staff of the entire process, partnership structures would be developed in each department and office.

It was also agreed that the 2% local bargaining increase would be “conditional on there having been verified progress to a satisfactory level on implementation of the modernisation programme.”

#### General Council Report No. 1331 (March 1998)

The parties agreed that in the context of Partnership 2000 and particularly Clause 4 of the Annex on Public Service Pay, the initial focus of the partnership process will be directed at “the development and implementation of action programmes to progress the modernisation of the civil service in accordance with the Strategic Management Initiative and the related Delivering Better Government Programme of change”.

#### Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (February 2002)

Again the parties committed themselves to full and ongoing co-operation with change, continued adaptation and flexibility and delivery of the modernisation programme. However, this programme went further and outlined key objectives to be achieved over the lifetime of the Programme in relation to the ongoing modernisation of the public service and agreed the specific actions to be pursued at sectoral level, including the Civil Service. The action agreed provided for:

- The design and implementation of performance management systems;
- Strengthening organisational capability;
- Putting in place integrated human resource management strategies, including mechanisms for external recruitment;
- Better targeted training and development, including a spend of 4 per cent of payroll on training and development by 2003;
- Improved organisational flexibility.

In this area, the parties agreed to examine issues such as new forms of work organisation embracing innovative work practices, multi-grade and cross-stream teams and flexibility in grading, including broad-banding, complemented by

imaginative reward and recognition systems including an examination of gainsharing. These were also included in the pay agreement, which provided that changes in grading, broad banding and team working would be addressed.

While it was recognised that these issues would arise in any event from the Benchmarking Report and that there are existing agreements on these issues, the parties committed themselves to addressing them during the currency of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.

The parties agreed that implementation of the modernisation programme in the civil service will continue to be advanced under the partnership arrangements and that these arrangements would be developed and improved in consultation between management and unions. It was also agreed that clear linkages should be established between public service pay and the implementation of the modernisation programme and, in that context, that the final phase of the pay agreement (4 per cent) would be paid in return for the agreement of specific performance indicators and targets for the Civil Service with independent quality assurance of the achievement of these targets.

### **Public Service Benchmarking Body Report (June 2002)**

The Public Service Benchmarking Body devoted a chapter to public service modernisation and change and concluded as follows:

“The Body expects that public service employers, trade unions and staff will, as a matter of course, work together in a partnership context to promote flexibility of working and to identify and eliminate practices, which may tend to foster inefficient delivery of services. In this context, there are a number of initiatives which merit detailed examination and consideration at workplace level such as:

- functional flexibility;
- more broadly defined work assignments;
- changes in working time arrangements;
- team-working;
- increased employee participation in decision-making.

The Body made recommendations for pay increases across the public service. A primary factor in the Body’s considerations was the evaluation and comparison of the jobs and pay of public servants with comparable jobs and rewards in the private sector. In the majority of companies in the private sector, change is accepted as an essential and ongoing criterion of survival, growth and prosperity. In this environment, an increasing number of managements who do not provide the innovation necessary for growth

and the concomitant requirement for change are held accountable for this failing. This should also be the case in the public service. It is the responsibility of management in the public service no less than in the private sector, to lead and manage change just as it is the responsibility of employees to co-operate with modernisation and change.

It is within this context that the Body considers the issues of adaptability, change, flexibility and modernisation should be addressed. The Body is of the view that developments of this nature are necessary to allow the public service keep pace with good practice in the private sector. The Body strongly recommends that implementation of its pay awards should be made conditional (apart from the one-quarter of any award to be implemented with effect from 1 December 2001 as agreed between the parties) upon agreement on the issues at the appropriate local bargaining levels. It will be a matter for managements and unions/associations to determine the agenda for this local bargaining but it is the firm expectation of the Body that real outputs will be delivered. Further, the Body recommends that an appropriate validation process be established to ensure that agreements on issues such as adaptability, change, flexibility and modernisation are implemented in accordance with their terms.”

### Sustaining Progress (January, 2003)

*Sustaining Progress*, the current social partnership agreement renews the parties' commitment to workplace partnership, stating that the partners 'recommit themselves to extending and deepening the partnership process at the workplace in accordance with commitments under previous national agreements'. *Sustaining Progress* also states that:

*"The Programme for Public Service Modernisation deepens the process of quality public service delivery, by ensuring a greater focus on outcomes and securing value for money. Sectoral performance indicators for change and specified outcomes have been linked to the payments arising under the Benchmarking Awards. Performance Verification Groups, including independent members, will be established to assess progress in each sector."*

In the Civil Service sector, management, staff and trade unions are asked for increased flexibility and modernisation in the following areas:

- A new Vision Statement, Strategy and Action Plan to 2007;
- Modernisation of HRM practices;
- A Public Service Management (Recruitment) Bill;
- Addressing skill shortages and strengthening recruitment practices;
- Performance management – the evaluation of PMDS;
- Development and Training;
- Code of Standards and Behaviour;
- eGovernment;
- Equality.

Along with other sectors, the civil service will develop Performance Verification Groups, at departmental level, in order to ascertain whether the sector reaches:

*"satisfactory achievement of the provisions on co-operation with flexibility and ongoing change; satisfactory implementation of the agenda for modernisation set out, the maintenance of stable industrial relations and absence of industrial action in respect of any matters covered by this Agreement."*

Civil service partnership committees will play a central role in the performance verification process. Each departmental committee will agree the department's action plan, prepared by the Secretary General, and following agreement, will submit it to the sectoral PVG, who will decide if the plan is appropriate or not. Progress reports on the implementation of the action plan will be submitted by the Secretary General to the partnership committee, which will forward them to the Secretary General, Public Service Management and Development, Department of Finance, who is the Secretary General responsible for the sector.

The Secretary General, PSMD, will submit all departmental reports, and a report on the sector, which will report progress on the implementation of initiatives at central level, to the Civil Service Performance Verification Group. Before doing so, he will consult with General Council concerning the contents of the report.

Finally, *Sustaining Progress* states that the Review of Partnership in the Civil Service will be 'considered by a sub-group of General Council which will present proposals for the development of partnership to General Council.'

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The National Centre for Partnership and Performance was established by the Government in June 2001 to support and facilitate change through partnership in the Irish workplace.

The Centre's mission is to:

- Support and facilitate Irish organisations in the private and public sectors, to respond to change and to build capability through partnership
- Bring about improved performance and mutual gains
- Contribute to national competitiveness, better public services, higher living standards and a better quality of work life
- Develop a vision for the workplace of the future.