

RPA GUIDANCE NOTE: CAPACITY BUILDING

Introduction

1. This Guidance Note confirms that the Executive has accepted the Public Service Commission's 9th Guiding Principle, Capacity Building (copy attached at Annex 1) and is issued to assist and provide clarification to Departments and public sector employers in the RPA Affected Group (see RPA Circular 02/2007¹) on the practical implementation of the Guiding Principle.

Key Principles

2. Whilst work may be already underway in this regard, employers are reminded that they are required to develop and implement a capacity building strategy, the precise detail of which will be dependent on the particular organisational needs. In order to do so effectively, they should co-operate and collaborate on both a sectoral and cross-sectoral basis. The capacity building strategy need not be a stand-alone document and may be incorporated into various organisational documents.

3. In responding to the Guiding Principle, the Executive indicated the need for employers to carefully balance the resource commitment required to build capacity with the primary need to deliver services.

4. Employers should incorporate the elements set out in the Guiding Principle in developing their capacity building strategy and engage with the Trade Unions and other staff representatives.

Action Required

5. All employers are required to implement the key principles outlined in paragraphs 2 - 4 above at the appropriate point in implementation plans.

RPA CENTRAL UNIT
11th July 2008

¹ Currently under review

Ninth Guiding Principle and Associated Recommendations - Capacity Building



NINTH GUIDING PRINCIPLE AND ASSOCIATED RECOMMENDATIONS

CAPACITY BUILDING

Introduction

1. The Commission's role is to safeguard the interests of staff and to ensure their smooth transfer to new organisations established as a consequence of Government decisions on the Review of Public Administration, taking into account statutory obligations, including those arising from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In formulating this Guiding Principle and Associated Recommendation, the Commission has also had due regard to Government's commitment, as set out in the statement of 22 November 2005, that "Every possible effort will be made to avoid redundancies."
2. The Commission recognises the need for staff to have a clear understanding of their role within the existing or new organisations arising as a result of the decisions of the RPA and how they can best contribute to the success of helping the organisation, in which they are placed, achieve its aims and objectives. Given the enormity of the change facing staff, and the Commission's remit in safeguarding the interests of staff and ensuring their smooth transfer, the Commission has given consideration to how this might best be achieved by building the capacity of staff.
3. The Public Service Commission has consulted the Executive, the sectoral Staff Commissions and NIC/ICTU about the most appropriate way to safeguard the interests of staff and ensure their smooth transfer into new organisations with respect to capacity building.

Guiding Principle

4. The Commission is mindful that some capacity building work has already commenced. However, the Commission recommends that the Executive require current and prospective employers, at the appropriate time, to:
 - Develop and implement a capacity building strategy, which will enable and support staff through the transition period, and

- Co-operate and collaborate at both sectoral and cross-sectoral levels during the development and implementation of their capacity building strategies.

Associated Recommendation

5. A best practice capacity building strategy might include:

- Clarity around staffing and skills requirements.
- A plan to:
 - (i) make the most effective use of existing skills;
 - (ii) retain critical skills, experience and knowledge, and
 - (iii) reposition these as necessary by redeployment.
- An identification of skills gaps, and a recruitment, training and development plan to fill identified gaps.
- Provision for performance management and personal development plans with the aims of ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of how their role contributes to fulfilling customers' needs and promoting a shared sense of purpose.
- Specific provision to enable and support staff who are:
 - (i) at risk of redundancy;
 - (ii) competing for posts pre and post transfer;
 - (iii) facing substantial changes in employer, job function, responsibilities or location, and
 - (iv) undergoing a major change of culture, for example moving from central to local government.

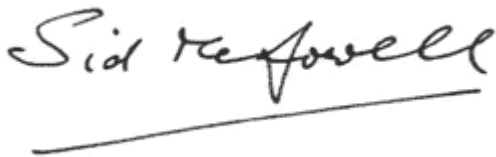
Such provision might include, but not be limited, to career counselling, retraining, interview skills and techniques or other identified needs.
- Provision for interchange including secondment, and the freer flow of staff between and within public services.

Commentary

6. The Commission wishes to emphasise to employers the importance of addressing the cultural shift which staff, may, as a direct result of the decisions arising from RPA, have to experience. Employers are advised to be mindful that employees may come from very different working environments and may experience difficulty in making the necessary adjustments to a new working environment. The more people are valued

and involved, given opportunities to learn and develop, the better placed the organisation will be to deliver quality services. Employers should also be mindful that the promotion of work-life balance plays an important role in creating an environment where staff are best placed to contribute to the success of the organisation.

7. The Commission recognises the pivotal role played by senior management in building the capacity of staff during the transition period, until the new organisations, or those taking on new functions become "bedded in". The Commission also recognises that there will be an inherent need for organisations to collaborate, co-operate and integrate throughout the process. The Commission therefore wishes to stress again that communication is a vital element in helping existing and new organisations face and successfully implement this challenging transition effectively.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sid McDowell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a solid horizontal line that serves as a separator.

SID McDOWELL
CHAIRMAN
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
12 October 2007