Leadership to Implement Change in the Public Sector

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# Introduction

Good morning everyone, Ministers and colleagues. I'm really honoured to be here this morning to speak at this really significant conference and my input is going to be about leadership to implement public sector reform.

I’m going to start my presentation with a very short introduction about the Centre for Effective Services and the work that we do because many of you may not know about us.

The objective of this conference is to explore planning and leadership for providing inclusive mainstream public services for people with disabilities.

In the Republic of Ireland we have already gone through a period of public sector reform and change. However if we are to be truly effective in mainstreaming our public services, than the pubic sector needs to change the way it does things and use a whole of government approach.

In this presentation I will explore:

* What a whole of government approach looks like
* The type of leadership we need to implement a sustained whole of government approach

I will also be providing you with a model of good practice that the Scottish government used to implement an effective whole of government approach.

# Centre for Effective Services

The Centre for Effective Services was established in 2008 and is jointly funded by the Department of Children, Youth Affairs and also Atlantic Philanthropy. We operate in the Republic and Northern Ireland.

We describe ourselves as a think and do tank. We were established to connect up research policy and practice and part of what we do is to bring good evidence to policy makers and practitioners, so that the practice and services are evidence based.

We also know that the best evidence in the world, unless it's well implemented, does not result in good outcomes for service users. We work in a practical way, helping services and organisations to implement good practice to improve outcomes.

# Mainstreaming

Before I continue on with my presentation I think it would be useful to have a shared definition of what we mean when we talk about mainstreaming.

I am going to use the definition from A Strategy for Equality published by the Commission on the Status for People with Disabilities in 1996.

The vision and goal of this Strategy was that people with disabilities enjoyed the fundamental rights of all citizens. They have the same freedom as everyone and they are included in society.

Mainstreaming was perceived as the practical means to achieving this vision of equality and inclusion. Mainstreaming is defined as the:

“planning, designing and delivering services so that people with disabilities can engage fully and on equal terms with other citizens.”

# Current Context

## Opportunity for mainstreaming

It's a good time for achieving mainstreaming because there is a very strong public sector reform agenda in the Republic and Northern Ireland.

In the Republic of Ireland, we have just had our second public sector reform plan and the civil service renewal plan. Both plans really indicated a strong commitment from government to reform.

In the current public sector reform agenda there is a strong focus on the whole of government change and service user participation. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform publicised guidelines to foster greater citizen consultation and involvement in policy, earlier this year.

We have achieved all we can from working in silos. We need to move beyond the silo mentality and implement a whole of government approach if we are going to achieve mainstreamed public services.

## Challenges for mainstreaming

We also face a number of challenges for achieving mainstream public services.

Since 2008, the public sector has experienced widespread cutbacks. The public sector bill has been reduced by 20 per cent, public sector numbers by 10 per cent. It is a huge achievement to those of us working in public services that there has been no major disruption to services as a result of these cutbacks. However, the reduction in staff has resulted in a loss of organisational capacity and memory that is very significant

At the moment there is a big commitment to reforming how we deliver public services. Reform can't be focused on cost alone that will not deliver the changes that we need in order to mainstream public services.

# Mainstreaming for Inclusive Public Services

According to the literature review I conducted, a serious whole of government approach needs to be implemented if the public sector is to provide mainstream, inclusive services. This is a challenge right through the system, from the ground up, right through to the political level.

This challenge was captured in the following quotes from the National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan (2013 – 2015).

**“Systems** can indirectly exclude people with disabilities if the **architecture**, **policies**, **information** or **service delivery** are not geared to include people with a range of disabilities”

“If the physical and policy environment are modified with people with disabilities in mind that can enhance freedom and participation and the enjoyment of fundamental rights”.

# What is a Whole of Government Approach

A whole of government approach is about different government departments and organisations working together to achieve outcomes/services that no one organisation or no one sector can achieve in isolation.

The literature and research on a whole of government approach states that services should be driven by the needs of the citizen.

The whole of government approach also requires greater collaboration and a system of operation and/or networking that supports collaboration.

Leadership plays a crucial role in facilitating a whole of government approach.

# Leadership for a Whole of Government Approach

I had difficulty finding a definition of leadership and I looked at the Senior Public Services Leadership Development Strategy (2013- 2015, which is supported by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. This Strategy contains the following vision statement for Leadership

“To build a **community of leaders** that supports national recovery and builds renewal through **innovation** and excellence, strengthening **cross-organisational collaboration**, supporting **continuous** personal and professional **development** and **inspiring others** to achieve high performance in a **common purpose”.**

Senior Public Service Leadership Development Strategy 2013-2015

This vision statement regarding leadership outlines the characteristics of leadership and the duties that leaders must carry out to provide high quality public services.

There are two types of leadership required for a whole of government approach.

The first type of leadership is that of the great leader who has the credibility at a national level to lead out and ensure the implementation of a strategy. Professor Tom Keane demonstrated this type of leadership when he led out on the National Cancer Strategy. He ensured that the Strategy received sufficient resources and that the Irish government actively implemented this Strategy.

The second kind of leadership is also really important and that is distributive leadership. It's leadership throughout the system. So it's not just that we need one great leader who is going to come and lead us out into the new era, we need leaders through the system. We need leaders at the political level, the government level, at departmental level, at service level and at a service user level. The Smoking Ban is a very good example of distributive leadership.

The Smoking Ban was successful because it had very clear, strong distributive leadership. The Department of Health and the Office for Tobacco Control displayed strong leadership in leading out on the campaign. The public sector advocacy group called Ash delivered evidence to support the Smoking Ban. The trade unions and the hospitality sectors also led out on supporting the campaign.

We also need consistency in leadership to ensure that a strategy and/or an approach are implemented.

It’s important to realise that the implementation of a new approach or strategy often requires systems change and this can take up to seven to ten years.

# Leadership Characteristics

If a leader is to implement an effective whole of government approach they need to have the capacity to:

* Communicate a compelling vision and ensure that stakeholders have a shared understanding, shared values and shared commitment for what the leader wants to achieve
* Engage and consulting with stakeholders and where practicable meet stakeholders’ needs
* Manage interdependencies. Implementing a strategy requires change. Some stakeholders will welcome the change and other stakeholders will not. An effective leader needs to manage the agenda of both parties and retain their supports
* Incentivise and model. An effective leader will incentivise their team to improve their performance, to effectively manage change and to develop and share models of good practice across an organisation
* Create a culture of learning and ensure that every project has time build into it so that people can reflect on the lessons they learned and use this learning for future projects

# Skills of the boundary spanner

An effective leader is also a boundary spanner that is someone who can look left and right and work across boundaries. This person is skilled at reciprocity and obtaining trust from a range of different stakeholders. They have the capacity to understand a problem from other people's perspective and the capacity to deliver interpersonal relationships.

If we want this type of leadership in the public sector than people need coaching, mentoring and training to become senior leaders.

# Other Enablers for a Whole of Government Approach

Effective leadership is key enabler and a catalyst for a whole of government approach but it is not enough on its own. There are other elements that contribute to an effective whole of government approach:

* Securing adequate resources. Mainstreaming public services and implementing a whole of government approach costs money. Funding needs to be ring fenced and allocated for mainstreaming.
* Staff in the public sector must have the interpersonal and technical skills (for example to design accessible websites, to produce Easy to Read documents, to project manage) to provide mainstream services to people with disabilities
* Leaders and their teams have the capacity to implement mainstreaming and whole of government change. Implementation is not a template. There's a process, there's a concept, and there are stages. There is a whole sequence of things that you can do to ensure that implementation can be more effectively done
* Teams are established to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate plans. It’s very important to evaluate if we have made progress or not. It’s important to collect data at different stages of the implementation process to determine if we are making progress

# Scotland Case Study

I have chosen Scotland as a case study because they provide a good model for a whole of government approach.

In 2007 the Scottish government implemented the Scotland Performs Strategy which used a whole of government approach to create sustainable economic growth and a more equitable society.

The Scottish government implemented big changes in their governmental structures. Some of these changes included setting up a strategic leadership group that were responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the whole of government approach. The government also implemented a National Performance Framework to measure their progress in using a whole of government approach.

The Scottish Performs Strategy has seven statements of purpose that include solidarity, cohesion and sustainability

The Strategy has 16 national outcomes including tackling significant inequality and creating strong resilient supportive communities, in addition to 50 performance indicators.

The Scotland Performs’ Strategy has been successful because it had really consistent leadership from the Head of the Civil Service and the strategic leadership group.

The Scottish government have captured evaluated and produced evidence that details the progress they have made. They produce an annual report that they publish to their website.

# Summary of Key Points

Before I finish my presentation I would like to summarise the key points of my presentation:

* The public sector needs to have a new kind of leadership to implement the whole of government approach
* The public sector should to have a shared vision and understanding about what a whole of government approach is and how it can be used effectively to mainstream public services
* It important to have leaders that are boundary spanners and who can coproduce/ implement mainstreaming with their staff and the stakeholders
* Implementation takes time, and sustained reform is incremental

This morning Minister Fitzgerald talked about re‑energising the mainstream agenda. This is really important because if we are going to sustain this, it actually is about the small nudges and changes over time that make a difference, as opposed to big episodic change that can't be sustained.

# What does this mean for your work?

I will end this presentation by leaving you with a few questions to reflect on.

We are marking the 15 years since mainstreaming became government policy. It is timely to reflect on where we have made the most progress in delivering inclusive public services?

What elements of leadership featured in this presentation today resonated with you?

What does the information presented mean for how you and your organisation leads and collaborates?

Thank you very much for your attention.