

OFFICE OF THE
OMBUDSMAN
INTERNAL MOBILITY
POLICY

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1. Background & Introduction

On 30 October 2014, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the Taoiseach launched the Civil Service Renewal Plan. This plan incorporates a vision and a three year action plan to renew the Irish Civil Service.

Action 15 of the Civil Service Renewal Plan addresses the need to create a Civil Service with more flexible and open structures and processes. It aims to improve how the Civil Service matches skills with roles by enabling greater mobility and flexibility across the workforce, resulting in managers having better access to available skills and staff having better opportunities to develop their own skills and experience.

Following this action, a commitment was made by the Civil Service Management Board that departments and offices will develop and publish an official internal mobility policy. The publication of the Office of the Ombudsman's Internal Mobility Policy coincides with the launch of the Service Wide Mobility Scheme in 2017. The revised policy comes into effect from 1 October 2017.

The Office of the Ombudsman's Internal Mobility Policy provides the policy regarding mobility opportunities arising within the Office. The Service Wide Mobility Policy provides the policy for mobility across different locations and departments/offices within the Civil Service.

2. Scope of the Policy

Reference to the Office of the Ombudsman (referred to herein as "the Office") in the Internal Mobility Policy applies to all the offices in the organisation, namely the:

- Office of the Ombudsman
- Office of the Information Commissioner
- Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Information
- Standards in Public Office Commission
- Commission for Public Service Appointments

The Office consists of five distinct offices, each carrying out separate statutory functions. The Policy applies to all employees at the grades of Clerical Officer and above within the Office. However, given the diverse nature of the various offices and the business needs of same, the application of the policy will be applied differently for each category. The categories are as follows:

- Category 1 – Clerical Officer to Administrative Officer/Higher Executive Officer grades
- Category 2 - Assistant Principal and Principal Officer grades
- Category 3 – Specific posts filled to address a specific business need of a unit/section

3. Operation of the Policy

The Office's Internal Mobility Policy will operate under the following general guidelines:

- In order to be considered for a mobility move, staff members may be refused a mobility move if any of the following apply:
 - i. Not yet completed their probation;
 - ii. An 'unsatisfactory' rating on their PMDS;
 - iii. An unresolved disciplinary issue or performance issue;
 - iv. An incomplete PMDS from the previous year;
 - v. Sick leave in excess of 56 days or 25 instances or more over a 4 year period (pro-rata where applicable).

- While regard will be given to all applications, applying for an internal mobility move does not guarantee that a staff member will be moved or that their specific preferences will be matched
- To avoid excessive turnover of staff, the pace of mobility will take account of general turnover within a unit/section and across the Office
- In general, any staff member approved for a mobility move under the Policy should be released within 6 weeks of approval
- The Policy does not impact on the rights of Management to assign staff members to different moves as required throughout the year for business/staff development reasons
- In certain circumstances, it is recognised that it may be beneficial for staff members to remain in their current area as long as they are effective and can continue to develop
- Individual circumstances may be taken into consideration for mobility opportunities where relevant to meet the business needs of a particular unit/section. For example, work-sharing or Shorter Working Year Scheme arrangements. Every effort will be made to retain such arrangements, however staff members may be required to vary such arrangements as part of an approved mobility move depending on the business needs of the receiving unit/section
- Investment made by a business unit through a formal education programme or significant specialised training may be taken into consideration when determining the timing of a mobility move

The Internal Mobility Policy prescribes a different approach, depending on the category of your position.

Category 1 – Clerical Officer to Administrative Officer/Higher Executive Officer grades

After 3 years in a role, a staff member may register interest in an internal mobility move. After 5 years in a role, staff members can be automatically considered for mobility.

Staff members in this category must discuss the consideration of a mobility move in detail with his/her line manager before applying for a mobility opportunity.

Once this discussion has taken place, staff members can apply using the Application Form. The Application Form is available to all staff on the Intranet.

Category 2 - Assistant Principal and Principal Officer grades

After 4 years in a role, a staff member may register interest in an internal mobility move. After 6 years in a role, staff members can be automatically considered for mobility.

Staff members in this category must discuss the consideration of a mobility move in detail with his/her line manager in the first instance before applying for a mobility opportunity. The staff member must also discuss his/her intent to apply for a mobility move with the Director General.

Once this discussion has taken place, staff members can apply using the Application Form. The Application Form is available to all staff on the Intranet.

Category 3 – Specific posts filled to address a specific business need of a unit/section

In some instances, positions held in the Office are specialised and the officer(s) have been recruited for a specific business need of a unit/section. These positions are generally filled through specific panels, skills specifically sought from open/interdepartmental panels, or specially run competitions for this Office. Regard will be given to all expressions of interest in an internal mobility move for Category 3 positions in line with this Policy. However, due regard must be given to the possible effect that losing one of these positions could have on the operation of a unit/section.

In this regard, the staff member may apply for a mobility move after the time specified above that is relevant to his/her grade. However, it should be noted that consideration will be given to the business needs of both the providing and receiving units/sections. Consideration will also be given to the cost of training a replacement for the position to an appropriate level.

Staff members in this category must discuss the consideration of a mobility move in detail with his/her line manager in the first instance before applying for a mobility opportunity. The staff member must also discuss his/her intent to apply for a mobility move with his/her Head of Unit/Section (PO), where applicable.

Once this discussion has taken place, staff members can apply using the Application Form. The Application Form is available to all staff on the Intranet.

If a move is not considered possible, the line manager's staff member should discuss in detail other development opportunities that may be available to the staff member concerned. This is particularly important where a staff member has expressed a need for a mobility move for developmental purposes.

4. Key principles underlying the Policy

There are many benefits to an effective internal mobility policy. It is envisaged that this Policy will assist the Office by:

- Matching the delivery of goals and objectives to the staffing resources available
- Promoting consistent standards across the different functions and a unified sense of identity
- Providing opportunities for staff to develop
- Optimising existing knowledge, skills and abilities
- Reducing any potential over-dependency on individual staff members
- Improving knowledge sharing across the various functions
- Strengthening staff engagement and well-being

It is envisaged that this Policy will assist individual staff members by:

- Developing competencies
- Gaining different experiences through knowledge sharing
- Clarifying career paths
- Improving engagement and well-being

While it is recognised that there are many benefits to the Internal Mobility Policy, the *business needs* of the Office will be at the forefront of all staffing decisions. Staff in the Office are transferable at any time in order to meet business needs as they arise.

This Policy does not impact on Management's right to assign staff members to different roles as required to meet business needs or for the development of particular staff members. Furthermore, Management reserves the right to move staff to suitable roles within their own units/sections. In such instances, Management will work closely with the HR Unit to ensure appropriate arrangements are put in place. Similarly, Management of the proposed receiving unit/section will be consulted prior to the agreement of a mobility move to ensure it is appropriate for the business needs of their section/unit.

5. Roles of Stakeholders

The HR Unit

Internal mobility is a shared responsibility for all stakeholders. However, the overall responsibility for organising and monitoring mobility lies with the HR Unit. Responsibilities include:

- Promoting awareness of the Internal Mobility Scheme
- Advising and supporting other stakeholders
- Maintaining the application forms and the Internal Mobility Database
- Reviewing the Internal Mobility Policy on an annual basis

Line Managers

An important role of Line Managers is to offer encouragement and support in the performance and development of staff members. In this regard, Line Managers should:

- Ensure staff are fully aware of the Internal Mobility Policy. This should form part of the formal PMDS conversations if appropriate
- Ensure that all applications for mobility are notified to the member of the Management Team of each section/unit, where applicable
- Ensure there are sufficient knowledge management practices in place for their role and their staff members' roles to allow a seamless transition should a mobility move occur
- Actively communicate and cooperate with the HR Unit regarding the implementation of this Policy
- If a staff member (Category 1 & 2) is refused a transfer on the basis that their position is considered critical to the unit/section, succession planning and knowledge transfer methods should be put in place to facilitate a move within a 12 month period. Any methods or planning in this regard should be discussed in detail with the staff member and communicated to the HR Unit

Staff Members

It is important that staff members reflect and take full responsibility for their own career development. If a staff member is interested in mobility under this Policy they should:

- Take care to ensure that they consistently demonstrate a strong commitment to the work of the Office generally and their current role specifically
- Discuss in detail with their manager. The discussion should include the motivation for a mobility move and the benefit they and/or the Office expects to receive from same
- Submit an "Internal Mobility Application Form" to the HR Unit
- Be fully aware that an application under this Policy does not guarantee a move or a move to their preferred area
- Send any updates they wish to include in their application

- Should a staff member (categories 1 & 2) be refused a move as their role is considered critical to an area, ensure that they actively cooperate and engage with their manager regarding succession planning and knowledge management methods for their position. Failure to do so will result in the mobility move no longer being considered

6. Review of the Policy

The operation of this Policy will be reviewed for its effectiveness on an annual basis with a view to continually improving human resource management and meeting business needs.