

The background of the cover features a blurred photograph of a yellow bus on the left and two women in conversation on the right. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue gradient that darkens towards the bottom.

Better Government for Northern Ireland

Final Decisions of the Review of Public Administration

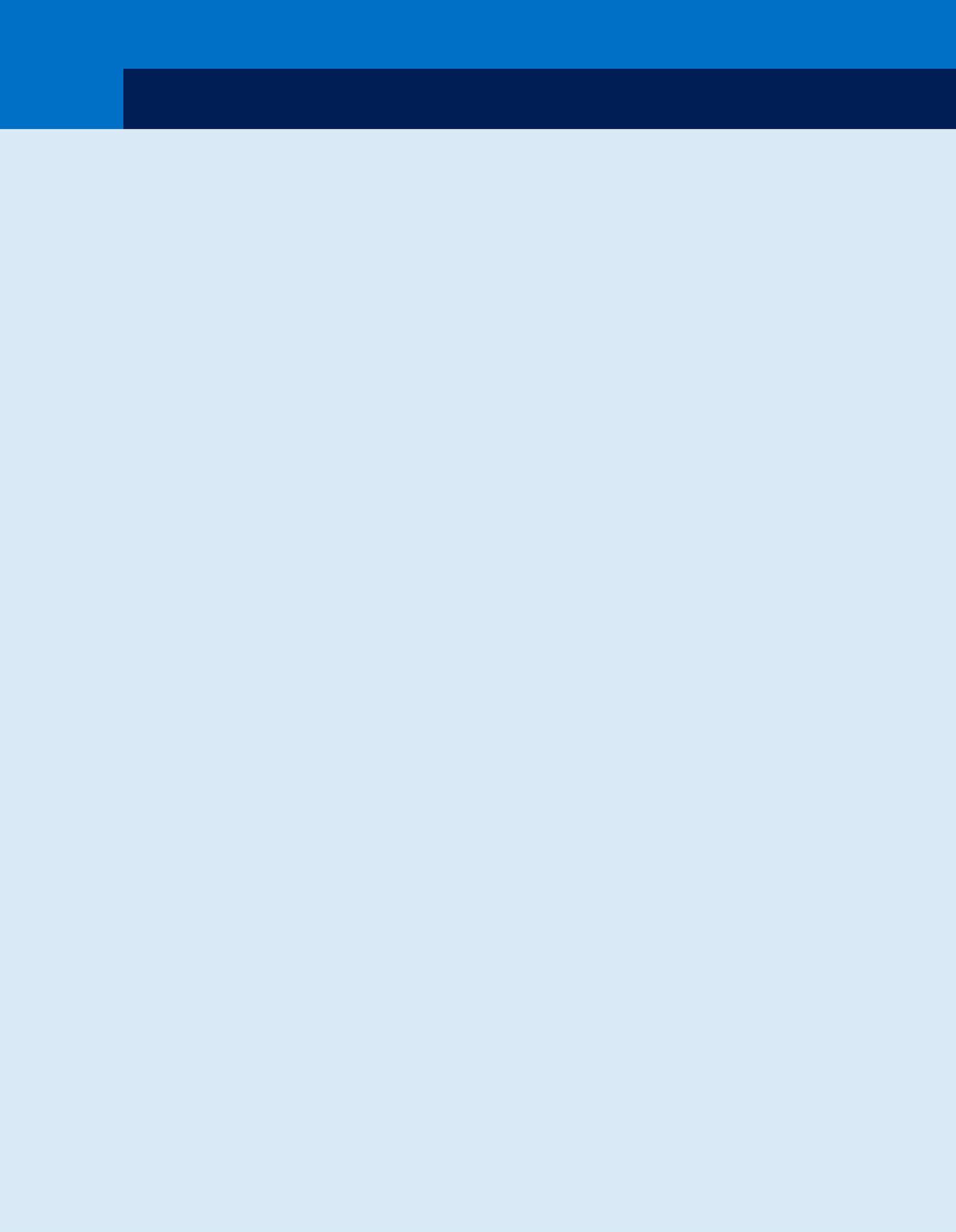
SECURING OUR FUTURE

A large, stylized white arrow graphic is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the cover. The arrow is thick and points diagonally upwards and to the right. It is set against a dark blue circular background element.

March 2006

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Foreword by the Secretary of State

Northern Ireland has been transformed in the last few years with more and more people being attracted here to visit, do business or settle down. This gives us hope for the future, but to realise the vision of a world-class Northern Ireland we need to develop our economy to be less dependent on the public sector while at the same time ensuring that our public services meet the highest standards.



Ideally local politicians in a local Assembly should be taking decisions on all the key issues affecting people in Northern Ireland. We are working to achieve that, but in the meantime the increasingly competitive world around us will not stand still. If we want to enjoy a successful, prosperous, secure future we need to ensure that Northern Ireland is in a position to compete in this fast-moving environment. We need to rebalance the economy to be less dependent on the public sector, and transform the delivery of government and public services with power being exercised as close to the people as possible. We need to transform Northern Ireland from dependency to sustainability.

There is no doubt that Northern Ireland is over-administered, and to be more competitive government needs to be smaller, more efficient, ensuring taxpayers' money is spent on the front line and not on wasteful layers of bureaucracy.

We need to develop better, smarter ways of working that reflect our changing lifestyles and our on-demand culture. Services need to be focused on the customer, and that means doing things differently.

In introducing the changes set out in this document we believe that local democracy will be strengthened through power being transferred to elected representatives working closely with communities in local areas. Communities will be empowered to become involved in the planning of services and development of their area through the community planning process, and taxpayers will get better value for their money through the savings made in reducing bureaucracy being redirected to front-line services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Peter Hain'.

Rt Hon Peter Hain MP

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland



Introduction

The Review of Public Administration (RPA) will introduce the most far-reaching reform of the system of public administration in Northern Ireland for a generation. It was launched by the Northern Ireland Executive in June 2002 but due to the suspension of devolution has been taken forward by direct rule ministers. Local political parties have been consulted at various stages.



After more than three years of research and public consultation, final decisions that are focused on service delivery and meeting the needs of the people who pay for public services were announced by the Secretary of State, Peter Hain MP, in November 2005, with a further announcement on the future of QUANGOs in March 2006.

Extensive public consultation showed that people wanted a more streamlined system of public administration that allows easy access to services, is easily understood, is

fair, and has clear lines of responsibility and accountability. They wanted better integrated and co-ordinated services, which could be achieved by organising public services around the same administrative boundaries. There was an overwhelming desire to see wasteful bureaucracy reduced and scarce resources redirected to the front line.

There was also a recognition that new technology and better ways of working would improve services and reduce costs. Of course structural changes will not in themselves improve the quality of services; that will require much work by the service providers. But often the current structures have proved obstacles to service improvement, therefore, getting the structure right is the first step.

It was also clear that people feel removed from decision-making, that services are done to them rather than provided for them. And to change this, they want to have the opportunity of becoming more involved in influencing services in their area. The council-led community planning process will provide just such an opportunity.



Taking these issues and many more that were raised with the review team into account, government announced a series of reforms that are based on four guiding principles:

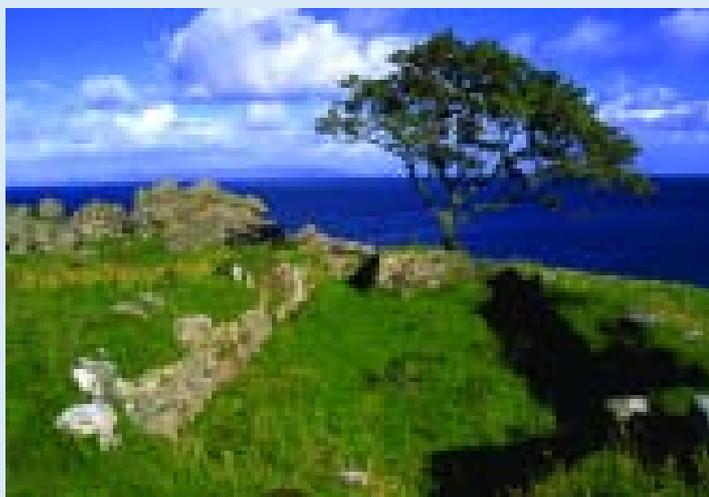
Subsidiarity – delivering services and exercising power as close to the people as possible. That means local councils having responsibility for the delivery of a wide range of services that affect the lives of people living in their areas;

Equality and Good Relations – equality, social need, good relations, human rights and rural considerations have been key threads woven into both the development of the reforms and the way in which the review was conducted. The local administration arrangements will provide an anchor for ‘*A Shared Future*’ and ensure that good relations actions are earthed in the needs of local communities;

Common Boundaries – having public services organised within the same boundaries (the new local council boundaries) will not only make them easier to understand, but will create real opportunities for well-planned, joined-up working; and

Strong Local Government – councils at the heart of the local community providing civic leadership; ensuring the provision of local services, locally delivered; and working with local interests to develop their areas, addressing social, economic and environmental issues that will ensure vibrant, sustainable communities for future generations.

The following pages summarise the key decisions that will shape this new system and outline the challenges ahead. Copies of all the evidence that helped to inform these decisions, including the consultation documents and all of the responses received, results of surveys and focus groups, and various research and briefing papers, can be found on the review website at www.rpani.gov.uk.





Local Government

Government is committed to developing a reinvigorated local government sector, with the local council at the heart of the community transforming the social and economic life of the local area.

Under the new system **councils will have responsibility for a wide range of functions** and a strong power to influence a great many more. This will enable them to respond flexibly to local needs and make a real difference to people's lives. A full list of the new or enhanced local government functions is at Annex A, but some of the key functions include planning, local roads, urban and rural regeneration, and some housing services. Funding for these additional functions will also transfer to councils.



In addition to these, councils will have a new **power of well-being**. This will allow them to take any action, not already the responsibility of another agency, linked with the community plan, that will improve the well-being of the local community or the local area. Such a power allows great flexibility and, coupled with the additional functions transferring from other parts of the public service, will enable councils to respond creatively to local needs, ensuring accessible and citizen-focused services that make a real difference to people's lives.

Councils will be required to lead a **community planning process**. This will require the council to consult all its constituents about issues that affect their lives and allow people to have a say in the way in which their area is developed. All other statutory agencies will be required to work with councils in developing and delivering these plans. The community plan will be published allowing the whole community to take ownership of it, as well as assess how well the council and others are delivering against their commitments.

Councils will not necessarily directly deliver all the services for which they are responsible. They will be encouraged to develop partnership arrangements with the voluntary and community sectors, and the private sector in developing and commissioning services. These sectors often have the flexibility to respond more quickly and creatively to the quickly changing demands of the community and could be important partners in developing customer-focused services.



In order to be able to take on this greater range of functions, and influence the way in which other agencies deliver services, councils need to be of a certain size and scale. An analysis of all of the evidence showed that, to achieve everything we hope these new councils will achieve, the optimum number of councils is seven.

Evidence used to arrive at this conclusion included:-

- research into the distribution of the property wealth base, population, socio-economic issues, and local identity; and
- consideration of equality, social need, population spread and where people live and work.

Work done to estimate potential savings indicated that the seven-council model would optimise efficiency.

Each of these **seven new councils** will have approximately **60 councillors** but, in exceptional circumstances, the Local Government Boundary Commissioner will have the flexibility to increase this to 65. To ensure that local communities do not become remote from these new councils, each council will be required to develop arrangements to ensure that local voices are heard and local needs addressed. This will challenge local councillors to develop new ways to engage with local communities.



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It is vital that councils work together with central government to deliver overarching government policies. In this context the principles set out in *'A Shared Future – The Framework for Good Relations'* are central to

the vision of stronger local government. Local government will therefore have a critical role in the development of a shared, tolerant and inclusive society which embraces diversity. Stronger local government will be at the heart of building more sustainable communities – communities that have improved economic and social well-being and a better quality environment. And through community planning the opportunity exists to promote good relations, address poverty and environmental issues, and develop normal civic society.



The political parties have all agreed that, once the Assembly is re-established, councillors should not also serve in the Assembly, which means your local councillor will be able to devote their time exclusively to local issues in the council.

An independent Boundary Commissioner will decide the exact boundaries of the new councils, but they will be based on groupings of the existing councils. A map and list of councils to be grouped is at Annex B.

It will be for the new councils to decide on the location of their headquarters and sub-offices. We invite representation on this to enable a considered analysis of options to be put to the new councils when they convene.

To enable everyone to have confidence in the councils and ensure fair and transparent decision-making processes, and protect the rights of minorities, there will be a **statutory system of safeguards**. This will be put in place before the new councils come into existence and assume their new powers.



Health



The reorganisation of the Health and Social Services (HSS) management structures is the most fundamental change to the health and social services system for decades. It is intended to support the Government's commitment to improving the health and well-being of the community and to promote better services to patients and clients. When completed, this reform agenda will have transformed the health and social services in Northern Ireland into a system which is genuinely patient-centred, well governed and continually improving.

The number of HSS bodies will be significantly reduced and the new management structures will be more compact and streamlined. While exact savings cannot be calculated until the final shape and staffing of the new structures is finally determined, they will be released and made available for front-line services.

A new **Health and Social Services Authority** will replace the four Health and Social Services Boards. It will be charged with promoting the health and well-being of the community, implementing the Government's policies for health and social services, and with managing the overall performance of the system.

Under the new system, service provision will be driven by and built around the needs of the patient. Working through **Local Commissioning Groups** (LCGs), GPs and other primary care professionals will have a major say in how services are delivered to their patients. The LCGs will be given a substantial role in designing local services and planning how budgets are used. They will be encouraged to make changes to the way services are delivered so as to improve their responsiveness to users' needs, and they will be accountable for the decisions they take. These seven LCGs will map against the seven new councils. They will eventually commission most of the health and social care services required by their communities from a range of service providers and will work with the local council in the community planning process.



Five new **Health and Social Services Trusts** will replace the 18 existing HSS Trusts. They will all be integrated acute and community trusts, and their larger size will enable the service to strengthen the linkages between hospital and community-based services. This will be very important in the move towards the overall goal of delivering seamless services for patients and clients.

A new **Patient and Client Council** (replacing the four HSS Councils) will have a critically important role in engaging with the patient, the client and communities to ensure they get the best from the service and will provide effective advocacy when the service is not meeting an individual patient's or client's needs.

The future **Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety** will be considerably smaller as some of its functions are moved into the new Authority or to the new Trusts. Its future role will be focused on developing policy, supporting the Minister, setting long-term standards and targets for the whole system of health and social care, and for monitoring outcomes. It will also advise the Minister on the allocation of resources at a strategic level and lead the drive for improved performance.



Education

The education system is already in the process of transforming to meet the needs of young people in a rapidly changing world. To support this aim it is important that the education administrative structures are efficient, effective and provide value for money so that they can support front-line services effectively.



The reorganisation of existing education structures will provide a more unified approach to the delivery of education services – that means that every pupil, parent, teacher and school in Northern Ireland will have access to the same services, no matter which school they are in, what community they come from, or where they are geographically.

This also involves fundamental change to the Department of Education. In future there will be a clear separation between policy formulation and operational delivery. The Department of Education will focus more effectively on strategy, policy development and on the translation of policy into improved outcomes at the front line. The Department will set the overall strategic direction of the education and youth sector.

An Education and Skills Authority will be established to support the operational delivery of Education across Northern Ireland and across all sectors of Education.

- It will have responsibility for the functions performed currently by the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, and the Regional Training Unit.
- It will also have responsibility for the front-line support and related functions currently undertaken by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.
- It will be the employing authority for all teaching and other support staff employed in grant-aided schools, and this will result in greater coherence and consistency in how things are done.



- Some of the operational functions currently performed by the Department of Education will also transfer to the new Authority.
- The ownership of the controlled schools estate, currently with the ELBs, will transfer to the new Authority.
- **A Director of Children's Services** will be appointed to co-ordinate the Authority's responsibilities for children.
- The Authority will play a key role in taking forward the curriculum for 14- to 19- year-olds.

A new statutory Advisory Forum will be established to act as a unified advisory interface between the Department and the education sector. Its membership will comprise representatives from the Transferors and Trustees, as well as the Integrated and Irish medium sectors and Voluntary Grammar Schools.

The new arrangements will be more streamlined and corporate, bringing together all the existing support functions under one roof.

Under these changes there will be more direct access to Government. The new Advisory Forum will provide a direct link between education interests and the Minister. There will also be a stronger voice for parents and young people. The Education and Skills Authority will engage fully with councils and others in the community planning process to maximise the opportunities for providing shared services at a local level.

Responsibility for all libraries in Northern Ireland will transfer from the ELBs to a new **regional Library Authority**. This Authority will be able to develop the library service beyond purely educational needs, providing a valuable resource for the wider community and recognising that the library has cultural, recreational and community roles. The Authority will share its central services with other bodies, thus keeping administrative costs to a minimum.

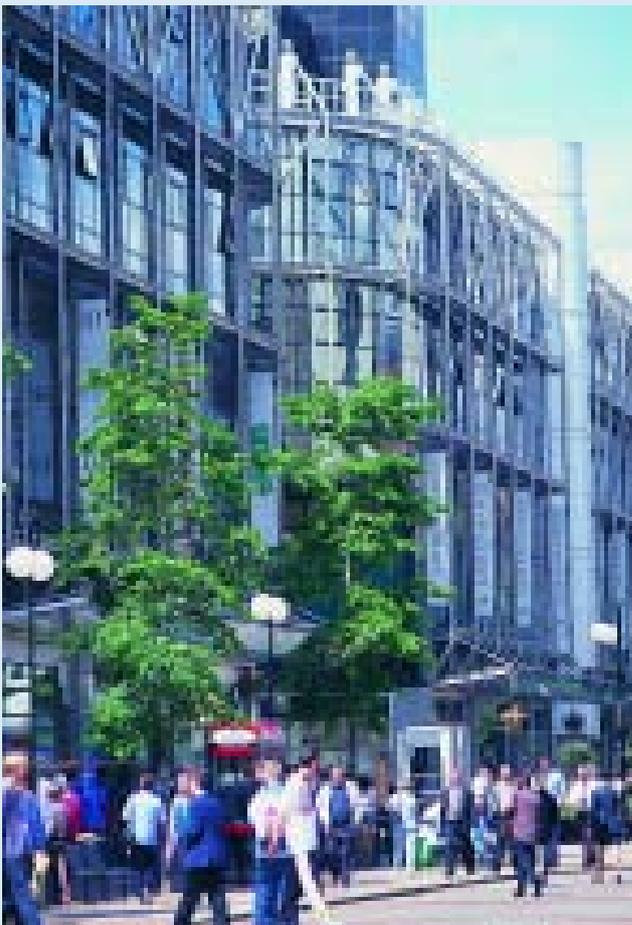


Other Public Bodies

In addition to the major organisations in local government, Health and Education there is a plethora of other bodies that fulfil a variety of roles in the overall system of public administration. These include:

Executive Agencies that are part of government departments, but set up as separate agencies to allow them to operate on a business footing to deliver services directly, while at the same time retaining a direct line of accountability to the Minister and Parliament (or the Assembly). Staff in these agencies are civil servants. Examples include the Social Security Agency and the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency.

Executive, advisory and tribunal **Non-Departmental Public Bodies** (NDPBs) or QUANGOs operate at “arms length” from government. They have boards that are made up of people appointed through the public appointments process, and also



nominees from local councils, professional or industry bodies or key interest groups. Staff are employed directly by the body and the board is accountable to the relevant Minister, but this line of accountability is not as strong as for Executive Agencies. However, the advantage of the “arms-length” relationship of these bodies is that they are able to make decisions which are more independent of political influence. Examples include the Arts Council, the General Consumer Council and the Equality Commission.

In order to streamline public administration, clarify accountability, and ensure public services are easily accessible and customer-focused, the number of these bodies will go from 81 to 53. This will be achieved, in the main, by merging bodies or



transferring complete functions to local government or central government. Many of the remaining bodies will have reduced responsibilities through some of their functions transferring to local government. All of the bodies that remain will be required to work with councils in the community planning process.

It is essential that, for those public bodies which remain, accountability is clear. In all cases such bodies are accountable to their sponsoring Minister. Board members must be chosen solely on the basis of the skills and expertise necessary to do the job. All appointments are to be made on merit and no one should be appointed to any position solely because they hold a particular position in another organisation. For the future, all Board members will be appointed under the guidelines laid down by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.



There are a number of tribunals in Northern Ireland which deal with employment disputes and appeals arising from certain decisions taken by Government Departments and other public bodies. These are mainly funded and provided with administrative support by the Department responsible for the relevant area of policy. These arrangements have been considered in the light of reforms in England and Wales and of concerns about the independence of Tribunals under their current administrative relationships with Departments. To secure greater independence and more streamlined administration, responsibility for the administration of those Tribunals currently sponsored by Departments will transfer to the Northern Ireland Court Service as part of a new Courts and Tribunals Service.

Annex C lists the small number of bodies that are unaffected by these decisions, and the impact of these decisions on each of the remaining public bodies. Annex D maps the public sector as it will be after these changes take effect.



Implementation

No one underestimates the scale of the programme of change, and it will take strong leadership, both politically and within the public sector, to ensure that there is a smooth transition. It is recognised that not just anonymous organisations are being affected, but the changes will impact on individuals working in the public sector, their families and in communities. Government is sensitive to the needs of everyone involved. To ensure the smooth transfer of staff to new organisations, and to advise government on guiding principles which would apply to all sectors, an independent advisory public service commission has been established.

A major programme of legislation is needed in order to make these changes happen, and making and changing legislation is an unavoidably lengthy process. Therefore full implementation will take a number of years, but work has already begun and some changes will happen quickly. The key milestones in the process are as follows:

May 2006	Five new Health and Social Services (HSS) Trusts will have been legally established.
June 2006	Local Government Boundary Commissioner appointed.
September 2006	The Local HSS Commissioning Groups will start operating within the HSS Boards and work with stakeholder groups to develop their future role.
April 2007	The 18 existing HSS Trusts will be formally dissolved and the five new HSS Trusts will become fully operational.
December 2007	Following the Local Government Boundary Commissioner's recommendations, legislation will establish the final boundaries for the seven new councils.
April 2008	Existing HSS Boards and Councils cease to exist and the new HSS Authority, the Local Commissioning Groups and Patient and Client Council will assume full operational responsibility. New Education and Skills Authority and statutory Education Advisory Forum operational.
2008	Elections to new shadow councils.
Spring 2009	New councils fully operational.



ANNEX A**LIST OF NEW OR ENHANCED LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS**

Application of Building Regulations
Arts and Culture (Armagh County Museum)
Community Development
Community Planning
Community Relations
Conservation of Natural and Built Heritage
Donaghadee Harbour
Emergency Planning
Environmental Health
Environmental Services (spot listing of buildings)
Fire and Rescue
Fishery Harbours
Future European Programmes
Housing Related Functions
Leisure and Recreation (local water recreation facilities)
Local Arts
Local Economic Development
Local Events
Local Roads functions
Local Sports
Local Tourism
Maintenance of the Public Realm
Planning
Planning local bus services
Rathlin Ferry
Rural Development
Rural Transport Fund
Urban and Rural Regeneration
Other services carried out in partnership with or on behalf of other bodies



ANNEX B

MAP OF SUGGESTED BOUNDARIES FOR NEW COUNCIL AREAS



LIST OF COUNCILS TO BE GROUPED

Belfast

In the North East: Coleraine, Moyle, Ballymoney, Ballymena and Larne

Around Antrim: Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Antrim and Lisburn

In Down: North Down, Newtownards, Castlereagh and Down

In the South: Craigavon, Armagh, Banbridge, Newry and Mourne

In the North West: Derry, Limavady, Strabane and Magherafelt

In the South West: Fermanagh, Omagh, Cookstown and Dungannon



ANNEX C**PUBLIC BODIES INCLUDED IN MARCH 2006 ANNOUNCEMENTS****BODIES UNAFFECTED****EXECUTIVE AGENCIES**

Child Support Agency
Social Security Agency
NI Statistics and Research Agency
Forest Service – subject to review of environmental governance

EXECUTIVE PUBLIC BODIES

NI Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee
NI Transport Holding Company
Trust Ports
General Consumer Council for NI
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
NI Social Care Council
Health & Safety Executive for NI
Equality Commission for NI
NI Commissioner for Children and Young People
Strategic Investment Board
ILEX
Economic Research Institute of NI
Community Relations Council
NI Film and Television Commission
Museums and Galleries of NI
Ulster Supported Employment Ltd
Labour Relations Agency



ADVISORY PUBLIC BODIES

Higher Education Council
 Research and Education Advisory Panel
 Charities Advisory Committee
 Office of the Social Fund Commissioner for NI
 Statute Law Committee for NI
 Advisory Council on Infrastructure Investment
 Statistics Advisory Committee
 NI Building Regulations Advisory Committee
 The Lay Observer
 Law Reform Advisory Committee for NI

BODIES IMPACTED

EXECUTIVE AGENCIES	FUNCTION
Driver & Vehicle Licensing	} } Merge into a single Driver & Vehicle Agency
Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency NI	} }
Health Estates Agency	Transfer functions into new HSS structures
Ordnance Survey of NI	Functions transferring to Land & Property Services Agency
Public Record Office NI	De-agentise, incorporate into Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Rivers Agency	Functions transferring to new Environment Agency – subject to the outcome of the review of environmental governance



EXECUTIVE AGENCIES	FUNCTION
Environment and Heritage Service	Functions transferring to new Environment Agency – subject to the outcome of the review of environmental governance
Business Development Services	Functions transferring to Department of Finance and Personnel
Valuation and Lands Agency	Functions transferring to Land & Property Services Agency
Rate Collection Agency	Functions transferring to Land & Property Services Agency
Land Registers of NI	Functions transferring to Land & Property Services Agency
EXECUTIVE PUBLIC BODIES	
NI Housing Executive	A range of non-core functions will transfer to local government
Invest NI	Local economic development functions transferring to local government
NI Tourist Board	To incorporate the NI Events Company and local tourism functions transferring to local government
Fisheries Conservancy Board	Functions transferring to Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
NI Museums Council	Functions transferring to local and central government
Arts Council of NI	Some funding to transfer to local government
Sports Council for NI	Some funding to become responsibility of local government



EXECUTIVE PUBLIC BODIES	
Enterprise Ulster	Abolish
Construction Industry Training Board	Amalgamate with Construction Skills Sector Skills Council
Livestock & Meat Commission	Incorporate the functions of the Pig Production Development Committee
Agricultural Research Institute of NI	Functions transferring to new Agri-food Biosciences Institute
Pig Production Development Committee	Functions transferring to Livestock & Meat Commission
NI Fishery Harbour Authority	Functions transferring to local government
Rural Development Council	Functions transferring to local government and policy role to central government
Agricultural Wages Board	Abolish
Local Government Staff Commission	Functions transferring to local government when new councils are established
Central Services Agency	Functions transferring to HSS structures
NI Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery	Functions transferring to Health and Social Services Authority
NI Medical and Dental Training Agency	Functions transferring to Health and Social Services Authority
Mental Health Commission for NI	Functions transferring to the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
Fire Authority for NI	Transfer to local government as a shared operational service
NI Events Company	Functions transferring to NI Tourist Board



ADVISORY PUBLIC BODIES	
Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board	Functions will transfer to the equivalent Board in Great Britain, whose remit will be extended
Drainage Council	}
	}
Council for Nature, Conservation and the Countryside	}
	}
	} Functions transferring to new Environment
Historic Buildings Council	} Agency – subject to the outcome of the
	} review of environmental governance
	}
Historic Monuments Council	}
	}
NI Housing Council	Abolition will precede the creation of the new councils
TRIBUNALS	
Tribunals	Combined Tribunal Administration Service under NI Court Service



ANNEX D

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM – POST RPA DECISIONS

	DCAL	DE	DEL	DARD	DOE
Executive Agencies [7]				Forest Service	Driver & Vehicle Agency
Executive Public Bodies [38]	Museums and Galleries of NI Arts Council of NI Sports Council for NI NI Film and Television Commission Library Authority	Education & Skills Authority General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland	Ulster Supported Employment Ltd Labour Relations Agency	Agri-food Biosciences Institute Livestock & Meat Commission	NI Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee Environment Agency
Advisory Public Bodies [12]		Education & Skills Advisory Forum	NI Higher Education Council	Research and Education Advisory Panel	
Overall 57	5	3	3	4	3



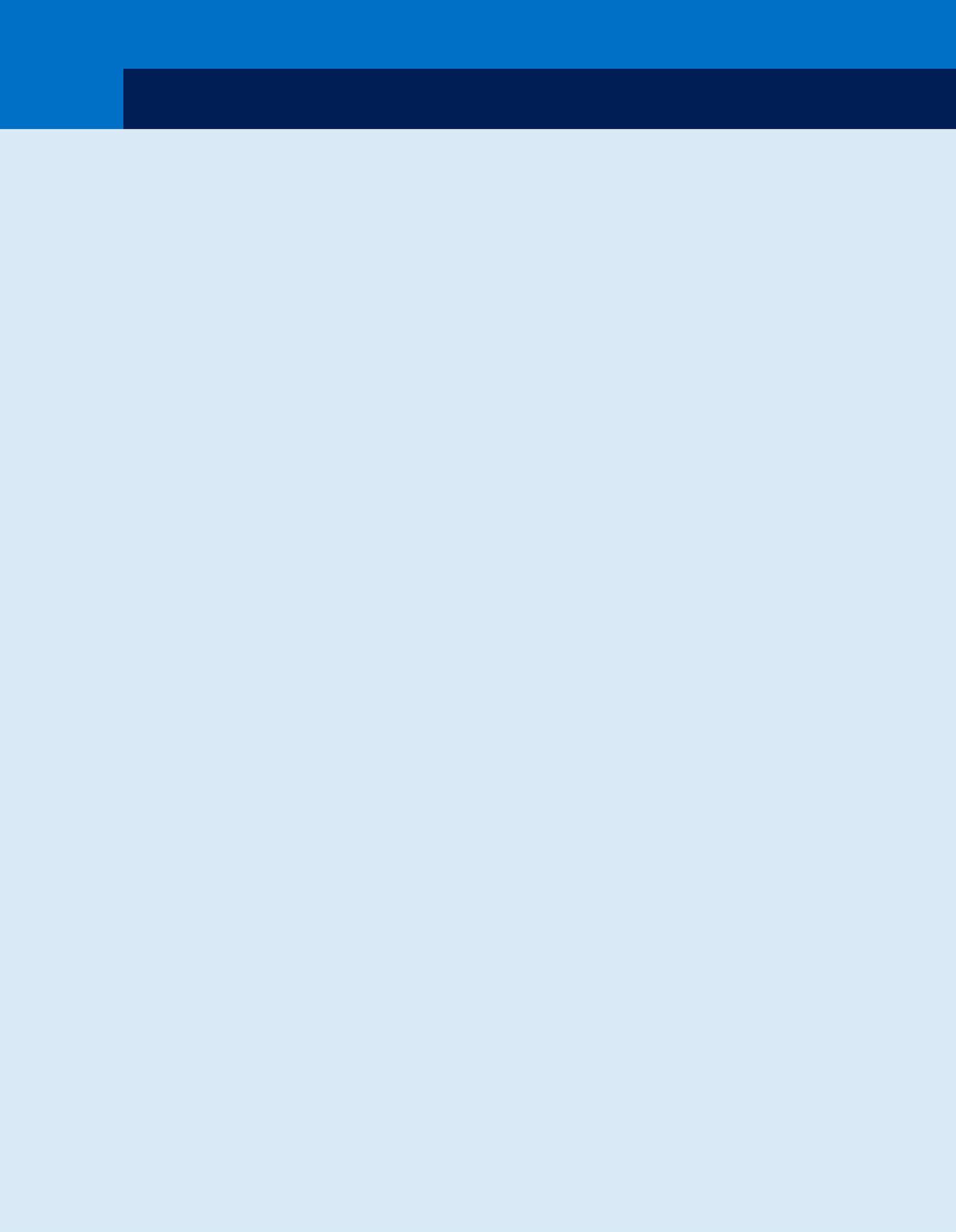
DRD	DSD	DETI	DHSSPS	OFMDFM	DFP
Roads Agency	Child Support Agency Social Security Agency				Land & Property Services Agency NI Statistics & Research Agency
NI Transport Holding Company Trust Ports NI Water Ltd	NI Housing Executive	General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland Health & Safety Executive for Northern Ireland Invest NI NI Tourist Board	Health & Social Services Authority HPSS Trusts (5) Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority NI Social Care Council	ILEX Equality Commission for Northern Ireland NI Commissioner for Children and Young People Strategic Investment Board Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland Community Relations Council	
	Charities Advisory Committee Office of the Social Fund Commissioner		Patient Client Council	Statute Law Committee for NI Advisory Council on Infrastructure Investment	Statistics Advisory Committee NI Building Regulations Advisory Committee The Lay Observer Law Reform Advisory Committee for NI
4	5	4	12	8	6

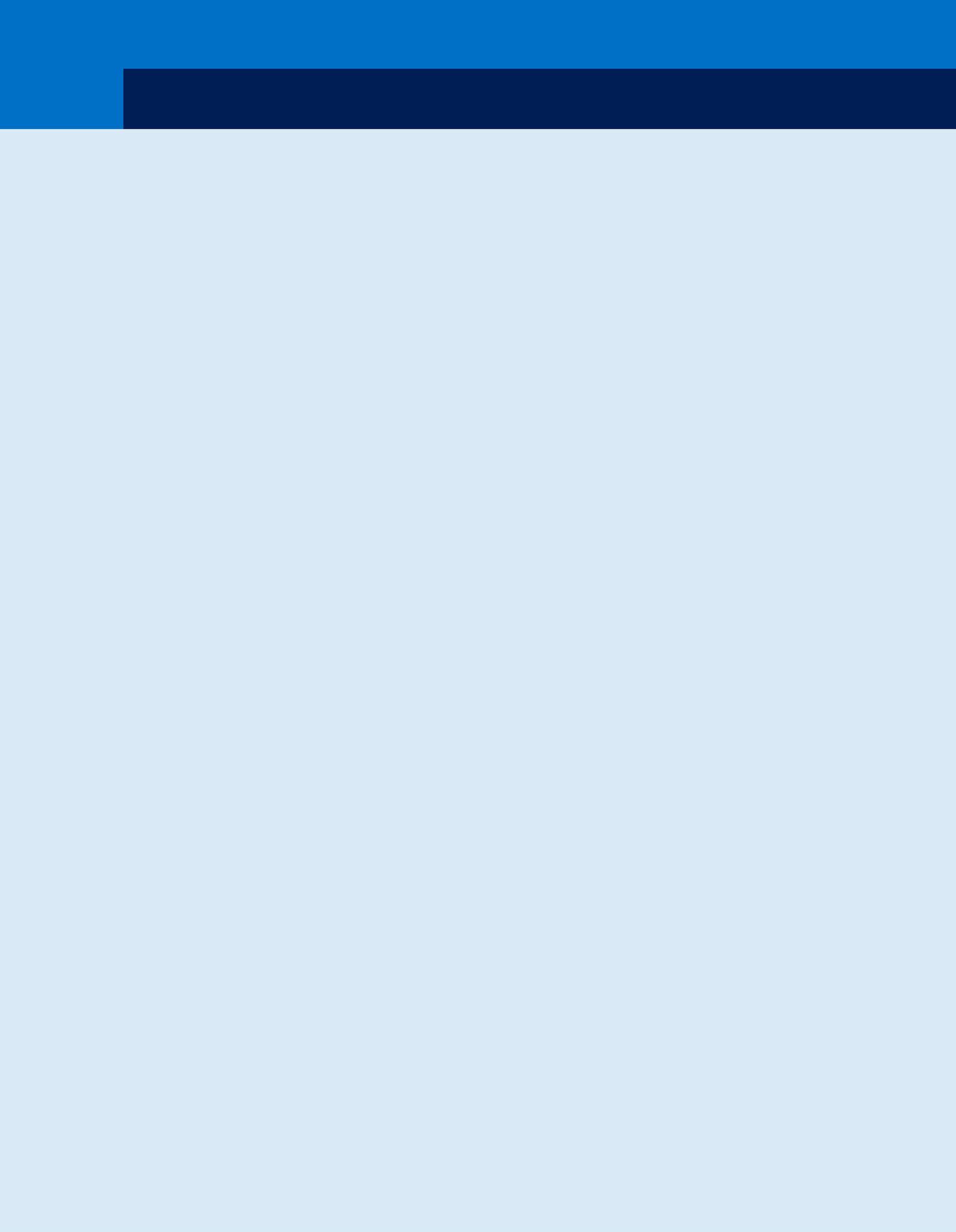


ANNEX E**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department of Employment and Learning
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DFP	Department of Finance and Personnel
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DOE	Department of the Environment
DRD	Department for Regional Development
DSD	Department for Social Development
ELB	Education and Library Board
HSS	Health and Social Services
LCG	Local Commissioning Group
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
RPA	Review of Public Administration











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