



**PUBLIC SERVICE IMPROVEMENT UNIT
DELIVERY AND INNOVATION DIVISION**

**Northern Ireland BEST PRACTICE SCHEME
Information Brochure**

Visit: www.bestpracticeni.gov.uk

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I am delighted that the Northern Ireland Best Practice Scheme is being extended for a further period. This will be the most extensive round, with sixteen participating organisations from across the wider public sector and the third sector hosting events and sharing their experience and journeys of improvement.

We now have participating organisations from health, education, housing, local government, the economy, the voluntary sector and the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). The themes are wide-ranging, from project management to IT development, to joined-up government. All of these organisations have demonstrated that they have considerably improved their business and their delivery to the customer, from developing collaborative partnerships and planning mechanisms in local government to changing the quality of life for health service users.

The objective of this scheme is for public sector and third sector organisations to learn from each other and to date it has been extremely well received. During the previous round of events a total of 780 delegates attended 17 learning activities with 94% stating that the events had met their objective. Of those who attended these events, 57% said that they had either made changes or planned to make changes as a result of their attendance. These are indeed encouraging statistics.

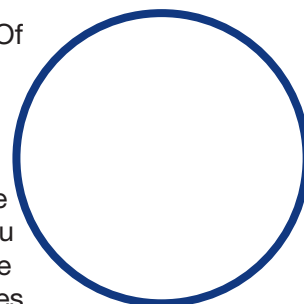
As you are aware, public services in Northern Ireland are in the middle of the most radical modernisation programme in decades. In the NICS many of you will have been affected by the changes to executive agencies as some move back into the core while others have merged. The number and responsibilities of Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) has also been affected and there are further changes planned, particularly within local government, health and education.

In my role as Minister for Finance and Personnel I am also responsible for the implementation of a major change programme that affects the whole of the NICS. This includes the provision of modern accommodation with flexible working practices that fit a progressive service for today and tomorrow. We are also embracing developments in technology that will help us to supply efficient and innovative solutions in the provision of support services. Our Programme for Government agenda has also identified improving the way citizens access the services you provide as a key objective over the next 3 years.

Many of the best practice examples that you will have the opportunity to see during the course of this programme will be extremely relevant as we modernise and change. The Best Practice Scheme provides the opportunity to visit organisations that have been faced with the same issues and challenges and to learn from them and share experiences. I would encourage you to participate in the scheme by attending events which are of relevance to you and by encouraging your colleagues and staff to do likewise.

May I take this opportunity to wish you well in your endeavours to provide a modern and efficient service.

PETER ROBINSON



Introduction

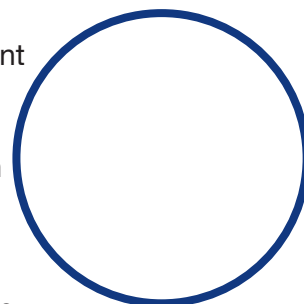
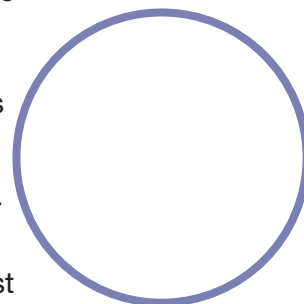
The Northern Ireland Best Practice Scheme (Round Three) was launched in January 2008 and follows on from a successful programme which ran during the last two years. The scheme is sponsored by the Public Service Improvement Unit (PSIU), within the Department of Finance and Personnel, as part of the reform agenda in Northern Ireland. Its aim is to provide real examples of quality improvements in the delivery of services to citizens.

Through the scheme, staff from the wider Northern Ireland public sector and the third sector are given the opportunity to visit host organisations, assess working practices, and benchmark their own performance against key aspects of service improvement.

The planned outcomes for the initiative are that participants will use the experiences of others to develop their knowledge and skills to improve their own service delivery.

Sixteen organisations with a proven track record of business improvement or customer service development will host a range of learning activities during the period of the scheme. All events are free of charge and some of the participating organisations will also provide help and assistance in addition to the formal events.

A programme of events will be developed to cover the period of the scheme (2008 – 2010) and further information can be obtained from the best practice website at www.bestpracticeni.gov.uk.





Antrim Borough Council has responsibility for providing local government services to a population of almost 50,000 residents in an area which lies on the north-east shores of Lough Neagh.

In 2005 the Council adopted a new approach to customer service by introducing a dedicated Customer Service Advisor Team. The team's multi level approach involves working on the front line, liaising and communicating with customers both in person and by telephone and behind the scenes in developing and implementing training, systems and procedures aimed at improving the customer relationship. This has resulted in a major improvement in service.

One of the key advancements has been the introduction of a single point of contact for anyone telephoning the Council, with advisors dealing with around 70-80% of these directly. Advisors also work closely with individual units and knowledge and experiences are shared. They have also been instrumental in researching and commissioning a bespoke Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

The Council will host two learning activities during the period of the scheme and one of these will focus on the major development and improvement of its customer service and the challenges and rewards which this has provided.

Antrim Borough Council is also heavily committed to its people, and in its approach to worklife balance, has demonstrated a willingness to take risks which far exceed any legislative requirements. The organisation focus is on the health and wellbeing of its staff and they have introduced a number of initiatives to promote health education. The Council is working with a number of agencies, for example, as part of their 'Healthy Lifestyle Scheme' and actively encourage staff to look at (and make changes to) their lifestyle, diet and health.

Antrim Borough Council became an accredited Employer of Choice in 2007 and received a special 'Innovation Award' which recognised the fact that they have introduced a completely flexible approach to work-life balance.

The Council will also outline its strategy and reinforce its view that demonstrating a commitment to work-life balance directly impacts upon attendance levels, staff satisfaction and employee turnover rates.

For further information on Antrim Borough Council please visit their website at www.antrim.gov.uk.

To book a place on any of the Best Practice Scheme events please visit www.bestpracticeni.gov.uk. If you require further advice or assistance please contact Catherine Harland on 028 9081 6032 or email to: catherine.harland@dfpni.gov.uk.



Belfast City Council (BCC) is the largest Council in Northern Ireland, employing more than 2,600 people and serving a population of 269,000. The Council's commitment to continuous improvement and excellence has been recognised through a number of awards and accreditations, including Investors in People, Charter Mark, ISO and the Mark of Excellence.

The Council will host two events, demonstrating 'Innovation in Problem Solving' and best practice in 'Communication'. The projects highlighted during these learning activities will include:

Operation Clean-up: a highly successful Community Safety initiative which reduces and prevents criminal and anti-social behaviour by removing 'run-around' cars from public roads. 6,457 vehicles have been seized over a 3 year period, removing the enabler for car-related crime and leading to a substantial reduction in the number of abandoned vehicles reported.

Women into Non-traditional Sectors: BCC is leading the Women into Non-traditional Sectors (WINS) project to attract more women into jobs such as street cleansing, grounds maintenance, construction and driving. The project was able to access support from the European Social Fund and the Department for Employment and Learning under the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme for Northern Ireland. BCC is working in partnership with a number of organisations including Translink, The Northern Ireland Housing Executive, The Construction Industry Training Board, The Department for Employment and Learning and Queen's University.

Step up to Learn: It was recognised that some BCC staff had problems with reading and writing and had not benefited from access to formal qualifications. This has implications for service delivery, employee participation and inclusion. To help rectify this, BCC worked closely with the Trade Unions to introduce an essential skills programme.

BCC has recently introduced a new alternate week **kerbside recycling collection**. This has been extremely successful and a key contributory factor was the innovative communication strategy that the Council deployed. A recent independent survey revealed that 84% of customers were satisfied with their bin collection (78% in 2004) while 74% were satisfied with the doorstep recycling service. Only 1% of responders were unaware of the changes to the recycling service. The data management and communication of the alternate week collection was lauded by the Chair of the EU Eurocities conference in 2006 as a model for EU emerging states.

For further information on Belfast City Council please visit their website at www.belfastcity.gov.uk.

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Belfast Model School for Girls



The Belfast Model School for Girls is an all ability school for 11-18 year olds, located in North Belfast. Pupils are drawn from a catchment area with a high proportion coming from recognised areas of deprivation. The school has formed a wide range of partnerships within Business, Education, Health and Sport.

All of the partnerships contribute to the School vision of “Achievement for All” and to improving the life chances of pupils. It has a long tradition of innovation and has received a number of external awards such as the Schools’ Curriculum Award, the Educational Technology Laureate and Investors in People recognition.

The School has developed excellent links with the whole community and shares good practice through collaboration with appropriate organisations. Partnership and joined up working permeates every area of school from teachers working with Primary Schools in the area, to business representatives working with mixed groups of sixth formers in the school.

The School is a designated Specialist School for ICT and one of only two Full Service Schools (pilot 2006) in Northern Ireland. The Full Service Extended Schools Programme supports the school’s work with voluntary and statutory agencies and neighbouring communities offering a range of services to students, their families and the wider community. Examples include: adult learning classes, vocational classes, community forum, health initiatives and parental and pupil support.

Collaboration also takes place with other schools and colleges in terms of provision and sharing best practice to widen curricular choice.

The Girls’ Model is a Health Promoting school and works closely with the local HAZ (Health Action Zone) team on a range of projects, many of which provide opportunities for parental involvement. They also work in partnership with a range of community organisations and collaborate with them to raise pupils’ achievement & aspirations.

The school has developed collaborative and sustainable partnerships with a wide range of organisations over a period of many years and will host two events in this area. These learning activities would be of considerable interest to schools, Further and Higher Education and the wider public sector.

For further information on the school please visit their website at www.belfastgms.org.

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BIH Housing Association is dedicated to the provision of affordable housing and associated support services. Their key role is to develop and manage rented accommodation for single people, families, the elderly and various models of supported housing for people with special needs. They currently manage and maintain approximately 4,300 properties located throughout Northern Ireland. BIH is a Charter Mark, Investors in People and ISO 9001:2000 accredited organisation.

BIH recognises that tenant involvement is vital to delivering responsive services. Through various methods they encourage all tenants to participate in the management of their homes, in the design, improvement and monitoring of the services BIH provides and in the running of the organisation at Board and Committee level. This includes membership of the main Board, Tenants Associations, and a Tenants Forum.

BIH also consults with staff across the organisation at all levels through a Staff Consultative Forum and staff attitude surveys. A 'Continuous Improvement Team' has been set up with the aim of promoting best practice and ongoing improvement throughout the organisation.

During its first event BIH will demonstrate how it encourages customers and staff to be actively involved in the organisation and how their views are integrated into its overall improvement strategy.

The theme of the second event will be on customer focus and in particular the development, publishing, monitoring and review of meaningful and relevant customer service standards. This will also provide an insight into how BIH interacts with its Tenants' Forum and the involvement of the Performance and Standards Team.

BIH Housing has a proven track record of customer service improvement which has been recognised through the attainment of a number of Charter Marks over an eleven year period. They focus heavily on customer (and staff) involvement and encourage this in a variety of ways. These events would be of considerable interest to organisations who wish to apply for Charter Mark accreditation or who wish to develop their own customer service.

For further information on BIH Housing please visit their website at www.bih.org.uk.

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The Cedar Foundation



The Cedar Foundation is a leading voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland and is a chief contributor to delivering services to disabled people. In the 1990s, The Cedar Foundation went through a significant period of change in response to the changing expectations of disabled people and funders. In order to respond to the changing market, the Foundation committed to a process of continuous improvement and the application of a range of quality management tools was central to the strategy.

The Foundation holds Investor in People status and has recently been selected as Investors in People Champion. It also holds ISO 9001:2000 and has won five National Training Awards. The organisation is also an 'Employer of Choice'.

The Foundation was the first voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland to use the EFQM Excellence Model and has incrementally increased its score, twice being awarded the Mark of Excellence and the Northern Ireland Quality Award in 2006. In October 2007 the Foundation won the European Quality Award and was nominated as a role model organisation in the areas of customer focus, leadership and process management.

The Foundation strongly believes that user involvement increases the likelihood that the services provided, and the processes by which they are delivered are appropriate and sensitive to users needs. The organisation has introduced a process management system which is extremely agile giving it the ability to rapidly respond to changing demand and new market opportunities.

The Cedar Foundation will host two events around 'customer focus' and 'managing processes' which will centre on:

- The application of quality standards;
- Leadership and management; and
- Managing a diverse staff.

These events would be of interest to people wishing to develop their customer service by communicating and involving their users, managers and staff. The second event will focus on how key processes are identified, managed and developed and would be useful for people who are considering applying for ISO accreditation; are using the EFQM Excellence Model or who wish to improve their processes in a structured way.

For further information on the Cedar Foundation please visit their website at www.cedar-foundation.org.

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Invest NI is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) established in 2002. Its role is to encourage economic growth by helping new and existing businesses to compete internationally and by attracting investment to Northern Ireland. The organisation currently holds Investors in People accreditation and ISO 9001:2006/ ISO 27001:2005.

The organisation relocated to purpose built office accommodation in October 2005 (accommodation for 550 staff) through a Public Private Partnership arrangement. The contract provides a full range of ancillary and office services. The building which is open plan, has encouraged new ways of working and has maximised recent developments in IT.

The project was completed on time (one year) and on budget. Average downtime per staff member was less than 2 hours during the move. Considerable financial savings have already been achieved and there will be recurring savings in terms of hospitality, printing and telephones etc.

During its first event Invest NI will share their experience of how the concept was developed from the design stage through to completion and beyond. This event would be of interest to a wide audience including people who are interested in developing collaborative partnerships, those working in project management, as well as anyone involved in major change programmes.

In June 2006 Invest NI set up a dedicated portal (www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk) which provides 24/7 tailored business advice, guidance and access to help, through a wide variety of sources including help lines, interactive tools and a contacts directory.

This facilitates 'joined up government' by encouraging departments and organisations to work together to provide comprehensible business advice and reduces the burden on Government departments and agencies in fielding basic enquiries. Considerable financial savings have been achieved and help is now also being made available to businesses who may not have previously met the criteria for assistance.

The second Invest NI event will focus on the development, maintenance and improvement to the portal and would be of interest to personnel involved in website development, creating partnerships, communication and developing customer services generally.

For further information on Invest NI please visit their website at www.investni.com.

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Land Registers of Northern Ireland

Land Registers of Northern Ireland (LRNI) is an Executive Agency in the Department of Finance and Personnel. The Agency's purpose is to record accurate details of legal interests in land in Northern Ireland and to provide fast and accurate registration and land information services to facilitate the conveyancing and property markets. From 1st April 2008, it will become part of the Land and Property Services, joining with the Rates Collection Agency, the Valuation and Lands Agency and Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland.

LRNI has transformed both the way it operates internally and how it interacts with the legal and business community in Northern Ireland. Working with BT through a PFI agreement, it has moved from a paper based to a computerised system (Landweb), which enables customers to directly access records from their own offices.

Prior to the inception of the Landweb programme there was little if any use of computer systems within the agency and working practices and procedures had remained similar to those in use over the previous 100 years. In collaboration with BT, Land Registers has sought to get the best from the new technology by totally analysing and re-engineering business practices and procedures.

The number of transactions completed has tripled in 3 years and customer satisfaction has almost doubled. LRNI are about to commence a pilot project with customers to test 'e registration', which will enable clients to register online rather than by post.

Delegates at the first LRNI event will be given the opportunity to see the Landweb technology first hand and to be provided with a tour of operations.

There is much to be learned from the LRNI Landweb project in terms of using technology to deliver both internal and external services. Involving and consulting both customers and staff from the design stage onwards has enabled LRNI to manage change within the organisation and to deliver a transformed service to the customer.

For further information on Land Registers please visit their website at www.lrni.gov.uk.

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The North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) which performs a wide range of functions in the funding and delivery of local education and youth and library services to 406,000 people and 73,000 pupils in schools in its area. The range of services provided by the Board is complex in nature, and geographically widespread. The board has instilled a culture of continuous improvement and in recent years has tested its progress towards the provision of excellent services through external validation. This includes achieving Investors in People accreditation and a number of Charter Marks for various parts of the organisation.

NEELB uses the EFQM Excellence Model as the overarching framework for managing its continuous improvement strategy and has been recognised on three occasions through the “Steps to Excellence” programme and achieved a “Mark of Excellence” in 2005.

NEELB’s events will focus on how Information Technology has been increasingly used to promote internal and external communication. During the past seven years, IT in the NEELB has been developed and is used to support communication with staff and external customers. This has been enabled by the development of the corporate intranet and websites providing information for the public.

Staff actively participate in the development of electronic information resources through a participative forum, while service standards for IT service delivery have been set using best practice methods. Online consultation with customers has been conducted and standards modified as a result of the feedback.

The Board is also seeking to develop good practice in this area by using technology to improve communication in schools and has sought to achieve this through the introduction of a ‘Creativity Truck’ which brings practical experience in video conferencing, multimedia and animation.

NEELB are a forward thinking organisation who have made considerable progress in providing a customer focused service. The board has introduced a structured and coordinated approach to communication which would be of interest to people both in terms of the outcome of their strategy as well as the lessons learnt. For further information on the North Eastern Education and Library Board please visit their website at www.neelb.org.uk.

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The Northern Health and Social Care Trust became operational on the 1st April 2007 and provides services to the areas formerly covered by Causeway, Homefirst and United Hospitals Trusts. The Trust is committed to continuous improvement, modernisation and reform. Within this alliance, the former trusts have previously been accredited as Investors in People organisations as well as achieving a number of Charter Marks and national awards.

In the Trust it is believed that the 4% of chronic disease admissions (DHSSPS 2005) would be preventable if an alternative model of management was available. To counter this, a case management model of service delivery was developed and implemented in the Trust which means that one person acts as both provider and commissioner of health and social care and takes responsibility for ensuring that all care needs are met.

The Community Nursing Service was redesigned and a new grade - Continuing Care Nurse (CCN) – was introduced to case manage these clients. A Coordinator screens client's hospital and social care records, following identification by a computerised risk stratification tool for Patients at Risk of Readmission (PARR Algorithm), for inclusion to the service.

The Case Management Coordinator liaises with acute and community staff to facilitate early discharge to an appropriately enhanced level of health and social care in the community.

This proactive and co-ordinated approach between primary and secondary care has improved the quality of life for patients and their carers. There is also a projected saving of 10,348 bed days over 12 months.

Following a review, the Trust also introduced a nurse led discharge procedure. Previously patients were often being discharged in an inappropriate, hurried and uncoordinated fashion. The changes have significantly improved the quality of life for patients while reducing the length of time being spent in hospital.

These are excellent examples of customer service improvement, maximising IT, partnership working and project management which the Trust will highlight during their events.

For further information on the Trust please visit their website at www.northerntrust.hscni.net.

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The Northern Ireland Citizen Interaction Centre (NICIC), in the Department of Finance and Personnel, provides a virtual contact centre for the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS).

A review of telephonist services between 2004 and 2005 concluded that: customer experience was very poor; there was a high volume of abandoned calls and handling times were too long.

An improvement strategy was developed which resulted in the setting up of a Service Improvement Team. Greater stakeholder involvement was encouraged which included consultation with staff and their representatives. Relevant training programmes for staff and supervisors were also put in place.

The overall improvement strategy has resulted in considerable improvements in service and satisfaction levels. For example NICIC handles in the region of 400,000 calls per month. The average % calls abandoned has dropped considerably and recent survey information has revealed that over 96% of calls are now answered within 12 seconds.

Another one of the main outcomes was that NICIC began to provide 'one and done' services for a number of key Agencies/ Departments. Today, these include Planning Service, Land & Property Division, General Records Office and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. NICIC provides a wide range of services which includes form distribution, surveys, Avian Flu advice and help in relation to the recording of births, deaths and marriages.

An example of a successful collaborative partnership is with the Planning Service. NICIC worked in partnership with the organisation as part of a pilot project in defining processes, collaborating on training and addressing areas of concern. The benefits include: more efficient use of staff resources; prior knowledge of cases before customer contact is made; response targets now in place and general enquires are resolved at the first point of contact. Following the success of the pilot the "Information Line" went live in July 2007.

Over the last few years NICIC has undergone radical change and will continue to evolve as the NICS modernises and transforms. Their experience would be of considerable benefit for staff involved in project management and customer service improvement.

For further information on NICIC please visit their website at www.dfpni.gov.uk/index/delivery-and-innovation/did-delivery/did-nicic.htm.

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The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is a Non-Departmental Public Body which has been in existence since 1971. The Housing Executive has a unique role in Northern Ireland and is one of the province's largest public sector organisations, with a budget in excess of £600 million. The Housing Executive's strategic position, alongside its local presence, enables the organisation to deliver quality housing services and regenerate neighbourhoods, as well as contribute to better health, education and wellbeing. In addition, its work with communities adds real value to decision-making, service development and higher standards.

The Housing Executive uses the EFQM Excellence Model as the overarching framework for managing its Business Improvement Strategy and has received recognition for the quality of its services through a number of awards and accreditations such as the Northern Ireland Quality Award, Charter Mark and Investors in People.

During its Best Practice events the Housing Executive will focus on how the organisation identifies and works with partners to manage its business. The Housing Executive has developed a considerable number of successful partnerships within the statutory, private and third sectors. In 2004 the organisation introduced a new governance framework 'Partnership Working and Funding for other Bodies' which was developed in consultation with the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The framework (which was reviewed in 2006) helps to ensure that the Housing Executive obtains value for money and that robust controls are in place.

An example of an effective partnership, which will be highlighted during the event, is The 'Supporting People Programme', which provides housing support services to 15,000 people through a range of provider organisations, many of which are in the voluntary sector. The overall aim of Supporting People is to commission housing support services and integrate them with wider local strategies in a multi agency and partnership approach that will improve the quality of life and independence of vulnerable people.

Another highly successful example that will be highlighted is in relation to 'Egan Contracts'. Since 2001, the Housing Executive has adopted the principles of the Egan Report – a review of construction in the UK, which advocated long term contracts and the development of good working relationships to improve quality, value for money, health and safety and timeliness.

These events would be of interest for people who wish to improve performance through collaboration and working in partnership. For further information on the Housing Executive please visit their website at www.nihe.gov.uk.

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**Housing
Executive**

Omagh District Council is the second largest district council area in Northern Ireland, covering 440 miles with a population of around 48,000. The Council currently has around 290 staff working from a number of locations throughout the district.

Omagh Council has over the years achieved and maintained a number of quality awards/accreditations, for example the Environmental Department has ISO 9001:2000, Omagh Leisure Centre has the UK leisure specific award QUEST and the Council has the corporate Investors in People award.

The Council will focus their events on Community Planning. The Review of Public Administration recommended that Councils will take the lead in the community planning process on issues that affect the lives of their inhabitants.

The 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'.

The Department of Environment Task Group (sub group) defines Community planning as 'any process through which a Council comes together with other organisations to plan, provide for or promote the well being of the communities they serve'. The objective is to develop a co-ordinated response to the identified needs of the population. The community plan will be published 'allowing the whole community to take ownership of it, as well as assess how the Council and others are delivering against their commitments'.

Omagh was the first Council in Northern Ireland to formally enter into a community planning process, launch a community plan and establish partnerships. The process has been innovative and while in many ways the plan and relationships between partners continues to evolve, the organisations involved are already benefiting from the engagement.

During the events the Council will outline its approach to identifying, developing and engaging with key stakeholders including elected members and officers of Omagh District Council, Government departments, other statutory partners, the private sector, the voluntary/community sector and the wider community. They will also discuss their arrangements for monitoring and implementing the plan.

For further information on the Council please visit their website at www.omagh.gov.uk.

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Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI) is an Executive Agency in the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and is the official government organisation responsible for supplying mapping and geographic information for Northern Ireland. From April 2008, it will become part of the Land and Property Services joining with the Rates Collection Agency, the Valuation and Lands Agency and Land Registers Northern Ireland.

Through the CAMEO (Customer Access to Maps Electronically Online) project, OSNI has developed its website to deliver its services electronically by providing access to map data, products and licenses and enabling electronic purchase for business customers and the general public. This project is the first of its kind in the world of digital topographical data and it has achieved recognition by winning the BT GoldenEye T Public Sector Award in 2006.

The project was initiated in response to customer feedback in 2004, which highlighted the need for an electronic commerce service to deliver a speedy accurate service.

OSNI is building on the success of CAMEO by introducing GeoHub NI™. This will provide access to geographical data shared by government bodies e.g. the location of water pipe lines, gas pipe lines, electricity cabling, telephone cabling and, potentially, 'social' data such as the location of older populations etc.

There will also be significant advantages to government and to the citizen as shared information enables better planning of services. One of the strengths of GeoHub NI™ is that it has been developed in partnership with representatives from local authorities, industry and the public sector.

There is considerable learning from the development of the CAMEO project and the GeoHub NI™, not just about the streamlining of processes and the delivery of government services by electronic means, but also about the benefits of involving staff, customers and partners at all stages. Delegates at the events will have the opportunity to share OSNI's experience and to see demonstrations of the two systems.

For further information on OSNI please visit their website at www.osni.gov.uk.

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Roads Service (RS) is an Executive Agency within the Department for Regional Development. As the sole road authority in Northern Ireland, it has responsibility for over 25,000 kilometres of public roads, together with about 9,000 kilometres of footways, 5,800 bridges, 263,000 street lights and 370 public car parks. The Agency aims to ensure that the public road network is managed, maintained and developed in a safe and efficient way. RS seeks to continually improve its level of service through an ongoing programme of review and stakeholder consultation.

RS holds a number of awards and accreditations and is currently the only area within central government in Northern Ireland to hold the Quality Standard - Mark of Excellence (2006). RS has also been designated as a Centre of Procurement Expertise and its internal providers Roads Service Consultancy (RSC) and Roads Service Direct (RSD) have been certified to ISO 9001.

Roads Service will centre its events on RSC which is a separately managed business unit within the organisation. RSC will focus on an internal Procurement Strategy Review which has resulted in new approaches which provide value for money. This includes a collaborative partnering arrangement with a private sector consultancy firm.

The thrust behind the new procurement strategy has been to reduce the number of contracts, increase contract periods and value and to combine multi-functions, within a tendering strategy that staggers the competitions against a pre determined programme, to maintain competition and generate value for money. Contract numbers have reduced from approximately 300 to 70, while multifunction contracts have been created and contract periods have been increased from 1-2 years to 3-5 years.

The strategy has resulted in efficiency savings; innovative procurement practices; promotion of a partnering ethos; a non-adversarial approach in procurement; the standardisation of procedures and a greater emphasis on Quality Management.

In 2005, Owen Williams (OW) consultants were appointed as RSC's partner to assist with the delivery of the RS programme. OW work closely with RSC and are involved in specialist areas where expertise and experience is not available in-house. The partnership has also resulted in a two-way skills and knowledge transfer which have further improved the capabilities of the partnership and added to the 'intelligence' of the organisation.

For further information on Roads Service please visit their website at www.roadsni.gov.uk.

To book a place on any of the Best Practice Scheme events please visit www.bestpracticeni.gov.uk. If you require further advice or assistance please contact Catherine Harland on 028 9081 6032 or email to: catherine.harland@dfpni.gov.uk.



St Columb's College, Derry



St Columb's College was founded in 1879 and is the North West's largest post-primary school with 155 staff and 1,500 boys aged 11-18. The school has won a number of local and national ICT (Information and Communications Technology) related awards and recently became the winner of a National Training Award.

In 2004 the College embarked on a focused journey to develop learning and teaching through ICT. The College is now recognised as a 'beacon' of good practice in the use of educational technology and was recently cited as a case study in a circular from the Department of Education.

To encourage and empower teachers in taking risks with their traditional repertoire, the school introduced a staff learning programme. A core group of teachers volunteered to act as ICT teaching support personnel and produced a learning package: 'Skill, Support, Collaborate, and Celebrate' (SSCC).

An essential element of this learning package has been the sharing of good ideas amongst colleagues. In a pioneering cross-community project for example, they brought together, both on-line and in person, 15 teachers and almost 200 pupils from 4 schools to learn, pilot and evaluate the Scholar e-learning package for A-level sciences – earning recognition by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) for this work.

St Columb's has created a learning culture where innovative strategies are developed, disseminated and embedded and where teachers are confident with technology in the classroom; lessons incorporate exciting digital, audio and image literacy; pupils have improved ICT skills and choose more ICT-related subjects and local employers have access to a more highly-skilled workforce.

The focus of the learning activities will be on 'making effective and innovative use of educational technology in learning and teaching and taking risks' and 'building staff confidence in the use of ICT for improvement'.

St Columb's have much to share and their events would appeal to people in education and across the wider public sector who are involved in staff development programmes or who wish to see excellent examples of service improvement through the innovative use of ICT.

For further information on the school please visit their website at www.stcolumbs.com.

To book a place on any of the Best Practice Scheme events please visit www.bestpracticeni.gov.uk. If you require further advice or assistance please contact Catherine Harland on 028 9081 6032 or email to: catherine.harland@dfpni.gov.uk.



St Joseph's is a large primary school situated in Crumlin with 834 pupils (this figure includes 104 nursery pupils). The school is an innovative organisation, optimising opportunities to open doors for even greater development and success. As a flagship school in NI they already disseminate good practice throughout the education sector and beyond, nationally and internationally.

St Joseph's have attained a number of awards/accreditations including: Investors in People, ICT CCEA Accreditation and the Extended Schools Award for Dissemination of Good Practice. The school is innovative and creative in using a wide range of tools and approaches to enhance learning and teaching.

The school is involved in the many areas of innovative practice and one of their pilot programmes, Emotional Intelligence (EI), has been extremely successful.

Around four years ago the school was undertaking a major review of its leadership and management structure and became very aware of the importance of emotional intelligence in promoting effective leadership. A unique and progressive approach was taken which involved developing new strategies and processes resulting in the emergence of emotionally intelligent leaders at all levels of the school.

Over the past 3 years they have built leadership capacity through this EI approach. The programme has contributed to successful outcomes and high performance and has helped them prepare for their future where change will occur in an even more rapid way and where emotionally intelligent leadership will be the key to success.

This initiative has had a major impact on the whole school community and the outcomes include: managing change is now integral to their ethos with shared high level leadership throughout the school; creative strategic planning is encouraged and targets are achieved; there are positive relationships at all levels and teamwork and collegiality is operating at an advanced level across the school.

St Joseph's will host two events on this area and the programme will include an overview of the link between developing Emotional Intelligence and building leadership capacity.

For further information on the school please visit their website at www.stjosephscrumlin.co.uk.

To book a place on any of the Best Practice Scheme events please visit www.bestpracticeni.gov.uk. If you require further advice or assistance please contact Catherine Harland on 028 9081 6032 or email to: catherine.harland@dfpni.gov.uk.

