Exploring the Effectiveness of the Performance Management System in an
Irish Government Department.

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Abstract

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This study seeks to explore the effectiveness of the performance management system currently used throughout the Irish Civil Service, the PMDS. The research will be conducted through a study of the PMDS in one Government Department. Due to the sensitivities around the topic of PMDS and the potential for individuals to be identified the researcher made the decision to keep the name of the organisation in question anonymous. For the purposes of this research the organisation in question will be referred to as Department X.

The overall aim of the research is to discover if the PMDS is an effective tool for increasing organisational and individual performance. The literature on performance management would suggest that when implemented correctly, performance management has the potential to increase organisational performance and drive employee engagement.

However, for many years performance management has been the Achilles heel of the Civil Service. A publicised deep routed inability to address underperformance and the public perception of the “job for life” often portrayed the Civil Service in a negative light.

In order to realise the three objectives associated with the research, a mixed methodological approach was employed. The quantitative aspect, the online survey, was associated with the realisation of objectives 1 and 2. As part of the qualitative approach, the researcher utilised face to face interviews and these were concerned with objective 3.

The findings of the study revealed a number of serious issues with the PMDS, including a lack of support from management, an unwillingness for staff to take the process seriously,
and a disconnect between the local training & development unit and staff in the
Department. It is clear that the new rating scale negotiated between DPER and the Civil
Service Unions is tremendously unpopular amongst the majority of those who participated
in the research, with many voicing concerns that the new scale could demotivate
employees. From a learning and development perspective the picture was a similarly bleak
one. It was clear from the responses that not enough emphasis was being placed on
learning and development aspect of the PMDS process. There appeared to be a lack of
commitment from line managers and from HR to assist employees with realise their learning
needs and this was demotivating staff. The role of management comes under intense
scrutiny throughout the study and it is clear that there has been a lack of training and
support provided to those tasked with facilitating the PMDS process. Although there have
been some positive revelations during this study, the findings of the research highlight
significant issues with the PMDS and it is clear that it is not an effective tool for increasing
individual and organisational performance in its current form.
Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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List of Acronyms

PMDS – Performance Management & Development System
DPER – Department of Public Expenditure & Reform
NMP – New Public Management
PMS – Performance Management System
PM – Performance Management
CIPD - The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
OCB – Organisational Citizen Behaviour
PDP – Personal Development Plan
HEO – Higher Executive Officer
EO - Executive Officer
AP – Assistant Principal
CO – Clerical Officer
SPS – Senior Public Service
NSSO - National Shared Service Office
Peoplepoint – HR shared services
ROF – Refund of Fees
HR – Human Resources
L&D – Learning and Development

FEMPI - Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest

HSE – The Health Service Executive

DSP - Department of Social Protection & Family Affairs
Chapter 1 - Introduction

The landscape of the Irish Civil Service has been undergoing a significant transformation in the past twenty years. In 2000, the Department of An Taoiseach published “Partnership 2000 for Inclusion, Employment and Competitiveness, and Delivering Better Government”, a report which set out the key factors which would modernise the Irish Civil Service (The Department of An Taoiseach, 2000). One of the steps outlined in the plan was the introduction of a Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

In May 2000, General Council Report 1398 introduced the PMDS to the Civil Service. The role of the PMDS, as stated in the Report 1398 was to “to contribute to continuous improvement in performance across the Civil Service by aligning individual and team performance with the goals of the organisation. It also provides a context in which the development needs of job holders can be addressed” (The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, 2000).

The modernisation process was initially slow, but the global economic crisis and the collapse of the Irish economy brought the perceived inefficiencies in the Civil Service to the forefront of Irish society. Between 2009-2014, staff numbers in the Civil Service decreased by 10% to 298,198, with payroll budgets being cut by 20% (The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, 2015). During this period the onus was on the Civil Service to do more with less and to become more accountable to the citizen.

The current PMDS process is a holistic one, encompassing many factors which are required for effective performance management. The PMDS cycle is akin to Williams Deming’s model of performance management and incorporates the concept of SMART goals (Deming, 1952).
It begins with goal setting, followed by a mid-year review, and concludes with a performance appraisal.

Since its introduction to the Civil Service, the PMDS process has been altered on several occasions. In June 2004, human resource consultancy firm Mercer Human Resource Consultancy completed an evaluation of the process. The report made several recommendations designed to streamline the process which General Council approved in May 2005 (Report 1452). These recommendations included the introduction of a five-point rating scale for the end of year review, the linkage of the performance rating to increments & promotion, and changes to the process cycle itself (Civil Service General Council, 2005). A subsequent report into the PMDS was published by the Department of Finance in 2010 which highlighted a number of outstanding issues with the process.

The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform (DPER) was formed in 2011 during the global financial crisis and soon undertook a further evaluation of the PMDS process. A press release by DPER stated the review was conducted due to “a perceived lack of fairness and consistency in the application of the system “ (The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, 2015). As a result of this review, it was decided that further changes to the system would be implemented in two phases.

- Phase 1 which launched in 2012 included measures to further streamline the process and increase manager accountability.

- The cornerstone of phase two was the development of an electronic PMDS process (e-PMDS) and the introduction of a competency framework.
An E-Reward survey of performance management in 2005 revealed that simplification of the process and the introduction of competencies models were common steps being taken by organisations to improve their PMSs (E-reward, 2005).

Figures released by the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform in 2012 showed that in 2011 only 0.1 per cent of staff – which equated to 30 out of roughly 30000 received a rating of one in their end of year review. The reaction to this revelation was one of disbelief, with many media organisations questioning the integrity of the PMDS system and those who are tasked with administering it. This low figure was compounded by the news that 64 per cent received either a four or a five. This trend continued for several years with then Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform Brendan Howlin acknowledging the discrepancies. He was of the view that the system was too complex, stressing reform was needed “to ensure greater balance and consistency in the award of ratings” (Wall, 2013). Strebler et al (2011) echo the above and note that the key to an effective PMS is to make the process simple, they argue that increased complexity can act as a barrier to buy in. In an effort to simplify the system, it was proposed that the five-point scale be replaced by a two-point scale as part of the Civil Service Renewal Plan. This change was successfully negotiated between DPER and the Civil Service Unions and introduced across the Civil Service in January 2016. The new scale would simply assign either a satisfactory or an unsatisfactory rating to an employee.

The researcher has worked in three different government departments and has noted the level of importance placed on the PMDS differs greatly depending on the organisation. The inconsistencies in attitudes towards such an essential workplace tool, combined with separate research on the PMDS conducted by Mercer and The Department of Finance have led the researcher to believe that the process is simply not effective across the board. Since
the embargo on recruitment was lifted in 2015 there has been an influx of young, energetic workers who are no longer only content with the perceived “job for life”. This has placed an increased importance on the PMDS system and it is possible that the new simplified system doesn’t encourage or reward high performance. This may lead to disengagement, demotivation, and difficulties retaining talented employees.

The structure of this research begins with Chapter 1, the introduction. Chapter two examines the literature around performance management, as well as the concept in which performance management in the public sector has its roots, New Public Management. This chapter will analyse the literature with a view to discovering what works and what doesn’t in performance management. Chapter 3 will focus on the research methodologies adopted for this research, including the tools used to gather and analyse the data. Chapter 4 contains an explanation of the research question and the three main objectives of the research. Chapter 5 will present the findings of the research alongside an in-depth analysis of the data and how the findings relate to the researches objectives. Chapter 6 will summarise the findings in the context of the research objectives, while Chapter 7 will contain recommendations based upon the PMSs in a variety of both public and private sector organisations.
Chapter 2 - Literature Review

New Public Management

The concept of new public management (NPM) first surfaced in the United Kingdom during the 1980s when Margaret Thatcher’s government sought to introduce the ‘3Es’ of Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness into the British Public Sector. It was an ideology that public sector organisations such as the Civil Service should strive to mimic the private sector by becoming more business-like and efficient. At the root of NPM was the idea that services should be tailored in such a way as to provide efficient and accountable services to their customers, the citizens of the state. However, it was the early noughties before it could be found in any major form in Ireland. Hood, who is largely credited with coining the term NPM identified several doctrines of NPM which are essential for successful public-sector reform. These doctrines included increased organisational competitiveness, the efficient use of resources, performance management standards, and increased emphasis on results rather than procedures (Hood, 1991). Pollitt added further to this in 1995 when he identified eight key elements of NPM (Pollitt, 1995). Batley & Larbi (2004) conceptualised NPM in a similar fashion to Hood & Pollitt, they categorised NPM into two strands. The first strand focuses on the restructuring of public organisations, placing an increased emphasis on downsizing and improving efficiencies. Strand two referred to the adoption of private sector management styles, including outsourcing and privatisation.

However, almost 40 years after its inception there is still much debate on NPM and its effectiveness in the literature, with many arguing that NPM as a paradigm is dead. (Institute of Public Administration, 2004) (Mongkol, 2011) (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004) (Hardiman & MacCarthaigh, 2010). Much of the debate centres on whether private sector principles and
techniques can be effectively applied to public sector organisations. Armstrong argued that the two are not compatible due to the unique political and social considerations which affect public sector organisations (Armstrong, 1996). Arygiades, as cited in Hughes (2017) declared that NPM worked against social justice and human rights, a stark claim which is also supported by Lapsley (2009). Despite the reservations about NPM, it has been credited with the transformation of the traditional rigidly defined public sector to a less bureaucratic one (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). From an Irish perspective, NPM was a driver in securing increased efficiencies and levels of accountability in the Irish Civil Service, one direct result of this was introduction of a performance management system (Hardiman & MacCarthaigh, 2010).

Definition of Performance Management

Hill and Jones (2004) note that “the most important goal for an organisation is to achieve superior performance relative to its rivals in the same industry”. This, in the context of the Civil Service equates to providing the citizens with the best and most efficient public services. The literature makes clear that the main objective of performance management systems (PMS) is to improve both individual and organisation performance. Its agreed that the foundation for any PMS is a clear understanding of the organisations beliefs and values which are built into the organisations strategy. This strategy acts like a roadmap which helps to guide the business towards its goals. The way in which a performance management system is designed is regarded as a key factor in determining its success (Armstrong & Baron, 2005) (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Lawler et al (1984) argue that poorly designed PMS are inevitably going to be ineffective and can have a detrimental effect on the organisation. Fletcher and William (1996) see performance management as “creating a shared vision of the purpose and aims of the organisation, helping each individual employee understand and
recognise their part in contributing to them, and in doing so manage and enhance the performance of both individuals and the organisation”. Armstrong (2006) defines performance management as “a systematic process for improving organisational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams”. The academic definitions are supported by the CIPD (2016) who define it as “the activity and set of processes that aim to maintain and improve employee performance in line with an organisation’s objectives”. However, Boswell and Boudreau (2002) dissect the concept further and propose that there are two main functions of PMS. They posit that PMS are both developmental and evaluative in nature. The developmental side is concerned with the identification of training needs, goal setting and providing constructive feedback. The evaluative aspect relates to salary administration, disciplinary issues, and the recognition of good or substandard performance. Although both are closely linked, the evaluative function focuses primarily on differentiating between people while the developmental function focuses primarily on within person analysis. Boswell & Boudreau’s viewpoint is compounded by a shift in the emphasis from the traditional performance appraisal to the holistic process of performance management.

Armstrong and Baron (2005) note that the performance appraisal has “a reputation as a punitive, top down control device”, while performance management is “a holistic approach geared towards improving the performance of everyone, and thereby the performance of the entire organisation”. Bones, as cited in Pilbeam (2010) also noted that the traditional appraisal approach was losing its validity. He stated that “performance does not need managing. It needs encouraging, developing, supporting, and sustaining”. 
The shift from the traditional performance appraisal to performance management also demonstrates the rising importance of employee engagement. Although a mainstay of most modern HRM policies, the concept of employee engagement has its foundations in the Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, and Frederick Hertzberg’s Two Factor Theory of Motivation. The behavioural aspects of work motivation can be traced to two concepts, job commitment, and organisational citizen behaviour (OCB), both of which have been the subject of much research (Rafferty, et al., 2005). As of now, although there are many, there is no widely accepted definition for employee engagement. In 1990, Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement as “the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances “. Similarly, Robinson et, al (2004) define employee engagement as “a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization”.

Therefore, employee engagement is an overarching concept which encompasses both job satisfaction & OCB. A report published by the Institute of Employment Studies noted the key difference between satisfaction and engagement. The report states that engagement is a two-way process in that organisations must strive to engage their employees, and in turn, employees then decide as to the level of engagement they are willing to return to their employer. Fernandez (2007) also accentuates the importance of employee engagement over job satisfaction. He feels that organisations cannot rely on job satisfaction to attract and retain talented employees. He posits that engaging employees is an integral part of ensuring the top performing employees remain committed to the organisation.
(1994) argued that there is direct correlation between organisations who place an emphasis on motivating their staff and increased organisational performance. Studies conducted by Harvard Business Review, Deloitte, Gallup, and the Institute of Employment Studies reinforce the academic literature that employee engagement is a key component for driving organisational performance. The 2016 paper titled “The Impact of Employee Engagement on Performance “by Harvard Business Review (2016) revealed that organisations which placed a high importance on employee engagement were found to have elevated levels of customer satisfaction. Mone and London (2009) argue the idea that performance management is a key tool for driving engagement which in turn drives organisational performance.

As referred to above, it is widely accepted that employee motivation is key to organisational success and therefore this holistic approach, when implemented properly is an essential tool for increasing individual and organisational performance (Armstrong, 2006) (Armstrong & Baron, 2005) (Mone & London, 2009) (Pettinger, 2004). To reaffirm the above theory, Gruman and Saks (2011) refer to the Engagement Management model of performance management as a precursor to high organisational performance. Their model begins with a performance agreement which allows the employee and their manager to negotiate performance objectives. They argue that this stage also provides a platform to review the psychological contract. Levinson et al, as cited in Cullinane & Dundon (2006) define the psychological contract as “a series of mutual expectations of which the parties to the relationship may not themselves be dimly aware but which nonetheless govern their relationship to each other”. Thus, this first stage provides the employee and the manager an opportunity to discuss the preconceptions relating to what is expected of each of them. Also, during this stage line managers have an opportunity to use the PMS as a method of
increasing employee engagement through the setting of goals which are of importance to both the individual and the organisation.

The second stage, engagement facilitation, focuses on job design, coaching and development opportunities. The final stage, the Appraisal, or the Review, according to the pair, “focuses on perceptions of justice and trust as drivers of engagement, as opposed to the common focus of performance appraisals on rating accuracy” (Gruman & Saks, 2011). The model demonstrates that driving engagement throughout the performance management process can lead to increased organisational performance.
Performance management is also regarded as a key tool for identifying the learning and development needs of individuals within an organisation. It is agreed amongst academics and practitioners that if an organisation is to succeed then there must be a strong emphasis placed on developing employees who will ultimately drive the business toward the achievement of its goals (CIPD, 2016) (Armstrong & Baron, 2005) (Mone & London, 2009). Armstrong and Baron (2005) went as far as to suggest that the term performance management should be changed to performance and development management. However, Boswell and Boudreau (2002) note that many organisations lack the commitment to the developmental aspect of PM, focusing more so on the evaluative side.

Vroom’s expectancy theory is an importance factor to consider when evaluating the importance of the developmental function of performance management. Expectancy theory states that the level of effort put into performance is dependent on the value placed on the outcome (Vroom, 1964). In relation to PMS, if an employee feels development opportunities are available, and that these opportunities will be essential in them achieving valued outcomes such as promotion then they are likely to seek out these opportunities. Training and development opportunities are generally aligned to suit an organisation’s goals, but they are also an important platform for personal development and are regarded as another tool for driving employee engagement. Therefore, it’s vital that all PMS incorporate some aspect of personal development, whether it be through personal development plans (PDPs), or by identifying gaps in competencies identified by the organisation as vital to the role.

Yarnall, as cited in Chubb et al (2011) argues that the performance management process is a “basis for dialogue about career aspirations “(Chubb, et al., 2011). This is an important, and often underappreciated aspect of the process as it provides managers with the opportunity
to discuss career aspirations with their subordinates. Talented employees are likely to strive for progression and this can be a crucial step in keeping them engaged and motivated.

Tamkin (2004) felt that the absence of training and career development opportunities would be detrimental to an organisation, leading to a dissatisfied workforce and a drop-in productivity. Gruman & Saks are other advocates of incorporating learning and development opportunities into the performance management process, citing the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model in their reasoning. The JD-R model recognises that a work environment can be split into two, demands and resources. The demands encompass the characteristics of a job which can have profoundly negative effects on an employee. The creators of the model Arnold Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti (2007), note that work pressure, increased advances in technology and role ambiguity can lead to elevated levels of stress and a subsequent drop in performance levels.

Job resources are the supports which an organisation can offer its employees to help them succeed in their role. By ensuring the availability of personal development opportunities organisations can combat employee burnout and disengagement, ensuring that employees have the necessary knowledge and skills to maximise their performance and improve retention rates (Gruman & Saks, 2011) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). To reinforce the above, a survey conducted by the CIPD in 2015 revealed that 29% of respondents stated that they could quantify the impact of learning and development on their organisations performance.
Reward management is a term often closely associated with performance management, especially in relation to the private sector, where a positive performance review is usually underpinned by a bonus or tangible reward. According to Sashkin (1981) building rewards into a PMS is a crucial factor in determining whether the PMS will have the desired effect, i.e. increasing individual and organisational performance. Armstrong (2015) defines reward management as “the design, maintenance, communication and evolution of reward processes which help organisations improve performance and achieve their goals”. Lawler supported this definition but stated that reward systems had five main objectives, to attract & retain employees; to promote self-development; to influence corporate culture; to determine pay costs; and to motivate employees to perform at an elevated level (Lawler, 1996).

All reward systems consist of two offerings, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards are rewards which come from the completion of tasks because they are enjoyable and of importance to the individual. Kanfer et, al (2017) note that “tasks which are interesting and enjoyable are believed to satisfy one of more of the universal needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness”. Extrinsic rewards are the tangible offerings at the disposal of an organisation such as pay and bonuses. However, it’s important to note that reward management in the private and public sectors differs significantly. Private sector organisations can create and implement their own reward systems while public sector organisations are generally forbidden from offering extrinsic rewards as part of its offering.

In Ireland, Civil Service renumeration policy is set by DPER largely through negotiations with the public-sector trade unions such as Forsa and the AHCPS. Salary scales are uniform across the entire Civil Service and the concept of performance related pay is for the most part non-
existent. Locke and Latham (1979) agree that extrinsic rewards such as pay increases, and bonuses, are primary incentives for employees, and that without them people simply wouldn’t turn up to work. However, they note that these types of rewards are not sufficient to motivate all employees. This is echoed by Armstrong (2015) who argues that organisations can offer employees responsibility, development opportunities, recognition, and influence in lieu of payment and bonuses to motivate them to perform better. A survey conducted by the CIPD in late 2017 revealed that a majority of the 715 organisations surveyed believe they are better at implementing the financial aspects of their total reward offering than their non-financial ones (CIPD, 2017). Adam’s equity theory suggests that employees place a huge level of importance on the idea of fairness in the workplace. The theory states that employees compare their inputs (e.g. effort) and outcomes (e.g. salary) with those of others, and that any perceived imbalances can lead to disengagement and a subsequent drop in performance as well as high employee turnover levels (Adams, 1965).

Organisations, particularly Civil Service ones are charged with the creation of a total reward package which relies more on intrinsic rewards than it does extrinsic ones. The creation of such an offering would provide these organisations with a chance to attract and retain the best talent available at a time when the war for talent is at the highest level since the global economic crisis.
In theory, academics agree that if implemented correctly, performance management systems can have a positive effect on employee and organisation performance (Armstrong & Baron, 2005) (Chubb, et al., 2011) (Gruman & Saks, 2011). However, some would argue that the success of a PMS often relies on the culture of the organisation in which it has been placed (Morgan, 1989) (Weiner, 2009). When writing in 2011, Cameron and Quinn (2011) stated that “an organisation’s culture is reflected in what is valued, the dominant leadership styles, the language and symbols, the procedures and routines, and the definitions of success that make an organisation unique”. Cameron and Quinn (2011) also note that one of the most important tools an organisation has at its disposal, the one from which it can gain a competitive advantage from, is its culture. Traditionally, public sector organisations are depicted as having issues with culture, they are often seen as rigidly defined inward looking organisations (O'Riordan, 2015). To emphasise this, in 2014, the Report of the Independent Review Group on the Department of Justice and Equality found the Department to be “A closed, secretive and silo driven culture”, with significant leadership and management problems and ineffective management processes and structures”. If this is reflective of the entire Civil Service, it is plausible that performance management, which has its roots in the private sector, may never be a success in the Civil Service. To effect a change in this culture senior management in Civil Service organisations need to lead from the front. Strong, prominent and most importantly transformational leadership is proven to be effective in facilitating change and promoting innovation in organisations (Belias & Koustelios, 2014) (Campbell, 2018) (Sun & Anderson, 2012).
The Performance Appraisal

The appraisal stage is the one which sparks most debate amongst the literature, with Likert stating that “performance reviews as a rule are seriously deflating towards employees’ sense of importance and self-worth”. Heathfield (2007) argues that although in many cases employees are expected to be appraised against set criteria such as competencies, many are still assessed by the appraisee’s subjective viewpoint. She also feels that the end of year appraisal can de-motivate employees as the appraisee often feels that the appraiser doesn’t really care about the outcome, viewing it as a box ticking exercise. The integrity of the appraiser also comes under scrutiny from Pulakos and O’Leary (2011) who highlight the “chronic issue” of managers that give higher than deserved rating to their subordinates to avoid any conflict. Kirkpatrick also highlighted the “halo effect”, that is when managers over-rate employees. He attributes this process to a variety of things such as an employee’s past record, their personality, and the high potential effect, which is rating someone based on what they can do on paper rather than what they have accomplished (Kirkpatrick, 2006).

The literature notes that employees are unlikely to take a process seriously if they feel that the appraiser is conducting the process under the influence of bias, intentional or unconscious. This can have a significant impact on the process and will likely compromise its credibility. McGregor as cited in Debrincat (2015) stated that the appraiser can also sometimes find it difficult to criticise their subordinates, leading to average ratings being given to employees. Not only does this undermine the process but it can also demotivate talented employees who genuinely perform above what is expected of them. Javid (2015) supports this view, stating that average marking can be demoralising for high achievers and can lead to a drop in individual performance and increased tension amongst colleagues. Boswell & Boudreau (2000) argued that training for managers in unconscious bias is a viable
way to provide the appraiser with the necessary knowledge to allow them to conduct the process in a fair and transparent way.

Issues with the performance appraisal are found in droves throughout the literature. It is argued that not everyone is capable of receiving critical feedback and that this can be demotivating and upsetting for employees (Benson, et al., 2012). Similarly, a lack of objective and fair ratings undermines the process and often leads to demotivation which inhibits their performance. However, despite these issues the performance appraisal remains a feature of the majority of PMS (Armstrong & Baron, 2005) (Fletcher, 2007) (Javid, 2015). The main reason for this, according to the literature is because the performance appraisal is a platform which allows employees and their managers to address any potential performance issues which may have arisen.

It is evident from the literature that the role of the line manager is integral to the performance management process, with Purcell et, al stating that the line manager who is “a crucial variable in how policies, practices and values are brought to life”. This is supported by Shanks et, al (2013), writing for Accenture who argued that line managers are key in the creation of ‘a climate that supports high performance and engagement’ and that they are ‘the single biggest influence on an employee’s development’. Training and support for management on the implementation of PM has proven to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of the process (Cavalluzzo & Ittner, 2003). Organisations, particularly Civil Service ones, where the concept of performance management is relatively new need to ensure that managers are given the required time and resources to conduct the process in a meaningful way.
Although there are many advocates of PM, there are also many sceptics found amongst the literature. When writing about performance management in 1993, Grint stated that “rarely in history of management can a system have promised so much and delivered so little” (Grint, 1993). Much of the debate around the shortcomings of PM centres around process design, the appraisal, lack of support from senior management and employee buy in (Armstrong & Baron, 2005) (Pulakos & O’Leary, 2011).

Goal setting is a fundamental basis for the majority of PMS. The concept of goal setting as a source of motivation can be traced back to Locke and Latham’s Goal Setting Theory of Motivation. Locke & Latham’s theory proposes that for goals to act as a source of motivation they must have the following attributes: clarity, challenge, commitment, feedback, and a level of complexity (Locke & Latham, 1990). Kanfer et al (2017) argue that goals are” posited to aid performance because they direct attention to goal related activities, mobilise and sustain effort, and promote the use of task-relevant knowledge”. However, Pulakos & O’Leary (2011) argue that goal setting is not applicable to many modern-day jobs. According to the pair, goals are set at a certain point in time and do not account for any ad-hoc or special tasks which may be assigned to an employee throughout the year, and the goals themselves often read like “generic task statements “rather than measurable goals. Pilbeam and Corbridge support this criticism, stating that goal setting assumes that organisations operate in a stable environment. They stress that performance management is an agent of change, but rigidly defined goals can inhibit change within an organisation (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010). A study conducted by Kanfer and Ackerman (1989) found that setting challenging goals can sometimes have a negative effect on an employee’s level of performance. Their investigation into goal setting theory revealed that performance suffered when newly appointed air traffic controllers were assigned
performance goals without having the required skills and knowledge (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). In situations such as this, where tasks are naturally complex and require upskilling, it is more beneficial to assign learning goals (Kanfer, et al., 2017).

In theory, as per the literature, performance management is an important workplace tool for improving employee and organisational performance, employee motivation, and driving employee development. It can also serve as a tool for determining salary and promotion prospects and can act as a development programme for talented employees. However, also made clear in the literature is that the reality can often differ from the theory. It’s vital that the overarching role of performance management is communicated from the top down to all involved in the process, ensuring support for the process permeates the entire organisation. By doing so, an organisation ensures that the appraisee is aware of the potential opportunities which may arise while also stressing the importance of the appraiser conducting the processes in an impartial manor. Critics of the end of year appraisal argue that managers should be discussing performance with their staff throughout the year, and that the appraisal should simply compound this. The idea that there should be no surprises at the appraisal stage is one which can be found throughout the literature. Lee (1985) noted that PMS are most effective when the appraiser provides regular performance feedback to their staff.

Stemming from the NPM era of the twentieth century, performance management manages to divide opinion more than any other aspect of human resource management. Benefits of performance management include high-levels of employee engagement, minimising turnover rates, the promotion of organisational change, and increased individual and organisational performance. However, there are some who argue that PMS can actually
demotivate employees, create tension amongst co-workers, and reduce organisational effectiveness and agility. Most of the criticisms identified in the literature are rooted in the poor design of PMS, and the culture in which they are being deployed. Organisations, and particularly senior management must ensure that the role of PM is dispensed downwards to all levels of the organisation, creating an environment in which employees are aware that PM opens opportunities for both themselves and the organisation. Similarly, organisations both public and private must ensure that they offer a reward package which will encourage its employees to take the process seriously. Utilising the strategic aspects of human resources, identified as HR business partners in David Ulrich’s Three-Legged Stool is one way in which organisations can make their PMS, and in turn their business a success.
Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

This chapter will focus on the design of this particular piece of research as well as its philosophical underpinning. Details on how the researcher chose the population for the study, the sampling techniques used, and an explanation of the pilot studies conducted during the process will also feature throughout this chapter.

There is an abundance of academic research relating to performance management, most of which centres on what works and what doesn’t (Chubb, et al., 2011) (Fletcher, 2007) (Grint, 1993) (Heathfield, 2007) (Javid, 2015). On the practitioner side, the CIPD have released reports on the subject in 2005, 2007, 2012, and again in 2017. Other notable releases on the topic include Deloitte’s ‘Global Human Capital Trends’ and Harvard Business Review’s ‘The Performance Management Revolution”. From an Irish perspective both Towers Watson (2016) and Talentevo (2012) have conducted studies on performance management, both adopting the use of online surveys to gather the substantial amounts of data required to compile their research. In relation to PMDS both Mercer Consultancy and The Department of Finance examined the process in 2004 and 2010 respectively. Out of a total of 32,190 civil servants, 6,292 or 20% of staff completed the Department of Finance’s Survey in 2010.

Philosophical Approach

The purpose of this research is to examine the effectiveness of the performance management system used in the Irish Civil Service through a study of the process in the one of the largest government departments. Quinlan notes that if the aim of the research is to establish facts then the project is likely to fall within a framework of positivism (Quinlan, 2011). As a result, the philosophical foundation for the research is positivism. Positivism was developed in the 18th and 19th centuries by theorists such J.S Mill, Auguste Comte and Emile
Durkheim. It became the benchmark paradigm for research conducted in the natural sciences during this period. A positivistic study is generally completed using hard data, limiting ambiguity in the responses received and ensuring that only what is measurable is recorded. Positivism is underpinned by the belief that it is possible to provide mathematical proof for every rationally justifiable assertion (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Positivist researchers are known to remain detached from their population and participants, and in doing so, ensuring the researcher remains neutral throughout the process. (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008) (Saunders, et al., 2009) (Collis & Hussey, 2014) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The use of instruments to collect the required data is yet another hallmark of positivism, doing so is a further way in which the researcher can remain impartial. Although the surveys do allow participants to make their feelings known on PMDS, the majority of what the researcher collected was ‘hard data’.

The alternative philosophical approaches, Realism and Interpretivism are concerned with establishing facts about certain realities and seeking to gain an understanding of a situation or phenomenon. (Saunders, et al., 2009) (Quinlan, 2011).

Research Design

Having identified the philosophical foundation, the researcher’s next concern was to decide on an approach which would complement the philosophical foundation. Quantitative research is concerned with numerical data and therefore is generally deductive. Saunders et al (2009) note that a deductive approach involves ‘the development of a theory that is subjected to a rigorous test’ (Saunders, et al., 2009).

As the aim of the research is to gauge the effectiveness of the PMDS and will involve large data sets, the research is more suited to a quantitative method, rather than a qualitative
one. Baird et al (2012) also adopted a quantitative, and deductive approach to their research which focused on the effectiveness of PMS in the Australian public sector. The alternative to deductive research is inductive research, which is closely associated with qualitative research and is mainly adopted in order to gain a deeper understanding of an issue. Inductive research rarely uses numerical data sets, often relying on focus groups and interviews (Saunders, et al., 2009) (Quinlan, 2011).

Population Selection & Sampling Techniques

Department X directly employs 896 staff in Ireland which are spread throughout nine offices. Seven of these offices are located in Dublin, with one in Cork and Limerick respectively. Given the geographical spread of staff the researcher decided to utilise cluster sampling. Quinlan (2011) notes that cluster sampling is ‘particularly efficient’ for populations that are spread over a large geographical area. The surveys were distributed to the various locations via the Departments internal email system and the link remained active for a period of four weeks.

Civil Service Departments currently adopt a grade system which allows Government departments to construct a hierarchical framework and implement incremental pay policies. One common trend found in the literature is the importance of buy in from senior management to the success of a PMS, as such the researcher opted to include the option for staff to make their grade known which he felt would add another layer to the subsequent analysis.
The survey was broken into five sections with a total of 34 questions. The breakdown of these sections can be found below in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 1 - General Introduction</strong></td>
<td>The opening questions were aimed at discovering the participant’s level of knowledge about the PMDS process as well as establishing their grade and length of service. Following the pilot study, it was suggested that a question aimed at establishing an individual’s office location be removed. The reason for this is explained later in the chapter.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 2 - Goal Setting</strong></td>
<td>Section two focused solely on goal setting. Much of the literature agreed that goal setting is a key part of any PMS and is seen as pivotal to the success of a PMS.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 3 - Learning &amp; Development</strong></td>
<td>This section examined the supposed role of learning and development in the PMDS. It looked specifically at the role of HR in assisting individuals with their learning and development plans and also at the refund of fees scheme available in the Department.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 4 - The Performance Appraisal</strong></td>
<td>The concluding section was based upon the performance review and the role of the line manager in the PMDS process.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 5 - General comments</strong></td>
<td>The final question provided participants with a platform to share their views on the PMDS.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 - Structure of online survey
The researcher decided to conduct a series of semi structured interviews with managers to gauge the level of training and support they have received on the PMDS process. It’s clear from the literature that the role of the line manager is integral to the success of a PMS and the researcher felt that it was important to get the opinions of those charged with facilitating the process. The researcher opted for semi-structured interviews as they allowed him to primarily gather measurable facts, but to also collect the thoughts and feelings of the interviewees. Quinlan (2011) notes that one of the benefits of face-to-face interviews is that they allow the interviewer to build rapport with the interviewee and this will be important due to the nature of the third research objective.

The sampling method used for the interviews was a mixture of purposive and convenience sampling. The researcher opted to invite line managers, of various grades and service lengths to take part in the surveys. Quinlan noted that purposeful sampling can be effective as it relies on the researcher’s judgment to choose participants for the interviews based on their capacity to provide relevant information (Quinlan, 2011). Due to time constraints, it was decided that six participants would be sufficient.

In terms of the Civil Service hierarchy, the Executive Officer (EO) grade was recently rebranded, alongside the Administrative Officer (AO) grade as the graduate level entry grades. However, unlike the AO grade which is focused on policy, EOs often find themselves managing large numbers of staff in process and service driven departments such as the Department of Social Protection & Employment Affairs. The Higher Executive Officer (HEO) grade is the next step progression pathway for an EO, both roles have an emphasis on staff management and this is reflected in the competencies associated with the two roles. The Assistant Principal Officer (AP) grade is a senior managerial grade in the Civil Service and the role often involves the analysis of public policy issues, managing and delivering large scale
programmes and managing stakeholders.

There are a total of 32 grades in the Irish Civil Service, 14 general service grades and 18 specialist grades. Specialist or professional grades are employed by the Civil Service to fulfil technical roles that require specific qualifications and knowledge. Ordinance Survey Ireland, The Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General, and The Office of the Attorney General are just some state bodies that would employ technical grades. A full list of both the general service and technical grades and their position in the hierarchy can be found in Table 2 on page 45.

In 2013, DPER published Circular 03/2013 which was titled “Staff Exchange Scheme between the Civil Service and the Private Sector”. The role of the scheme is to enhance communication, co-operation and understanding between the Civil Service and the Private Sector and to provide staff development opportunities for participants through new work experiences and project-based assignments. It is important to note that individuals seconded into the Civil Service from the private sector are not required to take part in the PMDS process. However, officers who are seconded from other Government Departments are expected to participate in the process, amending their goals to suit their temporary assignment.
Table 2 – Civil Service Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Service Grades</th>
<th>Technical/Professional Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Secretary General</td>
<td>1. Accountant/Auditor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>2. Architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Principal Officer (PO)</td>
<td>3. Barrister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Assistant Principal</td>
<td>4. Dental Surgeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer (AP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Third Secretary</td>
<td>5. Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Administrative Officer (AO)</td>
<td>6. Examiner of Maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Higher Executive Officer (HEO)</td>
<td>7. Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Executive Officer (EO)</td>
<td>8. Law Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Staff Officer (SO)*</td>
<td>9. Marine Biologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Clerical Officer (CO)</td>
<td>10. Medical General Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Telephonist</td>
<td>11. Nursing Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Service Officer</td>
<td>12. Pharmacist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Store Person</td>
<td>15. Quantity Surveyor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Scientist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Solicitor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Veterinary Surgeon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SO grade abolished in 2017 under Civil Service Renewal Plan, all SOs promoted to EO.
The breakdown of the interviewees by grade and length of service can be found below in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Current number of Staff</th>
<th>Previous Management Experience Prior to Current Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer (EO)</td>
<td>9 months</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer (EO)</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer (EO)</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer (HEO)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer (HEO)</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal (AP)</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - Interview Breakdown
Pilot Studies

When writing in 2002, Fowler stressed the importance of the concept of total survey design. This is the idea that all aspects of the research from sample selection to the analysis should be conducted thoroughly, incorporating the use of a feasibility study if required (Floyd J. Fowler, 2002). With this in mind, the researcher completed a pilot study prior to issuing the live surveys to the participants. Hundley and van Teijlingen note that a pilot study allows the researcher an opportunity to discover “where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated” (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Saunders et al also place high importance on pilot testing stating that a pilot test will enable the researcher to obtain an assessment of the questions' validity and the likely reliability of the data that will be collected (Saunders, et al., 2009). The pilot study conducted involved ten former colleagues of the researcher who were working in another government department. The researcher chose these participants as the PMDS process is uniform across the Irish Civil Service and felt it was important that those involved in the pilot study were familiar with the system and the vernacular associated with it. Those who participated in the pilot study had varying levels of experience, some had worked in the Civil Service for more than twenty years and had experience of a variety of PMS systems utilised in the Civil Service over the course of their careers.

Feedback from the pilot study was largely positive. However, a number of the participants felt that the question which identified the participant’s area of work could potentially deter people from taking part in the survey. Having a solid knowledge of the culture within the organisation the researcher considered the potential risks of including this question and
opted to remove this from the live surveys. It was also reported that some of the questions were “too complex” and it would be more beneficial to break them up.

There were no issues with the length of the survey itself and the participants stated that it had a logical flow to it. The researcher reflected on the feedback and requested specifically to meet with the individual who felt some questions were too complex to get a better understanding of their concerns. Following this meeting changes were made to a number of questions, splitting some up into separate questions which made the surveys less intense and more user-friendly.

In order to keep the process uniform, the researcher felt it was important to also conduct a pilot interview. This was of particular importance to the process as the researcher had never assumed the role of interviewer before. The researcher organised a meeting with two managers from the Department of Social Protection (DSP). The researcher was previously employed by this Department and could be assured of receiving critical feedback if necessary. The researcher invited a HEO, and an EO to participate in the interviews and having a relationship with the participants also afforded him the opportunity to create and maintain the friendly and open environment which he sought to create in the real interviews. Following feedback from the participants the researcher made some amendments to the order of the questions that he planned to ask to improve the logical flow of the interviews. The interviews were relatively brief and consisted of eight questions. The length of the interviews varied from 10 to 15 minutes and the researcher decided not to record them. The researcher opted to conduct a thematic analysis of the data collected during the interviews, the main benefit to adopting this approach is that it is highly flexible and can be adopted to suit the researchers needs. Braun and Clark (2006) as cited in Nowell
et al (2017) are advocates of this approach and recommend it for novice researchers as it is “relatively quick to learn, as there are few prescriptions and procedures”.

Quinlan (2001) notes that following the collection of the data the researcher must then store the data, interpret it, and finally draw some conclusions from it. Quantitative data is generally numerical data and therefore this data must be analysed using statistical methods. As the data collected during the quantitative phase of the process was largely numerical the researcher first had to code the data. Following this the researcher opted to use an analytical software package to assist with the analysis. SPSS was the package recommended by Quinlan (2011) and Saunders et, al (2009) therefore it was selected for use.

Ethical Considerations

It's important to note that the researcher made clear to both sets of participants that any information provided to me would be on the basis of anonymity. The researcher was the only person with access to both data sets and these were securely stored to ensure that all responses would remain confidential. A statement outlining the reasons for the study, how the information would be stored etc was included on the first page of the online survey and this was communicated this to each interview participant before the interview commenced. Prior to the commencement of each interview the researcher also presented each participant with a consent form which had to be completed before the process could begin, this form can be found in Appendix III.
Chapter 4 - Research Question & Objectives

Research Title:

“Exploring the Effectiveness of the Performance Management System in an Irish Government Department”

The overall aim of this research is to assess the effectiveness of the PMDS system used in the Irish Civil Service through a study of one department. As stated previously the Department in question will remain anonymous. Following a review of the literature relating to performance management the researcher identified three main objectives of the research:

Objective 1

Does the current PMDS appraisal used in the Irish Civil Service motivate or demotivate employees?

• The researcher hopes to discover if the new simplified rating system acts a deterrent to increased productivity within the Civil Service. Is the lack of differentiation between those outstanding employees and the acceptable ones limiting the potential of certain employees? Is there a chance the new system may overlook talent and drive them out of the Civil Service?

As outlined in chapter two, the appraisal stage is the most contentious aspect of performance management with Armstrong and Murlis (2007) referring to it as “a dishonest annual ritual”. Academics argue that although the appraisal provides a platform for an open discussion regarding an employee’s performance and how it can be approved (Fletcher, 2007) (Armstrong & Baron, 2005), it can also impact negatively on an employee’s performance. It is argued that not all employees are capable of receiving critical feedback
and that can cause distress for some (Benson, et al., 2012). In relation to the actual rating, the subject of this particular objective, the idea of average marking is one which surfaces often in the literature. It is argued that average marking, which is all the current PMDS system allows undermines the performance management process and can subsequently demotivate high performing employees (Debrincat, 2015) (Javid, 2015).

Objective 2

Is the PMDS system an effective tool for developing employees?

• The current PMDS system has a learning needs section, do employees receive the training/supports requested in the process which would allow them to perform at a higher level? Ideally, the process should begin with a training needs analysis, offering both manager and employee the opportunity to identify any supports which they may require.

The concept of performance management and its effectiveness is the subject of much debate amongst the literature. However, all agree that the process is an excellent opportunity for employees to identify learning and development opportunities which will allow them to perform better and enhance their career opportunities (Tamkin, 2004) (Armstrong & Baron, 2005) (Boswell & Boudreau, 2000) (Mone & London, 2009). It is also clear from the literature that personal development opportunities can act as a source of motivation for employees and evidence shows that a highly engaged workforce is a key factor in driving organisational performance (Gruman & Saks, 2011) (Armstrong & Baron, 2005) (Pettinger, 1997)
Objective 3

3. Are managers provided with adequate supports & training to facilitate the PMDS process?

- Have managers received sufficient formal or informal training on the PMDS process? Have they been given the necessary supports to properly conduct the performance management process?

The literature makes clear that the role of the line manager is integral to the success of a performance management system (Benson, et al., 2012) (Kirkpatrick, 2006) (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011). A lack of commitment, bias, and subjective ratings are just some of the issues found amongst the literature relating specifically to the role of the manager in the process. However, as PM was initially a role of an organisations HR department before being delegated to line mangers organisations must offer training and other supports to ensure managers can facilitate the process fairly and efficiently (Boswell & Boudreau, 2000) (Armstrong, 2015).
Chapter 5 – Research Findings

The penultimate chapter of this dissertation will discuss the findings of the research. Chapter 5 will commence with a detailed analysis of the quantitative aspect, the online surveys. The analysis will be based on the four sections outlined in chapter four, a general overview of PMDS, goal setting, learning & development, and the performance appraisal. Please see Appendix I for a full list of the questions asked during this phase of the process.

The second half of chapter 5 will focus on the qualitative approach adopted by the researcher, the face to face interviews with managers and supervisors tasked with administering the PMDS process. Data collection took place in May and June 2018, which meant that the mid-year review stage of the process was not yet active. The full interview questions can be found directly after the questions used for the online surveys in Appendix II.

As advised in the previous chapter, the researcher distributed the online surveys through Department X’s internal email system. The email was issued to 469 members of staff and the link remained live for a total of 22 days. The researcher received 132 responses out of the 496 issued giving a response rate of 26.6%. However, upon investigation it was discovered that 18 of responses had only been partially completed. These 18 responses were subsequently quarantined and removed from the analysis, giving a completion rate of 22.08%. Morton et al (2012) note that there has been a significant drop off in response rates to surveys since the beginning of the 21st century and they attribute this to a decrease in “volunteerism “and an increase in the complexity of our daily lives. However, research conducted by Holbrook et al (2007) into the changes in response rates revealed that a lower response rate does not automatically render the research less accurate than that which has
a higher rate of response. Having had experience of working in a number of government departments the researcher was fully aware that the PMDS is quite often regarded by many as a taboo subject and that this could potentially impact on the response rate. Due to the large number of questions asked and responses gathered it was not possible to analyse each question. As such the researcher has included a summary of all the data collected in Appendix VIII.
Analysis - Section 1, Overview of PMDS

The first section of the survey consisted of eight questions aimed at uncovering general opinions on the role of the PMDS within the Department. It is important to note that all grades up to and including principal officer are required to complete the PMDS process, the Assistant Secretary General grade and above are required to undertake a similar process created by the Senior Public Service (SPS) in 2016. Prior to this Secretary Generals were not required to undergo any form of performance review. The SPS, which currently has 258 members was established in 2012 with the aim of strengthening senior management and leadership across the Civil Service. The only grade eligible to participate in this survey but didn’t was the Principal Officer (PO) grade. The full breakdown of the respondents by their grade can be found below:

Figure 1 – Breakdown of respondents by grade
As stated previously, the role of the first section was to gauge whether the participants understood the role of the PMDS within the Department. We know from the literature that performance management is a tool which, when implemented correctly can improve both individual and organisational performance. Surprisingly, 51 respondents which equates to 44% either disagree, or strongly disagree with this statement. 30 respondents had a neutral stance on this question, leaving only 33 individuals who agree or strongly agree that the PMDS is an effective tool for increasing individual and organisational performance. The below histogram makes clear that the most popular selection for this question was 3, or disagree.

![Histogram](image)

**Figure 2 – Do you agree the PMDS is an effective tool for increasing individual and organisational performance?**
When you analyse the responses, it’s evident that those with longer service tend to disagree that the PMDS is an effective tool for increasing individual and organisational performance. As you can see from figure 3 below, those with shorter service are more likely to agree with the statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to statically verify the above, a One-way ANOVA was conducted to compare effect of length of service on the perceptions of the PMDS. An analysis of variance showed that the effect of length of service on perceptions of the effectiveness of the PMDS was significant, $F(3,96) = 5.7, p = .001$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANOVA</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>23.752</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.917</td>
<td>5.054</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>134.438</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1.400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>158.190</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 – Perceptions of PMDS

Figure 4 – Anova comparing effect length of service has on perceptions of PMDS
To build on the previous questions, the researcher opted next to offer the respondents the opportunity to give their opinion on the principal functions of the PMDS. This was a multiple-choice question therefore the participants could choose from five options created by the researcher based on the literature, but could also chose an ‘other’ option if they felt the need to add their own answer. As per the literature, the principal functions of performance management are to increase individual and organisation performance, identify staff development needs, increase motivation, and to identify performance issues. Only two responses referred to motivation, while 31 selected that PMDS was a tool for managing training and development needs. Reviewing performance and managing underperformance were selected a total of 53 times, which is encouraging given the fact that 44% disagreed with the statement that the PMDS was an effective tool for increasing performance.

Worryingly though, 54 individuals felt that the PMDS was simply “a box ticking exercise with no real meaning”. The majority of those who felt the PMDS is a box ticking exercise are of the CO grade, with the analysis showing that 28 COs felt this way. However, one AP also chose this option. Support and commitment from senior management is fundamental to the success of performance management system so this is an alarming revelation. The results of the study conducted by the Department of Finance in 2010 revealed that only 54% of civil servants interviewed felt that senior management were committed to the PMDS process. This shows that although there has been an improvement, there is still further work required. The full breakdown of responses is included below.
In relation to the usability of the system, 59 of the 114 respondents felt that the system was straightforward. This compares to 52 who found it complicated and 3 who said they had never heard of the PMDS before this survey. However, all three who indicated they never heard of the PMDS indicated they had been working in the Department for less than a year so this is plausible. This would be somewhat welcomed by DPER, the architects of the electronic PMDS process, as its predecessor was quite often the subject of much vitriol due...
to its complicated nature. It’s clear from figure below that those newer to the Civil Service tend to find the PMDS system more user friendly than those with longer service.

**Length * Usability Crosstabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Usability / Count</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Straightforward</td>
<td>Complicated</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 5 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than 10 years</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 – System usability

It is worth noting that 79 individuals, or 69% of all responses stated that they had never received any formal training on the PMDS, this includes its role within the organisation and simply how to operate the system. Of those who claimed to have not received any training on the PMDS, 26 of them have been a member of the organisation for greater than 10 years and given the numerous changes to the system since its introduction this is a worrying statistic.

An analysis of section 1 has revealed major issues relating to staff perceptions of PMDS. It is clear from the data that a majority of participants do not agree that the PMDS is an effective tool for increasing organisational and individual performance. This apparent disconnect is magnified further when the responses are broken down by grade, with a large number of COs viewing the process as nothing more than a box ticking exercise. The data also highlights an interesting link between perceptions of the PMDS system and your length of service. It’s evident that the longer you have spent in Department X, the less likely you are
to endorse the PMDS as an important workplace tool. This revelation is compounded by the fact that those with greater service also found the system difficult to use.
The PMDS cycle commences in January when the goal setting phase opens. This is an automated process and staff are informed of this through an email from Peoplepoint. Peoplepoint is the HR Shared Services centre set up under the Public-Sector Reform Plan and currently lies under the aegis of the National Shared Service Office (NSSO). Goals are supposed to be agreed upon in conjunction with line managers by the end of January each year and it is the role of local HR to ensure this deadline is met. Interestingly, 32 individuals, or 30% stated that they had not completed their 2018 goal setting by June this year. Out of the 32, 15 of the respondents have worked in Department X for longer than one year. This shows a lack of commitment from local HR, and from line managers when it comes to the most fundamental aspect of performance management. Granted there are some who argue against the validity of goal setting (Pilbeam & Corbridge, 2010) (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011), but the majority of literature supports the importance of goal setting in the performance management process.

The second question in this section was specifically for those who had set their goals, and asked “As per your 2018 PMDS, how many goals have you set?”. The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform’s guidelines for completing the PMDS recommend that jobholders have an average of three goals. The rationale behind this as per the guidelines is to allow “Managers and Jobholders to stay focused on achieving the most important goals thus contributing to improved performance of the individual, the team and the organisation” (The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, 2012). A single sample t-test was conducted to determine if a statistically significant difference existed between the average number of goals from the participants of the survey and the recommendations issued by DPER. As you can see from the results in figure 6 below the officers who participated in the
A survey reported a similar number of goals ($M = 3.08 \, SD = 1.94$) when compared to DPER recommendations, $t(104) = [.408]$, $p = [.684]$. 

### One-Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As per your 2018 PMDS, how many goals do you have?</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.408</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>-.30 to .46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 7 - One Sample T-Test*

The results also revealed that 29.2% of those who set their goals stated they were based on business needs, whereas 7.5% said they were based on individual needs. 42.6%, or 49 said their goals were based on a combination of business & individual needs. The 42.6% figure is a promising one, as we know from the literature that goals must be important to the individual in order for them to act as a source of motivation.

Line managers play a key role in the PMDS process and they have a responsibility to discuss individual goals with each member of staff before signing off on them. Worryingly though, however, only 41% of respondents stated that they had discussed their goals with their manager prior to them being signed off. To compound this worrying revelation, the next question asked was “who set your goals?“ and allowed the participants to choose from a number of options. As you can see from the graph in figure 2 below, 14, or 17.1% of respondents identified as having copied their goals from someone else. Of this 14, 9 have worked in the Department for greater than 10 years, and only 1 of the 9 has received any formal training on PMDS and its importance to the organisation. However, 16, or 19.8% of
chose ‘both of you’ which shows that some line managers are providing support to their staff during the goal setting phase of the process. This is detailed in figure 7 below.

One of the fundamental aspects to Locke & Latham’s goal setting is that goals must be challenging, yet achievable. They argue that goals must lie on the equilibrium point in terms of difficulty in order to act as a source of motivation. One of the few positive elements to this section was that 64, or 59.8% of the individuals who took part in survey felt that their own goals were challenging, but achievable. This compares to 13, or 12% who disagree, and 30 who neither agreed nor disagreed. It was mentioned earlier in the chapter that 69% of the individuals interviewed stated that they had never received any formal training on PMDS and its role within the organisation. This statistic is compounded by the fact that only
46.2% of the participants feel like goal setting allows them to focus more clearly on their objectives.

The goal setting phase of the PMDS is perhaps the most important of the entire process. If employees do not set goals, they cannot have a mid, or end of year review and consequently should not be awarded their annual increment. The fact that 30% of those surveyed have not completed their goal setting is a worrying one. There also appears to be a significant lack of communication between managers and staff in relation to the PMDS process, with 59% of staff stating they had not even discussed their goals with their manager before signing off. The researcher is fully aware that the majority of work in the Civil Service is generalist in nature but open communication and dialogue between managers and staff should negate the need for staff to copy their goals from someone else. This practice completely undermines the PMDS process and highlights a further lack of commitment from line managers. However, there are some positives that can be taken from the above, specifically the fact that the average number of goals are in line with DPER’s recommendations. Also, the fact that 59.8% of those surveyed felt their goals were challenging but achievable.
Learning and development opportunities are regarded by many as fundamental to the success of a PMS (Armstrong & Baron, 2005) (Mone & London, 2009). Not only can it act as a source of motivation for employees, but the facilitation of learning and development opportunities allow organisations to upskill its employees based upon what the organisation’s future needs may be.

Having this, it is extremely disappointing that only 51.9% of those surveyed have completed a learning and development plan as part of the PMDS cycle. Out of those who hadn’t completed a learning and development plan, 38 had been working in the Department for longer than a year. Out of the 38, 20 were COs, but surprisingly 3 were of the AP grade. A full breakdown can be found below in table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP/First Secretary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO/HEO/Third Secretary</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVO</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4 – Breakdown of respondents with no L&D plan*

Out of the 56 who stated they had created a learning and development plan, 20, or 37.5% of those stated that their goals were based upon their own personal needs or their career ambitions. 13, or 23.3% stated that their plan was based on business needs, while 23, or 41.4% revealed that their learning and development plan was based on a combination of business needs and their own personal ambitions. This is a positive statistic which shows that a large number of officers are taking responsibility for their own personal development.
which will not only enhance their career prospects but allow them to perform at a higher level in their role which is of benefit to the Department, and consequently the Irish citizen.

The next question was aimed specifically at those who had not created a learning and development plan and asked ‘if you have not created a learning and development plan, why not?’. The inclusion of a qualitative question here allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding as to the reasons why officers had failed to create a learning and development plan. Having opted for a thematic analysis of the data collected it was revealed that the most common reasons for not creating a learning and development plan were:

1. Time constraints,
2. No commitment from line managers,
3. A lack of faith in the HR department to deliver on the training.

It was interesting that a number of responses here referred to the role of HR in the PMDS process as the next question in the survey asked those who had created a plan if they had received any communication from HR in relation to their learning and development plan. Staggeringly, 91% of individuals stated that they had not received any communication from HR or the training unit in relation to their training needs. Having considered the response to the above questions the researcher sought guidance from a HR unit in another government department, the Department of Finance (DoF). The DoF conducts a training needs analysis (TNA) every February based on the training requirements sought by officers during the first phase of the PMDS cycle. This information is provided by PeoplePoint at the request of local HR and officers are subsequently contacted regarding the availability of training courses which would meet their needs. If officers accept and attend the training offered to them,
their name is removed from the waiting list, thus achieving one of the requests as set out in their PMDS.

The role of the line manager is once again under scrutiny in this section as only 30.1% could state that their manager had assisted them in achieving any of the training identified in their 2018 learning and development plan to date. Out of the 58 who have not received any assistance from their line managers, 18 have worked in the Department for less than a year. This is a worrying statistic, and has the potential to be highly demotivating for new entrants.

The data revealed that 83.8% of individuals who had created learning and development plans feel they would perform better in their role if their training needs were met. It’s difficult to understand the reasons as to why to 16.2% don’t agree with this but it could be attributed to the lack of understanding around the role of the PMDS in the organisation which was discussed earlier in this chapter. However, the figure of 83.3% is a positive one, as it shows that employees are actively thinking about their learning needs.

However, although 83.8% feel they would perform better if they received the requested training, only 30, or 37.3% are confident that their training needs will be met in 2018. This is one of the most poignant statistics revealed as part of this research and further highlights the apparent disconnect between staff and the training and development unit. To further compound this issue, 52.4% of individuals stated that their training needs which they requested in their 2017 PMDS were not met. While it is acceptable that there may be some gaps or time lags in the implementation of training plans and not all can be provided for, the
failure to follow-through on the training needs undermines the process completely and it is clear from the data collected that this can lead to disengagement.

The refund of fees (ROF) scheme is a Civil Service wide arrangement which allows government departments to refund education fees to officers who chose to undertake further education while working. There is also provision for the prefunding of college fees, but this is at the discretion of individual departments. As per circular 23/2007, the fundamental objective of the scheme is to build the appropriate skill and expertise levels required by the Civil Service while also supporting officers’ efforts in the area of self-development and life-long learning (The Department of Finance, 2007). 75, or 72.1% of those surveyed stated that they were aware of the ROF scheme, but only 27 of these have actually availed of the scheme. This leaves 51 of those interviewed who were aware of the ROF scheme but had not availed of it. Figures revealed from Department X revealed that the Department supported a total of 50 officers in the 2017/218 academic year, this equates to 5.5% of total staff. Following the circulation of this survey, a number of individuals contacted the researcher directly regarding this question and revealed their reasons as to why they had not undertaken further education with the support of the scheme. The majority of the issues regarding the process related to the percentage of funding which the Department was willing to refund, as well as the lack of willingness on the Departments behalf to prefund the course, which meant the officer would be required to finance the course upfront. These factors create difficulties for those officers on a lower rate of pay and act as a deterrent to those who might be considering further education.
An analysis of section 3 revealed that almost 50% of those surveyed had not created a learning and development plan for 2018. The reasons, given by those who hadn’t are very disappointing. A sizeable proportion of those surveyed have simply chosen not to create L&D plans as they did not believe they would receive the training requested. This is a worrying revelation and one which could have a significant impact on both individual performance and morale levels across the Department. It is clear that the HR department has a crucial role to play in following up and implementing training initiatives and programmes to assist in staff development. Also, more must be done to advertise the ROF scheme, and to encourage staff members to participate and take some responsibility for their own development. The regulations and conditions attached to the scheme are decided on centrally by the Department of Finance, but the circular does afford individual departments some scope in how they manage the process. The scheme has the potential to be a key motivational tool and should be linked in some way to the PMDS system if we are to create an ethos of lifelong learning within the Civil Service.
Analysis – Section 4, The Appraisal/End of Year Review

As outlined in an earlier chapter, the PMDS cycle has three stages, goal setting, the mid-year review, and an end of year review. However, as a holistic process, it is expected that there will be ongoing communication between staff and managers following the goal setting phase. Out of the 90 individuals who have completed the goal setting phase, only 35, or 38.9% have had a conversation with their manager. Out of the 55 who have set their goals, but have yet to have had any conversation with their manager, 8 have worked in the Department for less than one year. Although everyone should be having regular conversations regarding their performance with their manager, it is imperative that those new to the organisation are given regular feedback in order to assist them as much as possible during their probationary period. The probationary period in the Irish Civil Service is generally one year. During this period the officer on probation must pass three stages and upon successful completion of this he/she will be appointed as an established civil servant.

Of the 35 who have had a conversation with their manager, 25 said that the conversation was formal, while 10 had an informal conversation with their supervisor. Quite a number of individuals, 13 in total, stated that conversations had taken place on both a formal and informal level. Although the levels are low, the figure shows that some line managers are taking a proactive approach to performance management and this should be encouraged.

The mid-year review stage of the PMDS process is scheduled to be completed between June & October each year. The next, and final phase of the process is the end of year review which is supposed to be completed in December, prior to the cycle beginning again in January.
Out of the 114 individuals interviewed, 78 completed their 2017 end of year review. The completion rate for the entire department for 2017 was 77.28%, this equates to 893 out of the department’s 1153 staff. The Civil Service wide compliance rates for 2017 have yet to be released yet but the 2016 figure was 87% (The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, 2017) The data collected shows that 11, or 14.1% of those who had their end of year review were unhappy with their rating. However, only one of those who were unhappy with their review discussed this with their manager. It should be noted that only 2 officers, which translates to 0.17% of the total staff in the Department X received an unsatisfactory rating in 2017 (The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, 2018). The figure for the entire Civil Service in 2016 was 0.25%. Despite the small number of unsatisfactory ratings, the fact that 10 individuals were unhappy with their rating but failed to raise this with their supervisor once again raises concerns regarding the lack of open dialogue between line managers & their staff.

As outlined in chapter one, the Civil Service adopts a hierarchical management structure and utilises pay scales for all those directly employed by the state. The number of points on each scale depends on the grade itself but lower grades such as the CO grade has 14 incremental points. 106 of the 114 interviewed were aware that you required a satisfactory rating to receive your annual increment. The remaining 8 who were unaware of this have worked in the Department for less than one year. Similarly, 98 of those interviewed were aware that you require a satisfactory rating in order to be eligible for internal and interdepartmental competitions for promotion. This leaves 16 who were not. Although it is a relatively low figure, when combined with the number who were unaware that a satisfactory rating is also required to receive the annual increment, it continues to emphasise the need for more training on PMDS and its role within the organisation.
Individual government departments have almost no control over their reward offering. Public service pay policy is decided centrally by DPER in conjunction with the Civil Service Unions and the practice of awarding bonuses to certain grades ended during the recession. This means Civil Service organisations must strive to utilise non-monetary or intrinsic rewards such as assistance with promotion to motivate and retain staff. There are two routes to promotion in the Civil Service, open and internal competitions. Open competitions are those which members of the public and civil servants are both eligible to apply for. These competitions are managed centrally by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). Closed competitions are restricted to current civil servants and can be held within individual departments or they can also take the form of interdepartmental competitions, where officers can be promoted to other government departments and bodies. Selection processes for open competitions are generally standardised and utilise a selection of aptitude tests followed by a competency-based interview. The fact that competitions are standardised means that Civil Service departments have a great opportunity to aid staff seeking promotion. However, as you can see from figure 9 on the next page, only 23 out of the 45 who had sought promotion received help from the Department.
As most of the data collected during this part of the research was hard data the researcher opted to give respondents the opportunity to make their feelings known on the PMDS. This was an optional question and the rationale behind it was to provide a platform where staff could air their views on the process knowing that their views would remain confidential. 54 individuals responded to this question and the responses were largely positive. The overarching theme found in these responses was that individuals are aware of the reasons behind the PMDS, but feel that its poor execution and lack of commitment to the process from management undermines the process. One individual stated that because it is not implemented correctly it becomes “a stick to beat staff with”. Although this is a particularly strong image it is certainly echoed throughout the responses.
The final question of the survey was dedicated solely to research objective two, which was to identify if those surveyed agreed with the change to the rating system. As outlined in chapter three, the end of year rating was changed from a 5-point scale to a 2-point rating in January 2016. The rationale for the change, as stated by then Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform, Brendan Howlin TD was due to the perceived lack of fairness in the system which was reflected in “high levels of awards of the higher categories of ratings and very low levels of ratings in respect of underperformance” (Wall, 2013). The question posed was a simple ‘do you agree with the change’ but also sought illicit the reasons behind their choice. The researcher opted to conduct a thematic analysis of the qualitative data received in order to capture the most common reasons for the respondent’s feelings on the change.

A total of 80 responses were received for this question and as you can see from figure 11 below, 54, or 67% do not agree with the change.

![Pie chart showing 54% (67%) disagree and 26% (33%) agree with the change to the rating scale.]

Figure 10 - Do you agree with the change to the rating scale?

Of those who disagreed with the change, the most popular reason was that the new scale lacks the ability to differentiate between those who perform to an acceptable standard and
those who excel in their roles. The potential for the new scale to demotivate staff was mentioned a total of 19 times. Among the other reasons for this choice were that the new scale doesn’t allow for an accurate rating of an individual’s performance, and that the definitive nature of the two-point scale doesn’t leave much scope for improvement.

Interestingly, the most common reason for those who agree with that change was that it makes things easier for management, particularly those who are unable to deal with conflict. The issue of standardising ratings, and personal bias are also reasons as to why some people agreed with the change.

The Oxford dictionary definition of a manager is someone who is “responsible for controlling or administering an organization or group of staff”. Although there is often much variety in the work load of a manager, their primary role is to ensure that those who report to them complete their work in an accurate and timely manner. If it is the case that a particular member of staff is underperforming, the onus is on the line manager to address the issue. If a line manager is incapable of addressing issues due to their desire to avoid conflict, then it is questionable if they are suitable for a management position. It needs to be reinforced to management at all levels that awarding a positive rating to someone who’s performance level is below an acceptable standard purely because they wish to avoid conflict is not sustainable.

Underperformance has long been a term associated with the Civil Service, but the real issue appears to be unwillingness to address underperformance. This is once again highlighted in the 2017 Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey where it was revealed that the majority of staff continue to feel that inferior performance is not being effectively addressed throughout their departments. Out of the 21,300 civil servants who participated in the 2017
engagement survey, only 15% agreed that underperformance is effectively addressed throughout their Department (Government of Ireland, 2018).

It is abundantly clear that the inability to address underperformance permeates the entire Civil Service, and the change to 2-point rating suggests that it is also an unwillingness to address underperformance. It is clear from the responses to the survey that the majority of respondents feel like the new rating scale introduced in 2016 will have a profoundly negative effect on those who strive to provide an excellent service to the Irish Citizen and the Government of the day. Action point 2 of the Civil Service Renewal Plan was ‘Maximising the performance and potential of all Civil Service employees and organisations’ and this simply cannot be achieved if the Civil Service is willing to risk losing its talented employees due to the deep rooted inability to address underperformance and ensure that managers at all levels have the skills and the determination to address performance issues and any conflict which may arise out of this.
Analysis – Face to face interviews

The final aspect of the research, the qualitative one, was concerned with the realisation of objective 3. The aim of the third objective was gauge whether managers and supervisors had been given enough training and support to facilitate the PMDS process. As with the previous qualitative aspects, the researcher opted to conduct a thematic analysis of the data collected during the face-to-face interviews. Boyatzis (1998) was an advocate of this method of analysis as he felt that it allowed a researcher to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic approach that increases their understanding of a certain behaviour or phenomenon.

Aside from the introductory questions relating to length of service and grade, the first question posed by the researcher to each participant was ‘What do you think the role of PMDS is?’. It is fundamental that those responsible for conducting the process are aware of the importance of performance management. The most common theme amongst the answers to this question was that the PMDS is a tool to measure and assess performance. Surprisingly, only one of those who took part in the interviews saw the PMDS as a tool for developing employees. One interviewee even stated that they were unaware that there was a section on the e-PMDS form for creating a learning and development plan. The idea of the PMDS being a box ticking exercise also resurfaced in two out of the six interviews, one supervisor who had worked in Department X for 19 years felt that “the process is not taken seriously with most staff completing it on the last day of the year so they can receive their increment”.

Out of those who were interviewed, only three could state that all of their direct reports had completed the necessary stage of the process, which at the time of conducting the
interviews was goal setting as mid-year review window had yet to open. When asked for the reasons as to why this was the case, the dominant reason was a lack of time. It was clear from the discussion that managers are being encouraged to ensure their staff complete the process, but in order to complete the PMDS managers must allocate time. All three stated that due to a greater workload, they simply couldn’t factor in time for their staff to complete their goal setting. Interestingly, one referred to the difficulty incurred trying to get their direct reports to complete the goal setting properly. This individual was new to the role and noted how their staff had become “completely disillusioned “with the process and this led to a real resistance to the process.

When asked if they had received any formal training on the role of the manager in the PMDS process only two could state they had. Out of the four who had not received any training, three of them had no previous management experience prior to taking up their current role. Two referred to the ‘guides for managers ‘ which are available upon request from Peoplepoint but they argued that these guides were outdated and simply showed managers how to access the system, making them “useless “. All but one of the interviewees stated that they would attend manager-specific training on PMDS if it was to be organised by HR. When asked why they might refuse to attend the training, they simply stated that it would be a waste of their time as the process is not taken seriously.

Following on from the above, only 3 participants felt they were confident they could conduct all aspects of the PMDS as a manager. For those who lacked confidence, the most common issue behind this admission was the fear that they would not receive support from senior management, particularly when it came to issues of underperformance. When questioned further on the above, it became clear that the lack of commitment from senior
management made it incredibly difficult for line managers to ensure their staff complete the process in full. The issue of copying goals was again mentioned at this stage, further undermining the integrity of the process.

When asked about the perceived idea that underperformance is not managed in the Civil Service the collective response was one of agreement. All off those who participated felt that there was a deep-seated unwillingness to address underperformance, especially when it came to long established staff. The reason for this was largely attributed to the culture of the Civil Service, but a number of the interviewees felt that there is a gradual shift in the culture towards a more efficient and professional organisation. The development of an e-probation system and the creation of a workplace relations unit in HR show are signs of this apparent shift and are likely to be welcomed by the majority of staff.

The final question posed to the interviewees was an open ended one which sought their honest opinions on the PMDS. The researcher worked hard through each interview to create a friendly and relaxed environment with the underlying aim of making the participants express their true feelings on the PMDS. Contrary to the negative themes which were revealed during the quantitative analysis, the responses to this question were extremely positive. The overarching theme found here was the acceptance and validation of the importance of the PMDS as a workplace tool. Almost all of the interviewees recognised that PMDS has the potential to increase individual and organisational performance. However, they stressed at present they felt the system was being undermined by senior management who are not committed to ensure the process is carried out as it was designed to be. The concept of PMDS being an agent of change could be found amongst all answers but they recognised that culture change can be a lengthy process, especially in the Civil Service. The
The most positive trend found during this aspect of the research was the fact that 5 out of 6 managers were willing to attend training on the PMDS. As per the PMDS guidelines, every manager in the Civil Service will have a default goal which is to ensure that all of their staff complete their PMDS in a timely manner. This willingness to become better informed on the PMDS process as expressed above is one which demonstrates the aforementioned cultural shift which can now been seen in traces across the Civil Service.
Chapter 6 - Conclusion

This research has found clear evidence that the PMDS is failing to fulfil its role within Department X. This study has shown that attitudes towards the process from both management and staff remain incredibly poor and that the process is seen by the majority as nothing more than a box ticking exercise. The lack of commitment from senior management combined with the absence of any training on the PMDS for anyone in the organisation compounds this.

Objective 1 - Does the current PMDS appraisal used in the Irish Civil Service motivate or demotivate employees?

There is much scepticism in the literature relating specifically to the appraisal, with many of its critics stressing that unless the end of year review is conducted properly it can have a profoundly negative impact on the organisation (Heathfield, 2007) (Javid, 2015) (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011). Although not unanimous, the data collected with regards to objective 1 revealed that the rating scale introduced in 2016 has a detrimental effect on employee motivation levels. The inability to recognise and reward those who excel in their roles seriously undermines the PMDS process as a whole and is likely to lead to a drop in individual and organisational performance in the long term. All employees have an inherent want for recognition as per Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, and the simplified two-point rating scale removes this.
Objective 2 - Is the PMDS system an effective tool for developing employees?

Although there are many differing opinions on the various aspects of performance management, there is almost unanimous acceptance of the importance of learning and development to the success of a PMS. Both academics and HR professionals agree that developing employees is essential for organisational success (Armstrong, 2009) (Boswell & Boudreau, 2000) (CIPD, 2015) (Mone & London, 2009). The launch of the Civil Service’s new learning and development centre in 2017 was heralded by many to be a significant step in the modernisation of the Irish Civil Service. OneLearning was launched in September 2017 with the goal of “enabling a high performing workforce by supporting the development of new skills and behaviours, facilitating ongoing professional development and ensuring that staff have access to learning and development when required”. (DPER, 2017). However, OneLearning is dependent on employees identifying and seeking learning and development opportunities. Analysis of the responses to the online survey revealed that the learning and development aspect to the PMDS was being severely neglected. Quite a number of participants appeared to have given up hope when it came to accessing training and development opportunities within the Department.
Objective 3 - Are managers provided with adequate supports & training to facilitate the PMDS process?

The line manager is a key cog in the performance management wheel and the literature makes clear that the success of a PMS can hinge on the support given to those tasked with implementing the process. The face to face interviews revealed a significant lack of training for line managers on their role in the PMDS process, so much so that a number of the participants felt they were not confident they could perform their role as they are supposed to. The frustrating aspect to this is that the majority of managers interviewed recognise the importance of PMDS to the Department and they would attend training if it was offered to them.

Limitations

The one issue with the chosen methodological approach was the potential for the online surveys to unintentionally act as a platform for individuals to air their grievances with issues other than the PMDS. The anonymity afforded to participants combined with the ability to complete the survey remotely meant that employees could potentially overexaggerate issues. However, it is clear that the main issues identified can be found throughout the majority of the data collected. Also, during the analysis the researcher was unable to identify any unrelated issues. In fact, it’s clear that the remote nature of the surveys actually provided employees with a rare opportunity to air their grievances without the fear of being penalised.
Chapter 7 - Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Reintroduce the old scale.

The term best practice is used so often in the world of human resources, but when it comes to performance management there is little consensus on what best practice is. The traditional model which the PMDS is based upon is frequently manipulated by organisations to suit their own needs. Google are regarded by many as one of the most innovative organisations in the world, and their PMS reflects this. The performance management cycle at Google is somewhat traditional in that it begins with a ‘preview’, and concludes with review towards the end of the year. Similar to the Civil Service, Google also adopts the use of competencies against which employee’s competence is assessed. The six competencies adopted by Google are:

- Googleyness
- Problem solving,
- Execution,
- Thought Leadership
- Leadership
- Presence

It is clear from the findings of the research that the new rating scale negotiated between DPER and the unions is damaging to staff morale and can demotivate staff which will subsequently lead to a drop in individual and organisational performance. The old scale which was retired by DPER in 2016 is remarkably similar to the one currently utilised in
google. As you can see in table 5 below, the scale in Google allows for improvements to be made, while also allowing managers to recognise the work of individuals whose performance exceeds expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Google</th>
<th>The Civil Service (prior to January 2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superb</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Exceeds required standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Fully acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistently meets expectations</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5 – Google/old Civil Service rating comparison.*

Other notable users of a 5-point rating scale KBC, a Belgian based multi-channel bank with over 38,000 employees worldwide. The 5-point scale is also utilised in the Irish Public Service, *Appendix IV* is an extract from one local authority’s PM guidelines.

The researcher fully accepts that any change to the scale introduced in 2016 is subject to negotiations between DPER and the Civil Service unions and is unlikely to happen in the short-term. However, failure to at least consider the proposed changes will inevitably lead to an exodus of talented staff from the Civil Service. In terms of costings, it’s likely that DPER still own the rights to the old system and therefore it would just be a case of rewriting the software to reflect this.
Recommendation 2 – Reintroduce merit awards to motivate staff.

Prior to the financial crisis some Government Departments had their own internal recognition schemes which ran alongside the PMS of the day. These schemes allowed senior management to recognise and rewards individuals and teams who performed above expectations. In the Department of Social Protection, the scheme was called ‘Fiuntas’, and the scheme ran for a number of years before the economy crashed. Managers at PO level or above could nominate individuals or teams for an award which typically came in the form of a monetary payment. As per the guidelines obtained from the DSP these monetary rewards could range from €100 – €600 depending on the situation being recognised. In 2009, the DSP directly employed over 5000 staff and had an allocated budget of €212,125 for its merit award scheme (The Department of Social Protection and Family Affairs, Annual Report). When you compare that number of employees to the 896 employed by Department X, it is plausible that a similar scheme could be implemented in Department X at a relatively low cost. The financial crisis is over, and the winding down of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) is no doubt a move welcomed by all civil servants. These internal recognition schemes have the potential to act as a great source of motivation for employees at a relatively low cost to Departments and could provide a great boost to moral levels. Further details on DPS’s Fiuntas scheme can be found in Appendix v.
Recommendation 3 – Introduce formal training for staff on the importance of the PMDS.

The responses to the survey highlighted the fact that many staff, including some senior managers view the PMDS as a box ticking exercise. The importance of PMDS and its role within the Department needs to be communicated to all staff if it is to be taken seriously. It is also evident from both the interviews and the online survey that the line managers are simply not completing their tasks properly. The onus is on the Department to provide training and supports for managers on the importance of PMDS and how to conduct the process properly. Analysis of the interview responses revealed that there is an appetite amongst line managers to receive more support from the Department in this area. The Health Service Executive (HSE) provides all staff with a detailed guidance document on its performance management system, an extract from which can be found in Appendix VII. In this guide line managers given an in-depth explanation of each phase of the PM cycle and exactly what is expected of them. The creation and circulation of a similar document would be a good first step in equipping managers with the knowledge to effectively administer the PMDS process. This document would not necessarily have to be circulated externally and could be created by local HR in a timely fashion which would keep the costs down.
Recommendation 4 – Clarify the role of HR in the realisation of employee’s learning and development plans.

The role of HR and the apparent disconnect between staff and the training unit were common themes which permeated this research. It was clear that quite a number of employees began neglecting their learning and development plans because they did not believe they would receive any of the training interventions they requested. This trend is worrying, and should it continue it is likely to further erode employee’s faith in local HR to deliver any training interventions they requested. The creation of localised HR reps would allow staff in isolated offices to meet with members of the training unit and discuss their training needs as it is clear the current process is not effective. It is my understanding that this was previously the case in Department X and therefore should not be difficult to re-introduce. There would be no additional cost to Department X to introduce this measure, it would simply be a case of transferring an employee to a separate location and could be done relatively quickly.
Recommendation 4 – Utilise peer reviews to assist managers in awarding accurate and fair ratings.

The chronic issues of standardised ratings and manager’s bias are two issues which plague the concept of performance management across the board (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011) (Kirkpatrick, 2006). The process of awarding inflated ratings to employees is common in the majority of organisations and can cause untold damage to the integrity of a PMS. However, in an effort to neutralise this in their own organisation, Google executives introduced a process in the cycle where an employee’s peers are expected to evaluate their colleague. The rationale behind this interesting addition was to counteract any bias managers may have towards certain employees which may undermine the process. Referred to internally as the ‘360-degrees review’, peers are expected to rate their colleagues based on three criteria. Their strengths, their weaknesses, and their contributions to projects within the organisation. Having collected the data, managers then gather together and review each employee’s draft ratings in a process given the name ‘the calibration stage’ by former Head of People Operations at Google, Laszlo Bock. The idea behind the stage of the process was to remove the pressure managers might come under to award inflated ratings to certain employees. The way in which google dealt with this was in stark contrast to the Civil service who simply opted to make the decision easier for managers by removing 60% of the rating scale. This research uncovered a perception amongst staff that managers are not prepared to make difficult decisions relating to underperformance and the inclusion of peer reviews would assist managers by alleviating some of the pressure on them. This would be a radical move, and one which would need to be approved by the Civil Service Unions, but the concept has also been adopted in similar formats by both Microsoft and Facebook and could
potentially change the way in which PM is conducted in the Civil Service. In terms of the cost, this would probably be the most expensive of the recommendations as it would require wholesale changes to the PMDS across the entire Civil Service. It would also be subject to Union approval and would likely be implemented in phases over a number of years.
Appendix

Appendix I - Survey Questions

Section 1

1. Are you?

2. Can you please indicate your grade below?

3. How long have you worked in the Department?

4. Do you agree that PMDS is an important tool which can increase organisational effectiveness?

5. How do you rate the PMDS system?

6. What do you feel the purpose of the PMDS system is?

7. Have you, as a jobholder, received any formal training on the PMDS process and its role within the organisation?

Section 2

8. Have you completed your 2018 goal setting?

9. As per your 2018 PMDS, how many goals do you have?

10. Are your goals based on individual or business needs?

11. Who set your goals?

12. Did you discuss your goals with your manager before submitting your goals?

13. Do you feel that setting goals allows you to focus more clearly on the objectives of your role?

14. Goals are meant to be challenging, but achievable. Do you agree with this statement in relation to your own goals?
Section 3

15. Have you created a learning and development plan for 2018?

16. If you answered yes to the above, are your learning needs based on

17. If you answered no to question 16, why not?

18. Have you received any communication from HR/Training Unit in relation to your development plan?

19. Has your manager assisted you in obtaining any training identified in your learning and development plan?

20. Do you feel you would perform better in your role if your training needs were met?

21. Are you confident your learning needs will be met in 2018?

22. Were any of your learning needs met in 2017?

23. Are you aware that the Department offers a refund of fees scheme which all established offers are able to avail of? The Scheme underpins the policy within the Civil Service of encouraging staff to avail of educational opportunities, in support of the concept of lifelong learning.

24. If so, have you availed of the refund of fees scheme?

Section 4

25. Have you had any conversation with your manager regarding your performance since the goal setting phase of the PMDS process?

26. If so, has this been formal or informal?

27. Were you satisfied with your 2017 end of year appraisal? I.e. your end of year rating?

28. Did you discuss your rating with your manager?
29. Did you know that you require a satisfactory end of year review to receive your annual increment?

30. Similar to the above, you are required to have a satisfactory rating to be eligible for promotion? Are you aware of this?

31. Have you participated in a competition for promotion in the past year? If so, did you receive any guidance/assistance from the Department?

32. The end of year rating was changed from a 5-point scale, to a 2-point scale in 2016. Using the old scale, you could receive a rating of excellent, good, satisfactory, poor, very poor. The new scale only allows for a rating of satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Do you agree with this change? Please feel free to explain your choice.

33. Please use the below field to add any further points you may have in relation to the PMDS (Please put N/A if you wish)
Appendix II – Interview Questions

1. Please indicate your grade and number of direct reports?

2. How long have you worked in the Civil Service? If previously assigned to another Department how long have you worked in DFAT?

3. Have you had any management experience prior to joining the civil service?

4. What do you think the role of the PMDS is?

5. Have all of your current staff completed their PMDS to date? If not, why?

6. Have you received any training on PMDS?

7. Would you attend training on the importance of your role in the PMDS process if it was offered by HR?

8. As a supervisor/manager, are you confident in your ability to conduct all aspects of the PMDS process?

9. How do you feel underperformance is managed/addressed in the civil service?

10. Are there any other points regarding the PMDS you would like to make?
Appendix III – Interview Consent Form

*Exploring the Effectiveness of the Performance Management System in an Irish Government Department.*

The aim of this research is to investigate whether the performance management system used in the Irish Civil Service, the PMDS, is a suitable tool for increasing both individual and organisational performance.

The researcher has opted to conduct a series of Interviews with managers of various grades in order to discover if they have been provided with adequate supports from the Department to conduct the process as it was meant to be.

There will be no recording devices used during these interviews, instead the researcher will make notes as the interview progresses. These notes will be made available to each participant at the conclusion of each interview and will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

All information obtained during the interviews is strictly confidential and each participant will remain anonymous.

Partaking in the study is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time.

Should you have any further queries, contact details for the researcher are as follows;

Name: Adam Flanagan

Email: x16107462@student.ncirl.ie

Phone: 087 9695 164

I understand the above and agree to participate in the study.
## End-of-Year Evaluation Criteria:

Exceeded (Ex), Achieved (Ac), Partially achieved (Pa), Not achieved (Na).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref No</th>
<th>Ex</th>
<th>Ac</th>
<th>Pa</th>
<th>Na</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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If required, introduce any remedial actions deemed necessary to be undertaken and agree.

## End-of-Year Overall Ratings:

- Exceptional,
- Exceeds expectations
- Successfully meets expectations
- Needs improvement
- Unacceptable Performance.

### Comment:

Base on overall evaluation:

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Line Manager: ____________________________

Employee: ____________________________

**Evaluation:**
Fiuntas – The Employee Recognition Award

Introduction

1. Fiúntas - The Employee Recognition Awards Scheme - was set up by the Partnership Steering Committee, in consultation with the five Partnership Committees in the Department. The Scheme is designed to recognise and reward high levels of individual and Team performance. The following guidelines set out the procedures for making nominations under the Scheme. In order to avoid delays it is important that all nominations comply with the procedures outlined below.

Procedures for Making & Processing Nominations for Awards

2. It is open to all staff in the Department, irrespective of grade, to nominate another staff member or a Team for a Fiúntas award at any time during the year. In the case of Team awards, the names and grades of the individual Team being nominated should be specified. Managers should actively encourage and promote the Scheme in their areas.

3. Each nomination must set out clearly the reason why it is being made and include details of the reasons underpinning the recommendation. It should also include a brief citation.

4. When submitting nominations it is important not to create undue expectations in relation to the making, or value, of possible awards. Care should be taken not to discuss nominations with nominees in advance as decisions, which are at the sole discretion of the Secretary General, will have to be taken in the context of recommendations made across the entire Department.

5. All nominations should be referred, through the local management of the nominee, to the relevant Principal Officer/Regional Manager. There is a particular onus on managers to ensure that the performance of staff at all levels is considered, particularly in areas where a high level of performance may not always be readily apparent because of the nature of the work being undertaken.

6. It is essential that all nominations are dealt with speedily at each level so as to avoid any undue delay in their processing.

7. Having considered the nomination, the relevant Principal Officer/Regional Manager should forward it, accompanied by his or her recommendation, to the Secretary, Fiúntas, The Employee Recognition Awards Committee, Corporate Services, Floor 3, Oisin House, Pearse Street, Dublin 2. Membership of the Committee is set out in Appendix A.

8. The Secretary to the Committee will acknowledge receipt of all nominations to the person(s) who made the nomination.

9. The Fiúntas Committee will meet quarterly to evaluate nominations and make its recommendations, via the Personnel Officer, to the Secretary General.
**Guidelines for Nominating Staff & Teams for Awards**

10. All staff below Assistant Secretary level are eligible for nomination for an award.

11. All nominations should be typed and prepared in the format set out in Appendix B.

12. Nominations should only be made in respect of performance above that which would reasonably be expected from staff included in the nomination. Undue emphasis should not be placed on performance of higher duties or savings. It should be noted that the Scheme is not intended and should not be used to compensate for the absence of more formal and appropriate interventions e.g. overtime, upgrading or additional and/or replacement staff.

13. In deciding whether an award should be granted, consideration is given to the nature and quality of the task or activity involved, the duration and associated deadlines, and any other circumstances which indicate the high quality of the work involved. Factors that are taken into account include commitment, dedication, foresight, flexibility, initiative, perseverance, courtesy and customer focus. In all cases, the factors appropriate to individual nominations should be reflected in the citation accompanying the nomination. Examples of various types of citations are contained in Appendix C.

14. Regard should also be had to the degree of commitment and initiative shown and, in the case of teamwork, to the level of team spirit and support demonstrated.

15. Work undertaken at peak periods and work involved in annual activities or special projects should not, in itself, be regarded as constituting criteria for an award.

16. Special consideration should be given to nominations in respect of Teamwork. In the case of team awards, the number of persons involved should not, as a general rule, be in excess of 35. Where whole Sections are nominated for awards, it is important that each member of the team contributed to the overall performance.

**Value and Nature of Awards**

17. When making nominations, the proposed value of the award should be specified. Under the present arrangements, individual and small team awards are in the region of €300 to €650. Awards for larger teams range from about €100 to €250 per person, depending on the size of the team. Higher amounts may be awarded under exceptional circumstances.

18. Two annual awards are made to recognise the individual and team of the year. All successful nominations received during the year will be considered for this award. Nominations will be recommended by the Committee to the Secretary General for her approval.

19. Fiúntas awards are subject to Benefit in Kind (BIK) and must pass through the payroll system. However, any tax and PRSI payable on the award are absorbed by the Department.
General

20. Under the provisions of the Administrative Budget Agreement, the total expenditure under the scheme in any year may not exceed 0.02% of payroll costs and expenditure incurred is met out of the pay budget. The cost to the Department of the Fiúntas, Employee Recognition Awards, in 2009 was €212,125.

21. Staff receiving an individual award will receive a certificate. In the case of Team awards for an Area or Office, one certificate will be provided in respect of the Team. Where appropriate, certificates will be presented by local management.

22. The scheme will continue to be promoted through various forms of communications including Office Notice, Log On Messages, Social Affairs Magazine and SDU News. Individuals and Teams who receive awards are encouraged to contribute articles for inclusion in these publications. Observations and comments on the operation of the Scheme are most welcome and can be made to the Secretary, Fiúntas Committee, Corporate Services, Floor 3, Oisin House, Pearse Street, Dublin 2.

23. The Partnership Steering Committee will be updated on the awards and will continue to provide support and guidance in its operation.

24. Please bring this notice to the attention of all staff in your area, including staff on leave (excluding career breaks).
Appendix VI - Personal Learning Statement

Similar to my two years in NCI, the process of writing this dissertation has thought me a lot. This was the first time I had ever attempted a project as of this scale and importance but it was one which I thoroughly enjoyed. I studied politics and international relations for my BA but always had a keen interest in HRM, one which was magnified when I undertook a job in the sector.

The wide variety of subjects offered in NCI allowed this interest to flourish, gaining knowledge and expertise which I could then use in my role. The camaraderie amongst my classmates combined with the quality lecturing made my time in NCI extremely enjoyable.

Balancing work and a night-time masters was no mean feat and one which I admittedly struggled with in the early stages of the course. However, I feel like the physical and mental requirements of the above will have long lasting effects on both my personal and professional lives, as will the relationships I have made throughout my two years in NCI.

The process of undertaking research was completely alien to me, but was one which I thoroughly enjoyed. My topic, performance management, is one which has always been of interest to me and this dissertation afforded me the opportunity to undertake a thorough review of the literature relating to performance management.

Upon reflection, it’s clear that the choice of questions I adopted for the quantitative element of the research didn’t support a quantitative analysis. Although the questions allowed me to gather significant data on the PMDS process as a whole, they did create difficulties when trying to undertake a quantitative analysis. This caused quite a bit of distress, but due to time constraints, it was impossible to rewrite the survey to make it more suitable. If I could re-do one aspect of the dissertation it would be to amend the questionnaire and incorporate the use of more Likert scales which would make a thorough quantitative analysis in SPSS easier.
Chapter 3

Managing the PRC Meetings: Guidelines for Managers

In this Chapter you will learn how a Manager will implement the PRC including

- How to prepare for the first, mid cycle & cycle end review meetings
- How to conduct the first, mid cycle & final review meetings

"If we look for success, we will find and create more successes. On the contrary, if we look for problems, we will find and create more problems".

3.0 The purpose of the PRC meetings is for both parties to meet and

- Discuss, clarify and agree role, key objectives and priorities for the cycle ahead
- Discuss resources, risks, supports required
- Discuss learning and growth requirements
- Discuss how performance will be reviewed at the end of the cycle

3.1 Preparing for the Performance Planning and Personal Development Meeting

(Meeting 1)

Ideally the cycle is preceded by a team discussion on the unit's service delivery requirements contained in the current service plan and team skills required for the coming year.

3.1.1 Part 1: Performance Planning Meeting

In preparation for this meeting you might:

- Review the completed section 1.2 of the PRC form in respect of individuals reporting to you
- Ensure that you have met with your own manager so that you are clear on the team's objectives and priorities for the forthcoming year. These will inform and provide direction for the objectives for those on your team
- Set some time aside to review the objectives you have agreed with your manager and how you plan to reach those objectives in the short, medium and longer term. You will need to be able to describe your expectations unambiguously to your team.
1. Are you?

- 42.6% Male
- 56.5% Female
- 0.9% Prefer not to say

3. Can you please indicate your grade below?

- 57.0% CO
- 25.4% EQ
- 7.0% AP/First Secretary
- 7.9% AO/HEO/Third Secretary
- 2.6% SVO
4. How long have you worked in the Department?

- 27.2% Less than 1 year
- 12.3% 1-2 years
- 11.4% 2-5 years
- 49.1% Greater than 10 years

5. Do you agree that PMDS is an important tool which can increase organisational effectiveness?

- 26.3% Disagree
- 26.3% Neutral
- 21.1% Agree
- 7.9% Strongly Agree
- 18.4% Strongly Disagree
6. How do you rate the PMDS system?

- 2.6% Not sure, this is the first time I've heard of it
- 45.6% Complicated
- 51.8% Straightforward

7. What do you feel the purpose of the PMDS system is?

- 32.5% Reviewing Performance
- 22.2% Managing Training & Staff Development needs
- 19.3% A method for sanctioning increments
- 18.7% Managing/Identifying Underperformance
- 10.5% Other - Write in (required)
8. Have you, as a jobholder, received any formal training on the PMDS process and its role within the organisation?

- 30.7% Yes
- 69.3% No

9. Have you completed your 2018 goal setting?

- 70.1% Yes
- 29.9% No
10. As per your 2018 PMDS, how many goals do you have?

Filter: #10 Question "As per your 2018 PMDS, how many goals do you have?" is one of the following answers ("1", "2", "3", "4", "5", "6", "7", "8", "9", "More than 10")
11. Are your goals based on
Filter: #11 Question "Are your goals based on" is one of the following answers ("Individual needs","Business needs","Both")

- 9.1% Individual needs
- 55.7% Both
- 35.2% Business needs

12. Who set your goals?
Filter: #12 Question "Who set your goals?" is one of the following answers ("You","Your manager","I copied by goals from someone else","Both of you")

- 19.8% Both of you
- 17.3% I copied by goals from someone else
- 12.3% Your manager
- 50.6% You
13. Did you discuss your goals with your manager before submitting your goals?
Filter: #13 Question "Did you discuss your goals with your manager before submitting your goals?" Is one of the following answers ("Yes", "No")

- 41.1% Yes
- 58.9% No

14. Do you feel that setting goals allows you to focus more clearly on the objectives of your role?

- 20.4% Not sure
- 37.0% No
- 42.6% Yes
15. Goals are meant to be challenging, but achievable. Do you agree with this statement in relation to your own goals?

- 50.5% Agree
- 28.0% Neutral
- 7.5% Disagree
- 4.7% Strong Disagree
- 9.0% Strongly Agree
16. Have you created a learning and development plan for 2018?

- 51.9% Yes
- 48.1% No

17. If you answered yes to the above, are your learning needs based on

- 35.7% Personal/Career Ambitions
- 41.1% Both
- 23.2% Business needs
19. Have you received any communication from HR/Training Unit in relation to your development plan?

Filter: #19 Question "Have you received any communication from HR/Training Unit in relation to your development plan?" is one of the following answers ("Yes","No")

- 91.3% No
- 8.7% Yes
20. Has your manager assisted you in obtaining any training identified in your learning and development plan?

- 30.1% Yes
- 69.9% No

21. Do you feel you would perform better in your role if your training needs were met?

- 83.8% Yes
- 16.2% No
22. Are you confident your learning needs will be met in 2018?
Filter: #22 Question "Are you confident your learning needs will be met in 2018?" is one of the following answers ("Yes","No")

- 37.0% Yes
- 63.0% No

23. Were any of your learning needs met in 2017?
Filter: #23 Question "Were any of your learning needs met in 2017?" is one of the following answers ("Yes","No")

- 45.6% Yes
- 54.2% No
24. Are you aware that the Department offers a refund of fees scheme which all established offers are able to avail of? The Scheme underpins the policy within the Civil Service of encouraging staff to avail of educational opportunities, in support of the concept of lifelong learning.

27.9% No

72.1% Yes

25. If so, have you availed of the refund of fees scheme?

Filter: #25 Question "If so, have you availed of the refund of fees scheme?" Is one of the following answers ("Yes","No")

34.6% Yes

65.4% No
26. Have you had any conversation with your manager regarding your performance since the goal setting phase of the PMDS process?

- 38.9% Yes
- 61.1% No

27. If so, has this been

Filter: #27 Question "If so, has this been" is one of the following answers ("Formal","Informal","Both")

- 15.6% Formal
- 30.2% Both
- 54.1% Informal
28. Were you satisfied with your 2017 end of year appraisal? i.e. your end of year rating?

- 85.9% Yes
- 14.1% No

29. Did you discuss your rating with your manager?

- 32.4% Yes
- 40.4% No
- 20.2% N/A (not here long enough, didn't have a review)
30. Did you know that you require a satisfactory end of year review to receive your annual increment?

- 8.8% No
- 91.2% Yes

31. Similar to the above, you are required to have a satisfactory rating to be eligible for promotion? Are you aware of this?

- 15.5% No
- 84.5% Yes
32. Have you participated in a competition for promotion in the past year? If so, did you receive any guidance/assistance from the Department?

- 51.1% Yes, but didn't receive any help
- 48.0% Yes, I also received help from the Department
References


The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, 2017. *PMDS Compliance Rates*. Dublin: The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform.


