



National e-Service Delivery Standards – and their application to HR

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With the e-Government mandate coming to a close at the end of the year, the thoughts of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Local e-Government Online team are turning to the standards of e-services in the future.

Questions are being asked about how a local authority can guarantee that the information and transactions it offers are of a similar minimum standard to a neighbouring authority yet at the same time can develop and improve on the services already provided.

The answer, it seems, is standards such as those provided by PARSOL (Planning and Regulatory Services OnLine), one of the ODPM's national projects. This has set out a detailed list of standards that local authorities should be aiming to achieve in terms of e-services offered around planning. The new [National e-Service Delivery Standards](#) (NeSDS) aims to do this for other service areas.

Such a solution is particularly relevant for HR departments in local authorities. The extensive and wide-ranging role the HR department performs, affects employees at all levels within the authority. Due to the diverse role that HR departments perform, it means that there is a need to ensure that a consistent minimum level of service is offered across the country. At the same time, the standards will highlight the best practice of CPA rated 'excellent' authorities and provide a mechanism for local authorities to see what their peers are doing.

The National e-Service Delivery Standards (NeSDS) programme is being led by the London Borough of Havering, who are also heading up the HR stream. The standards are designed to provide a benchmark against which the current level of e-enablement in an authority can be assessed.

In order to ensure that the output of this project is relevant to a wide range of local authorities, each e-service delivery standard will have up to three levels:

> Minimum

The Minimum Standard will reflect a basic degree of compliance with the standard which should be applicable to all local authorities. This will be the minimum required to meet the Government's targets as defined by BVPI 157, IEG, PO and Government Connects.

> Progressing

The Progressing Standard is between minimum and excellent and will indicate a natural step between the two.

> Excellent

The Excellent Standard will be 'National Best Practice'.

For each standard there will also be an explanation as to why the standard has been included, what the benefits of implementing the standard will be and any links to other standards, priority outcomes and best value indicators.

The standards are being designed with other ODPM initiatives in mind. They will allow local authorities to prioritise services allowing them to focus their effort and resources on achieving the improvements needed for the priority outcomes, the Gershon agenda, the IEG returns and the CPA ratings. They will be fully integrated with Government Connect.

The HR standards will cover, amongst others, the following areas:

• Attraction, Selection and Retention

The standards will provide guidance in terms of attracting the right people to the organisation and how to manage the selection process for potential employees. The standards will also suggest what steps need to be taken to ensure that once you have found the right candidate, you can provide an

attractive environment to encourage them to stay. This could include recommendations around learning and development.

- Core HR Processes

There are a number of key functions that the HR department performs, from providing information of policies to pay and reward. The standards could recommend ways to ensure that these core areas are efficient and effective, both for the actual HR department and the employee.

- > Your rights

What are your rights as an employee within an organisation? This category could look at areas such as the relations of trade unions, freedom of information and health and safety.

- > Workforce Planning

This section will build on the area around how to retain staff, looking at not only leadership and succession planning but also how to gain a broader understanding of the employee structure within an authority. This will allow greater foresight into the areas required for development across the whole organisation and where the skills and competencies lie.

- > Culture

HR revolves around people management. The standards could help organisations realise the importance of developing a supportive and encouraging culture.

The National e-Service Delivery Standards have the potential to transform the way individuals view their local authorities. By showing other authorities what the best ones are doing, every local authority should be able to improve the e-services they offer. For HR, this could mean a significant improvement in the way that HR departments function internally, but also how employees are able to interact with them.

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