



Chapter One: Introduction

This plan addresses the strategic challenges faced by the Department for Work and Pensions over the period 2008-2011 and the plans we have to meet them. It provides a vision for our services that is focussed on meeting the needs of our customers and sets out the efficiencies we plan to make to allow us to live within the resources we have.

Our Vision – Why We Exist

1.1 The Department for Work and Pensions exists to:

- contribute towards fair, safe and fulfilling lives, free from poverty – for children, people in work and retirement, disabled people and carers;
- reduce welfare dependency and increase economic competitiveness by helping people to work wherever they can and employers to secure the skills and employees they need; and
- provide greater choice and personalisation and higher quality of service for customers where it is in their interests and those of the taxpayer.

1.2 In doing this we aim to enable people to fulfil their potential over longer, more active lives. Our focus will remain firmly on our customers, providing them with the services they need and aiming, wherever possible, to join up and simplify our services, both internally and externally with our partners.

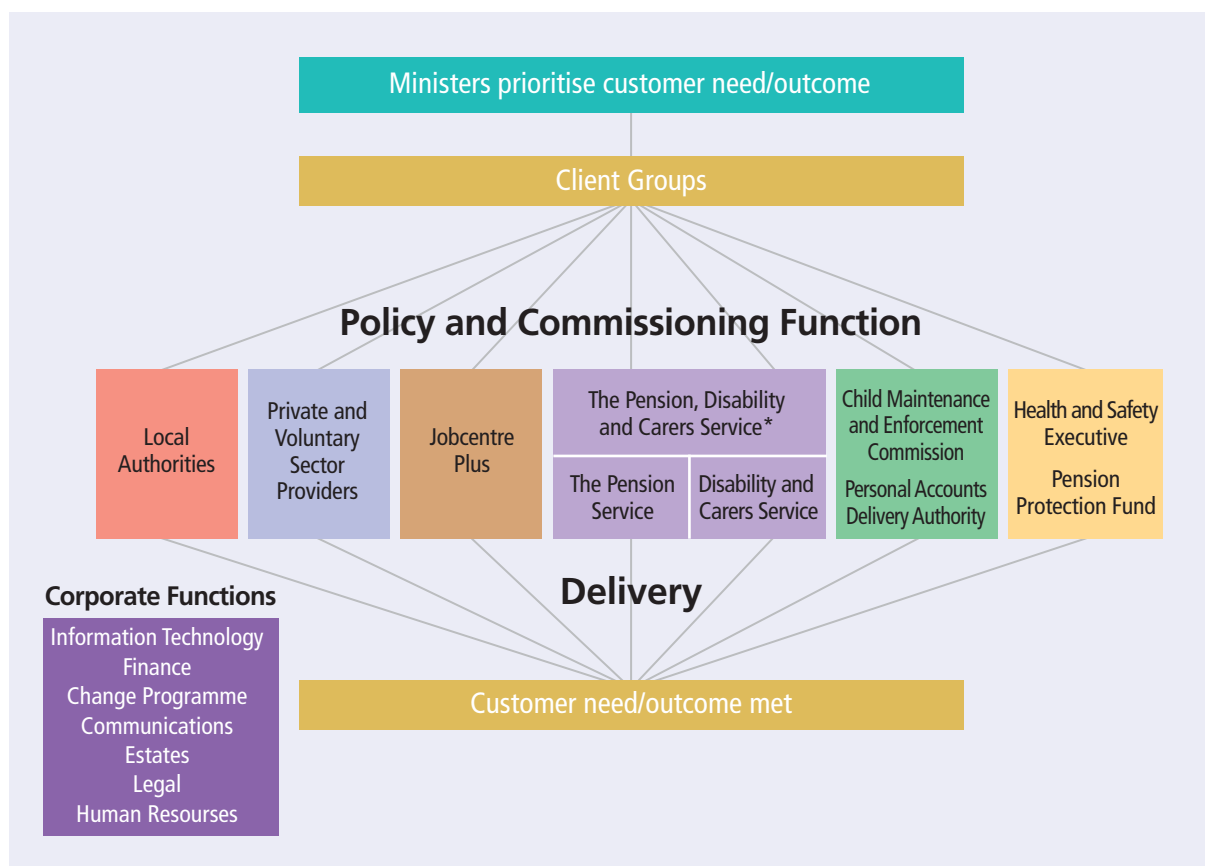
1.3 To meet these broad aims we have developed seven strategic objectives, which drive all of our activities. The Department also has lead responsibility for two Public Service Agreements ('Maximising employment opportunity for all' and 'Tackling poverty and promoting greater independence and well-being in later life') over the Spending Review 2007 period. These are cross-government outcomes which will be met both through our delivering against our Departmental Strategic Objectives and through the contributions of our partners, both in Whitehall and across the private and voluntary sectors.

1.4 To deliver our business we are organised into separate client group, corporate and delivery functions, as shown in Figure 1 overleaf.

1.5 In recent years we have made considerable progress across all of our objectives:

- there are now more people in work than ever before. The United Kingdom continues to have one of the strongest labour markets in the world with an employment rate above that of Japan, the United States of America, France and Italy – and one of the top four in the European Union, above that of France, Germany, Italy, Ireland and Spain;
- for the first time in our history more than 50 per cent of lone parents and around half of disabled people are in employment;
- the number of people on incapacity benefits has stabilised and begun to fall for the first time in a generation;
- there are 600,000 fewer children in relative poverty;
- the number of pensioners living in absolute poverty has fallen by over 2 million or two-thirds; and
- we have introduced legislation to give full civil rights to disabled people.

Figure 1: How DWP is organised



*NOTE: The newly formed Pension, Disability and Carers Service will, for the short to medium term, retain the distinct branding of The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service in providing its services to customers.

1.6 In parallel, we have also significantly improved the service we give to our customers:

- through Jobcentre Plus we have brought together the payment of benefits and help in looking for work into one single, modern network which has enabled us to deliver a step-change improvement in the services and support that we can offer to people on benefits;
- The Pension Service has transformed our service to pensioners and now also provides a source of valuable financial information for all those saving for retirement;
- the Disability and Carers Service has worked successfully with external partners to improve significantly its services to disabled people and carers;
- we have halved the level of fraud in Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance; and
- we now pay 98 per cent of benefits directly into our customers' bank or building-society accounts, which is more convenient for them and has saved taxpayers more than £1 billion over five years.

1.7 We are rightly proud of what we have achieved as an organisation and of what we continue to achieve every working day. As we face up to the challenges facing us over the Spending Review 2007 period we will need to build upon and draw confidence from the progress that we have achieved to date.