

RPA NEWS

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WE CAN NOW CHANGE THINGS FOR THE BETTER



From April 2009 a new body will be in charge of delivering education services to teachers and young people. The Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will bring together the wide range of administrative bodies currently providing education support services. Education Minister Caitríona Ruane explains why she believes the change is both essential and desirable.

Since becoming Education Minister I have met many children and young people in schools, youth clubs and in other settings.

I have also met hundreds of teachers and parents, and with the staff of those organisations providing a range of educational support services

What has struck me on every occasion is the talent and enthusiasm of the young people, and the undoubted commitment of those who work each day to educate and enrich their minds. There is much to admire in what we do and it is rightly celebrated.

But, too many of our children are not sharing that wonderful educational experience and not enough are realising their true potential. I have met parents who tell me of their

struggle to access the special support their children need. I have visited classrooms where teachers work hard to provide the best education they can in circumstances far from ideal. This cannot continue.

My determination to ensure all our children have equality of access to an excellent education is well known. And while considerable focus has rightly been placed on the post-primary debate, there are other changes happening which will help transform education for the better.

When the outcomes of the review of public administration in education were announced, the focus was primarily on saving money. While I support the reduction of bureaucracy and the redirecting of funds to frontline services, my focus is different.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

I believe this change is only worthwhile if we can show that it helps all our young people to realise their full potential, ensures that every school is a good school, and that every learner is given a fair and equal chance.

The success of ESA will be measured in exactly those terms.

I recognise that those who work directly with our children and young people - our teachers, youth leaders and support staff - can only make that change happen if they have the necessary resources.

ESA will provide our schools and youth clubs with the resources, training and support to make the improvements needed. It will take a leading role in driving up standards, and it will ensure good practice is shared. It will have the potential to achieve the goal of the best possible education for every child.

As parents we all want our children to be educated in the best possible circumstances. We want them to be content and happy and to learn in modern well equipped schools with access to a broad and balanced curriculum. That means doing things differently and ensuring we respect the role of parents and take their views into account.

In future, ESA will work closely with local communities and education sector interests to develop area plans for schools. These plans will be based on a shared understanding of each area's immediate and future educational needs, and how they can be best met. ESA will have a key role in supporting and coordinating this process.

I recognise that some in our community will have concerns that a large central body may not take care of education at a local level, that it may be too distant, too bureaucratic.

This will not be the case. I will ensure that ESA is designed to deliver a highly

responsive, highly accountable service to the whole community; a service that is planned together and delivered locally, answerable to me and answerable to you.

Very soon I will bring forward the relevant legislation to the Assembly. In advance of that, work is now taking place to ensure that equality is embedded in all aspects of the new organisation.

Through the leadership of ESA Chief Executive (Designate) Gavin Boyd, and with the engagement of an ever growing number of staff in the education sector organisations, considerable preparatory work has already been undertaken to bring together a range of core education services ahead of April 2009.

Let me be clear. The changes I have outlined here are no criticism of the staff and board members who have served our community with due diligence and great commitment.

Unfortunately the system of administration does not always match the quality of the people. First set up more than 30 years ago, the system is now well past its 'sell by' date. Despite some amendments, it has become cumbersome and does not make best use of the talents and skills of the people within it.

The review of public administration in education has presented us with a once in a generation opportunity to change things for the better.

The time is now right to take forward the change: to give clarity and direction to staff in the existing education sector organisations; to tell teachers and parents how the reforms will benefit our schools and our children; and most

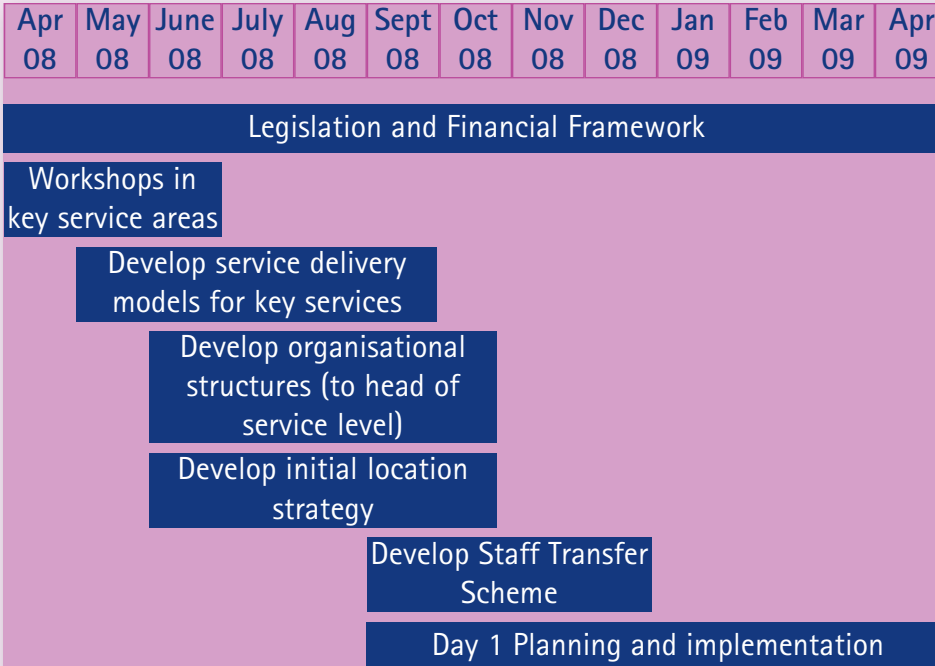
importantly of all - to ensure a better education and better opportunities for all.

I believe this change is only worthwhile if we can show that it helps all our young people to realise their full potential, ensures that every school is a good school, and that every learner is given a fair and equal chance.

The changes I have outlined here are no criticism of the staff and board members who have served our community with due diligence and great commitment.

Catherine Ruane

Roadmap to ESA



With under 10 months to go until April 2009 the work to establish ESA is moving ahead at full steam. Whilst the Department is working with the Minister to take the legislation through the political processes there is considerable parallel activity going on to shape the new organisation.

The current focus for the ESA Implementation Team (ESAIT) is on the design of the ESA in terms of new service delivery models and the organisational structures to support them. As part of the Change Management Strategy there has been a series of workshops involving around 350 staff from across all major services in the current organisations. The agenda for the days was to develop the vision and objectives for services under the ESA, making the most of the opportunities presented by the creation of the new organisation. The key activities required to make the vision a reality,

the current strengths and weaknesses and the priorities and risks in moving forward have been identified. The next stage of the process is to consider options for service delivery models and embark upon the convergence activity required to implement those models. For the staff transferring to the ESA there are many issues that need to be addressed, including the location and nature of the jobs that they will be doing. The ESAIT are working through these issues at present and will continue to involve staff and trade unions in these important considerations.

A top priority for the coming year is to take forward convergence activities and ensure a successful transition to ESA while continuing to deliver key services effectively. The Department and the ESAIT are working closely with the Chief Executives, through the Transition Board, and the Chairs of the existing organisations to meet this challenge.

Communicating Change Consultative Group

Communication has been recognised as a key priority throughout the Review of Public Administration (RPA).

In January 2008 at the request of the RPA Management Board, a group called the Communicating Change Consultative Group was established. The group is made up of nominees from the RPA affected organisations and it was formed in order to:

- establish clarity on RPA communication needs and flows.
- explore the methods and media for communicating with staff of the respective affected organisations.
- update affected organisations on what is currently happening with the RPA.

The group is chaired jointly by a representative from the Department of Education (DE) and the Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team (ESAIT) and its membership is listed below:

Member	Organisation
Richard Bullick,	SELB
Frances Donnelly,	NICIE
David Guilfoyle,	YCNI
Daryll Kenny,	NEELB
Frances Logue,	CCEA
John Martin,	BELB
Nicky McBride,	SEELB
Laverne Montgomery,	CCMS
Michael O'Duibh,	CnaG
John Reid,	RTU
Patricia Ward,	WELB
Patricia Weir, ...	Staff Commission

The group will hold regular meetings throughout the north of Ireland and the minutes of each meeting can be viewed by accessing the Communication's page under the RPA link on DE's website.

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

The organisations directly affected by the RPA in the education sector are playing a key role in keeping their staff up to date on how the changes will affect them. Below are examples of what three of the organisations are doing to keep their staff informed:

PATRICIA WARD – Western Education and Library Board (WELB)	LA'VERNE MONTGOMERY – Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)	FRANCES LOGUE – Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
<p>We recognise the importance of continued communication regarding RPA with all staff, Board Members and schools.</p> <p>'RPA Update' is a regular slot on our monthly newsletter 'OnBoard' while our Chief Executive, Barry Mulholland, convenes RPA Seminars both face-to face and via video-conferencing as required. ESA implementation is also a standing item on all team meeting agendas and staff opinions on how we communicate about, and prepare staff for, the Education and Skills Authority are measured through surveys.</p> <p>A WELB RPA Committee has been set up consisting of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of committees with RPA a standing item on the agenda of meetings of the Principals Forum. Minutes of these meetings are made available to all WELB schools.</p> <p>It is important to note that the Board can only communicate the information that is available, which does not always satisfy the needs or address the queries and concerns of stakeholders – more information please!</p>	<p>A number of senior CCMS officers have attended the first two modules of the RTU Programme for Building Skills and Capabilities in the change period running up to the establishment of ESA.</p> <p>As a result of this we have established a transitional project board to oversee the change process in CCMS. The first meeting of the board was in May where a number of discrete areas of work were identified along with officers to lead teams to develop action plans to deliver on these.</p> <p>The areas of work and team leader's are:</p> <hr/> <p>Managing internal communications: Brid O'Neill & Stephen Walsh</p> <hr/> <p>Managing training/development & support: Suzette Bracken & Rita McCrory</p> <hr/> <p>Managing communications with schools: Terry Murphy</p> <hr/> <p>Celebrating CCMS: Kevin O'Hara & Diane Christy</p> <hr/> <p>Winding up of CCMS: La'Verne Montgomery</p> <p>The board will meet again in June when each of the team leaders will be drafting terms of reference for each of the areas of work and once these have been agreed will be inviting all staff to become involved by joining a team and developing an action plan.</p>	<p>A key priority for CCEA is to keep staff well informed as we move towards the establishment of the ESA.</p> <p>It was very useful to have Gavin Boyd address staff and answer their questions at our annual staff conference in April. Gavin's Q and A session was filmed and has since been posted on CCEA's intranet for further reference.</p> <p>We have also set up a dedicated staff group to ensure people are made aware of important issues and know where to find important information on the change process.</p> <p>We alert staff to ESAIT news bulletins through our intranet where there is also a dedicated page for RPA information. Our quarterly staff briefings are also a great way for the Chief Executive, Neil Anderson, to highlight important issues and to answer questions staff may have.</p>