

BATHO PELE - "PEOPLE FIRST"

WHITE PAPER ON TRANSFORMING PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Department of Public Service and Administration

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FOREWORD

When I was elected to office, I knew that one of Government's most important tasks is to build a public service capable of meeting the challenge of improving the delivery of public services to the citizens of South Africa. Access to decent public services is no longer a privilege to be enjoyed by a few; it is now the rightful expectation of all citizens, especially those previously disadvantaged. This is why the guiding principle of public service transformation and reform is "service to the people". The transformation of our Public Service is to be judged, rightly, by the practical difference people see in their everyday lives. That is why I am launching *Batho Pele*. I want to turn words into action. I want the needs of our people to come first and be satisfied. I want people to view and experience the Public Service in an entirely new way.

Batho Pele is based on eight national principles referred to as the *Batho Pele Principles*. To make sure that these Principles are put swiftly into practice, I am asking every national and provincial department to undertake a number of actions. Firstly, I am asking them to identify the small but important improvements in their service delivery processes which can be immediately attended to and implemented. These include the speeding up of response times for answering letters and telephone calls or the introduction of departmental courtesy campaigns. Secondly, I am asking departments to follow the White Paper's implementation strategy to develop a service delivery improvement programme. I am also expecting departments to publish by the end of 1998, standards for the services they provide and to monitor results thereof. Reports will be made public on how well departments have performed against set standards.

In future, users of public services are to be consulted about their needs and priorities. More accessible and responsive arrangements are to be developed to enable individual members of the public to get something done if standards are not met. Public servants are expected to treat all citizens with courtesy, respect and dignity. Departmental codes of behaviour will be developed and training will follow to ensure that this happens. However, this will not be sufficient by itself. Standards of service cannot be raised overnight. We must live within the resources the nation can afford. That is why a key part of *Batho Pele* is a relentless search for increased efficiency and the reduction of wastage within the Public Service. Every Rand wasted in cumbersome, inefficient processes, in delays and duplication, is money which could be invested in improving services. The aim is to progressively raise standards of service, especially for those whose access to public services have been limited in the past and whose needs are greatest.

Batho Pele presents public servants with a great challenge, but I know that many dedicated public servants at every level welcome the challenge. I know that they see *Batho Pele* as an opportunity to provide their fellow citizens with public services that make them proud.

I wish to personally thank every organisation and/ or individual who contributed to the development of this White Paper. Your valuable inputs have contributed to what I and many others believe to be a highly readable and implementable White Paper. Please join me in ensuring that the Public Service lives up to its calling of truly serving all the citizens of South Africa.

Zola Skweyiya

Minister for Public Service and Administration

ABBREVIATIONS

CBOs - Community-based organisations

DPSA - Department of Public Service and Administration

GEAR - Growth, Employment and Redistribution MEC Member of the Executive Council

NGOs - Non-governmental organisations

PSC - Public Service Commission

RDP - Reconstruction and Development Programme

WPTPS - White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service

1. INTRODUCTION

"A guiding principle of the public service in South Africa will be that of service to the people"

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS), published on 24 November 1995, sets out eight transformation priorities, amongst which Transforming Service Delivery is the key. This is because a transformed South African public service will be judged by one criterion above all: its effectiveness in delivering services which meet the basic needs of all South African citizens. Improving service delivery is therefore the ultimate goal of the public service transformation programme.

1.1.2 The purpose of this White Paper is to provide a policy framework and a practical implementation strategy for the transformation of public service delivery. This White Paper is primarily about *how* public services are provided, and specifically about improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which services are delivered. It is not about *what* services are to be provided - their volume, level and quality - which is a matter for Ministers, Members of the Executive Councils (MECs), other executing authorities and the duly appointed heads of government institutions. However, their decisions about *what* should be delivered will be improved as a result of the *Batho Pele* approach, for example through systematic consultation with users of services, and by information about whether standards of service are being met in practice

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Public services are not a privilege in a civilised and democratic society: they are a legitimate expectation. That is why meeting the basic needs of all citizens is one of the five key programmes of the Government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). It is also the reason why the Government's macro-economic strategy called Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) calls, among other things, for the reduction in unnecessary government consumption and the release of resources for productive investment and their redirection to areas of greatest need. This means that government institutions must be reoriented to optimise access to their services by all citizens, within the context of fiscal constraints and the fulfillment of competing needs.

1.2.2 The Constitution, 1996 stipulates that public administration should adhere to a number of principles, including that:

- a high standard of professional ethics be promoted and maintained;
- services be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
- resources be utilised efficiently, economically and effectively;
- peoples' needs be responded to; * the public be encouraged to participate in policy-making; and
- it be accountable, transparent and development-oriented.

The Constitution, through the Bill of Rights, also give citizens certain rights to take action against the state if they believe their constitutional rights have been infringed, and to have access to information held by the state which they need in order to be able to do so.

1.2.3 In line with these Constitutional principles, the WPTPS calls on all national and provincial departments to make service delivery a priority. The WPTPS also provides a framework to enable national and provincial departments to develop departmental service delivery strategies. These strategies will need to promote continuous improvements in the quantity, quality and equity of service provision. Chapter 11 of the WPTPS requires national and provincial departments to identify, among other things:

- a mission statement for service delivery, together with service guarantees;
- the services to be provided, to which groups, and at which service charges;
- in line with RDP priorities, the principle of affordability, and the principle of redirecting resources to areas and groups previously under-resourced;
- service standards, defined outputs and targets, and performance indicators, benchmarked against comparable international standards;
- monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and structures, designed to measure progress and introduce corrective action, where appropriate;
- plans for staffing, human resource development and organisational capacity building, tailored to service delivery needs;
- the redirection of human and other resources from administrative tasks to service provision, particularly for disadvantaged groups and areas; * financial plans that link budgets directly to service needs and personnel plans;

- potential partnerships with the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) which will provide more effective forms of service delivery; and
- the development, particularly through training, of a culture of customer care and of approaches to service delivery that are sensitive to issues of race, gender and disability.

1.2.4 The WPTPS specifies, further, that in order to ensure that service delivery is constantly improved, national and provincial departments will be required to outline their specific short, medium and long term goals for service provision. They will also be required to provide annual and five yearly targets for the delivery of specific services, and will be required to report to their respective national and provincial legislatures on their achievements.

1.2.5 Improving the delivery of public services means redressing the imbalances of the past and, while maintaining continuity of service to all levels of society, focusing on meeting the needs of the 40% of South Africans who are living below the poverty line and those, such as the disabled, and black women living in rural areas, who have previously been disadvantaged in terms of service delivery. Improving service delivery also calls for a shift away from inward-looking, bureaucratic systems, processes and attitudes, and a search for new ways of working which put the needs of the public first, is better, faster and more responsive to the citizens' needs. It also means a complete change in the way that services are delivered. The objectives of service delivery therefore include welfare, equity and efficiency.

1.2.6 The introduction of a service delivery improvement programme cannot be achieved in isolation from other fundamental management changes within the public service. It must be part of a fundamental shift of culture whereby public servants see themselves first and foremost as servants of the citizens of South Africa, and where the Public Service is managed with service to the public as its primary goal. Improved service delivery cannot only be implemented by issuing circulars. It is not only about rule books and 'prescripts', because it is not simply an 'administrative' activity. It is a dynamic process out of which a completely new relationship is developed between the public service and its individual clients. To implement a service delivery programme successfully, public service managers require new management tools.

1.2.7 These 'tools' are, broadly, the tools of the 'new public service management'. In essence these are:

- assignment to individual managers of responsibility for delivering specific results for a specified level of resources and for obtaining value for money in the use of those resources;
- individual responsibility for results matched with managerial authority for decisions about how resources should be used;
- delegation of managerial responsibility and authority to the lowest possible level; and
- transparency about the results achieved and resources consumed.

1.2.8 These ideas are not strange to South Africa - they are enshrined in the WPTPS. However, the Public Service is generally still quite a long way from implementing them. The Public Service is currently perceived as being characterised by, for example, inequitable distribution of public services, especially in rural areas, lack of access services, lack of transparency and openness and consultation on the required

service standards, lack of accurate and simple information on services and standards at which they are rendered, lack of responsiveness and insensitivity towards citizens' complaints, and discourteous staff. These perceptions, which are frequently reflected in media reporting of Public Service activities, are also shared by many public servants themselves, as was confirmed during the consultation process which preceded the preparation of this White Paper and the WPTPS.

1.2.9 The Public Service is also seen as still operating within over-centralised, hierarchical and rule-bound systems inherited from the previous dispensation, which make it difficult to hold individuals to account because:

- decision-making is diffused;
- they are focused on inputs rather than on outcomes;
- they do not encourage value for money;
- they do not reward innovation and creativity;
- they reward uniformity above effectiveness and responsiveness; and
- they encourage inward-looking, inflexible attitudes which are at odds with the vision of a public service whose highest aim is service to the people.

1.2.10 Many of these outdated systems and practices are now being tackled, and the next few years will see major reforms, for example, in budgeting and human resource management, which will delegate to national and provincial departments substantial authority and accountability for service delivery, as well as greater flexibility to manage their operations in line with their developmental objectives.

1.2.11 It might be argued that internal management reforms should be completed before attempting to introduce a service delivery improvement programme. However, this argument ignores the fact that improved service delivery is a matter of extreme urgency for South Africa, and there is no choice but to tackle both internal management and service delivery reform simultaneously. It also fails to recognise that the cultural and managerial reforms which are required are of an ongoing nature, which will be achieved more speedily and effectively by prioritising service delivery. Service delivery should not be seen as the final item of the Public Service transformation programme, but an integral part of it, and a catalyst for many of the management reforms that are being sought.

1.2.12 This White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery therefore, urgently seeks to introduce a fresh approach to service delivery: an approach which puts pressure on systems, procedures, attitudes and behaviour within the Public Service and reorients them in the customer's favour, an approach which puts the people first. This does not mean introducing more rules and centralised processes or micro-managing service delivery activities. Rather, it involves creating a framework for the delivery of public services which treats citizens more like customers and enables the citizens to hold public servants to account for the service they receive. A framework which frees up the energy and commitment of public servants to introduce more customer-focused ways of working. The approach is encapsulated in the name which has been adopted by this initiative - *Batho Pele* (a Sesotho adage meaning 'People First'). The *Batho Pele* policy framework consists of eight service delivery principles,

set out in paragraph 3 below, derived from the policy goals set out in Chapter 11 of the WPTPS. ;

1.3 The people must come first: the 'customer' concept

1.3.1 In a genuinely competitive commercial market, private companies cannot afford to ignore the needs and wishes of their customers if they want to stay in business, because dissatisfied customers can choose to take their business elsewhere. Knowing what the customer wants and providing it quicker, better and cheaper than your competitors, is essential to business success. As competitive companies worldwide soon discover, 'the customer comes first' is not an empty slogan but a fundamental business principle.

1.3.2 By contrast citizens, as the 'customers' of public services, cannot choose to take their business elsewhere. For example, any South African who wants a passport has no alternative but to apply to the Department of Home Affairs. Many public services are not paid for directly by individual 'customers', and national and provincial departments which fail to satisfy their 'customers' do not go out of business. Moreover, many public services, such as revenue collection or the imposition of law and order are not 'services' but are regulatory in function. They are accepted by citizens as essential safeguards of a civilised society in which the vulnerable are protected and all citizens have equal opportunity for economic and social development.

1.3.3 The concept of the citizen as a 'customer' may therefore seem inappropriate at first sight. 'Customer' is nevertheless a useful term in the context of improving service delivery because it embraces certain principles which are as fundamental to public service delivery as they are to the provision of services for commercial gain. To treat citizens as 'customers' implies:

- listening to their views and taking account of them in making decisions about what services should be provided;
- treating them with consideration and respect;
- making sure that the promised level and quality of service is always of the highest standard; and
- responding swiftly and sympathetically when standards of service fall below the promised standard.

1.3.4 The term 'customer' will therefore be useful in taking forward the *Batho Pele* initiative and is used interchangeably with the term citizen throughout this White Paper. But it is not only the public who are 'customers'. National and provincial departments have many internal customers such as components and staff within their own organisations, as well as other departments and institutions for whom they provide a service. The *Batho Pele* initiative applies equally to these internal customers. The terms citizen and customer used throughout this White Paper refer both to internal and external customers.

1.3.5 Measured against the 'customer' yardstick, the South African public sector has a long way to go. In many instances, there are no clearly defined standards by which to measure the delivery of services. Individual citizens find that complaining about services often has little effect and can in any case be a daunting and time-consuming

process. Lack of information and complex regulations are also barriers to good service. All too often it is left to the citizen to work out for him- or herself what services are available, and what he or she is entitled to. Too many government forms are complicated and not designed with the user in mind. Too many letters are written in a stilted, impersonal style which is off-putting to the person who receives it. Finding the right person to speak to in a national or provincial department, particularly someone who can give friendly advice can be very trying, leaving the citizen feeling helpless, frustrated and uncertain.

1.3.6 Many public servants, especially those who serve the public directly, are only too conscious of all this, because they have to face the public's frustrations every day in their work. They would often like to see improvements and often have good ideas for what could be done, but they are bound by systems and practices which they believe they are helpless to change.

2. SCOPE OF THIS WHITE PAPER

Against the above introduction, this White Paper sets out a practical agenda for transforming the delivery of public services. This White Paper is directly applicable to those parts of the public sector, both national and provincial, which are regulated by the Public Service Act, 1994. However, it is relevant to all areas and employees of the public sector regulated by other legislation, such as local government and parastatals, teachers in education departments, as well as the South African Police Service, South African National Defence Force and the Intelligence Services. In line with the Constitutional principle of co-operative government, particularly as regards promoting a coherent government, it is expected, therefore, that all sectors of public administration will agree to follow the principles set out in this White Paper.

3. THE SERVICE DELIVERY PRINCIPLES OF BATHO PELE

Eight principles for transforming public service delivery - the *Batho Pele* principles - have been identified. These are expressed in broad terms in order to enable national and provincial departments to apply them in accordance with their own needs and circumstances. The *Batho Pele* principles are:

The Eight Principles of Batho Pele

1: Consultation

Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered.

2: Service Standards

Citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.

3: Access

All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled.

4: Courtesy

Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration

5: Information

Citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive.

6: Openness and transparency

Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost, and who is in charge.

7: Redress

If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.

8: Value for money

Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money.

4. PUTTING THE PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

Putting the Principles of Batho Pele into practice is the challenge now facing the South African public sector. The following paragraphs describe what national and provincial departments will be required to do, but they should also be regarded as guidance by all levels of Government and the wider public sector when introducing their service delivery improvement programmes. Text in italics indicates a mandatory requirement on national and provincial departments; the remainder of the text is offered as guidance.

4.1 Consulting users of services

4.1.1 *All national and provincial departments must, regularly and systematically, consult not only about the services currently provided but also about the provision of new basic services to those who lack them.* Consultation will give citizens the opportunity of influencing decisions about public services, by providing objective evidence which will determine service delivery priorities. Consultation can also help to foster a more participative and co-operative relationship between the providers and users of public services.

4.1.2 There are many ways to consult users of services, including customer surveys, interviews with individual users, consultation groups, and meetings with consumer representative bodies, NGOs and CBOs, including bodies representing previously disadvantaged groups. The method or methods adopted must be chosen to suit the characteristics of the users and consumers concerned. *Whatever method is chosen, consultation must cover the entire range of existing and potential customers. It is essential that consultation should include the views of those who have previously been denied access to public services.* Particular effort must be made to include the views of those who have been previously disadvantaged or who, due to geography, language barriers, fear of authority or any other reason, have previously found it hard to make

their voices heard. The consultation process should be undertaken sensitively; for example, people should not be asked to reveal unnecessary personal information, and they should be able to give their views anonymously if they wish. Often, more than one method of consultation will be needed to ensure comprehensiveness and representativeness.

4.1.3 The results of the consultation process must be reported to the relevant Minister/MEC/ executing authority and the relevant Portfolio Committee, and made public, for example through the media. The results should also be widely publicised within the organisation so that all staff are aware of how their services are perceived. The results must then be taken into account when decisions are made about what services are to be provided, and at what level. Consultation must be conducted intelligently. It should not result in a list of demands that raise unrealistic expectations; rather, it should reveal where resources and effort should be focused in future to meet the public's most pressing needs. The outcome should be a balance between what citizens want and what national and provincial departments can realistically afford - and have the resources and capacity to deliver.

4.2 Setting Service Standards

4.2.1 National and provincial departments must publish standards for the level and quality of services they will provide, including the introduction of new services to those who have previously been denied access to them. In the case of certain services, such as health, or education, national departments, in consultation with provincial departments, may set standards which will serve as national baseline standards. Individual provinces may then set their own standards, provided these meet or exceed the national baseline. Provincial departments may also set additional standards for aspects of service not covered by national norms. Similarly, departments may set intra-departmental service standards which will serve as minimum norms for their institutions and components. These internal institutions and components may also set additional service standards for aspects not covered by intra-departmental norms. Service Standards must be relevant and meaningful to the individual user. This means that they must cover the aspects of service which matter most to users, as revealed by the consultation process, and they must be expressed in terms which are relevant and easily understood. Standards must also be precise and measurable, so that users can judge for themselves whether or not they are receiving what was promised.

4.2.2 Some standards will cover process, such as the length of time taken to authorise a housing claim, to issue a passport or identity document, or to answer letters. Other standards will be about outcomes. In the health area, for example, standards might be set for the maximum time a patient should have to wait at a primary health care clinic, or for a non-urgent operation; or for the information they are entitled to receive about their treatment, and about who is responsible for their case. Service Standards must be set at a level which is demanding but realistic. This means that they should reflect a level of service which is higher than that currently offered but which can be achieved with dedicated effort, and by adopting more efficient and customer-focused working practices. To achieve the goal of making South Africa globally competitive, standards should be benchmarked against international standards, taking into account South Africa's current level of development.

4.2.3 The overall responsibility for decisions about what services are to be provided and at what level, rests with elected representatives - Ministers/ MECs/ other executing authorities - who are accountable to the legislature for implementing Government policies and for the proper use of public money. *Service Standards must therefore have the approval of the relevant Minister/MEC/ executing authority before they are adopted.* This need not require Ministers/ MECs/ other executing authorities to be personally involved in the detail of service delivery programmes. The process will normally be conducted by presenting the Minister/ MEC/ executing authority with the results of the consultation exercise, and proposing for his or her approval, the key standards to be set in priority areas together with a strategic plan for achieving them.

4.2.4 *Once approved, Service Standards must be published and displayed at the point of delivery and communicated as widely as possible to all potential users so that they know what level of service they are entitled to expect, and can complain if they do not receive it.* Publishing standards is not enough, however. *Performance against standards must be regularly measured and the results published at least once a year, and more frequently where appropriate.* These steps form an essential mechanism to enable the public to hold national and provincial departments to account for their performance. They are also essential tools to track improvements in services from year to year, and to inform subsequent decisions about the levels to which standards should be raised in future.

4.2.5 *Performance against standards must be reviewed annually and, as standards are met, so they should be progressively raised, year on year. Once set and published, standards may not be reduced. If a standard is not met, the reasons must be explained publicly and a new target date set for when it will be achieved.*

4.3 Increasing access

4.3.1 While some South Africans enjoy public services of first world quality, many others live in third world conditions. One of the prime aims of *Batho Pele* is to provide a framework for making decisions about delivering public services to the many South Africans who were and still are denied access to them, within the parameters of the Government's GEAR strategy. *Batho Pele* also aims to rectify the inequalities of distribution in existing services. *All national and provincial departments are required to specify and set targets for progressively increasing access to their services for those who have not previously received them.* In setting these targets, institutions which promote the interests of previously disadvantaged groups, such as the Gender Commission, and groups representing the disabled should be consulted.

4.3.2 One significant factor affecting access is geography. Many people who live in remote areas have to travel long distances to avail themselves of public services. In drawing up their service delivery programmes, national and provincial departments must develop strategies to eliminate the disadvantages of distance, for example, by setting up mobile units, and redeploying facilities and resources closer to those in greatest need. Another significant factor is the lack of infrastructure, which exacerbates the difficulties of communication with and travel to remote areas. There are other barriers to access - social, cultural, physical, communication and attitudinal, for example - which need to be taken into account. *Service delivery programmes*

should therefore specifically address the need to progressively redress the disadvantages of all barriers to access.

4.4 Ensuring courtesy

4.4.1 The concept of courtesy goes much wider than asking public servants to give a polite smile and to say 'please' and 'thank you', though these are certainly required. The Code of Conduct for Public Servants issued by the Public Service Commission, makes it clear that courtesy and regard for the public is one of the fundamental duties of public servants, by specifying that public servants treat members of the public "as customers who are entitled to receive the highest standards of service". Many public servants do this instinctively; they joined the public service precisely because they have a genuine desire to serve the public. The Principles of *Batho Pele* require that the behaviour of all public servants is raised to the level of the best.

4.4.2 *National and provincial departments must specify the standards for the way in which customers should be treated. These are to be included in their departmental Codes of Conduct.* These standards should cover, among other things:

- greeting and addressing customers;
- the identification of staff by name when dealing with customers, whether in person, on the telephone or in writing;
- the style and tone of written communications;
- simplification and 'customer-friendliness' of forms;
- the maximum length of time within which responses must be made to enquiries;
- the conduct of interviews;
- how complaints should be dealt with;
- dealing with people who have special needs, such as the elderly or infirm;
- gender; and
- language.

4.4.3 *The performance of staff who deal with customers must be regularly monitored, and performance which falls below the specified standards should not be tolerated. Service delivery and customer care must be included in all future training programmes, and additional training should be given to all those who deal directly with the public, whether face-to-face, in writing or on the telephone.* This should not require the injection of large amounts of additional resources: it is more a case of reorienting existing training courses to focus on service delivery. Of equal importance to formal training, is the example set by senior managers, and the day-to day guidance of immediate supervisors. Junior staff quickly pick up the unspoken messages about an organisation's values from the way their seniors behave. *All managers have a duty to ensure that the values and behavioural norms of their organisations are in line with the Principles of Batho Pele.*

4.4.4 An important aspect of encouraging customer-focused behaviour is to provide staff with opportunities to suggest ways of improving service and for senior managers to take these suggestions seriously. This applies particularly to staff who come into

regular contact with the public because they usually have an accurate appreciation of their needs and concerns. *All managers should ensure they receive first-hand feedback from front-line staff, and should personally visit front-line staff at regular intervals to see for themselves what is happening.*

4.5 Providing more and better information

4.5.1 Information is one of the most powerful tools at the customer's disposal in exercising his or her right to good service. *National and provincial departments must provide full, accurate and up-to-date information about the services they provide, and who is entitled to them.* This must be done actively, in order to ensure that information is received by all those who need it, especially those who have previously been excluded from the provision of public services. The consultation process should also be used to find out what customers and potential customers need to know, and then to work out how, where and when the information can best be provided.

4.5.2 Implementing *Batho Pele* will require a complete transformation of communication with the public. *Information must be provided in a variety of media and languages to meet the differing needs of different customers.* This is essential to ensure the inclusion of those who are, or have previously been disadvantaged by physical disability, language, race, gender, geographical distance or in any other way. Written information should be plain and free of jargon, and supported by graphical material where this will make it easier to understand. *There should always be a name and: contact number for obtaining further information and advice.* All written information should be tested on the target audience for readability and comprehensiveness. However, it should not be assumed that written information alone will suffice: many people prefer to receive information verbally, so that they can ask questions and check their understanding.

4.5.3 As a minimum, information about services should be available at the point of delivery, but for users who are far from the point of delivery, other arrangements will be needed. Schools, libraries, clinics, shops, and local NGOs and CBOs are all potential distribution points; information notices on trees in rural areas, and toll-free telephone helplines, in a variety of languages, where needed, can be extremely effective. Service providers should also make regular visits to remote communities to disseminate information.

4.6 Increasing openness and transparency

4.6.1 Openness and transparency are the hallmarks of a democratic government and are fundamental to the public service transformation process. In terms of public service delivery, their importance lies in the need to build confidence and trust between the public sector and the public they serve. A key aspect of this is that the public should know more about the way national and provincial departments are run, how well they perform, the resources they consume, and who is in charge.

4.6.2 The mechanism for achieving this will be an Annual Report to Citizens published by each national and provincial department setting out, in plain language:

- staff numbers employed, and the names and responsibilities of senior officials;
- performance against targets for: improved service delivery, financial savings, and increased efficiency;

- resources consumed, including salaries and other staff costs, and other operating expenses;
- any income, such as fees for services;
- targets for the following year; and
- a name and contact number for further information.

4.6.3 These Reports to Citizens are not a substitute for national and provincial departments' formal annual reports. Their aim is, in one or two pages of straightforward language, to provide the public with key information which they are entitled to know. *Reports to Citizens should be publicised as widely as possible and should also be submitted to national and provincial legislatures in order to assist the relevant Portfolio Committees in scrutinising and monitoring departmental activities.* A model report is at Annexure A.

4.6.4 Additionally, national and provincial departments may utilise events such as open days, preferably not during normal working hours, to invite citizens to visit the department or institution to meet with all levels of officials to discuss service delivery issues, standards, problems, etc. These events can also provide the department or institution with an opportunity to advertise their services to citizens.

4.7 Remediating mistakes and failures

4.7.1 The capacity and willingness to take action when things go wrong is the necessary counterpart of the standard setting process. It is also an important constitutional

principle. There are a number of institutions, such as the Public Protector, the Human Rights Commission and the Auditor-General, which serve to protect the public from maladministration and impropriety by government departments. However, such institutions should be seen as a last resort by citizens after exhausting departmental remedies, and are not a substitute for swift, effective action by service deliverers when services are falling below the promised standard.

4.7.2 The *Batho Pele* principle of Redress requires a completely new approach to handling complaints. Complaints are seen by many public servants as a time-consuming irritation. Where complaints procedures exist, they are often lengthy and bureaucratic, aimed at defending the department's actions rather than solving the user's problem. Many departments have no procedures for regularly reviewing complaints in order to identify systemic problems. Indeed many organisations do not collect any statistics about the number and type of complaints they receive. Often, 'complaints' are counted as such only when they are submitted in writing through the formal channels. Yet many members of the public do not bother using these channels because they have no confidence in their effectiveness, and because they find the process time-consuming and sometimes daunting. As a result, public sector organisations frequently underestimate the level of dissatisfaction which exists.

4.7.3 The first steps, therefore, are to acknowledge that all dissatisfaction, expressed in writing or verbally, is an indication that the citizen does not consider that the promised standard of service is being delivered; and then to establish ways of measuring all expressions of dissatisfaction. Staff should be encouraged to welcome complaints as an opportunity to improve service, and to report complaints so that

weaknesses can be identified and remedied. *The head of each department should regularly and personally review complaints, and how they have been dealt with.*

4.7.4 National and provincial departments are required to review and improve their complaints systems, in line with the following principles:

Accessibility.

Complaints systems should be well-publicised and easy to use. Excessive formality should be avoided. Systems which require complaints to be made only in writing may be convenient for the organisation but can be off-putting to many customers.

Complaints made in other ways, such as face-to-face, or by telephone, should therefore also be welcomed.

Speed.

The longer it takes to respond to a complaint, the more dissatisfied customers will become. An immediate and genuine apology together with a full explanation will often be all that they want. Where delay is unavoidable, the complainant should be kept informed of progress and told when an outcome can be expected.

Fairness.

Complaints should be fully and impartially investigated. Many people will be nervous of complaining to a senior official about a member of their staff, or about some aspect of the system for which the official is responsible. Wherever possible, therefore, an independent avenue should be offered if the complainant is dissatisfied with the response they receive the first time round.

Confidentiality.

The complainant's confidentiality should be protected, so that they are not deterred from making complaints by feeling that they will be treated less sympathetically in future.

Responsiveness.

The response to a complaint, however trivial, should take full account of the individual's concerns and feelings. Where a mistake has been made, or the service has fallen below the promised standard, the response should be immediate, starting with an apology and a full explanation; an assurance that the occurrence will not be repeated; and then whatever remedial action is necessary. Wherever possible, staff who deal with the public directly should be empowered to take action themselves to put things right.

Review.

Complaints systems should incorporate mechanisms for review and for feeding back suggestions for change to those who are responsible for providing the service, so that mistakes and failures do not recur.

Training.

Complaints handling procedures should be publicised throughout the organisation and training given to all staff so that they know what action to take when a complaint is received.

4.8 Getting the best possible value for money

4.8.1 Improving service delivery, and extending access to public services to all South Africans must be achieved alongside the Government's GEAR strategy for reducing public expenditure and creating a more cost-effective public service. The *Batho Pele* initiative must be delivered within departmental resource allocations, and the rate at which services are improved will therefore be significantly affected by the speed with which national and provincial departments achieve efficiency savings which can be ploughed back into improved services. Many improvements that the public would like to see often require no additional resources and can sometimes even reduce costs. A courteous and respectful greeting requires no financial investment. Failure to give a member of the public a simple, satisfactory explanation to an enquiry may result in an incorrectly completed application form which will cost time and money to put right. A few hours each month of a senior manager's time spent talking to their customers - and the staff who serve them - may be worth hundreds of rands in research fees.

4.8.2 One of the key aims of *Batho Pele* will therefore be to search for ways to simplify procedures and eliminate waste and inefficiency. *All national and provincial departments will be required, as part of their service delivery improvement programmes, to identify areas where efficiency savings will be sought, and the service delivery improvements which will result from achieving the savings.*

5. ENCOURAGING INNOVATION, REWARDING EXCELLENCE

5.1 It is not only the public who would like to see public services improve. Many dedicated public servants, particularly those who serve the public directly, are frustrated by systems and procedures which are often a barrier to good service rather than a support for it. *It is essential to the success of Batho Pele that the commitment, energy and skills of public servants are harnessed to tackle inefficient, outdated and bureaucratic practices, to simplify complex procedures, and to identify new and better ways of delivering services. It is also important that the efforts of staff - both individuals and groups - who perform well in providing customer service, should be recognised and appropriately rewarded.* In considering the transformation of the existing awards systems in the Public Service, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) will give due regard to the need for recognising and rewarding such efforts.

5.2. *Performance management procedures must in future include an assessment of the performance of individual staff in contributing to improving service to the public.* This will be essential for staff who serve the public directly, but it is also important for staff who provide services directly to their fellow public servants whether in their own or other departments. A key indicator will be how they rate in their dealings with their customers in accordance with the behaviour code of the department.

5.3 *National and provincial departments must also ensure that a conducive environment for the delivery of services is created to enhance their staff's capacity to deliver good services.* This means, for example, that staff dealing with the public directly should be given the necessary support and tools to carry out their functions effectively and efficiently.

6. PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY

6.1 Improving public service delivery matters not only to the individual users of services, but also to the whole community. Improved delivery of service from national and provincial departments, as well as from institutions such as hospitals and tax offices, is essential for the future economic prosperity and social development of the country as set out in the Government's GEAR strategy. However, the Public Service cannot develop a truly service-oriented culture without the active participation of the wider community, including the private sector and citizens themselves.

6.2 *Batho Pele* will therefore seek to establish partnerships with the wider community in which business and industry, NGOs, CBOs, academic institutions and other bodies throughout the community can all play a part. For example, local businesses might assist in funding the publication of Service Standards or a telephone helpline, or they might sponsor a customer survey in a variety of official languages. They could also offer secondments and exchanges to public servants to broaden their experience. NGOs and CBOs could help to spread information about what services are available and where to obtain them. They can also help individual citizens to access public service complaints schemes, and can work with national and provincial departments to simplify procedures and regulations. Academic institutions might be willing to conduct comparative studies on international best practice in public service improvement.

6.3 These are only a few examples of possible areas of involvement. There are many more potential areas of co-operation. These possibilities need to be creatively explored by national and provincial departments. *As part of their consultation exercises, national and provincial departments must involve representatives of the wider community in discussions about the future development of public services.* They should also forge partnerships with business, NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders to encourage them to participate in service improvement initiatives.

7. MAKING IT HAPPEN

7.1 Institutional mechanisms

7.1.1 National and provincial departments are expected to start work on their service delivery campaigns immediately after approval of this White Paper. Transformation units in national and provincial departments will have a key role to play in helping to support national and provincial departments' efforts to improve service delivery, by feeding in fresh ideas for improvements and identifying areas where existing systems are a stumbling block to better service. They will also monitor the results of their department's service delivery improvement programme and offer suggestions for making more rapid and effective progress. At national and provincial level, the various transformation co-ordinating committees will be valuable as focal points for sharing experience and best practice, and ensuring that momentum is maintained right across the Public Service.

7.1.2 However, ultimate responsibility for implementation rests firmly with the political and administrative heads of departments who should, as a first step, make the necessary institutional arrangements to ensure that the *Batho Pele* concept is communicated throughout their department, and to draw up and drive forward a Service Delivery Improvement Programme which must be integrated with the other departmental transformation priorities within the department's strategic plan.

Responsibility for this should be clearly assigned to a person or group of people, accountable directly to the administrative head of department.

7.1.3 The Service Delivery Improvement Programme should set out, among other things:

- the existing levels of service and the proposed service standards to be adopted in the short, medium and long term;
- how service standards will be monitored and reported on, and the management information systems which will support this;
- the organisational and systems arrangements which will ensure standards are met;
- the human resource training, supervision and appraisal arrangements which will ensure that staff behave in accordance with the Principles of *Batho Pele*;
- how the department's communications systems will be geared up to provide information about the type and frequency of services that customers require;
- how complaints systems will be developed to identify and rectify failure to deliver the promised standard to individual 'customers'; and
- the financial management systems which will collect data on the unit costs of key services, in order to provide information for standard and priority setting in subsequent years.

7.1.4 The Programme can also be used to:

- inform staff and encourage them to focus on improved service delivery;
- provide information to facilitate monitoring by the Public Service Commission (PSC), DPSA, Portfolio Committees, the national and provincial and inter-provincial transformation co-ordinating committees, and departmental transformation units; and
- provide the basis for the eventual published document setting out the organisation's service standards and other service delivery goals and commitments.

A model format for the Service Delivery Improvement Programme is at Annexure A.

7.1.5 *The department's Programme must be approved by the relevant Minister/ MEC/ executing authority. A copy of the approved Service Delivery Improvement Programme must be sent to the DPSA to inform the DPSA 's yearly progress report to Parliament.* Once approved, the head of the department will be held accountable for its implementation, and his or her performance may be assessed on among other things whether the promised improvements in service delivery have been met. Implementation of the Programme may also be included as one of the performance criteria in the contracts between heads of department and Ministers/ MECs/ other executing authorities under the terms of the *Public Service Act, 1994* (as amended by the *Public Service Laws Amendment Act, 1997*). Heads of department will, in turn, hold their managers to account for delivering their individual elements of the Programme.

7.2 Implementation strategy

7.2.1 The requirement to produce a departmental Service Delivery Improvement Programme does not mean, however, that the implementation of *Batho Pele* cannot begin until the Programme has been completed. There may be many actions which,

for example, individual components within departments can take immediately to improve the services they provide, such as speeding up response times for answering letters and telephone calls, or introducing a courtesy campaign.

7.2.2 Improving service delivery is a continuous, progressive process, not a once-for-all task. As standards are raised, so higher targets must be set. Implementing a service delivery improvement programme can best be illustrated as an eight-step cycle:

7.2.3 Step 1: Identity the customer

The starting point is to establish who the recipients of service are. This is not as straightforward as it may appear, since many public services have a variety of customers, whose requirements do not necessarily coincide. As well as recipients of service, such as the public, external organisations, other departments and other components within the department, there will be indirect 'customers' whose needs must also be taken into account. Taxpayers, for example, are customers, because *Batho Pele* gives them a right to expect that services will be provided cost-effectively. A thorough stakeholder analysis will be required to establish who the customers are, and their relative priority in determining levels of service.

7.2.4 Step 2: Establish the customer's needs and priorities

The customer's needs and priorities will be the starting point for the setting of standards. Since delivering on standards will involve decisions about resources, it is essential to have accurate information about what customers really want. This will require systematic, regular consultation, using objective methods which ensure that the views of all customers, including potential customers, are represented. Particular care must be taken to seek out the views of those who have previously been denied access to services, and those who may find it difficult to speak up for themselves. More than one method will almost certainly be needed. For example, written questionnaires are unlikely to elicit helpful responses from people whose standard of literacy is not very high; and some members of the public may feel intimidated from expressing their true opinions if asked questions by government officials.

7.2.5 Step 3: Establish the current service baseline

Accurate information about the current level and quality of service is essential in order to decide where and how to make improvements. How long does the average customer in a public office have to wait before being attended to? How long does it take to reply to letters or telephone enquiries? How long does it take to process applications, licences, permits etc.? Is information to customers provided in language which they can easily understand? What resources are consumed in delivering a particular service? A thorough scrutiny of organisational arrangements, workprocesses and practices involved in delivering the services provided as well as the motivation and skills of staff will be required to establish the current baseline.

7.2.6 Step 4: Identify the 'improvement gap'

The 'improvement gap' is the gap between what customers want, and the level and quality of service currently provided. Closing this gap is the prime aim of a service delivery improvement programme. Accurate identification of customers' needs, and of the current service baseline will enable targets to be set for improvement in a systematic, prioritised way, taking into account the availability of resources.

7.2.7 Step 5: Set service standards

Once the 'improvement gap' has been identified, standards can be set, and progressively raised for closing the gap. Service standards are commitments to provide a specified level and quality of service to individual customers at any given point in time. Standards are different from targets, which express longer-term aims for the ultimate level and quality of service to be achieved. Service standards must cover customers' main requirements, e.g. accessibility of services, response times, turnaround times, accuracy, courtesy, the provision of information, and dealing with complaints.

7.2.8 Step 6: Gear up for delivery

Ensuring that service standards are met is not solely the responsibility of those directly involved in delivering the service, but depends on the whole organisation being geared up to support the commitments that have been made. The service delivery improvement programme, approved by the Minister/ MECI other executing authority should set out how standards of service will be improved, and how the organisation will be geared up to deliver them. For example, monitoring and reporting systems will be needed which enable senior management to check on progress, and take remedial action where necessary. Management information systems will be required to provide data on the unit costs of key services. Human resource training, supervision and appraisal systems will need to be refocused on service delivery; and senior management must ensure that human and financial resources are shifted from inefficient and unnecessary activities and used instead to ensure that delivery of service standards can be met. In short, implementing a service delivery improvement programme is likely to involve significant changes in the organisation and management of the department. Managers at all levels, starting at the top, should be held to account for ensuring that these changes are made.

7.2.9 Step 7: Announce service standards

When the foregoing steps have been taken, the organisation will be ready to announce its service standards and launch its service delivery programme. There is no single right method for publishing standards: the key is that all customers and potential customers must know and understand what level and; finality of service they can expect to receive, and what recourse they have if the standard is not met. The method or methods adopted - more than one will usually be needed - must be tailored to the needs of different customers.

7.2.10 Step 8: Monitor delivery against standards. and publish results

The final step is to check whether services have met the standards that were set, to announce the results to customers, and to explain the reasons where the service has fallen short of what was promised. These results not only complete the accountability loop, but will provide valuable insights to guide further efforts to improve services in the future.

8. STATEMENTS OF PUBLIC SERVICE COMMITMENT

8.1 National and provincial departments are required to publish their Service Standards in a Statement of Public Service Commitment. The main aim is to make a

clear commitment to the Service Standards that citizens can expect, and to explain to citizens how the organisation will fulfill each of the Principles of Batho Pele. *Each Statement will be signed by the relevant Minister/MEC/executing authority who will be answerable for the delivery of the Commitment.*

8.2 Statements of Public Service Commitment should be short, simple and easy to understand. They should be published in relevant local languages. Strenuous efforts should be made to ensure that all users and potential users of public services are aware of the Statements, which are an essential tool to enable citizens to demand services in accordance with the Principles of Batho Pele. In widely spread rural areas, for example, radio and local community centres should be encouraged to publicise the Statements.

9. PILOT AREAS

Three pilot departments - the national Department of Health, the Department of Home Affairs, and the North-West provincial departments of local government & housing, health & developmental social welfare, finance & economic affairs, transport & civil aviation, and safety & security - have already embarked on service improvement programmes and should be ready to launch their service standards by the end of 1997. The purpose of the pilots is to demonstrate how the principles of public service delivery can work in practice; and thereby to create 'working models' from which other departments can learn. The implementation strategy outlined in paragraph 7 of this White Paper has been developed on the basis of the lessons learned from the three pilot departments.

10. DPSA'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING DEPARTMENTS' IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS

The DPSA, which is responsible for the Public Service transformation policy and, within that, for improving service delivery, has prepared a communications pack to assist national and provincial departments to disseminate the *Batho Pele* concept and the contents of this White Paper to staff at all levels. The DPSA has also in conjunction with the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology translated this White Paper into the following four additional official languages: Sesotho, isiZulu, Xitsonga and Afrikaans. These translated white papers can also be obtained from the Government Printer. The DPSA will provide leadership and expertise on an ongoing basis to guide and support national and provincial departments' implementation programmes, and to assist in capacity building. In conjunction with others, such as the South African Management Development Institute and the Joint Universities Public Management Education Trust, the DPSA project team will ensure that key line and staff officials within departments are assisted to develop expertise and share good practice.

11. MONITORING PROGRESS

The DPSA will work in conjunction with the Public Service Commission to ensure that departments' progress in implementing *Batho Pele* is systematically monitored. The DPSA will also evaluate the overall effectiveness of the *Batho Pele* initiative and submit regular reports to Parliament.

12. NO TIME TO LOSE

12.1 *National and provincial departments are required to begin implementing this White Paper immediately, with the aim of publishing their first Statements of Public Service Commitment during 1998.* However, the process of implementation will vary from department to department across the Public Service according to local conditions and capacities. Some departments may need to start with small, individual steps and build up gradually as experience develops, while other departments may be able to introduce a comprehensive programme from the outset.

12.2 Improving public service delivery is not a one-off exercise. It is an ongoing and dynamic process, because as standards are met, they must be progressively raised. This document marks only the first stage in that process. There is a great deal to do, and progress will sometimes be frustratingly slow; but the task is one of the most worthwhile and rewarding that the public service faces, and the need is urgent, so there is no time to lose. It is a process that must involve every public servant, at every level, in every department, whether they work behind the scenes or directly with the public.

12.3 *Batho Pele* has the potential to bring about a major change in the way that public services are delivered. This White Paper marks the start of a continuous process of improvement which will lead in time to public services that the public have a right to expect and that public servants are proud to provide. In this period of transformation and reform, when public servants- are facing constant changes and sometimes confusing challenges, *Batho Pele* reminds them that their main goal, their prime motivation, their most important task is service to their customers. The *Batho Pele* message is that the customer comes first, last and all the time. *Batho Pele* does not promise the impossible. It asks public servants to commit themselves to the limits of what is possible; and then to push on to the next goal. If the initiative is to achieve its aims, public servants at every level, from the very top to the most junior, must understand it and support it. *Batho Pele* must become the watchword of the new South African public service.

ANNEXURE A:

MODEL ANNUAL REPORT TO CITIZENS

DEPARTMENT OF.....

REPORT TO CITIZENS: [YEAR]

Who we are We are the Department of Our job is to [brief description of overall task]
What we do Our main services are: - - -

-
<p>Who is in charge</p> <p>The [Minister] [MEC] [other executing authority] is [name] He/she is an elected politician. He/she is responsible for directing the Department's activities in line with the [national] [provincial] Government's policies. The Director-General is [name] a public servant, appointed to ensure that the Department implements the [Minister's] [MEC's] [other executing authority's] policies efficiently and effectively.</p>
<p>Our standards - and how we met them</p> <p>Our service standards are set in consultation with our customers. These are our service standards, and the results we achieved [last year]:</p> <p>Standard</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>Results achieved</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>
<p>How we intend to improve services Next year we plan to improve our services still further:</p> <p>Current standard</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>Target for [date]</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>
<p>Our organisation and staffing</p> <p>We employ [XX] staff located in/ at [list location/s and numbers employed at each] .Additional information, e.g.:</p> <p>- [XX] of our staff are black, white, indian and coloured;</p> <p>- [XX] of our staff are women; we employ</p> <p>- [XX] persons with disabilities</p> <p>- [XX] of our staff are [language] speakers (list all languages spoken)</p>
<p>Our budget</p> <p>Our budget was [RXXX] [last year]. This is how we spent it:</p> <p>Staff salaries R</p> <p>Other running costs [equipment, training, etc] R</p> <p>Programmes R</p> <p>Other items R</p> <p>TOTAL R</p>
<p>For more information please call [name, telephone number] or write to [name] at [address/ e-mail address]</p>

ANNEXURE B

MODEL FORMAT FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME PLAN

NB: Shaded area will form the basis of the Statement of Public Service Commitment		
1. CUSTOMERS		2. SERVICES
1a. Primary customers (Indirect recipients of services)		2a. Main services provided
3. CONSULTANTS		
Customers (List each main group)	Existing consultation arrangements (method, frequency, how results are used and publicised)	New consultation arrangements from [date] (Method, frequency, how results will be used and publicised)
4. ACCESS		
Number of customers receiving services Service - - -	Current	Target from [date]
5. STANDARDS		
Service - - -	Current standard	Standard from [date]
6. INFORMATION		
Information provided about services No. of customers who receive information Method/s of communication Frequency Languages Contact name/number provided	Current	From [date]
7. COURTESY		
Written Behaviour Code Supervision arrangements Customer service incorporated in performance appraisal	Current	From [date]
8. OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY		
Information provided about organisation No. of customers who receive information Method/s of communication Frequency Languages Contact name/numbers provided	Current	From [date]
9. REDRESS		
Complaints system conforms with <i>Bastho Pele</i> White Paper requirements for	Current	From [date]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accessibility - speed - fairness - confidentiality - responsiveness - review - training <p>Head of organisation personally reviews complaints at regular intervals</p>		
10. VALUE FOR MONEY		
Areas where efficiency savings will be sought	Anticipated savings (time, money, increased efficiency)	How/when savings will be invested in improved services
11. HUMAN RESOURCES		
11a. Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All training programmes include service delivery components - Front-line staff trained in customer care 	Current	From [date]
11b. Encouragement and reward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schemes for encouraging staff to render improved service/identify new/better ways of delivering services 	Current	From [date]
12. STATEMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE COMMITMENT	Target date for publication	

Signed.....Minister

Date.....

Signed.....DG

Date.....

Department of.....