
Management Summary

In 1999 it was recognised that there was an opportunity to rationalise the procedures for pensions schemes registering with the parts of government involved. These are the, Inland Revenue (Contracted Out Employment Group (COEG) and the Pension Schemes Office (PSO)) and the Occupational Pension Regulatory Authority (Opra, sponsored by the Department of Social Security. The drivers behind this were the age and stability of the relevant computer systems in each organisation and the desire to provide an improved, joined up service for customers, with an e business option, in line with Government policy.

A Single Gateway into government utilising a single database across the organisations was thought to be the best way potentially to deliver this. To evaluate ideas and to identify issues needing attention a pilot was undertaken to test new ways of working with a small group of volunteer customers.

The pilot has validated the need for a single point of entry into government for the pension providers seeking approval of new schemes. It has also identified the need for processes between Inland Revenue and Department of Social Security be examined critically and urgently to allow for full and proper exchange of information on pension schemes to improve efficiency in both organisations.

There are some legislative issues regarding the creation of a joint database between the two Departments. But that should not preclude exchange of relevant data between the two databases providing it met the legislative requirements.

Use of a single application form as well as a single way into government was examined. This found favour with those taking part in the pilot and should be taken forward as a replacement product for PSO and Opra.

The pilot has also validated the value in working with the pension industry to develop the new registration and the maintenance function. Feedback from the pension providers who took part in the pilot was very favourable. It was appreciated that government was seen to be making an effort to listen to their concerns and recognise their involvement in the process. It has been indicated that the pension industry would encourage further involvement in this and other projects involving contact with pension schemes.

Electronic entry into government was identified as being a positive way forward by both government and the pension industry. There are a variety of projects being undertaken by government that involves electronic submission of data. A single entry point of this type would provide benefits for both government and pension providers; and because it would require an examination of the (often different) processes in each organisation, could point to more efficient ways of working.

1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 Three separate parts of Government are currently dealing with the registration of occupational pension schemes. The Pensions Scheme Office (PSO) Inland Revenue, to give tax approval, the Occupational Pension Regulatory Authority (Opra) Department of Social Security (DSS), to register, and the Contracted-out Employments Group (COEG) Inland Revenue, to approve contracting out from the state pension scheme. Prior to April 1999 COEG was part of the Contributions Agency, an agency of DSS.
- 1.2 Each Government organisation maintain their separate databases which hold information about pension schemes, and pension schemes are required to correspond with each organisation separately when seeking approval for registration and notifying changes in circumstances. Employers, pension administrators and pension trustees also have to provide information. In addition, the three organisations have processes in place to exchange information on pension schemes with each other.
- 1.3 This tripartite approach to registering and administering pension scheme applications creates an administrative problem, both to the pensions industry, employers and Government, and gives potential cause for confusion and complaint.
- 1.4 The merger of the Contributions Agency (CA) with the Inland Revenue (IR) offered the opportunity to investigate the scope for greater integration between PSO and COEG. It was also identified that greater integration could take place with Opra, while any requirements for the Financial Intermediaries and Claims Office (FICO) could also be considered.
- 1.5 Talks between PSO, COEG and Opra showed that some of the databases used by Opra and PSO were in need of replacement, as it was becoming very difficult to maintain them due to age and system stability. Due to the similar nature of registration a decision was made to examine the feasibility of rationalising the processes. Although the database used by COEG was identified as not needing replacement it was thought that this function could be included in a new database.
- 1.6 A business investigation review initiated on 5 March 1999 concluded "there would be an opportunity to improve the current situation in pension registration and regulation by creating a new Central Pension Schemes Registry". This option became the 'Joint Pension Schemes System Project' (JPSS).
- 1.7 As part of this overall project, a separate but linked piece of work was commissioned from Business Services Consulting – The 'Occupational Pension Data Links Project' (OPDL Project).
- 1.8 The OPDL project was to set up, pilot and test a single point of entry into Government, for the receipt and issue of relevant documentation relating to the approval, registration and maintenance of Occupational Scheme details, both to and from the providers and the respective Government offices. Issue of levy invoices

continued to be directly from the Registry. This was to be known as the Gateway Office.

- 1.9 A bid for £100,000 to fund the OPDL pilot made by PSO from the Invest to Save budget to run this project. £75,000 for the running of the pilot and £25,000 for consultancy.

Terms of Reference

- 1.10 The following terms of reference were agreed for the OPDL Project:

- Identify processes within COEG, Opra, and PSO required for the development of a single gateway to manage the flow of Occupational Pension Schemes registration and maintenance information to and from the provider.
- In conjunction with PSO, COEG, Opra and representatives from the pension provider, develop amalgamated forms for use in the combined process;
- Representation from the pension industry to be agreed and arranged by the Project Board, PSO, COEG and Opra;
- Pilot the processes and forms with PSO, COEG, Opra and the pension provider;
- To feed into a larger project looking at the development of a single computer system serving all organisations;
- To take forward the government's Modernisation Programme and provide a system which assists government's Welfare reform for pensions;

- 1.11 In addition to the above terms of reference the Project Steering Committee agreed the project would utilise existing IT, and would involve the participation of three Pension providers.

2.0 Methodology and deliverables

Initial Project Review

- 2.1 As a precursor to the project, Business Services Consulting carried out an initial scoping review. This took the form of:
- Assessing the requirements set out within the Spend to Save bid;
 - Meeting with all key stakeholders and relevant business parties (PSO / COEG / Opra / FICO / Business Development Centre (BDC)) to clarify their views / expectations of the project.

OPDL Project

- 2.2 Business Services Consulting were commissioned to co-ordinate the setting up, piloting and testing of an Occupational Pensions Gateway section based at PSO Nottingham.
- 2.3 The Gateway Office was to be the location for the receipt and issue of relevant documentation relating to the approval, registration and maintenance of Occupational Pension Scheme details both to and from the providers and the respective Government offices. Issue of levy invoices continued to be directly from the Registry.
- 2.4 The information and issues identified within this project were to inform the development of the larger JPSS project.
- 2.5 To achieve these requirement, Business Services Consulting:
- Reviewed ongoing JPSS working papers, assessing and accounting for any possible impact on the OPDL Gateway Project;
 - Interviewed / met with all business parties to identify their respective needs and requirements, assess their current IT systems, and collate copies of relevant forms;
 - Liaised with business units and project board, to identify and invite 3 pension providers to join the pilot exercise;
 - Met with all providers to brief them on the project, and set up communication channels;
 - Reviewed all forms in current use by COEG, Opra and PSO for approval and registration of pension schemes , discussing these where required with the business;
 - Reviewed forms in current use for updating scheme information held by COEG, Opra and PSO;

- Examined legislation restrictions placed on the Government organisations relating to information provision by Pension Providers, Scheme Administrators, Trustees and employers to identify issues that could cause risk to the project;
- Developed a Single Application Form for use by Pension Providers to use with the Gateway Office for approval and registration of new pension schemes;
- Developed draft Gateway Office processes and procedures to deal with the transfer of information to and from the Pension Providers, and identified what information would be required on a Gateway Registry Database;
- Maintained regular liaison with business and providers during the development of form / procedures, copying them into the respective draft versions for information and comment;
- Held workshops with business representatives to discuss, amend, and agree final version of form and procedures;
- Co-ordinated the development of a Gateway Registry Database, provided on existing IT by Business Services Consulting IT specialist to enable receipt of application forms and maintenance forms to be tracked during the pilot;
- Co-ordinate development of the new Gateway Office, via:
 - Liaison with PSO to organise staff, IT and accommodation
 - Installation of Registry Database on existing IT
 - Facilitated workshop with Gateway staff to ensure they understand procedures (including the opportunity to meet with staff from the other business areas to clarify what checks should be carried out on received information / forms)
- Kept all parties informed of project progress via ongoing copying of information, and regular kit meetings as required;
- Attending the Project Board, and inputting verbal and written reports as required, gaining their approval of the respective options, and forwarding information / issues that could inform the JPSS project;
- Drafting OPDL Project Success Criteria – a series of criteria were identified upon which the success of the project could be reviewed and any issues relevant to JPSS identified. These were discussed and agreed with all parties and the Project Board.

OPDL Project Review

2.6 Review meetings were held with all parties to evaluate the project. These were based on the agreed success criteria. To assist the review and to ensure the review interviews with each party followed the same format a questionnaire template was designed as a benchmark.

- 2.7 In addition to the interviews data from records kept on the Gateway database was compared with those held by Opra and COEG for the pilot material.

3.0 Review

Initial Project Review

3.1 The initial project review identified the following key factors:

- The key stakeholders were PSO / Opra / COEG / Pension Providers;
- FICO had no requirement to feed directly into the project, but were to be kept informed as work developed;
- The expectations of the project were:
 - To set up, pilot and review a Gateway team based at PSO in Nottingham, for the receipt and issue of all relevant documentation relating to the approval, registration and maintenance of Occupational Scheme details, both to and from the providers and the respective Government offices;
 - To review the current use of forms / information within the business, and identify and pilot joint forms and information sharing where possible;
 - To provide regular feedback to all parties and the Project Board, including the drafting of a final 'Project Assessment Report', and where required, feeding information / issues into the JPSS project.

OPDL Project

3.2 During the course of the project, the following successes were recorded:

- Three Pension providers were successfully brought on board - Legal and General, James Hay & Co and Scottish Amicable;
- New joint application form (OPDL1) was developed and made available to the providers for use in the pilot (see Appendix 4);
- Maintenance forms / letters were considered, and the Gateway staff trained to identify which areas these should be forwarded to;
- New business processes for the Gateway were successfully developed and tested in a live environment (see Appendix 3);
- Gateway Registry Database successfully developed, installed and utilised;
- The pilot supported the identification of issues to inform JPSS;

Customer Satisfaction

- 3.3 The decision to include representatives from the pension industry was considered a vital element to the success of this pilot. Without them ideas could not have been discussed or tried. This interaction with the providers of pension information has allowed us to develop customer relations outside of the more formal arrangement of the PSO Customer Forum.
- 3.4 Overall the level of satisfaction indicated by the pension providers during discussions varied, as was expected. It was felt that the pilot was run at the wrong time of the year to really benefit the trial of a joint application form and the time allowed for the pilot too short. To obtain the full benefit the pilot should have run for at least eight months, if not for a full year. These thoughts were echoed by the pilots other customers, COEG, Opra and PSO. To obtain maximum benefit of testing a new application form it should be trialed during the peak periods of application submission. This has been found to be between April and October.
- 3.5 That aside the pension providers thought that they have benefited by being involved in the pilot. Two of the providers have informed BS Consulting that they have identified improvements to be made to their internal processes by the introduction of the joint application form or by being involved in discussions with the Project Steering Committee (PSC) or with the consultants during the pilot.
- 3.6 All three providers were asked during the evaluation if they would like to act as Users during the JPSS project. The intention being that ideas about the interfaces being thought about for JPSS could be referred to Users to identify any problems that could be encountered by the pension industry when the system is rolled out. All three providers said that they would like to take up this offer. This is a good indicator of their satisfaction of the pilot.
- 3.7 It is suggested that the PSC build on the foundations laid down with these providers. The providers have obtained some benefit from the pilot and could in turn provide some benefit to the JPSS project by identifying other interested parties within the pensions industry that could be added to a Users list. This could help reduce the problems envisaged by remaining only with the current providers. **To this end it is recommended that Jim Kitson be used by the PSC as a liaison point for JPSS and the pensions industry.**
- 3.8 Opra and PSO have indicated that they were satisfied with the pilot and that there were no negative impacts on their internal processes. There were no obvious benefits to COEG during the pilot as the procedures that had been agreed did introduce an element of "double handling". However, this was recognised by all those involved in the pilot as being a necessity to aid the success of the pilot. The assumptions and principles underpinning the pilot were fully supported by COEG staff who well recognised the benefits for the customer and business. It was identified that staff from one provider had not been aware of the changed process when contacted. As the pilot was run with reliance of operations being controlled by the relevant pension providers it highlights the problem of educating the people involved in the process.

- 3.9 During the period prior to the pilot it was announced that the responsibility for application and maintenance work currently being submitted by pension providers to COEG was to be transferred to PSO when JPSS was fully functional. However, as COEG would still have responsibility for this work during the period of the pilot there was a need for an interface between the Gateway Office and COEG.
- 3.10 As a decision has been made by the PSC to continue with the Gateway Office until JPSS is introduced the COEG interface needs to remain in place and possibly monitored more closely. Action was taken during the evaluation talks to educate the provider as to what maintenance forms should be sent through the Gateway Office and what is not considered as maintenance. As the provider has regular meetings with COEG it is thought that any further problems could be dealt with directly between these parties.
- 3.11 This is a problem that could recur if other providers are used during the development of JPSS to test any processes. To assist the Gateway Office identify which forms are being erroneously referred through them it is suggested that COEG provide the Gateway with a list of the most common forms that relate to areas outside of their Elections section. The Gateway has been sent a copy of the log kept by COEG that highlights some of these.

Registration Document

- 3.12 To rationalise the current COEG, Opra and PSO approach to registration it was identified that a single application form was desirable. A single form was developed based upon information currently required by government for registration purposes. The form was designed to reduce the burden on the pensions industry by splitting the application into 4 distinct sections. The first section captured generic information required by COEG, Opra and PSO. The following sections captured information that was distinct for each. This design would allow registration data to be sent from the Gateway Office to COEG, Opra or PSO when that distinct part was received.
- 3.13 The design also took into account concerns from Opra that often registration with them was overlooked by pension providers. Initial talks prior to the start of the pilot showed that Opra spent a lot of time and effort in obtaining registration of schemes. In the period April 1999 to April 2000 Opra dealt with 14,128 items that were mainly to do with trying to get scheme registered. To try to avoid this the information distinct to Opra was designed to be the second section of the form. It was recognised that for tax approval with PSO that the majority of schemes are likely to be single member but by utilising a design such as this schemes with more than one member should always be captured for Opra.
- 3.14 It was mentioned by the pension providers that they have to use different references for each part of government they contact. Having a single reference for each scheme would be of benefit to them. Having a single reference should also provide some benefits to government making identification of schemes easier. To this end it was recommended that the PSO reference was one that all parties could use. It is

- recognised that COEG and NIRS2 would still require CON and ECON referencing but that any new database could take this into account.
- 3.15 The new form was given to the various government stakeholders to seek approval as well as to the pension providers involved in the pilot. Comments on the initial design were taken on board and the form altered accordingly. One comment made by the pension providers was that often forms, in particular from PSO, do not make clear what information is required. The pilot form took this into account and the inclusion of guidance notes in the form was found to be beneficial by two of the providers taking part. On final approval the form was issued to the pension providers for use.
 - 3.16 Since the issue of the form in October 2000 the Gateway Office received only two applications using this form. This was very disappointing, particularly as the providers involved indicated that they would expect numerous applications to be made. One provider indicated 30 to 40 per month. When questioned about the lack of take up it became apparent that there were several reasons.
 - 3.17 One provider stated that they did not have to submit their applications until April 2001 and that this was their normal approach to seeking tax approval.
 - 3.18 The second provider, although having approximately 50% of their schemes sold through Independent Financial Advisors (IFAs), had not told the IFAs of the form and were not able to distribute the form to their Point of Sales staff (PoS) through their normal stationery channels.
 - 3.19 The third provider had informed staff of the existence of the form but had to rely on staff requesting it.
 - 3.20 PSO were asked to check their records for new applications from 2nd October 2000 to 13th November 2000. During this period one of the participating provider submitted 9 new schemes and another submitted 28 new schemes all on PS176/177 forms. Further investigation found that these applications were started quite a time before the joint form was issued. Interestingly the two applications received on the new joint application form were from IFAs working for the last provider. This re-enforced the need to have a full understanding of the different ways pension providers operate.
 - 3.21 Although only two completed applications were received during the pilot period this has shown that the form needs further amending, on minor points, even though it had been circulated for evaluation prior to issue. However, all three providers have indicated that they prefer the joint application form to the previous single forms. The new form has benefited one provider in shortening the training time for new staff as the form guides users through completion and is clear in what information is required. A joint form should also help providers in their stationery requisitions, as they would only need to hold one or two forms instead of several as at present. **It is recommended that PSO and Opra develop a joint application form for use by a single point of entry into government that captures information that allows registration.**

- 3.22 Use of a single application form does not have to rely on the existence of JPSS to be used. If for some reason there was a delay of any length before JPSS was ready pension providers could still use such a form as it is seen as an improvement on those that are used at present.
- 3.23 The pilot has shown that the working practices of pension providers vary enormously and that we should not expect private industry to be able to alter their working practices to suit our needs at short notice. This is not to say that we should not expect them to be flexible but that government and industry should work together when amending working practices. The involvement of IFAs to such a great extent needs to be taken into account by the main project, as does the cyclical nature of pension applications.
- 3.24 The pilot has also shown that to fully test any new form or process in a live environment they should be released at a peak time of the pension application cycle. This being between April and October. Wider piloting of forms or processes could also be achieved by extending the number of participating Practitioners. **It is recommended that this cycle be taken into account when planning future projects involving pension providers.**
- 3.25 It was also identified that the COEG element formed a large part of the form but that this would not be used often as the number of employers' contracting-out for the first time is reducing, despite the Government's policy to encourage contracting-out. Indications from the pension industry suggest that this is due to other products now being available for employers such as Group Personal Pensions and the introduction of Stakeholder Pensions. This decline in applications has been confirmed by COEG. For the period April 1999 to March 2000 a total of 271 applications were received for contracted out schemes. The form then could be redesigned to exclude the COEG part but to include an indicator to show that such an application is desired.

Work Processes

- 3.26 The objectives of the pilot were to test and refine new business processes to create an end to end approach for registration, approval and maintenance. The creation of a Gateway Office went some way towards this but was not fully tested due to the lack of applications seeking approval.
- 3.27 Registration was tested by the development of a joint application form. Due to the number of forms used by government for maintenance of schemes it was decided design a process to deal with these rather than to rationalise the number of forms. However upon examination of the forms used there is a certain amount of duplication in maintenance requirements. Examples of this are change of employer address or name, change of scheme name or address.
- 3.28 Discussions with those taking part in the pilot showed that the processes operated satisfactorily. Opra benefited from the process as there were two schemes identified that they were not aware of and also some changes in address. By being notified of

- this information from the Gateway Office Opra can improve its efficiency in Levy collection.
- 3.29 Maintenance information was received in the Gateway Office that identified some issues, in particular with COEG maintenance forms. The maintenance aspect also highlighted the difference in Tax and National Insurance legislation. It was found that PSO required specific signatories on maintenance forms whereas Opra and COEG could accept a different signatory. PSO are very restricted as to who can provide maintenance information compared with COEG and Opra. The proposed transfer of work from COEG has provided the opportunity to examine ways of working around this legislative problem by having all maintenance information requirements for COEG and PSO reviewed, although a permanent solution lies in altering legislation, perhaps aligning PSO with COEG.
- 3.30 This proposed transfer also brought about another issue that has been discussed with pension providers during the evaluation. It has been identified that a number of forms used by COEG and PSO relating to maintenance of schemes duplicate each other. To ease the burden on the pensions industry these forms should be identified and amalgamated, it is anticipated that this would be one outcome from any such review as mentioned in the previous paragraph. This is a process that needs to be undertaken and completed before responsibility is transferred to PSO.
- 3.31 This work does not rely on the existence of JPSS and so can take place outside of that project. This approach has already been undertaken with the introduction of Stakeholders Pensions and would seem a logical step prior to the introduction of a system such as JPSS. Work has already been undertaken in the JPSS project on forms to identify any duplication and to produce a redesign that is suitable for the needs of PSO and the pension industry. **However, it is recommended that the process of redesign should also utilise users in the pension industry as discussions with representatives have shown that they have identified a need for clarification in the forms currently used.** The redesign would also provide a work around the legislative issues identified and would not be affected by any delay in the building of JPSS as it is only the medium on how information is provided that would be altered and not the associated processes within government.

Information Technology

- 3.32 The pilot was to explore the use of electronic commerce including the ability to move cases amongst organisations electronically. A restriction placed on the pilot was that existing IT structures had to be used. This was identified at an early stage as not being feasible to test due to numerous reasons, the primary one being the lack of connections between government offices.
- 3.33 The pilot was also to examine the feasibility of government receiving applications and maintenance information electronically. Discussions were held with the three pension providers to identify issues in supplying applications and maintenance information by this method. The main concern of the providers was over the level of confidentiality

the government could offer and the security of the data. At the time this was something that the pilot could not offer a solution to. There were additional concerns on issues such as file formats to be used and accessibility by staff employed by the providers.

3.34 Since then government has provided a secure method of transfer of data into three government systems that would appear to satisfy the industry's need for security and confidentiality. This is through the Government Gateway. Currently the service is open to users to provide information to Customs and Excise, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as well as Inland Revenue. It is recognised that the JPSS team spoke to people within Inland Revenue on this subject during the pilot. **It is recommended that the JPSS pilot build on discussions with the Government Gateway to establish requirements for an electronic link into JPSS. It is also recommended that technical aspects of the Government Gateway be discussed with pension providers to ensure that this form of electronic entry is satisfactory for their requirements.**

3.35 In the mean time it has been agreed with two of the providers that they are to try using an e-mail link into the Gateway Office for the sending of general correspondence. The third provider has informed the pilot that they are restricted in the use of e-mail by their system provider and could only use e-mail if files were encrypted to a standard acceptable by their provider. This is something that the pilot was not able to undertake.

Turnaround Times

3.36 The pilot set targets for the Gateway Office for issuing items received from the Practitioners to the relevant government office. Targets were also set for the Gateway Office to issue outgoing post from government offices to the Practitioners. These targets were met. The introduction of the Gateway Office added to the interface processes between government and pension provider thereby making it difficult to improve turnaround times. However, in the stakeholders offices turnaround times were found to be favourable for the three pension providers involved. It was found that government was treating items received through the Gateway Office in a different way to items received in the normal manner. The providers did not know of this different process so their impression was affected. If the Gateway Office were to receive applications for all schemes seeking approval and maintenance notifications turnaround times would suffer without additional resources. Having said that, the transfer of work to PSO should alleviate this.

Internal Processes

3.37 Improvements in internal processes for the pension providers have already been commented upon. As well as improving training the providers have been able to examine their procedures for completing applications for scheme registration. They have indicated that the form used in the pilot has provided them with the opportunity

to streamline their processes and provide efficiencies for them. This is also seen as an improvement in customer service.

- 3.38 The pilot has shown that government is not adversely affected by the introduction of a single entry point and that alterations to existing processes are not required outside of the Gateway Office if government were to continue with the present arrangement.
- 3.39 The pilot has identified that there would be efficiencies for government if there were a joint database as there would not be a requirement outside of the Gateway Office to input registration data for COEG or Opra. In addition to initial registration data maintenance information received by one part of government could be passed to the others ensuring that all parts were working with up to date records.

Relationships

- 3.40 All parties involved in the pilot have indicated that relationships between them have improved. COEG thought that the pilot has helped participants to understand the needs and requirements of the other parties involved and this had been strengthened through the developing JPSS. One provider has strengthened links to government and has developed a higher level of customer service than existed before. They are now having discussions with government on how they are developing their systems to allow government to get an insight into their business.
- 3.41 This development in relationship between government and pension industry can only benefit both parties. **To this end we re-iterate the need for the project to bring on board other pension providers as Users for testing forms and processes to be introduced.**

Issues Identified

- 3.42 The first concern of the pilot was of the difference in legislation that COEG and PSO had to operate under. The proposed transfer of responsibility from COEG to PSO has provided the means to work around this issue by being able to amend maintenance forms relating to contracted-out schemes to meet with the legislative restrictions placed on PSO without it becoming a possible “show stopper” for the main project. Ways of working around have already been discussed (Para 3.29 refers).
- 3.43 The second issue of concern is the legislation surrounding the formation of Opra. It has been noted that due to primary legislation Opra have to remain as owners of the Registry and that by being a joint owner this requirement would not be satisfied. This issue was mentioned in meetings at an early stage but appears to have been sidelined due to other imposing issues such as who should undertake the development of the database.
- 3.44 Advice has been sought from legal experts on the legislation surrounding the forming of Opra and the ownership of the Register. The pilot has not been able to identify a quick way around what appears to be an insurmountable wall. If legal and policy

- experts cannot find a way of allowing Opra to be joint owners of registration data then Opra has to withdraw from being a joint owner of JPSS.
- 3.45 Concern has been made on the length of time taken to get to this stage. Opra have identified the need to have ownership of the Registry due to primary legislation. To try and resolve this issue by amending primary legislation would probably lead to a delay of three or four years in developing JPSS. As the Computerised Registration and Approval (CORA) database and the Register are in need of urgent replacement this course of action is not sensible.
- 3.46 This said, there are still methods that can be used to enable a single point of entry into government and for a single application form to be used. Development of JPSS could run along side that of the development of a new Registry and the two databases linked electronically to allow data that follows the current legislation restriction and the Memorandum of Understanding to be passed automatically. **It is recommended that implementation of the JPSS should be based initially on Opra (Registry) developing their accounting and database separately from PSO and COEG functionality. The projects should plan to exchange data at a later stage. It is also recommended that Opra continue to be included in all development procedures to allow full connectivity to exist between any developed systems.**
- 3.47 Legislation allows PSO to act as an Agent for Opra and collect the information required for the Registry on their behalf. Information on the joint application form that is distinct to Opra can be recorded by PSO on behalf of Opra, as it is not subject to the Data Protection Act. This would actually fit in with their business requirements, as it would provide PSO with historical information on schemes and employers. At present CORA cannot do this. Information recorded on JPSS could then be fed to the Register.
- 3.48 This would ensure that only schemes meeting Opra's requirements for registration would be transferred in addition to both businesses working from up to date synchronised information.
- 3.49 At present Opra receives a disk from PSO on a fortnightly basis that provides details of new schemes. On receipt of the disk an invitation to register is sent to the schemes listed. Discussions with one provider showed that Opra were sending these invitations where there was only one member in the scheme. The provider then has to inform Opra that registration is not required as the scheme is for less than two members. Opra have stated that the disk should only contain details of schemes where there is more than one member, the filtering being done by PSO. **Automating this transfer of information from PSO to Opra should remove this potentially error prone process and reduce the burden on pension providers.**
- 3.50 The only "show stopper" to this approach would be if Opra made a decision to capture personal data about Trustees. If this were something Opra wished to include on their registration document then PSO would be restrained by the Data Protection Act on acting as Agent for them.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 A point of liaison between the PSC, JPSS development team and Users from the pension industry needs to exist. It is recommended that Jim Kitson be used by the PSC as a liaison point for JPSS and the pensions industry. (Para 3.7)**
- 4.2 It is recommended that PSO and Opra develop a joint application form for use by a single point of entry into government that captures information that allows registration. (Para 3.21)**
- 4.3 The pilot has also shown that to fully test any new form or process in a live environment they should be released at a peak time of the pension application cycle. This being between April and October. It is recommended that this cycle be taken into account when planning future projects involving pension providers. Wider piloting could also be achieved by extending the number of Practitioner participants. (Para 3.24)**
- 4.4 It is recommended that the process of redesign should also utilise users in the pension industry as discussions with representatives have shown that they have identified a need for clarification in the forms currently used. (Para 3.31)**
- 4.5 It is recommended that the JPSS pilot build on discussions with the Government Gateway to establish requirements for an electronic link into JPSS. It is also recommended that technical aspects of the Government Gateway be discussed with pension providers to ensure that this form of electronic entry is satisfactory for their requirements. (Para 3.34)**
- 4.6 It is recommended that the project bring on board other pension providers as Users for piloting forms and processes to be introduced. This could be best achieved by asking the present providers to identify interested parties. (Para 3.42)**
- 4.7 It is recommended that implementation of the JPSS should be based initially on Opra (Registry) developing their accounting and database separately from PSO and COEG functionality. The projects should plan to exchange data at a later stage. It is also recommended that Opra continue to be included in all development procedures to allow full connectivity to exist between any developed systems. (Para 3.46)**

5.0 Acknowledgements

Business Services Consulting would like to acknowledge the work put in by all concerned and thank those involved in the pilot project for all their support and assistance. Everyone from the Project Board and Business Units through to the Pension Providers gave freely their time and knowledge. Without their co-operation and participation the OPDL pilot would not have achieved what it did. Their input is much appreciated.

Occupational Pensions Data Links – Pilot Success Criteria

Customer Satisfaction –

The Gateway (Single Entry Point) should, in the view of all parties on the project, provide a more effective channel to and from government for the provision of pension provider information.

This criterion will cover Customer Satisfaction for all parties regarding the development, implementation and use of the Gateway pilot.

It will seek to identify the initial customer expectations of the pilot and how successful it was in meeting these.

Also, while it is realised that there are specific criteria linked to the form, processes and relationships, this criterion can be used to:

- Provide a summary overview of customer input (opportunity / level / improvements) to the pilot, and the overall pilot timescales (development / operation).
- Canvass information from those customers who were involved only in an overview capacity.

Registration Document –

The registration document(s) should fully meet the needs of the pension providers and the business and be as clear, concise and user friendly as possible, with no duplication of data.

This criterion will focus primarily on the development and use of the ‘Registration Form’.

Also, there are obvious links to the ‘Work Processes’ criterion, re. use of this form and lessons learned for the development of other forms.

Work Processes –

A set of single gateway working processes should be developed prior to the pilot. These will be tested and modified as appropriate throughout the life span of the pilot so that streamlined processes evolve.

This criterion will focus upon the use and effectiveness of the Single Entry Point, the type and volumes of information received, and the Development / use of the Gateway procedures.

It is realised that some of the issues / feedback around Communication, will link closely with the ‘Relationships’ criterion.

Information Technology –

Existing Information Technology should be used within the processes to its full potential.

This criterion will focus on:

- The development / use of current IT during the pilot
- Highlight any identified issues / problems with the planned use of IT during the pilot

This will focus on IT issues such as the Gateway database and e-mail links between Gateway / Back Offices / Providers.

Turnaround Times –

Information coming into and emanating from the single gateway should be processed within 2 days.

This criterion will consider the suggested turnaround time for information passing through the Gateway – was it successful and how did it effect the customers.

Issues Identified –

Information and issues emanating from the OPDL project should inform the progress of the Review of Functionality within COEG, Opra and PSO Project.

As identified issues relating to the pilot will clearly be picked up by within the other criteria, this criterion will focus on the procedures / systems put in place to identify and address issues as they arose during the course of the pilot (monitoring and review procedures).

Internal Processes –

There should be improvements in processing applications for all parties.

While aspects of this will have been covered in other criteria, this will provide an overview of the Gateway's effect on the customer's internal processes.

Relationships –

There should be improvements in communication and working relationships between all parties – Gateway /COEG/Opra/PSO/Providers.

This criterion will focus on the communication and working relationships between all parties.