



Report on the
Evaluation of Performance
and Compliance with the
Batho Pele Principle of Redress

Public Service Commission

October 2006

Vision

The Public Service Commission is an independent and impartial body created by the Constitution, 1996, to enhance excellence in governance within the public service by promoting a professional and ethical environment and adding value to a public administration that is accountable, equitable, efficient, effective, corruption-free and responsive to the needs of the people of South Africa.

Mission

The Public Service Commission aims to promote the constitutionally enshrined democratic principles and values in the public service by investigating, monitoring, evaluating, communicating and reporting on public administration. Through research processes, it will ensure the promotion of excellence in governance and the delivery of affordable and sustainable quality services.

Evaluation of Performance and Compliance with the *Batho Pele* Principle of Redress



Published in the Republic of South Africa by:

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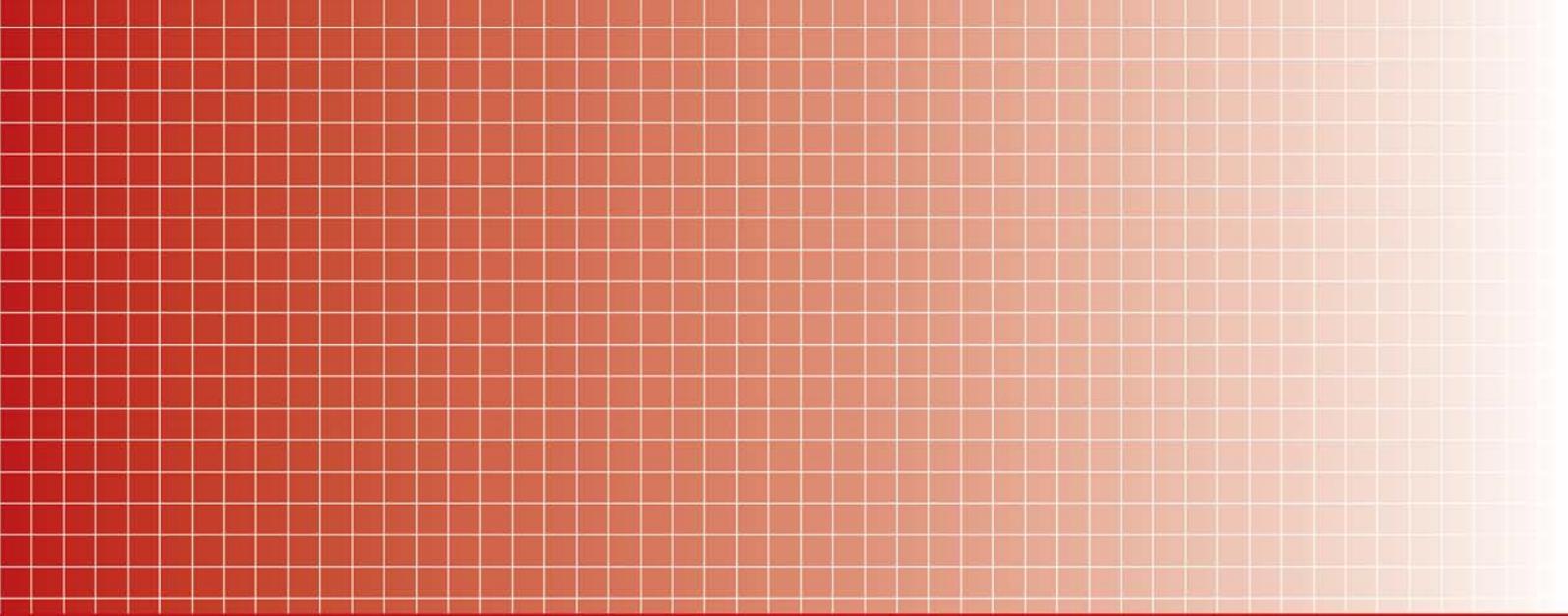
National Anti-Corruption Hotline Number: 0800 701 701 (Toll-Free)

Compiled by: Branch: Monitoring and Evaluation

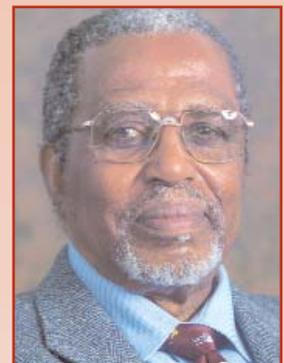
Distribution by: Directorate: Communication and Information Services

ISBN: 0-621-36887-3
RP: 234/2006





Foreword



The *Batho Pele White Paper* on Transforming Public Service Delivery published on 18 September 1997, states that “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 Africans. Improving service delivery is therefore the ultimate goal of the Public Service transformation programme”.

One of the key principles of the *Batho Pele White Paper* is Redress. This principle requires that once a 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. Redress is also a key element of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act.

I present this Report on the Public Service’s performance and compliance with the *Batho Pele* Principle of Redress. The study included national and provincial departments with an overall response rate of 81%.

From the study, the Public Service Commission notes that there is partial compliance with the *Batho Pele* principle of redress. Although most departments have some form of procedures for handling complaints in place, a great deal more needs to be done to formalize systems in this regard. This includes developing written guidelines, establishing mechanisms for recording complaints, conducting regular monitoring and evaluation to improve service delivery, and reviewing the standards and complaints procedures to determine if they meet the departments’ redress and client care objectives.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sangweni".

PROF. STAN S. SANGWENI
CHAIRPERSON: PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Contents

Foreword	1
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Acronyms	vii
1. Executive Summary	1
1.1 Background to the Study	2
1.2 Main Findings	2
1.3 Conclusion and Recommendations	4
2. Introduction	5
2.1 Background to the Study	6
3. Context	9
3.1 The <i>Batho Pele</i> Principles	10
3.2 Constitutional and Legislative Context	11
3.3 Previous Research on the Implementation and Promotion of <i>Batho Pele</i>	12
3.4 The <i>Batho Pele</i> Principle of Redress	15
4. Methodology	17
4.1 Method	19
4.2 Limitations of the Study	20
4.3 Presentation of Findings	21
5. Key Findings on Redress	23
5.1 Understanding of <i>Batho Pele</i>	24
5.2 Developing a Complaints Procedure	25
5.3 Training of Staff	28
5.4 Accessibility of System	30
5.5 Dealing with Complaints	37
5.6 Recording and Analysing Information	45
5.7 Service Improvements	52

6.	Good Practice Model and Benchmarking	57
6.1	A Model of Good Practice for Redress	58
6.2	Performance on Redress in Relation to the Good Practice Model	60
6.3	Benchmarking Redress	61
6.4	Challenges and Gaps in Implementing Redress	64
7.	Conclusion and Recommendations	67
8.	Annexure 1: Government Clusters	72
9.	Annexure 2: Participating Departments	73
10.	Annexure 3: Good Practice Checklist	74
11.	Appendix 1: Bibliography	78
12.	Appendix 2: Questionnaire	79

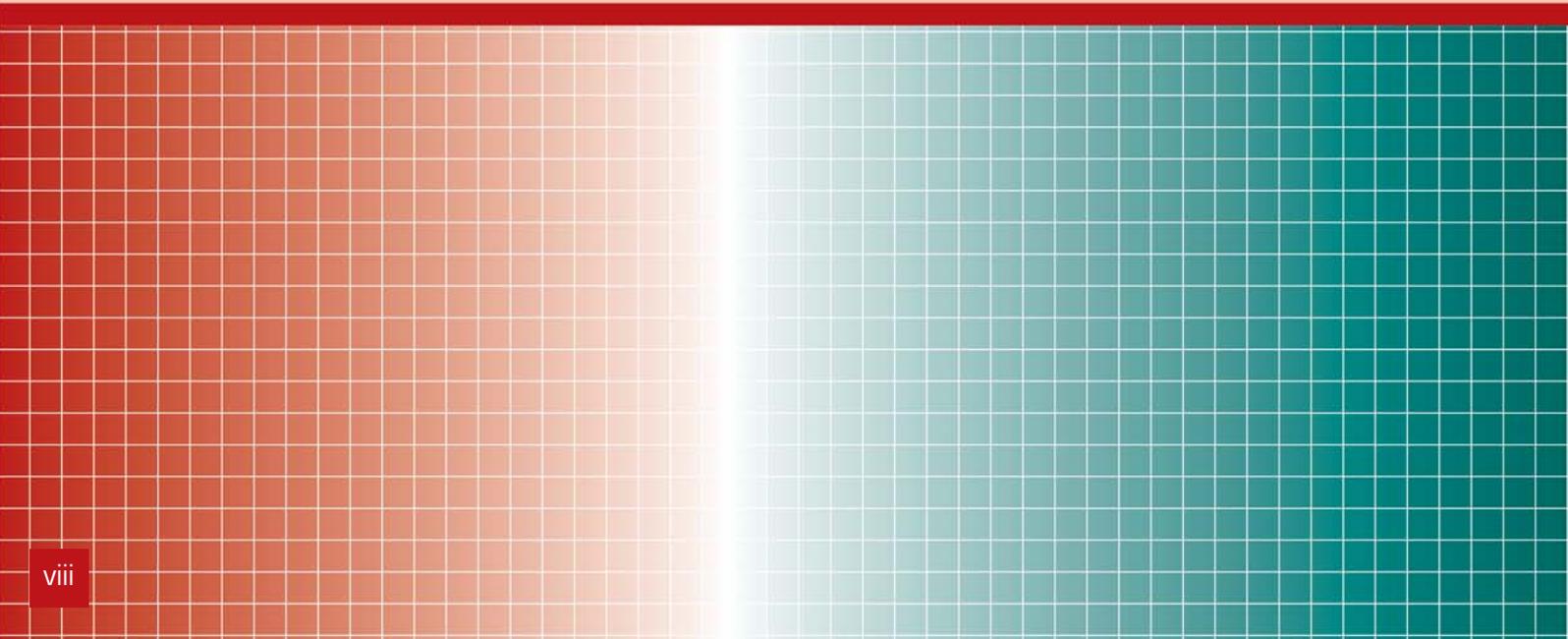
Acknowledgements

The Public Service Commission acknowledges the following people and organizations who have contributed to this report:

- German Agency for Technical Cooperation for providing technical and financial assistance to this project.
- Community Agency for Social Enquiry for its assistance with the conducting of the study and producing of the report.
- All the respondents in the various government departments who gave their time to provide information for this report.
- Staff of the OPSC who assisted in undertaking this.

Acronyms

C A S E	-	Community Agency for Social Enquiry
DPSA	-	Department of Public Service and Administration
EXCO	-	Executive Committee
GTZ	-	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
HOD	-	Head of Department
ICD	-	Independent Complaints Directorate
ICT	-	Information Communication Technology
OPSC	-	Office of the Public Service Commission
PAJA	-	Promotion of Administrative Justice Act
PSC	-	Public Service Commission
SAPS	-	South African Police Service



Chapter One

Executive Summary

1.1 Background to the Study

In terms of section 196 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the Public Service Commission (PSC) has a mandate to promote the constitutional values set out in section 195 and to propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance within the Public Service. To this end, the PSC monitors the level and quality of government services and promotes a culture of access, openness and transparency that in turn should build more confidence and trust between the Public Service and the public it serves. In line with its constitutional duty, the PSC set out in September 2005 to evaluate the performance of departments with regard to implementing redress in accordance with the *Batho Pele White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery* published on 18 September 1997. Redress is also a key element of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act. In terms of the seventh *Batho Pele* principle listed in the *Batho Pele White Paper*, redress entails the following:

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.

All national and provincial departments were included in the study, with the exception of the National Intelligence Agency, the South African National Defence Force, the South African Secret Service, the Office of the Presidency, and the South African Management Development Institute.

A standardised, self-completion questionnaire that covered a broad range of policy, implementation and monitoring issues was distributed to designated contact people in each department. Departments were given three months from September to November 2005 to complete the questionnaires and provide supporting documentation. The overall response rate was 81%.

1.2 Main Findings

The main finding included an extraction of examples of good practice. There is partial compliance with the *Batho Pele* principle of redress. While most departments have some form of complaints handling procedures in place, a great deal more needs to be done in terms of formalising, monitoring and reviewing these procedures.

1.2.1 Developing a complaints procedure

- Ninety percent (90%) of national departments and 84% of provincial departments had some form of complaints handling system in place, although these varied greatly and ranged from structured and formalised systems to highly informal, *ad hoc* responses.
- Seventy-seven (77%) percent of national departments and 62% of provincial departments had liaised with internal and/or external stakeholders about the handling of complaints.
- Two thirds (67%) of national departments and 51% of provincial departments specified that they have written guidelines that differentiate between how different types of complaints should be handled.

In the Free State Province, the Department of Health has developed and is utilising the Provincial Complaint Procedure Manual to deal with issues of redress.

1.2.2 Training of staff

- Fifty-nine (59%) percent of national departments and 54% of provincial departments provided some form of training on the handling of complaints. Good practice was found in the Free State Department of Public Works which has implemented a comprehensive training programme for handling complaints. This programme is based on a manual developed by the South African Management Development Institute entitled: *Excellent Customer Care: Frontline Personnel Manual*.

1.2.3 Accessibility of system

- Seventy-three (73%) percent of all departments indicated that they have mechanisms in place to ensure that clients are aware of how to complain.
- Less than half (48%) of the national and provincial departments (46%) have set targets to improve the complaints handling system. Even fewer (29% of national and 41% of provincial departments) had set standards for redress.

1.2.4 Dealing with complaints

- Only 29% of national departments and 47% of provincial departments reported conducting follow-ups to monitor the fairness of their complaints handling system.
- Fifty-two (52%) percent of national departments and 45% of provincial departments have a designated unit or individual to oversee the implementation of redress or *Batho Pele* more generally.
- Approximately two thirds of national (62%) and provincial departments (67%) integrate the budgeting for *Batho Pele* into their overall budgets.

1.2.5 Recording and analysing information

- Only two thirds of departments (67% of national and 63% of provincial departments) indicated that they have a system for recording complaints.
- Only 29% of national departments and 18% of provincial departments indicated that they have a specific system to monitor and evaluate performance on redress. The main reason given for this low number is that departments do not have formalised systems in place.

The South African Police Service and the Free State Department of Sports, Arts, Culture, Science and Technology provided evidence of well functioning systems for recording and analysing complaints.

1.2.6 Service improvements

- Only 27% of all departments indicated that they have a system that allows external stakeholders to assess their performance on redress.
- In a self-assessment of their implementation of redress, 39% of national departments and 21% of provincial departments indicated that their current performance is less than adequate and requires further attention.

The Department of Labour adopted a comprehensive approach of making the principle of redress part of Service Standards.

1.3 Conclusion and Recommendations

There is generally a good understanding and awareness of *Batho Pele* as a whole and of the principle of redress in particular. Most government departments have complied partially with the principle of redress in that they report having some form of complaints handling system.

However, in many cases there is also a lack of formalisation of these systems in terms of developing written guidelines, recording complaints, conducting regular monitoring and evaluation to improve service delivery and reviewing the standards and complaints procedures to determine if they are meeting the departments' redress and client care objectives.

Key recommendations arising from this study include the need for departments to:

- Implement the model of good practice for redress based on the steps outlined in the *Batho Pele Handbook*
- Develop targets or standards for redress
- Benchmark redress performance
- Develop indicators for the measurement of compliance with redress
- Develop guidelines for ensuring accountability for complaints handling systems
- Identify appropriate drivers of redress within departments.

Chapter Two

Introduction

2.1 Background to the Study

Effective government service delivery continues to be a key expectation on the part of the South African public. This was highlighted in President Thabo Mbeki's State of the Nation speech on 3 February 2006, in which he indicated that the South African public expects that "...the machinery of government, especially the local government sphere, discharges its responsibilities effectively and efficiently, honouring the precepts of *Batho Pele*."

The concept of *Batho Pele* was introduced almost a decade ago in 1997. Since that time, government departments have done much to address the demands of citizens but they have also been faced with a number of challenges in expanding service delivery, and often doing so within an environment of human resource and other constraints.

In terms of section 196 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the Public Service Commission (PSC) has a mandate to promote the constitutional values set out in section 195 and to propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance within the Public Service. To this end the PSC monitors the level and quality of government services and promotes a culture of access, openness and transparency that in turn should build more confidence and trust between the Public Service and the public it serves.

In September 2005, the PSC commissioned the current study into the implementation of the *Batho Pele* principle of redress.

2.1.1 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to evaluate the performance and compliance of national and provincial government departments in implementing procedures intended to improve redress as required by the White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery (1997).

More specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

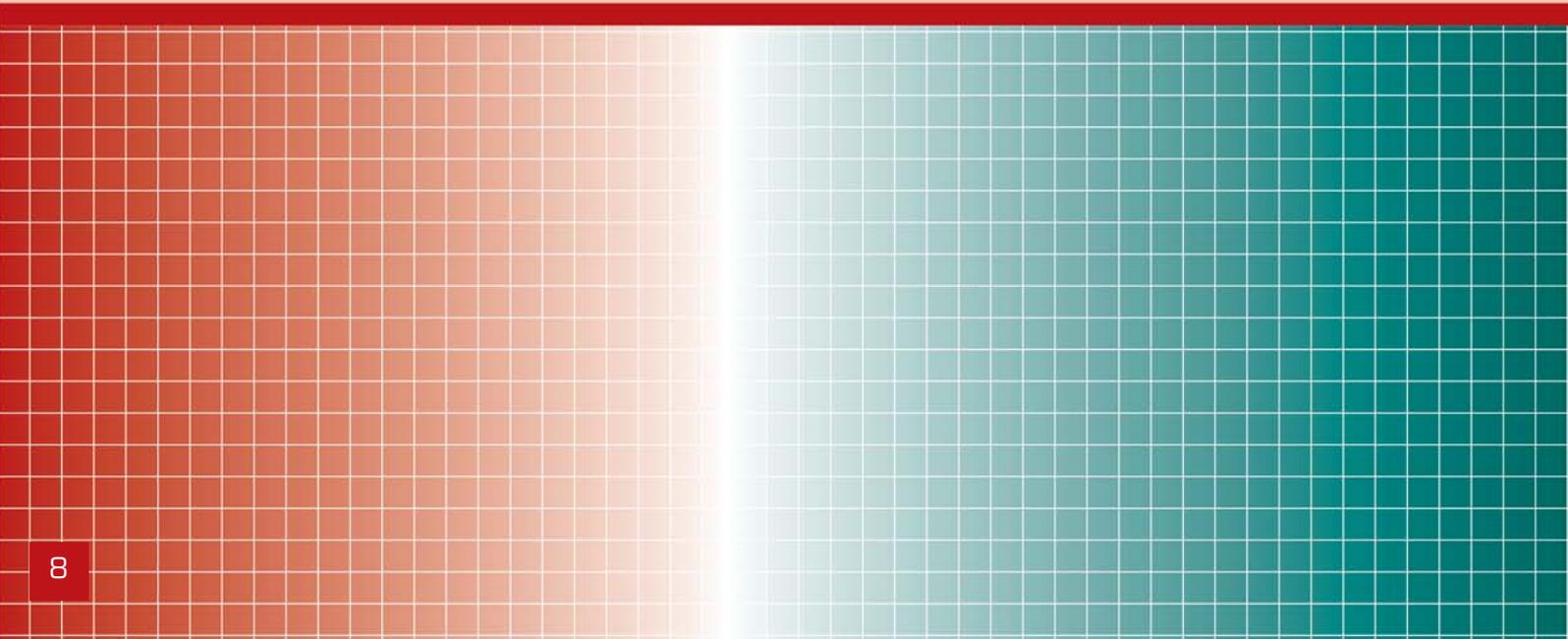
- Assess the degree to which departments' performance complies with the redress principle as required by the *Batho Pele* White Paper;
- Develop a model of good practice and highlight examples of existing good and inadequate practice; and
- Make generic recommendations on how to better implement redress to improve service delivery.

2.1.2 Structure of the report

This report presents the findings of the evaluation with regards to the *Batho Pele* principle of redress. The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 outlines the *Batho Pele* principles and elaborates on the constitutional and legislative framework for *Batho Pele*. It also provides an overview of previous research regarding the implementation of *Batho Pele* within government and then focuses on the principle of redress.
- Chapter 3 describes the methodology that was used in this study.
- Chapter 4 uses the six steps for developing and implementing a complaints handling system outlined in the *Batho Pele* Handbook as a framework for presenting the key findings of the evaluation.

- Chapter 5 presents a model of good practice in relation to redress and uses this model to develop a checklist of good practice. This is used to assess the overall performance of departments in implementing the principle of redress. The chapter includes a section on benchmarking and provides examples of what constitutes good practice. It also identifies gaps and challenges that remain in the implementation of redress.
- Chapter 6 provides some conclusions and presents recommendations for ways in which departments can improve their compliance with the principle of redress.



Chapter Three

Context

3.1 The *Batho Pele* principles

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997, also referred to as the *Batho Pele* White Paper) states that “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.”

The White Paper seeks to introduce a client-oriented approach (*Batho Pele* means ‘people first’ in SeSotho) and requires government departments to transform and improve their public service delivery in terms of eight service delivery principles.

The *Batho Pele* principles are quite simple and promote the principle of ‘putting people first’ and attempt to get government to be service-oriented and to strive for excellence in service delivery. The *Batho Pele* principles pose a challenge to government in that they require ongoing improvement in the delivery of services. As the then Minister of Public Service and Administration, the Honourable Dr. Zola Skweyiya, noted in his Foreword to the White Paper in 1997; “...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 and inefficient processes, in delays and duplication, is money that could be invested in improving services. The aim is to progressively raise standards of service, especially for those whose access to public services has been limited in the past and whose needs are greatest.”

The *Batho Pele* initiative is, therefore, a combination of an approach and a programme of action, a mindset for a way of doing things. It consists of the following eight principles: consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money. Together these principles provide a framework for good practice in ensuring improved service delivery.

The Eight Principles of *Batho Pele*

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.

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.

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

Courtesy: Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.

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

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

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.

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

In 2001, the government developed the *Batho Pele* Revitalisation Strategy after realising that while *Batho Pele* had been well received, its implementation was slow. The Revitalisation Strategy was aimed at intensifying the implementation of the *Batho Pele* initiative by giving it more focus and practical direction. This was done by identifying four pillars, namely:

- Re-engineering and improving the back-office operations of government;
- Re-engineering and improving the front-office operations of government;
- Internal communication, and;
- External communication.

Each pillar was accompanied by a balanced scorecard to assist in translating organisational visions and missions into a balanced and measurable approach to client satisfaction.

In 2003, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) developed the '*Batho Pele* Handbook – A Service Delivery Improvement Guide'. The aim of the Handbook was to deepen the understanding of *Batho Pele* and provide a practical guide to implementing the principles. The specific objectives of the Handbook were to help bridge the gap between “knowing” and “doing” and to put *Batho Pele* into action.

3.2 Constitutional and Legislative Context

Batho Pele as an initiative of government exists within a broad-ranging legislative framework governing the performance of government institutions and the way in which they are expected to relate to the public. At the heart of this legislative framework is the principle of “putting people first.” The starting point for considering this framework is section 195 of the **Constitution** of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. This section outlines the basic values and principles governing public administration, including the need to provide services impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias. The principle of responding to peoples’ needs is also contained in this section and together these speak directly to the *Batho Pele* initiative and the principle of putting people first.

The principal piece of legislation governing the Public Service is the **Public Service Act**, number 103 of 1994. This Act has been amended twice, in 1997 and 1999, and has been amplified by other legislation and a number of white papers. The purpose of the Public Service Act is to provide for the organisation and administration of the Public Service, the regulation of conditions of employment, discipline, retirement and discharge of members of the Public Service and matters connected therewith.

An important piece of legislation enacted in 2000 was the **Promotion of Administrative Justice Act** (PAJA), number 3 of 2000. Section 33 (1-2) of the Constitution (1996) stipulates that everyone has the right to a just administrative action that is lawful and fair and that, persons whose rights have been adversely affected by administrative action, have the right to be given written reasons. The PAJA was enacted in this context and its provisions have a direct bearing on the *Batho Pele* principle of redress. The PAJA provides for adequate notice where administrative action is instituted, opportunity to make representations, the right of review or appeal and notice of the right to request reasons for administrative action. In particular, the PAJA spells out citizens’ rights to redress, providing for written reasons to be furnished and judicial review of administrative action. Moreover, the Act stipulates that public servants must respond to a request to divulge the reasons for a decision within 90 days of receiving the request, and must give that person adequate reasons in writing for the administrative action.

Supporting and amplifying the above legislation is the **White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery** that was published in 1997 – also known as the *Batho Pele* White Paper. This White Paper contains a comprehensive policy framework for *Batho Pele*, as well as an implementation strategy for transforming Public Service Delivery. Its focus is on how services are provided and it contains guidelines for the development of service delivery improvement programmes within government departments.

The above are some of the key Constitutional provisions as well as legislative and policy instruments that relate to *Batho Pele*. There are many others that form part of the regulatory framework for the Public Service post-1994, for example, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service of 1995. This White Paper addressed the strategic framework for change in the Public Service in relation to a number of key areas, such as; institution building, representivity, enhancing accountability and the broad parameters for enhancing service delivery. The Employment Equity Act, the Labour Relations Act and the Public Finance Management Act also impact on service delivery by the Public Service in different ways and therefore have some relevance for the *Batho Pele* initiative.

3.3 Previous Research on the Implementation and Promotion of *Batho Pele*

Prior to the current study, five others were undertaken that have a focus on the implementation and promotion of *Batho Pele*. The first was the Survey of Compliance with the *Batho Pele* Policy undertaken by the PSC in 1999 – 2000. The second was a survey of progress with the *Batho Pele* implementation in government departments undertaken by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) in July 2003. The third and fourth studies were client satisfaction surveys conducted by the PSC – one in the Social Services sector in 2001 – 2002 and another in the Criminal Justice sector in 2003 – 2004. Finally, the PSC also commissioned an evaluation of service standards during 2004. The following gives a brief overview of these five studies and their key findings in relation to the principle of redress.

3.3.1 Survey of Compliance with the *Batho Pele* Policy

Between October 1999 and February 2000, the PSC surveyed four national government departments (namely Correctional Services, Home Affairs, Justice and the South Africa Police Service), the provincial departments of Education and Health and five North West provincial government departments identified as pilot departments by the White Paper. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the degree to which departments were implementing the *Batho Pele* White Paper and to obtain baseline information on progress in transforming Public Service Delivery.

Each principle of the *Batho Pele* policy was evaluated in relation to compliance by the eleven departments surveyed. On the principle of redress, the South African Police Services, provincial departments of Education and the North West Department of Health and Finance were found to have redress mechanisms in place. The conclusion of the study in relation to redress was that; “limited efforts have been made to provide complaints handling mechanisms. Where these exist they rarely function effectively”¹. The report on the study went on to conclude that; “As part of a broader support program, departments should be assisted to put complaints handling systems in place.”

¹ Public Service Commission, 2000. Survey of Compliance with the *Batho Pele* Policy. Page xxii. (www.psc.gov.za).

3.3.2 Report on the Implementation and Promotion of *Batho Pele*²

In 2004, the DPSA requested information from 136 national and provincial government departments about their progress in implementing the eight *Batho Pele* principles. The overall response rate was 37%, with many more national than provincial departments responding. As was the case for the Survey on Compliance with *Batho Pele* conducted in 2000, the DPSA survey assessed progress in the implementation of each of the eight *Batho Pele* principles. With regard to the principle of redress, the study found that the majority of departments provide some formal or informal channels for redress. However, the degree of formalisation, quality and monitoring of redress mechanisms was not clear.

General findings from the DPSA study suggested that there are differing degrees of understanding of the *Batho Pele* principles within government departments. The report noted that; "...it appears that some departments do not always create a link between various initiatives they engage in with the fact that these initiatives enhance the realisation of the *Batho Pele* principles or have a bearing on the improvement of service delivery" (p29). The report also noted that *Batho Pele* tends to be treated as an 'add-on' and is not properly integrated with the core work of departments.

3.3.3 Citizen Satisfaction Survey: Social Services Sector

A critical element of measuring performance is assessing the levels of satisfaction amongst clients to whom the service is delivered. In 2001 the PSC commissioned a research study to assess the satisfaction of clients with the provision of services by departments within the social sector. The survey was conducted with selected clients of the Departments of Education, Housing, Health and Social Development.

In addition to other department-specific services, the study examined how each department fared in terms of satisfying the *Batho Pele* principle of redress. The survey found that:

- Many clients are unaware of the complaints process;
- Of those who complained, many remained dissatisfied with the way the complaint was dealt with.

The study recommended that departments should inform all users of the mechanisms for making a complaint; ensure an environment conducive to lodging complaints and significantly improve procedures on how to deal with complaints.

3.3.4 Citizen Satisfaction Survey: Criminal Justice Sector

In November 2003, the PSC commissioned research to assess the satisfaction of clients with the provision of services by departments within the criminal justice system in line with the *Batho Pele* principles described in the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (1997). The study focused on three key departments within the criminal justice system, namely the South African Police Services, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and the Department of Correctional Services.

In broad terms, the study found that citizens were generally satisfied with the different services received. One area in which most citizens interviewed across all departments were dissatisfied was with the level of information made available to them about the services provided. Most citizens also indicated that departments lack clear, easily accessible complaints mechanisms for the public, as well as systems for the follow-up of complaints lodged.

² Department of Public Service and Administration, 2004. Report on the implementation and promotion of *Batho Pele*. Pretoria: Government Internal Consulting Services.

It was noted that, “during the course of the study it became apparent that departments lack clear, easily accessible complaints mechanisms for the public. In many cases, public servants assume that if citizens have complaints, they will approach someone. Besides not being transparent, this practice puts the onus on members of the public to take action. Further, in cases where mechanisms do exist, citizens raised concerns about the lack of information regarding progress with, and outcomes of, their complaints and their unwillingness to lodge complaints out of a feeling that reporting problems will not make a difference in the quality of the services delivered”³.

In terms of compliance with redress, the study went on to conclude that, “the departments included in this study have some way to go to ensure that the public has access not only to user-friendly complaints mechanisms but also to information about progress regarding complaints that they might have lodged. The latter is particularly important to demonstrate to members of the public that their input is valued and taken seriously by the different departments” (p35).

3.3.5 Evaluation of Service Standards in the Public Service⁴

During 2004, the Public Service Commission initiated an evaluation of the performance of departments with regard to implementing service standards. This was also a survey-based study across government departments, but it was more narrowly focused on the implementation of service standards. Service standards, following the *Batho Pele* White paper, require that citizens be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.

In this study, a standardised questionnaire was administered to 131 national and provincial departments with 122 departments responding (93% response rate). The focus of the study was on the service standards being used by departments and their role in the functioning thereof. Many other aspects of service standards were also covered in the study, for instance, consultation around the development of standards, the measurement of performance against standards and communication of standards to internal and external clients. The study also considered best practice in developing service standards.

The study found that 52% of the departments (or 64 departments) that responded had service standards in place. A number of strengths were identified in departments, including:

- a strong will throughout departments to develop service standards;
- awareness of the importance of service standards;
- many departments had identified individuals to drive the process of setting and implementing service standards.

Accompanying the strengths were however a number of weaknesses. These included the fact that many departments did not have service standards and of those that did, service standards were often poorly defined and thus difficult to measure. There also appeared to be confusion between standards and indicators, with a number of departments arguing that their indicators were their service standards. Other weaknesses identified by the study included the following:

- Service standards were sometimes unachievable, leading to clients having exaggerated expectations regarding service delivery;
- Members of staff were often not well informed about the service standards of their department;

³ Public Service Commission, 2003. Citizen Satisfaction Survey: Criminal Justice Sector – Overview Report. Pretoria, PSC. (p33)

⁴ Public Service Commission, 2005. Evaluation of service standards in the Public Service. Pretoria, PSC.

- Some departments had uniform standards that took no account of local variation, for example, between urban and rural areas; and
- No linking of service standards to the other seven *Batho Pele* principles.

In general, the study found widespread use of service standards within government departments, but also identified a few key challenges. Two challenges worth highlighting are, firstly, the regular measurement of performance within departments and, secondly, making effective use of the information gathered. The study went on to make a number of recommendations aimed at strengthening the way in which service standards are understood and used by government departments. The study also noted that in the context of the findings, "...it is now possible to initiate a focused and concerted campaign to improve service standards across the public service and thus assist in the development of service delivery systems that are truly responsive to the needs of the citizens of this country" (p12).

In summary, it could be said that the research work conducted over the past three years points to a situation whereby progress has been made in implementing *Batho Pele* within government. The extent to which *Batho Pele* has had a real impact on the functioning of departments and on their delivery of services is less clear. The service standards study suggests that while standards are in place in many departments, there are weaknesses in the measurement of performance against them. Equally, the citizen satisfaction survey found satisfaction on the part of citizens with some aspects of service delivery of the seven departments surveyed. It also found dissatisfaction with other aspects and with information about redress mechanisms in particular.

3.4 The *Batho Pele* Principle of Redress

This report focuses specifically on the *Batho Pele* principle of redress. Redress, as defined in the *Batho Pele* White Paper (1997), states that, "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".

The White Paper states that government departments must "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." The White Paper goes on to provide a set of principles by which national and provincial departments are required to review and improve their complaints systems:

- **Accessibility**
Complaints systems should be well-publicised and easy to use. Systems should welcome complaints made in ways other than writing, such as face-to-face or by telephone.
- **Speed**
Complaints should be acknowledged immediately and once the complaint has been verified, the client should be given an apology together with a full explanation. Where delays are 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. Wherever possible, 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 intimidated or victimised.

- **Responsiveness**

A client's complaint must be taken seriously, no matter how trivial it may seem. 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 remedial action must be taken where necessary.

- **Review**

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

- **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 lodged.

Government departments are therefore required to develop and implement a complaints handling system that deals with complaints quickly and efficiently; is accountable to the public, and feeds records of complaints received back into the management process.

According to the *Batho Pele Handbook*, the objectives of a complaints handling system are to:

- Provide dissatisfied clients with opportunities for redress;
- Gauge the extent to which client satisfaction is being met;
- Establish the gap between service delivery and client expectations; and
- Improve service delivery⁵.

The outcome of this process should be a non-defensive public service which takes the views of its clients seriously and which is committed to improving service delivery⁶.

The *Batho Pele Handbook* elaborates on the principles set out in the White Paper and outlines six practical steps to be followed in order to develop and implement a successful complaints handling system⁷.

These steps include:

- Developing a complaints procedure;
- Training staff;
- Ensuring that the complaints system is accessible to all clients;
- Dealing with complaints;
- Recording and analysing information; and
- Implementing service improvements.

This evaluation uses these six steps as a framework for evaluating departments' performance and compliance in terms of implementing the *Batho Pele* principle of redress.

⁵ *Batho Pele Handbook*, (pp195-6)

⁶ *Ibid.*, (p198)

⁷ *Ibid.*, (p201)

Chapter Four

Methodology

All national and provincial departments were included in this study with the exception of National Intelligence Agency, South African National Defence Force, the South African Secret Service, the Presidency, and the South African Management Development Institute.

The PSC identified a total of 130 departments for inclusion in this study – 31 national departments and 99 provincial departments. Of these, 21 national and 83 provincial returned questionnaires on their compliance with the principle of redress. This is a total of 104 of the 130 government departments, or an 81% response rate.

Table 1: National and Provincial Departments that Responded, by Cluster

Government Clusters		No. of departments in cluster	No. of departments that responded
Central Government Administration	National	5	2
	Provincial	16	15
Economic Services and Infrastructure	National	10	9
	Provincial	31	29
Finance and Administration	National	5	3
	Provincial	9	6
Justice and Protection	National	4	4
	Provincial	7	4
Social Services	National	7	3
	Provincial	36	29
Total departments		130	104

This report compares the responses of national and provincial departments, as well as the responses of departments in the five clusters as outlined by the National Treasury. A detailed list of the departments that fall into each cluster is provided in Annexure 1: Government Clusters

The **Central Government Administration** cluster oversees the administrative functions of the national and provincial governments. It consists of four national departments and two departments that operate at a provincial level.

The **Economic Services and Infrastructure** cluster is the largest of the government clusters, consisting of ten national government departments, five of which operate provincially. It provides a range of services, including agricultural, labour, technology, trade and infrastructure-related services.

The **Financial and Administration Services** cluster is responsible for strengthening the capacity of the state and state run institutions, as well as facilitating the transformation of service delivery through guidelines and targeted interventions.

In the **Justice and Protection Services** cluster, the focus of the constituent departments is on addressing crime and public disorder, improving the functioning of the criminal justice system, and addressing factors that impact negatively on the socio-economic development of the country.

The **Social Services** cluster provides public services such as health care, social support, poverty alleviation and the provision of housing⁸.

⁸ See Annexure 1 for a detailed list of the departments that fall into each cluster.

4.1 Method

4.1.1 Data collection

To facilitate gathering of information by means of questionnaires, workshops were held with the PSC's technical advisors and personnel from regional offices.

The questionnaire addressed the following themes:

- Existing redress mechanisms;
- The redress procedures followed;
- Targets and standards set with regards to redress and the methodology used to effect redress;
- Provision of training on redress procedures;
- Budgets allocated for redress;
- Systems used for monitoring and evaluating performance on redress; and
- Areas to improve the implementation of redress.

All national and provincial HODs, who are responsible for service delivery and accountable to Parliament for the actual performance of their departments, were informed of the study in an official letter signed by the Director General of the PSC. The HODs were requested to designate a contact person responsible for overseeing the completion of the questionnaires. Departments also provided documentary evidence of the redress policies and initiatives described in the questionnaires.

Designated contact people from national and provincial departments were assisted through the workshop to understand the underlying logic of the questionnaire and the required supporting documentation.

Departments were given three months (September – November 2005) to complete the questionnaires and provide supporting documentation. The PSC's regional office personnel supported designated contact persons, where necessary, in the completion of the questionnaire. Quality control visits were made in the provinces during October 2005.

4.1.2 Data Analysis

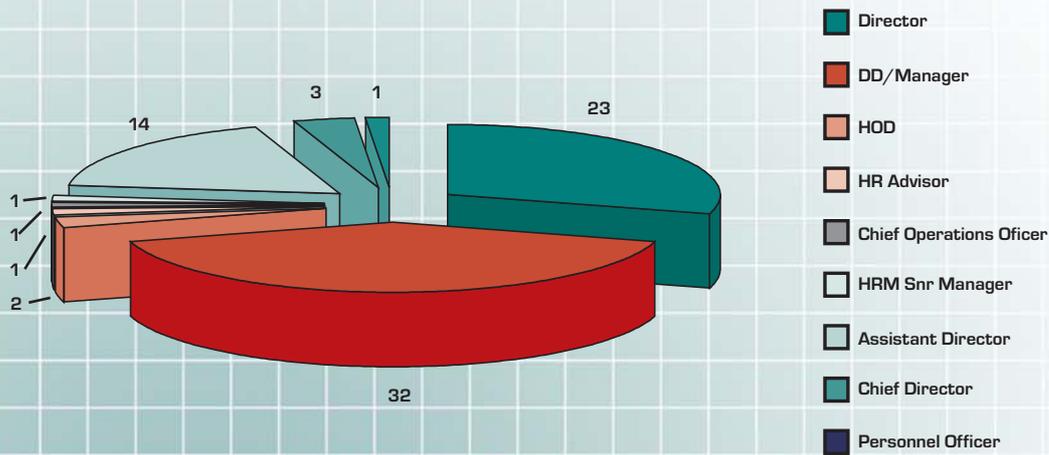
The analysis of the questionnaire was conducted in two stages. In the first stage of analysis information provided by each department was consolidated into five clusters of government departments as outlined above. The aim of this was to ensure that the context in which departments operate and the kinds of services that they provide were taken into account. Five cluster-based reports reproduced the information provided by each department in the cluster.

The second stage of analysis condensed the findings further and presented them in a user-friendly format. In this stage the analysis compared the responses of national and provincial departments in the main, but where appropriate, responses from the different clusters are also compared. In addition, the supporting documentation submitted by the departments was analysed and formed the basis for the identification of good practice.

4.1.3 Respondents

Most of the respondents were Deputy Directors or Managers (32), with the second most common category of respondent being Directors (23). In total, 78 persons provided responses to these questions. The breakdown of respondents is shown in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Respondents by Official Position



The average length of service of the respondents was found to be 8 years. Given the predominant level of seniority and the years of experience in the public service, it can be assumed that the information provided is reliable and accurate.

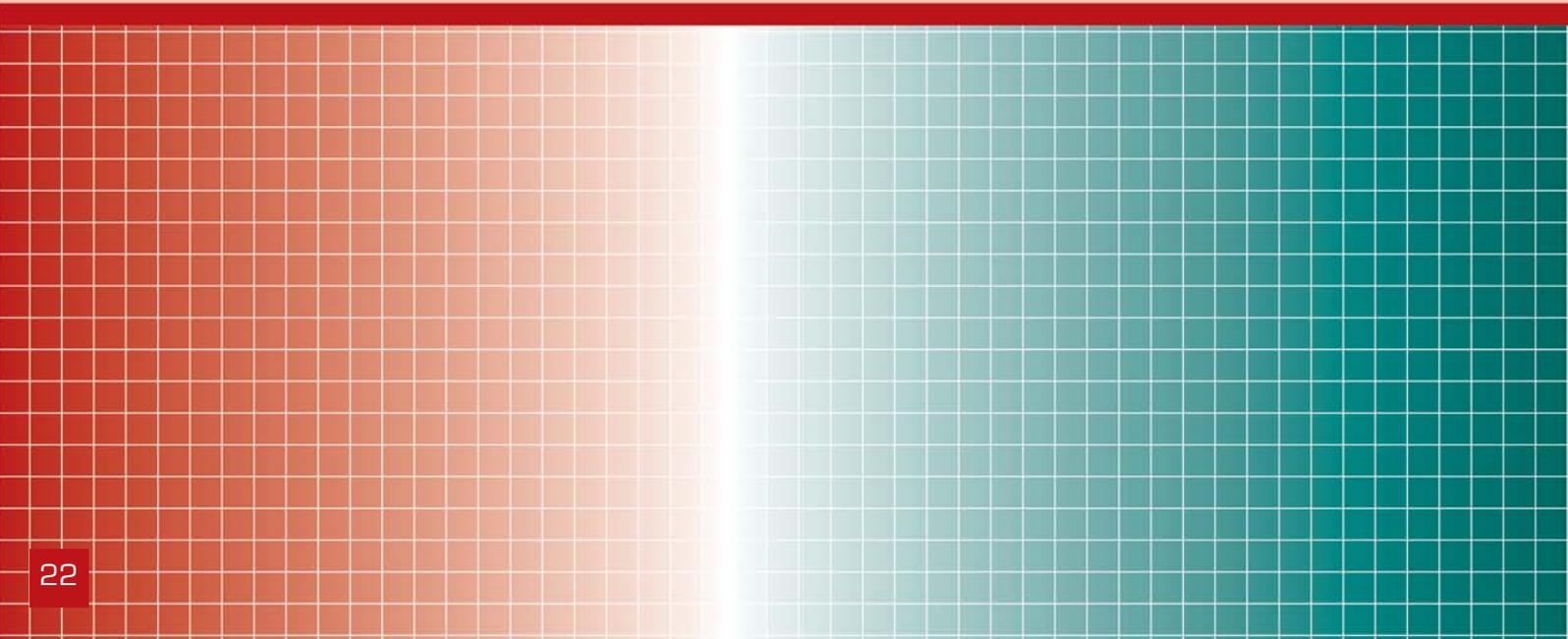
4.2 Limitations of the Study

- The response rate was 81%. The 19% non-response from national and provincial departments was attributed to strict time lines and changes in contact person.
- Some departments experienced difficulties in completing the questionnaires because of differences in the extent to which they provide services to the public. Where departments, such as the National Treasury, do not provide services directly to citizens, they were asked to complete the questionnaires in relation to the services they provide to other government departments and to treat these departments as clients.
- Some departments that do not deal directly with the public did not feel that the study applied to them and therefore were not willing to participate. This narrow interpretation of the *Batho Pele* principles contributed to a lower response rate. Had this narrow interpretation not prevailed, an even higher response rate could have been attained.
- The questionnaires received from those departments who participated in the study were of varying quality. Although there were a handful of departments which submitted poorly completed questionnaires, all questionnaires submitted by departments provided usable information which has been analysed and presented in this report. Incomplete or unanswered questions have been reflected in the findings where appropriate.

4.3 Presentation of Findings

The findings presented in Chapter 5 are a consolidation of the responses provided in the questionnaires. In general the responses of individual departments have been aggregated to provide an overall picture of national and provincial departments' compliance with the principle of redress. Graphs and pie charts have been used to illustrate the findings and present the information by national and provincial departments. Where appropriate, graphs and pie charts that present information by cluster are also included.

In most cases the findings are reported as percentages. However, where the number of departments referred to is particularly low, the actual number of departments is reported instead because the use of percentages in these cases may be misleading. This approach was taken when reporting on findings by cluster, as some clusters consist of very few departments.



Chapter Five

Key Findings on Redress

The findings presented in this chapter will explore in greater depth and detail the departments' understanding of the *Batho Pele* principle of redress and how they have set about translating this principle into practical policies with measurable effects in terms of client participation, satisfaction and improved service delivery.

In this chapter, the following six steps are used as a framework for developing and implementing a complaints handling procedure as outlined in the *Batho Pele Handbook*:

1. Developing a complaints procedure;
2. Training staff;
3. Ensuring that the complaints system is accessible to all clients;
4. Dealing with complaints;
5. Recording and analysing information; and
6. Implementing service improvements.

The departments' understanding of the principle of redress is discussed, after which each of these six steps will be discussed in more detail.

5.1 Understanding of *Batho Pele*

The *Batho Pele* principle of redress, as defined in the White Paper on The Transformation of Public Service Delivery, states that “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”.

In explaining their departments' understanding of the *Batho Pele* principle of redress, the overwhelming majority of the respondents were able to provide outlines that closely reflect the definition of the principle of redress as provided in the *Batho Pele* White Paper, in some cases giving a direct quotation or reproduction of the White Paper definition as it is, with very little variation.

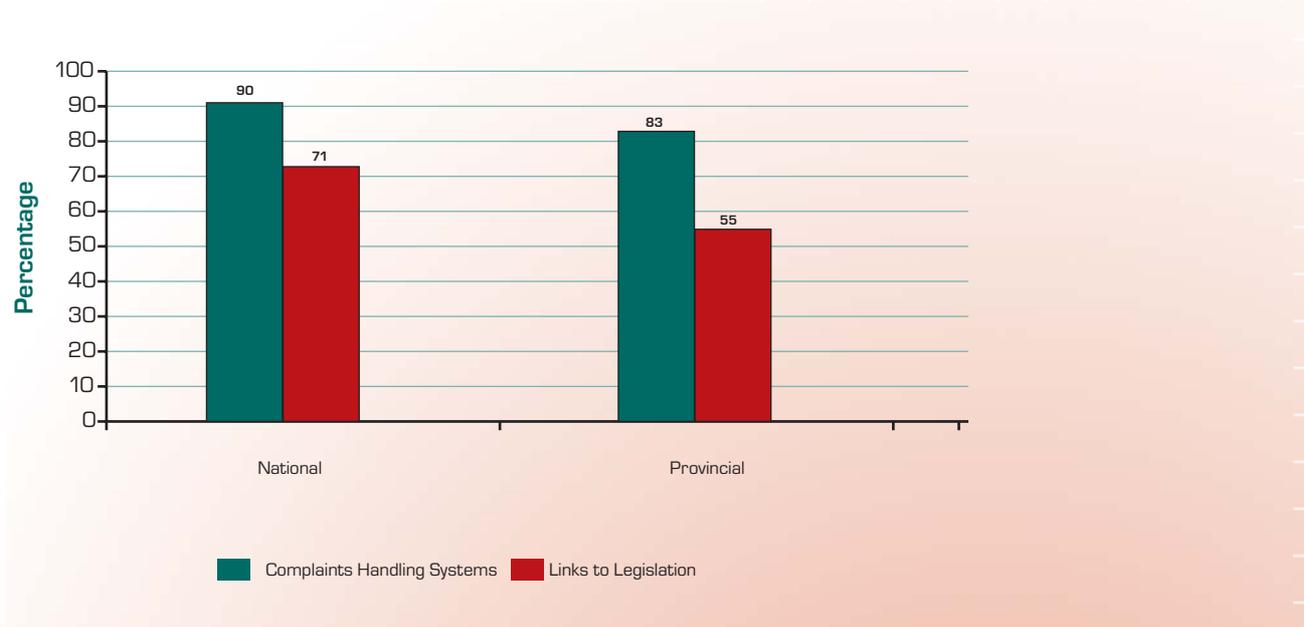
Only in a small number of cases did departments attempt to define their understanding of the principle of redress in a way that makes linkages with improving the quality of services. The Western Cape Department of Health was one such example, outlining its understanding of redress as “providing quality care and regard for the monitoring and management of client complaints as an enabling process as it is an effective mechanism of establishing how clients perceive services provided and what aspects thereof require improvement”. The Foreign Affairs Department states that “members of the public have a right to raise complaints and concerns regarding the service rendered to them and the department has an obligation to put measures in place to prevent future occurrences”.

Some departments linked the notion of redress with the promotion of equity, for example through departmental recruitment practices or procurement policies. They invoked the notion of redressing the historical imbalances affecting previously disadvantaged citizens when outlining their understanding of the *Batho Pele* principle of redress. Two departments from the Northern Cape Province adopted this approach.

5.2 Developing a Complaints Procedure

Developing a complaints procedure is the first step in implementing the principle of redress. This section focuses on how the complaints procedures of various departments were developed. In particular, it is important to determine what sort of complaints mechanisms departments have and whether they were developed in accordance with *Batho Pele* principles, including whether departments liaised with external stakeholders in the development of complaints handling mechanisms. A large proportion of departments have implemented some form of complaints mechanisms.

Figure 2: Departments with Complaints Handling Mechanisms and Links to Legislation/Policy



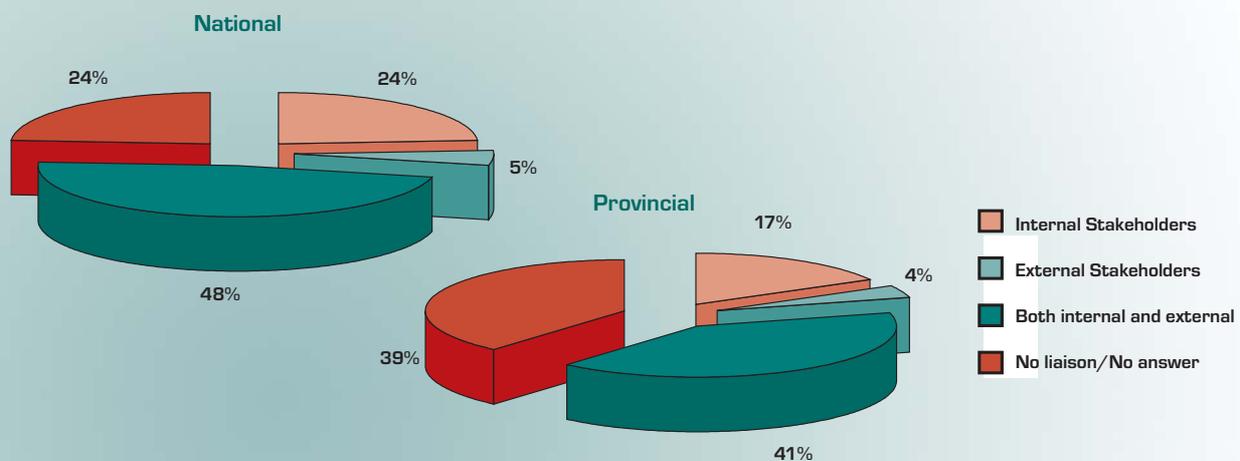
Ninety percent of national departments (90% or 19 of 21 departments) and 84% of provincial departments (70 of 83 departments) had some form of complaints handling system in place, ranging from the highly structured and formalised systems to draft redress mechanisms, to highly informal and local, on-the-spot responses. The Mpumalanga Department of Economic Development, Planning and Tourism and the Northern Cape Department of Economic Development and Economic Affairs, for example, had ad hoc systems in place – complaints are dealt with as and when they arrive.

Seventy-one percent of national departments (71% or 15 departments) and 55% of provincial departments (46 departments) had complaints mechanisms that were explicitly linked to legislation or government policies. Complaints mechanisms were linked to general pieces of legislation, such as the Constitution, the Administrative Justice Act, the Public Service Act, and the Labour Relations Act, as well as the White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service Delivery. In some instances legislation or policy documents specific to departments' line functions were mentioned, such as the Patient's Rights Charter and the National Health Act for the Departments of Health; and the Employment of Educators Act and the South African School Act for the Departments of Education.

5.2.1 Stakeholder Liaison

In developing their complaints handling system, departments should ensure that they liaise with internal and external stakeholders. In particular, the *Batho Pele Handbook* recommends that all staff in the component (and particularly those that will run the system), members of the public who will use the system, and other stakeholders should be consulted⁹. To avoid confusion with the *Batho Pele* principle of consultation, this aspect will be referred to as stakeholder liaison.

Figure 3: Departments that have Liaised with Internal and External Stakeholders in the Development of Complaints Handling Systems



Seventy-seven percent of national departments (71% or 16 departments) and 62% of provincial departments (51 departments) conducted some form of liaison with internal stakeholders, external stakeholders or both.

Internal stakeholders that the departments liaised with included various levels of managerial staff (section, division and executive managers), staff members generally and staff members represented by trade unions. The National Department of Social Development liaised with call-centre staff, while the North West Treasury discussed the issue at their employment equity forum.

Discussions with internal stakeholders took place through a variety of means, including workshops and workgroups; training sessions; focus groups, interviews and surveys with staff; bargaining council meetings and circulation of draft documents for comments.

External stakeholders included other government departments; relevant Community and Faith Based Organisations; labour organisations and members of the public generally (the departments' beneficiaries). Members of the public or beneficiaries of the various departments were consulted primarily through sector specific fora, public hearings, izimbizo, workshops, and, in some instances, the mass media. For example, the Gauteng Department of Agriculture published the draft service standards in the local and national press, inviting comments from all stakeholders. The department also has regular meetings with stakeholders.

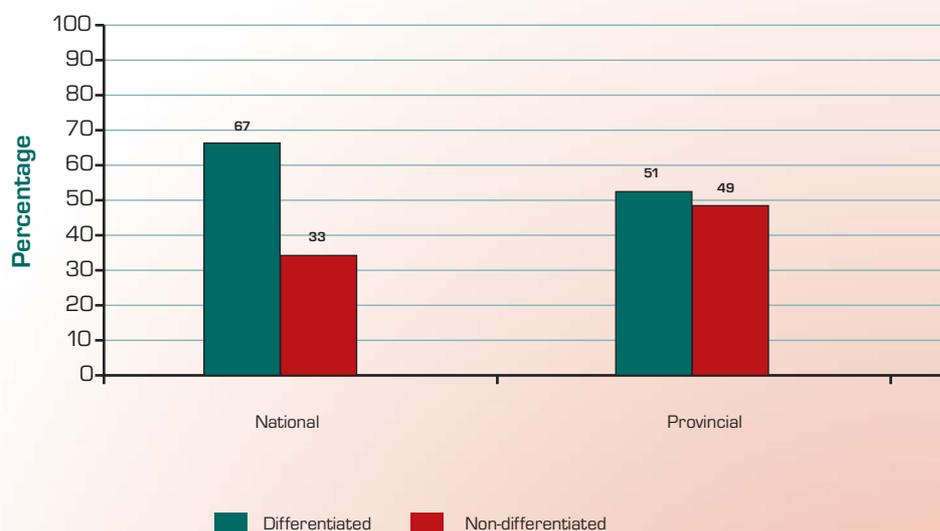
⁹ *The Batho Pele Handbook*, p201

Notably, the National Department of Trade and Industry conducted a benchmarking and study tour to Australia in 2004 to benchmark their consumer complaints handling model with the Australian consumer protection agencies. Those departments that reported not having liaised with either internal or external stakeholders either did not yet have a complaints handling system in place, or had only just begun the process of developing the system.

5.2.2 Guidelines

According to the *Batho Pele Handbook*, the complaints handling system should include a set of guidelines detailing how to communicate with clients and when complaints should be referred to higher levels¹⁰.

Figure 4: Departments with complaint systems that differentiate between different kinds of complaints

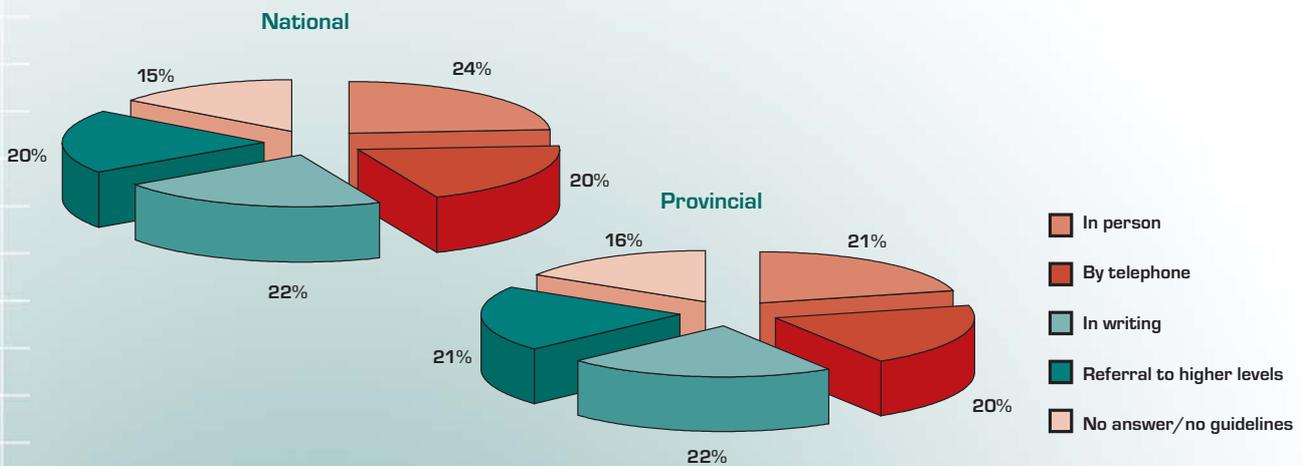


Two thirds of national departments (67% or 14 departments) and half of the provincial departments (51% or 42 departments) specified that they have complaints handling systems which differentiate between different kinds of complaints.

Both formal and informal complaints handling mechanisms differentiated between complaints in a variety of ways. Differentiation of complaints occurred either at a local level at the discretion of the person dealing with the complaints (as with the Eastern Cape Department of Arts and Culture where relevant managers individually differentiate different complaints) or at a systemic level. This related to the format of complaints (such as the Western Cape Department of Education where complaints lodged through the call centre and written complaints were captured separately) and to the type or content of the complaint, such as was the case with several of the provincial Departments of Health, which captured complaints according to different categories devised at the national level. Other modes of categorisation included differentiation of internal and external complaints (e.g. National Department of Agriculture), and differentiation of complaints by municipality (e.g. Gauteng Department of Local Government).

¹⁰ The Batho Pele Handbook, p201

Figure 5: Departments with Written Guidelines for Handling Complaints in Person, by Telephone, in Writing and Referral



A total of 7 national departments (33%) and 33 provincial departments (40%) reported having no guidelines for handling complaints in person, by telephone, in writing, or through referral¹¹. The majority of departments therefore do not appear to have formalised their complaints handling system to the extent of specifying written guidelines for the handling of different complaints. Surprisingly, national departments appear to be behind provincial departments in drawing up guidelines for the handling of complaints.

At least another third of the national departments (10 departments) and 52% of the provincial departments (43 departments) had guidelines specifically for handling complaints in person. These guidelines included prescriptions for listening to clients with empathy and courtesy, recording complaints, and providing feedback within specified timelines.

Guidelines for responding to telephonic complaints were similar, ranging from guidelines that request the personal details of the complainants to guidelines which preserved the anonymity of the complainant.

Guidelines for the referral of complaints to higher levels included guidelines both for forwarding complaints to higher levels, either at the request of the client or due to internal procedure, and for submitting memos and monthly reports to senior management on complaints generally.

5.3 Training of Staff

Maintaining an effective complaints handling mechanism requires departments to train and equip members of staff to communicate with clients, record, and refer complaints to appropriate sections. The *Batho Pele Handbook* suggests that where possible, it is advisable to select staff members that are in regular contact with clients for training in the department’s complaints handling system.

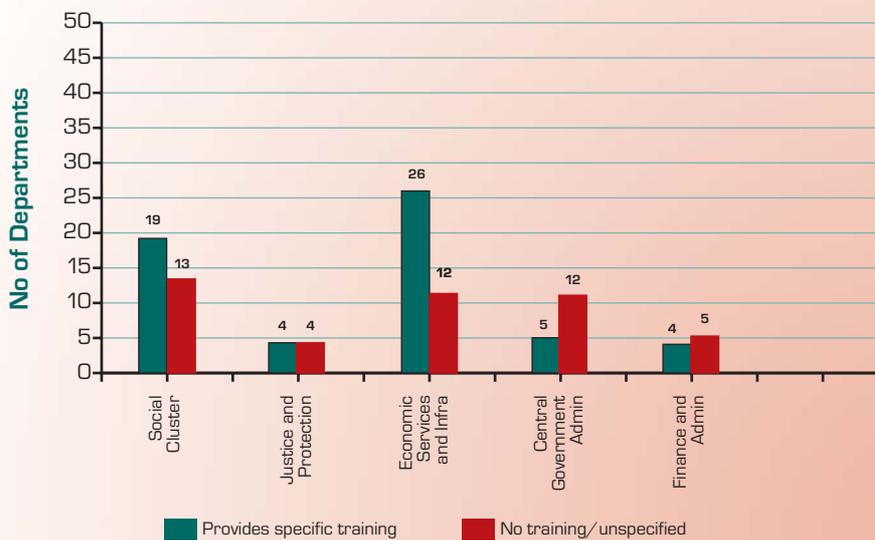
¹¹ Departments were allowed multiple responses to this question, thus appearing to decrease the percentage of departments which specified no guidelines.

Figure 6: Departments that provide training on redress issues



Fifty-nine percent of national departments (59%) and 54% of provincial departments provide some form of training to staff on the handling of complaints.

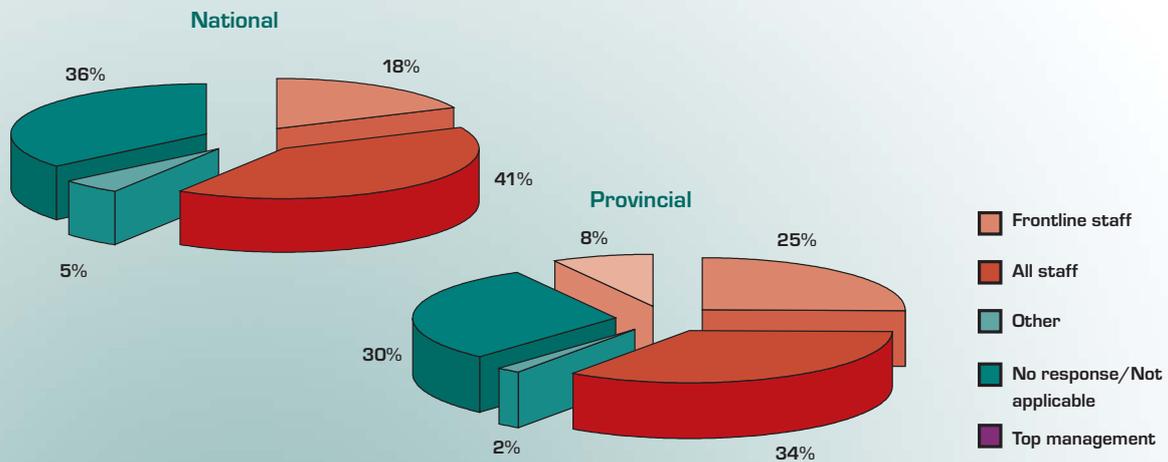
Figure 7: Departments that Provide Specific Training in Handling Complaints, by Cluster



In the Social Services cluster and Economic Services and Infrastructure cluster, the larger portion of provincial and national departments provided specific training to their staff in handling complaints, with 60% of the departments in the Social Services cluster (19 of the 32 departments) and 68% of the departments in the Economic Services and Infrastructure cluster (26 of the 38 departments) reporting that they provided such training. This is in keeping with the fact that the departments in these clusters are more likely to provide direct services to the public, and consequently ought to have developed measures for accommodating complaints from the public regarding their services.

The *Batho Pele Handbook* suggests that departments should select the appropriate staff for training in complaints handling systems. More specifically, it recommends that training should be directed to staff that are in regular contact with clients¹².

Figure 8: Staff in the Department who are Targeted for Training



Of all the national departments that provided specific training in the handling of complaints, 41% (or 9 departments) targeted all of their staff for training. Only 18% (or 4 departments) targeted their frontline staff. A slightly higher proportion of provincial departments (25% or 21 departments) targeted their frontline staff for training in handling complaints.

Handling complaints requires special skills. In particular, staff dealing with complaints must receive training on the complaints procedure of the department and the communications skills necessary to handle complaints efficiently and courteously¹³.

Training topics reported by departments included training on the complaints procedure and principles of dealing with clients. The Department of Social Development in the Western Cape had a comprehensive training programme, including topics such as cultural diversity, roles of internal and external clients, relationship building, communicating with clients, decision-making and delegation, and mentoring and coaching. Other departments, such as SAPS, mentioned training in telephone etiquette and multi-lingualism.

5.4 Accessibility of System

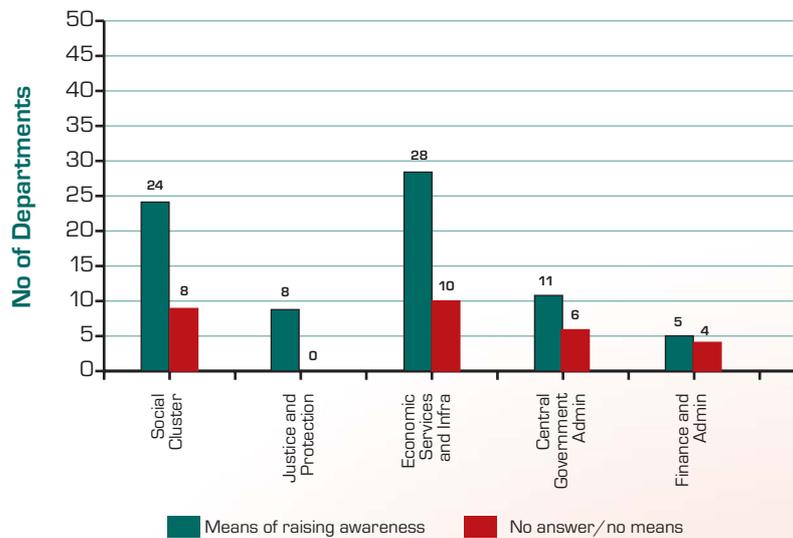
It is essential that in developing their complaints handling mechanisms, departments make them user-friendly, remove any obstacles which clients may encounter in lodging complaints and ensure that they are widely publicised. Clients need to know how to lodge complaints and what to expect of the complaints handling mechanism. In addition, clients must have their rights and obligations in the complaints handling mechanism explained to them¹⁴. The *Batho Pele Handbook* suggests that the complaints handling system can be publicised using posters, leaflets, newsletters, mass media and helpdesks.

¹² The *Batho Pele Handbook*, p202

¹³ The *Batho Pele Handbook*, p202

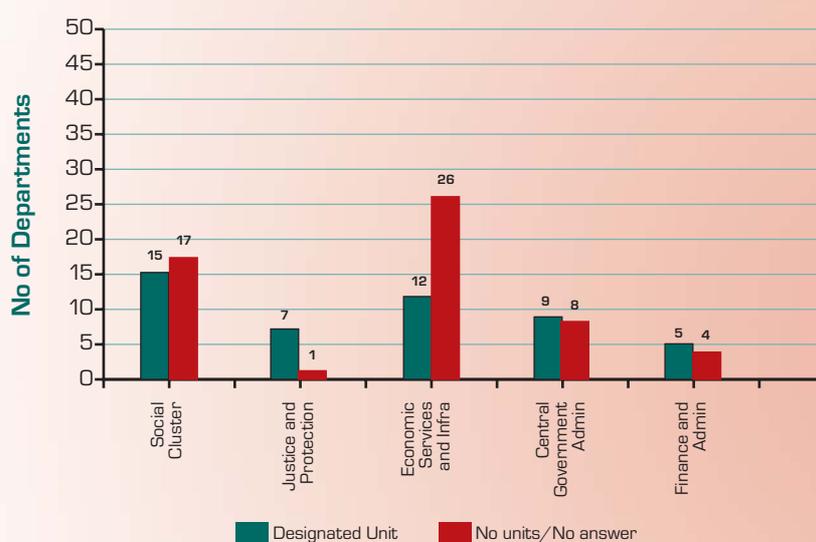
¹⁴ The *Batho Pele Handbook*, p202

Figure 9: Departments that Make Clients Aware of Complaints Procedure, by Cluster



Seventy-five per cent of departments in the Social Services cluster (75% or 24 departments), 67% of departments in the Economic Services and Infrastructure cluster (28 departments) and all 8 departments in the Justice and Protection cluster specified some means of making their clients aware of their complaints procedures. These included flyers, websites, outreach projects, workshops, toll-free numbers, mass media, and the distribution of service delivery charters. Generally, this represents good performance of the departments in relation to publication of the procedure and sensitising clients about their rights in terms of redress.

Figure 10: Departments with Means of Encouraging the Lodging of Complaints by Cluster



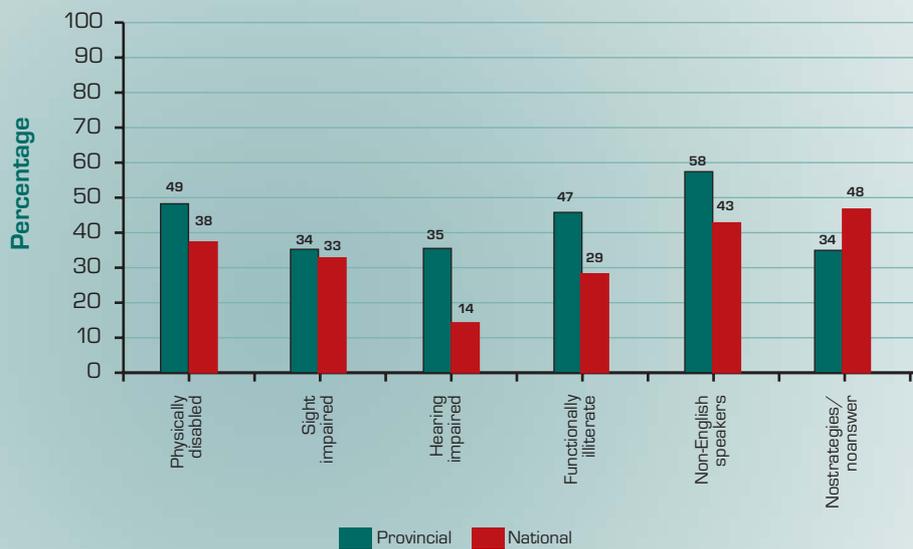
Twenty-four departments in both the Social and Economic clusters mentioned some means of encouraging the lodging of complaints.

Similar methods were used to encourage clients to lodge complaints in the event of poor levels of service delivery (flyers, events, websites etc.). The Department of Agriculture in the North West mentioned the importance of ensuring that the public are aware that complaints will remain confidential.

5.4.1 Meeting special needs

Complaints systems should accommodate people with special difficulties. The *Batho Pele Handbook* specifies that consideration should be given to the physically disabled, those with impaired hearing and/or sight, the functionally illiterate and those who cannot read, write or understand English¹⁵.

Figure 11: Accommodating People with Special Needs in the Complaints System



While a number of categories of people with special needs were accommodated by some national and provincial departments, 48% of national departments (10 departments) and 34% of provincial departments (28 departments) gave no indication that their complaints system specifically accommodates people with special needs¹⁶.

Not surprisingly, non-English speakers were the most likely to be accommodated in both national and provincial departments, with 58% of national departments (9 departments) and 43% of provincial departments (48 departments) specifying that they accommodate non-English speakers. This was generally done by employing multi-lingual staff to handle complaints.

Departments that accommodated people with physical disabilities did so primarily through renovations and alterations to the buildings in which they were located, including the installation of ramps, and special lifts and restrooms. Several departments mentioned common means of access (available to the physically disabled and physically enabled alike), such as suggestion boxes, telephonic help-lines and help desks. The Office of the Premier in the Eastern Cape reported that they have a special unit which deals with matters affecting people with disabilities.

¹⁵ The *Batho Pele Handbook*, p203

¹⁶ This was a multiple response question

Measures to assist the sight impaired included common measures, such as toll-free hotlines, as well as special measures such as having lift buttons in Braille. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism translates certain documents into Braille on request.

Those departments that accommodated the hearing impaired mentioned the use of sign language interpreters, and sign-language training for members of staff. The Department of Social Development in KwaZulu-Natal distributes hearing aids to the hearing impaired while the North West Department of Agriculture makes use of audio-visual materials.

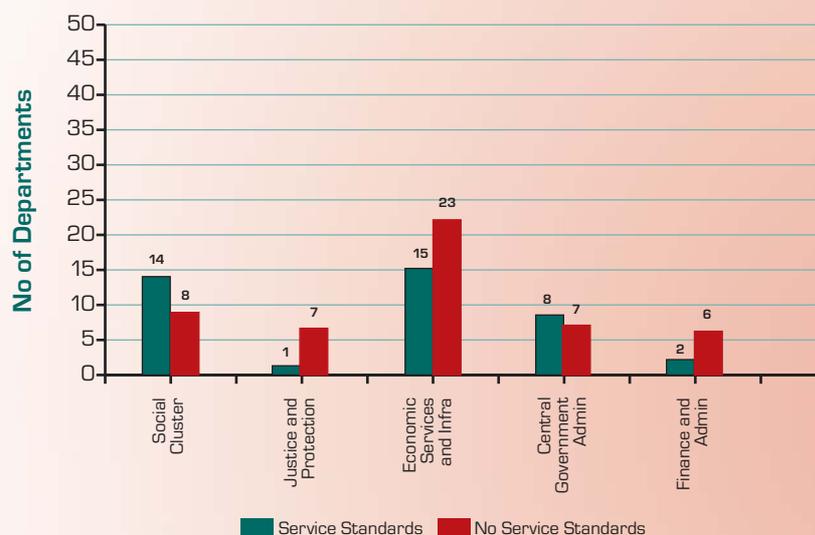
Departments accommodated the functionally illiterate through language translators and the use of audio-communication (izimbizo, radio talk shows etc.).

5.4.2 Redress Standards

The development and publication of a department’s redress standards is central to its complaint handling mechanism. Clients need to know about the redress standard that the departments have set so that they are clear about what to expect and are able to complain when the standards are not met. Amongst other things, the departments’ redress standards should define time limits for responding to complaints¹⁷. This is an area that requires further attention from a number of departments.

Overall, 29% of national departments (6 departments) and 41% of provincial departments (34 departments) reported having redress standards. Bearing in mind that departments have had nine years to implement the principle of redress since the publication of the *Batho Pele* White Paper, this must be considered a poor performance.

Figure 12: Departments with Redress Standards, by Cluster

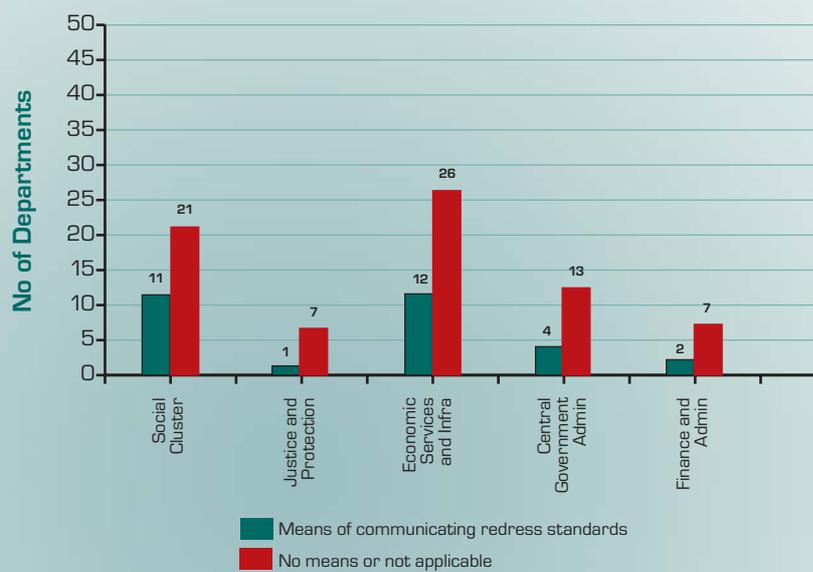


¹⁷ The Batho Pele Handbook p.204

In the Central Government and Administration cluster, just over half of the departments (8 out of 15 departments) have developed redress standards. In all of the other clusters, less than half of the departments have developed standards for redress.

For departments that have developed redress standards, it is important that they develop a means for communicating these standards to clients, so that clients know what to expect and so that departments are motivated to keep to the standards they have set for themselves.

Figure 13: Departments that Communicate Redress Standards to Internal and External Clients, and Departments with Redress Standards, by Cluster



Eleven of the 14 departments in the Social cluster and 12 of the 15 departments in the Economic Services and Infrastructure cluster that reported having redress standards also reported having means of communicating them to internal and external clients.

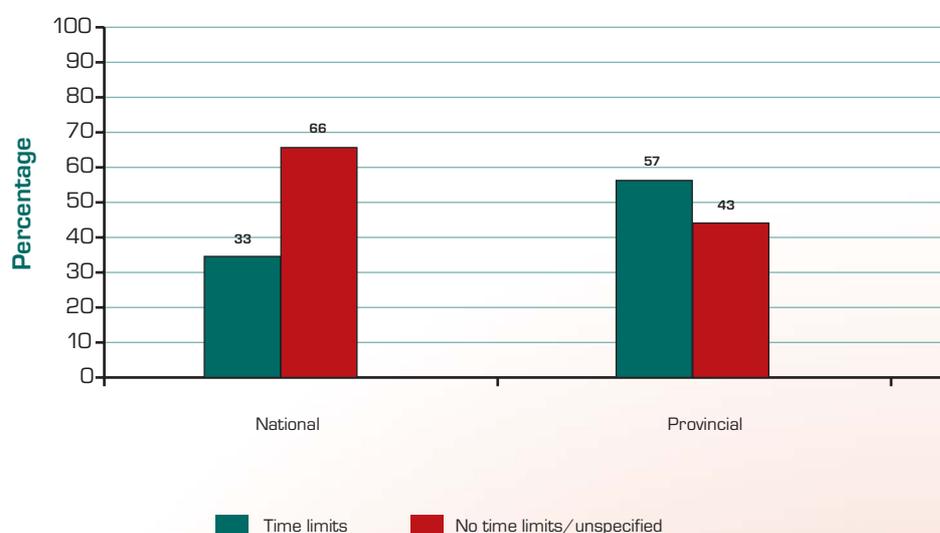
Redress standards were communicated in a variety of ways. Internally, redress standards were communicated at staff meetings, workshops, in-service training, induction programmes, departmental websites and performance enhancement processes. Externally, standards were communicated through workshops and seminars, public hearings, road shows, radio, izimbizo, posters, joint planning sessions with stakeholders, community awareness campaigns and the publication and distribution of service communication charters.

Amongst some of the problems mentioned in communicating redress standards were budget constraints, staff shortages and poor public participation in public meetings.

The standards developed by government departments with regard to complaints handling systems must define prompt time limits for responding to complaints and provide for keeping clients informed of the progress of complaints where delays are unavoidable¹⁸.

¹⁸ The Batho Pele Handbook, p204

Figure 14: Departments with Time Limits set by Law or Internal Procedures by National and Provincial Departments



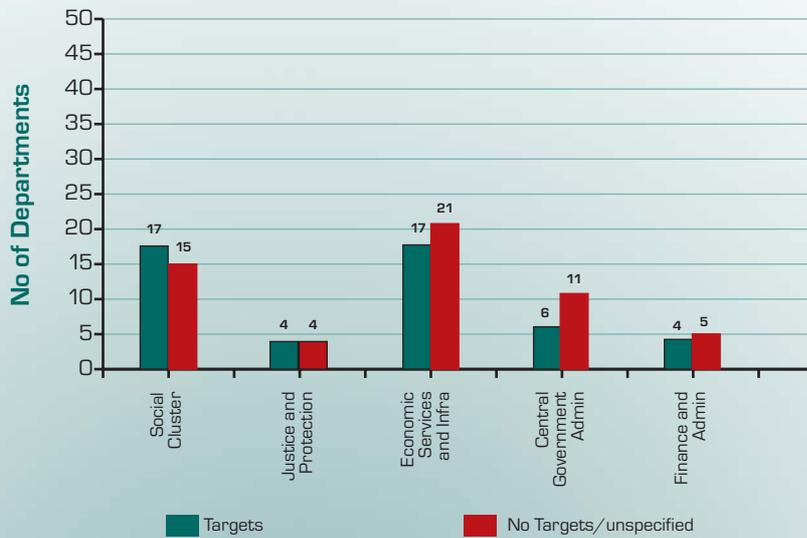
A third of national departments (7 departments) and 57% of provincial departments (47 departments) specified having time limits set by law or internal procedures for dealing with complaints. As with the case of service standards, national departments fall well behind provincial departments in formalising time limits in their complaints handling systems. This may be explained by the fact that provincial departments are generally more involved in interacting with the public.

Time-limits for complaints specified by departments were generally 7 days to acknowledge receipt of a complaint and 30 days to resolve it. Where departments mentioned internal complaints, these tended to be resolved much sooner, usually in 10 days. The Western Cape Department of Health added that complainants are notified in the case of a delay.

The *Batho Pele Handbook* suggests that the complaints procedure developed by government departments should set and monitor targets for acknowledging and dealing with complaints, keeping people informed about the progress of their complaints, and peer review¹⁹.

¹⁹ *The Batho Pele Handbook* (p201.)

Figure 15: Departments that have set targets to improve the complaints handling system, by cluster



Overall, 48% of national departments (10 departments) and 46% of provincial departments (38 departments) specified targets that had been set to improve the complaints handling system. Only in the Social Services cluster have more departments (17 of 32 departments) specified targets for improving their complaints handling systems than those which specified none, though this was marginal. The low numbers of departments who have defined targets for their complaints handling system is consistent with the finding that few departments had set standards for their complaints handling system.

Departments across the different clusters had set a variety of targets to improve the complaints handling system, most of which, however, related to ensuring that complaints were acknowledged and resolved within fixed time periods (for example, the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape specified 7 days to acknowledge a complaint and 21 days to respond to it).

The Department of Education in the Western Cape listed far-reaching targets for their complaints handling system, including computerising the system, the appointment of a provincial complaints officer, and the establishment of a district health committee to look at complaints. The Department of Social Development in the Western Cape specified similarly far-reaching targets, encompassing the entire design of the redress system, the appointment of *Batho Pele* co-ordinators, the drafting of a new charter and standards, service improvement plans and the installation of a telephonic interpretation system.

Common methods for ensuring that departments' targets were met included incorporating targets into individual performance agreements and managerial contracts, regular management reviews, suggestion boxes, and quarterly and annual reports. In addition, in 2004, the Department of Agriculture conducted a survey of the complaints handling mechanism.

5.5 Dealing with Complaints

The fourth step in the *Batho Pele Handbook* provides guidance on dealing with complaints. This section will address organisational structure, referring complaints, monitoring fairness, fairness to staff, confidentiality and responding to a complaint.

5.5.1 Organisational Structure

FIGURE 16: STRUCTURE OF DEPARTMENTS IN DEALING WITH COMPLAINT

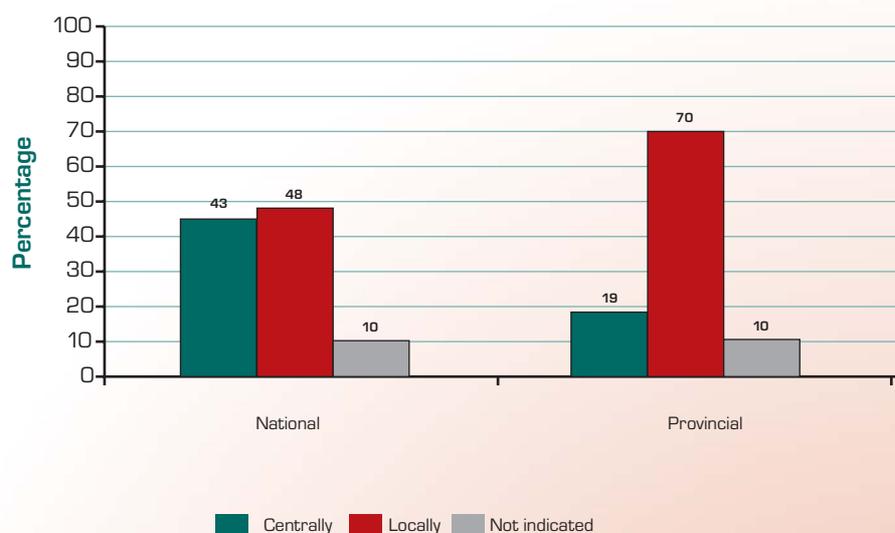
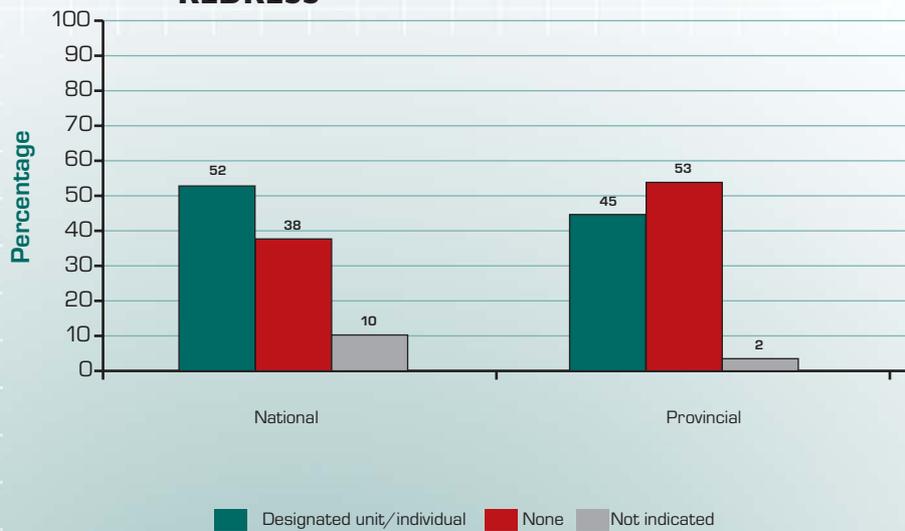


Figure 16 shows that at national level, there was a relatively even split between departments that channel complaints through a central point (43% or 9 departments); and departments that deal with complaints locally, either at the point of service or by the head of the department or unit that receives the complaint (48% or 10 departments). This is in contrast to the provincial level, where more than two thirds of departments reported that they deal with complaints locally (70% or 58 departments). This is not surprising as provincial departments are usually responsible for implementation and therefore more likely to deal directly with clients at a service point level than national departments.

Dealing with complaints at a local level suggests that staff members are taking ownership of complaints. Eighty percent of departments at both national (17 departments) and provincial level (66 departments) reported that staff members view dealing with complaints as part of their normal workload rather than an additional responsibility²⁰.

²⁰ One national department and 10 provincial departments did not respond to this question.

FIGURE 17: PRESENCE OF DESIGNATED UNIT OR INDIVIDUAL TO OVERSEE REDRESS



Although many departments deal with complaints at a local level, Figure 17 indicates that approximately half of both the national and the provincial departments have a designated unit or individual to oversee the implementation of redress or *Batho Pele* more generally in their department (52% or 11 national departments and 45% or 37 provincial departments).

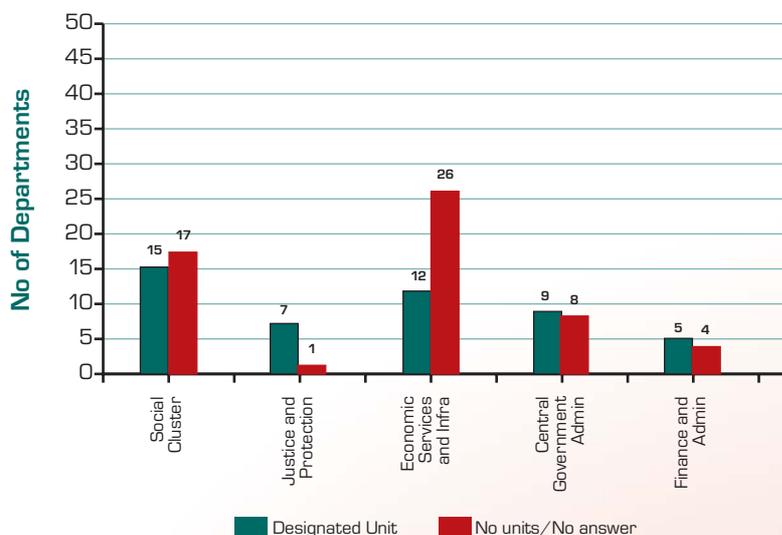
At national level, the Service Delivery Branch at the Department of Home Affairs and the Service Delivery Unit and Integrity Unit at the Independent Complaints Directorate are responsible for overseeing the implementation of redress. At the National Department of Education and the Department of Science and Technology, the implementation of redress is overseen by the Legal and Legislative Services and Labour Relations; and the Legal Unit respectively. At the National Department of Public Works this is the responsibility of Key Account Management and at Statistics South Africa, it is the responsibility of the Marketing Manager.

There are three designated units or divisions at the Department of Trade and Industry, namely the Consumer and Corporate Regulation Division; Office of the Consumer Protector and the Complaints Resolution Unit. The Department of Agriculture has a Transformation Advisor at the Deputy Director level, and at Correctional Services it is the responsibility of the Chief Deputy Commissioner of Human Resource/Corporate Services who heads the *Batho Pele* Task Team. At DPSA, the implementation of redress is the responsibility of the Imvuselelo team, headed by the Director-General.

At a provincial level a wide range of units or individuals were described. The most common were client care units, units tasked with overseeing transformation, Labour Relations and Legal Services, and units or directorates that provide organisational development or support services to departments²¹.

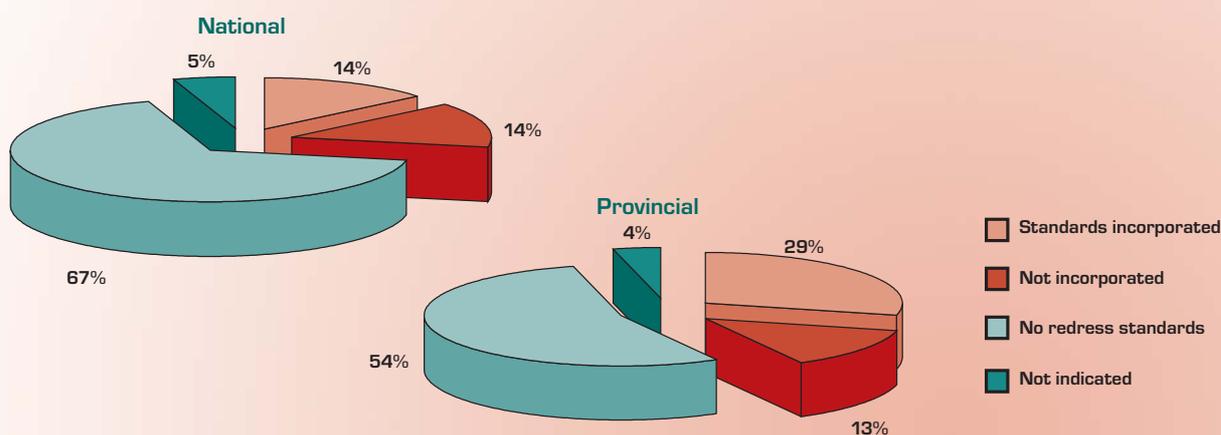
²¹ The Limpopo Office of the Premier has a Performance Management and Transformation Unit and a Batho Pele Committee; the Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs in the same province has designated Transformation Services to oversee redress. At the Mpumalanga Department of Health, the Gender and Transformation Directorate and the Transformation Units oversee redress; at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Social Development, the Policy and Transformation Unit is one of two units with this responsibility.

FIGURE 18: DEPARTMENTS WITH DESIGNATED UNITS OR INDIVIDUALS TO OVERSEE REDRESS



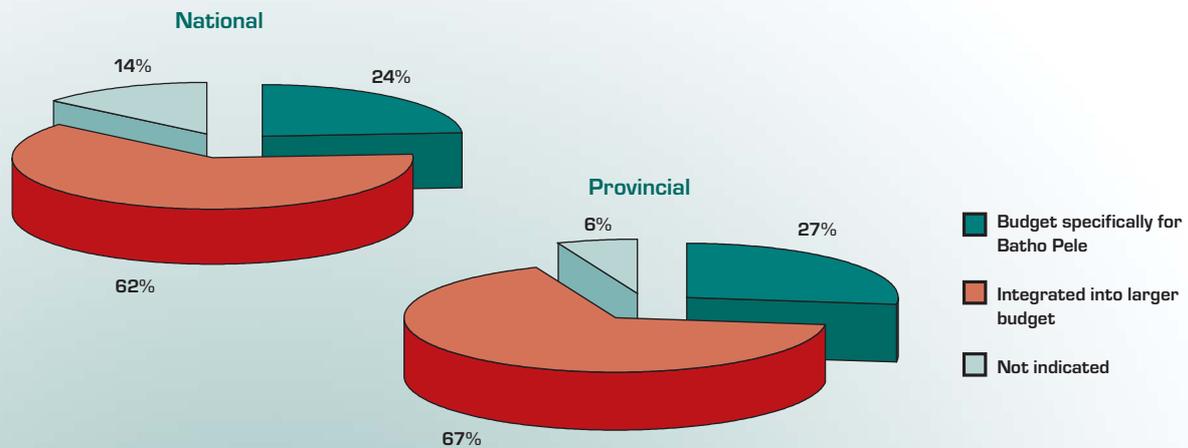
There were some differences between the clusters in terms of whether the departments have designated units or individuals to oversee the implementation of redress. Departments in the Justice and Protection cluster were most likely to report having designated units or individuals (7 of 8 departments). This was least likely to be the case in the Economic Services and Infrastructure cluster (12 of 38 departments).

FIGURE 19: INCORPORATION OF REDRESS STANDARDS INTO PERFORMANCE/SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS



One way of inculcating a culture of client care is to incorporate redress standards into individual performance and service level agreements. Of the 7 national departments that have developed redress standards, 3 indicated that they are included in performance or service level agreements.

Figure 20: Structure of budget for the implementation of *Batho Pele*



The majority of departments do not develop separate budgets to cater for the implementation of *Batho Pele*. Instead, 62% of national departments (13 departments) and 67% of provincial departments (56 departments) reported that they view *Batho Pele* as a set of principles that should be mainstreamed and therefore integrate the budgeting for *Batho Pele* into their overall budgets.

5.5.2 Redirecting complaints

When dealing with complaints it may be necessary in some cases to refer complaints to a higher authority for resolution. The *Batho Pele* Handbook notes that the client should be made aware of referrals²².

Table 3: Steps for Referring Complaints to a Higher Authority

	National	Provincial
Department outlined steps for referral to a higher authority	5	29
Departments do not have specific guidelines for referral	4	17
Complaints go directly to higher authorities	2	9
Department provided a list of superiors or chain of authority	7	17
No response given	3	11
Total	21	83

Table 3 indicates the number of national and provincial departments that have set procedures to be followed when referring complaints to a higher authority. Only 24% of national departments (5 departments) and 35% of provincial departments (29 departments) described specific steps that should be taken when referring complaints to a higher authority. Twenty percent of national (4 departments) and provincial departments (17 departments) indicated that they do not have specific guidelines because complaints are dealt with by a specific unit, or because there are no set procedures to be followed in this instance. In a smaller number of cases (2 national departments and 9 provincial departments), complaints are channelled through higher authorities such as the MEC and then referred to relevant departments.

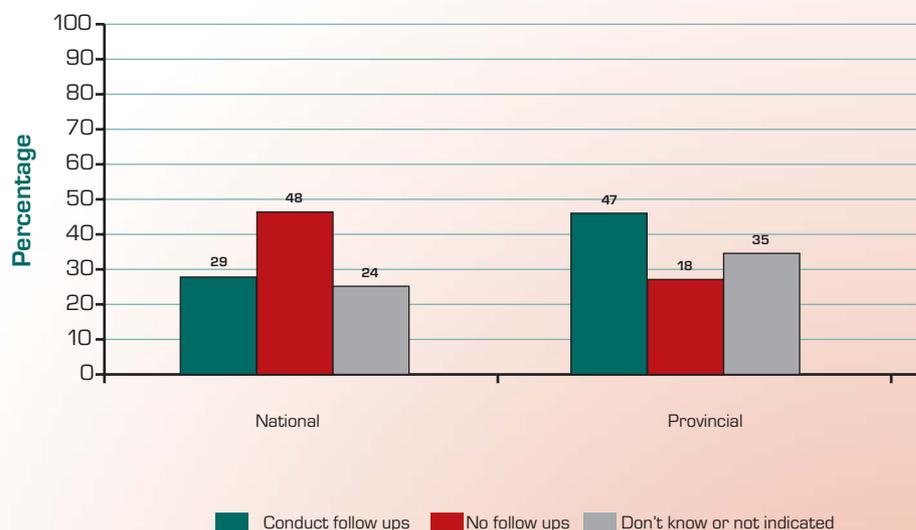
²² *Batho Pele Handbook*, p205

Where departments spoke of procedures to be followed, the most commonly mentioned requirement was to produce a written submission or memorandum that summarises the progress in the investigation so far, sometimes including recommendations on the way forward and supporting documentation. Only two national departments and 12 provincial departments also noted that the complainant should be notified of the referral. This appears to be a poor performance, but other departments may do this and simply did not report it in the questionnaire.

5.5.3 Monitoring fairness

It is important to monitor the fairness of the complaints handling system by reviewing the process of handling complaints and their outcomes. This is something that most departments do not do.

Figure 21: Monitoring the fairness of the complaints handling system



Only 29% of national departments (6 departments) do follow ups to monitor the fairness of their complaints handling system, compared to almost half of the provincial departments (47% or 39 provincial departments).

5.5.4 Fairness to staff

Fairness within the complaints handling system also refers to keeping staff informed about complaints against them. This involves informing them promptly; giving them a chance to provide their perspective and keeping them informed of the progress and outcome of the investigation.

Table 4: Procedures followed when a complaint is laid against a member of staff

	National	Provincial
Consult/inform staff member concerned	7	9
Relevant supervisor informed/investigates	10	19
Investigation of complaint	8	24
Both sides given chance to explain/respond	5	9
Corrective measures implemented (disciplinary action)	8	27
Complainant informed of outcome	4	21
No formal procedures	6	8
Other	2	15

Table 4 shows the procedures that departments reported following when a complaint is laid against a member of staff. Two national departments and 6 provincial departments did not respond to this question, and a further 6 national and 8 provincial departments reported that they do not have formal procedures. The table above shows how many of the remaining 13 national departments and 69 provincial departments mentioned each of the steps in their explanation of the procedures.

At both a national and provincial level, the procedures most commonly mentioned were to:

- inform the supervisor of the staff member concerned;
- have the supervisor investigate the complaint (speaking to both the complainant and the member of staff) and
- to implement corrective measures. This may include disciplinary action being taken against the member of staff if appropriate. The complainant should then be informed of the outcome of the process.

5.5.5 Confidentiality

The *Batho Pele* Handbook states that confidentiality should be maintained so that:

- Clients are not discouraged from complaining; and
- Accusations against staff are known only to the persons investigating the complaint.

Table 5: Procedures followed to maintain confidentiality of a complaint from a client

	National	Provincial
Information not shared with unauthorised individuals	9	20
Anonymity of complainant	3	14
Limited number of people investigating/dealing with complaint	3	8
Suggestion boxes/documents/registers locked away	3	9
Separate files kept	2	4
Oath of secrecy/code of conduct/confidentiality agreement	2	13
Complaints dealt with at high level	-	2
Correspondence marked confidential	-	2
Other	-	17

The above table outlines the steps that departments take to ensure that complaints remain confidential. Three national departments and 8 provincial departments did not respond to this question, while one national department and 9 provincial departments reported that they do not have specific procedures to maintain confidentiality. Of the remaining 17 national departments and 66 provincial departments that did respond to this question, 53% of the national departments (9 departments) and 30% of the provincial departments (20 departments) stated explicitly that information relating to the complaint is not shared with people outside of the process. Eighteen percent of national departments (3 departments) and 21% of provincial departments (14 departments) also noted that the identity of the complainant can remain unknown, particularly when complaints are channelled through a call centre or suggestion boxes.

At a national level, the Department of Land Affairs requires key personnel to sign confidentiality agreements, and all staff must abide by the Code of Conduct for Public Service. The Department of Trade and Industry noted that Section 14 of the Consumer Affairs Act no 71 of 1988 provides for confidentiality and that members of staff sign the department's Code of Conduct to maintain confidentiality.

Five provincial departments reported that their staff are bound by Codes of Conduct to maintain the confidentiality of complaints, namely: the Departments of Local Government and Housing and Public Works in the North West; the Provincial Treasuries in the Northern Cape and Western Cape; and the Western Cape Department of Social Development. The Limpopo Department of Agriculture requires all officials dealing with complaints to sign an oath of secrecy and officials are trained on the Minimum Information Security Standards (MISS). The departments of Agriculture and Transport and Public Works in the Eastern Cape also require staff involved in client services to sign an oath of secrecy, as does the Limpopo Department of Education.

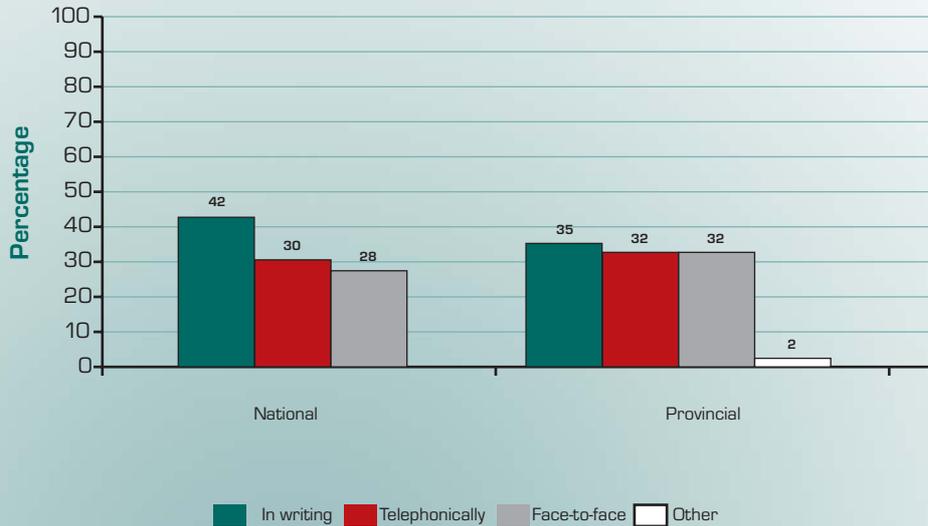
According to the Free State Department of Public Works, all officials responsible for handling complaints are in receipt of the client care operational plan, which outlines the complaints handling procedure and stipulates that staff must respect the client's desire for confidentiality. The Free State Department of Arts and Culture also referred to the Customer Care Operational Plan, but noted that it does not specify the steps to be taken to ensure that confidentiality is respected. The Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury referred to a Client Complaint protocol that requires all personnel involved in the complaint resolution to maintain confidentiality.

In contrast, according to the respondent from the National Department of Public Works it is "not necessary for complaints to be confidential", suggesting that the department should be transparent about the complaints lodged against it. The Department of Home Affairs also noted that transparency is important. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport argued that very little can be taken against any individual team member if the complainant wishes to remain anonymous. The Western Cape Provincial Treasury does not deem complaints to be confidential unless specifically indicated.

5.5.6 Responding to a complaint

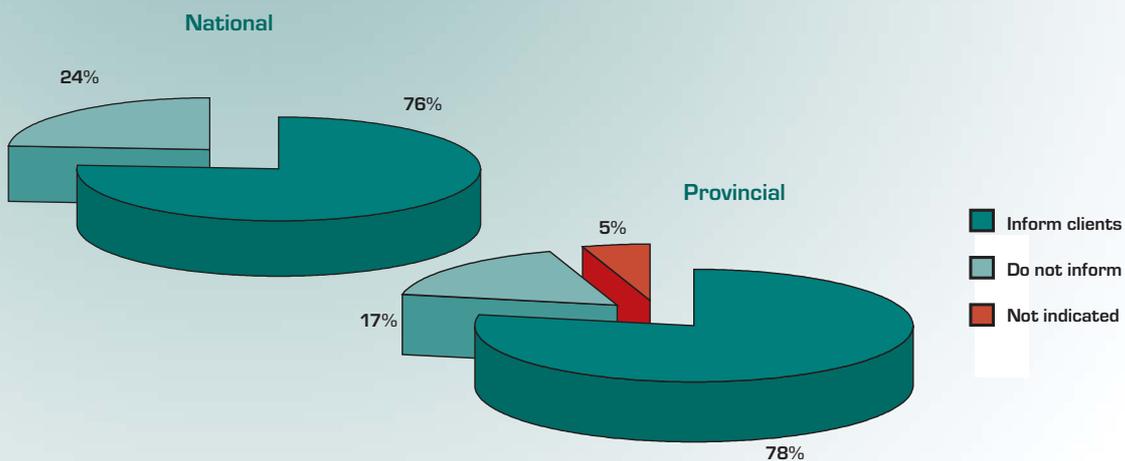
The *Batho Pele* Handbook outlines three ways in which complaints can be responded to: in writing, by telephone or in person (face-to-face).

Figure 22: Methods for responding to complaints



All three methods are commonly used by national and provincial departments, although responding formally in writing appears to be the method most frequently used.

Figure 23: Informing Clients about Procedures Involved in Responding to Complaints



Three quarters of departments at national and provincial level (16 departments and 65 departments respectively) indicated that they inform clients of the procedures involved in responding to their complaints.

Table 6: Average amount of time taken to process a complaint

	National	Provincial
Varies depending on nature of complaints	10	35
24 hours	1	3
1 – 9 days	2	10
10 – 15 days	3	7
21 days	1	4
More than 21 days	1	13
No records/not indicated	3	11
Total	21	83

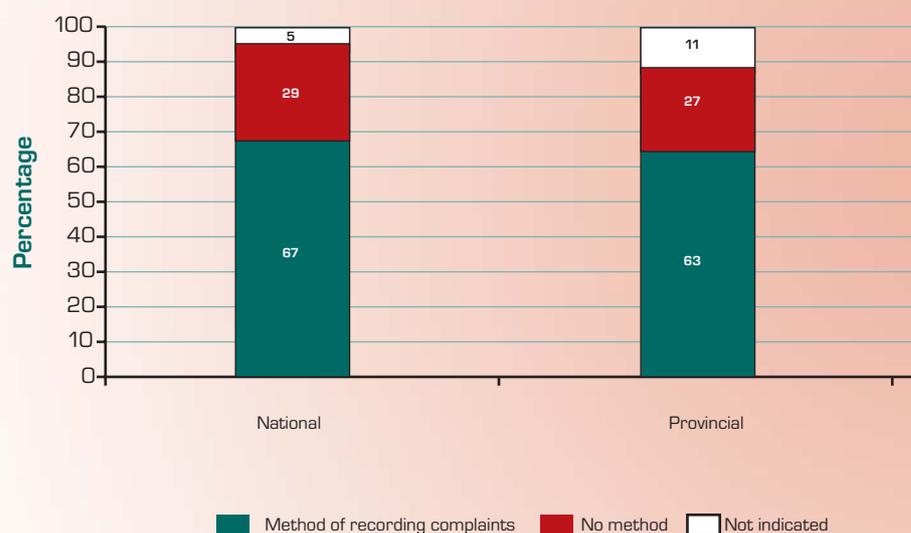
Departments were asked about the average time taken to respond to complaints, but few were able to provide definitive responses. Forty-eight percent of national departments (10 out of 21 departments) and 42% of provincial departments (35 out of 83 departments) pointed out that the time taken depends on the kind of complaint and how it was received. According to the Free State Department of Local Government and Housing, the time taken depends on the nature and complexity of the complaint – if a complaint can be solved at the lowest level, an immediate solution is possible but where it is more complex, more time is required.

The average times provided by the departments varied even within the clusters, in part because the departments deal with different types of complaints. For example, within the Finance and Administration cluster, Statistics South Africa aims to respond to complaints within 24 hours, while the National Treasury takes approximately three weeks due to the need for formal submissions.

5.6 Recording and Analysing Information

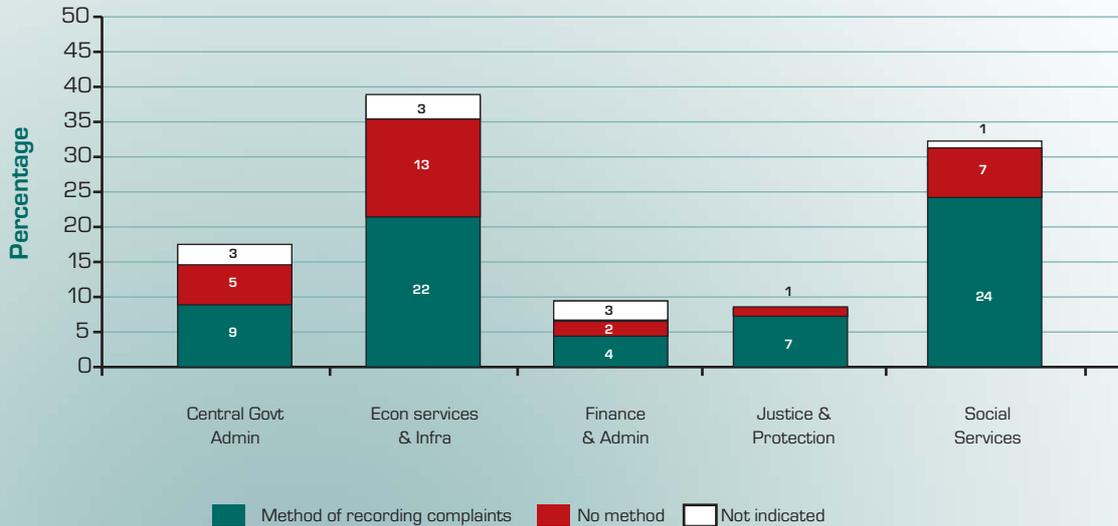
A vital component of the complaints handling system is one that allows the department to record all complaints about services and policy matters. Capturing this information will allow the department to identify areas in which service delivery can be improved.

Figure 24: Existence of method or system for recording complaints



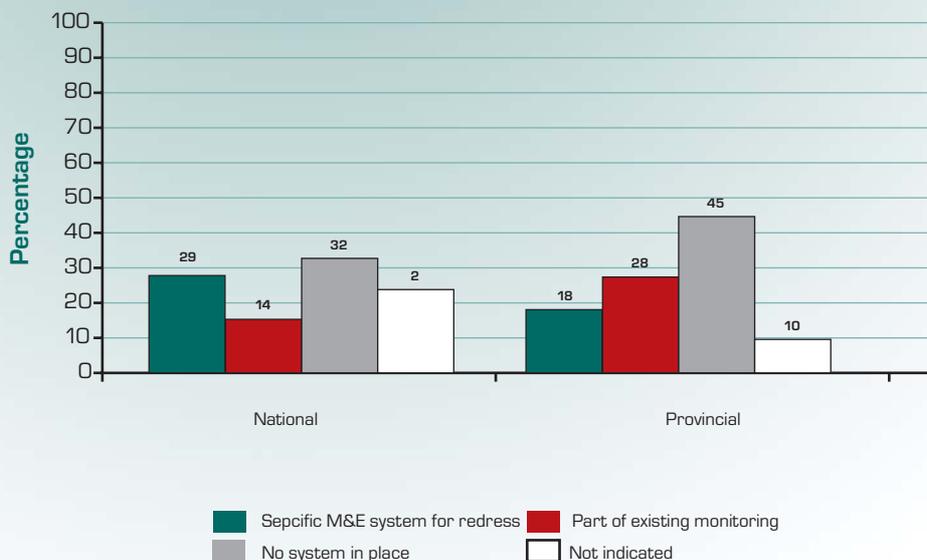
Two thirds of departments at a national level (67% or 14 departments) and 63% at a provincial level (52 departments) indicated that they have a method for recording complaints. However, 29% of national departments (6 departments) and 27% of provincial departments (22 departments) do not have recording systems in place.

Figure 25: Existence of method or system for recording complaints, by cluster



The Justice and Protection cluster has the highest proportion of departments with a system to record complaints – only one of the eight participating departments does not have a complaints recording system. Three quarters of the departments in the Social Services cluster (24 of the 32 departments) reported that they have recording systems, followed by just over half of the departments in the Economic Services and Infrastructure cluster (22 of 38 departments) and the Central Government and Administration cluster (9 of the 17 departments). Less than half of the departments in the Finance and Administration cluster have recording systems (4 of 9 departments).

Figure 26: System to monitor and evaluate redress performance



A clear gap in implementing redress is that only 29% of national departments (6 out of 21 departments) and 18% of provincial departments (15 out of 83 departments) indicated that they have a specific system to monitor and evaluate redress performance. The most common reason given for the absence of a monitoring and evaluation system is that the departments do not have formal procedures for handling complaints. Where departments do have monitoring and evaluation systems specifically for redress, these tended to be monthly reports based on the complaints register that are referred to higher authorities, or client satisfaction surveys.

Fourteen percent of national departments (14% or 3 departments) and 28% of provincial departments (23 departments) referred to general monitoring and evaluation systems such as annual or quarterly reviews and performance management systems that may include aspects of redress but do not focus specifically on this issue. Almost half of the provincial departments (45% or 40 departments) do not have a system to monitor and evaluate their performance on redress issues. Another 10% (8 departments) did not respond, suggesting that they do not have these systems in place. A third of national departments (8 departments) do not have systems in place and 24% (5 national departments) did not respond.

Table 7: Frequency with which departments revisit complaints procedures

	National	Provincial
Bi-annually	1	-
Annually	6	18
Quarterly	-	6
Monthly	-	4
Ongoing basis	1	8
Ad hoc	1	8
Do not currently revisit procedures	7	25
Not indicated	5	13
Total	21	83

Approximately half of the departments at national and provincial level either do not revisit complaints procedures on a regular basis (7 national and 25 provincial departments) or did not respond (5 national and 13 provincial departments). In many cases this is because formal complaints procedures do not exist. Of those departments that do review the complaints procedures regularly, the most common timeframe is to do so on an annual basis (6 national departments and 18 provincial departments).

Departments were asked about how they use the results of assessments of their performance regarding redress to improve service delivery. Eight of the 21 national departments and 31 of the 83 provincial departments do not carry out assessments of their performance on redress. Several departments (4 national and 20 provincial departments) indicated that performance on redress is dealt with at an individual level through the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS). Performance is discussed during personnel performance review discussions and outstanding performances are rewarded. The rewards can vary from personal feedback to a service excellence awards scheme. For example, the North West Department of Agriculture rewards individual employees in the form of bonuses or recognition letters, while the Eastern Cape Office of the Premier holds the Qapheleka Awards to reward excellent performers and those who have contributed to improving service delivery. At a provincial level, the Eastern Cape Premier's Good Governance Awards are held annually.

These assessments are also used to improve the service delivery of units and service providers. Statistics South Africa noted that the assessments are used to improve procedures and practices within business units. The Northern Cape Department of Health reported that units that do well are rewarded through the departmental excellence awards and training is provided where needed, as did the Limpopo Office of the Premier. The Mpumalanga Department of Local Government and Housing noted that this assessment extends to the service providers – complaints about businesses that default or fail to finish housing projects have led to these businesses being blacklisted and contractors are required to dismantle poor quality houses and rebuild them at their own cost.

Other means included using the results of the assessment of redress to draw up Service Delivery Improvement Plans to inform the department's strategic planning session. For example, Correctional Services incorporates the results of client satisfaction surveys into the Department Strategic Operational Plans. At a provincial level:

- The Limpopo Department of Health uses the results to develop service delivery improvement plans to prevent future occurrence of problems.
- The Free State Provincial Treasury uses the results to review their strategic plan.
- The Northern Cape Department of Education uses them to review and change targets.
- The Western Cape Department of Agriculture used the results to restructure the department in 2001 and 2004.

Departments were also asked to indicate any significant changes or improvements in service delivery levels that can be attributed to implementing redress procedures. In the Central Government and Administration cluster:

- The Department of Home Affairs indicated that redress procedures have encouraged staff members to not become involved in corruption.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs reported that there have not been significant changes in the improvement of service delivery, but management has noted the importance of implementing redress procedures and mechanisms.
- The Mpumalanga Department of Local Government and Housing found that contractors are now more likely to build better quality houses and respect the contract period for finalisation of projects.

In the Economic Services and Infrastructure cluster:

- The Limpopo Department of Agriculture noted an increase in productivity.
- The Limpopo Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs said that staff are now more aware of the quality of service to be rendered and therefore are becoming more efficient.
- The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport indicated that the channels of communication between staff and clients have been opened and this has increased clients' belief that their complaints will be taken seriously.
- The National Department of Trade and Industry noted that turn-around times have been significantly improved and that clients get monetary value.

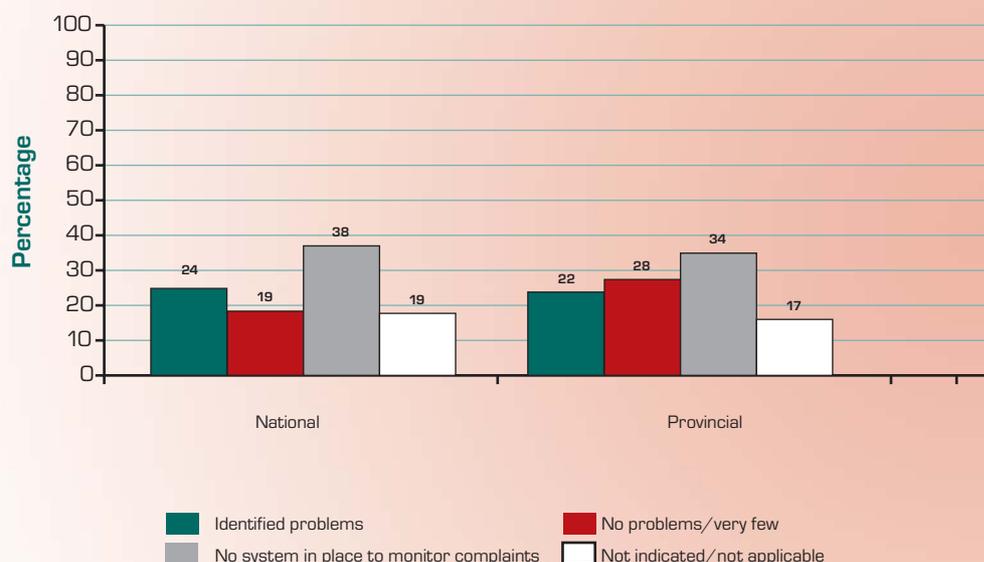
In the Finance and Administration cluster:

- Statistics South Africa reported an improvement in switchboard turnaround time and has instituted quality assurance procedures and standards to address the publication of statistical releases.
- The National Treasury found that providing dedicated follow up capacity for all follow up actions (including redress) has begun to improve response times. At a provincial level, the Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury indicated that a significant level of ‘client focus’ has been achieved by the staff and that this has changed perceptions about the department; while the Free State Provincial Treasury reported fewer complaints.
- The South African Police Services reported that the implementation of redress procedures has led to the implementation of sector policing, which is about crime prevention initiatives and the allocation of new resources to historically disadvantaged areas. The Eastern Cape Department of Safety and Security has been able to reach and assist more people since the development of the complaints and research component within the department, while the department in the Free State found that complaints are now addressed to the satisfaction of complainants.

In the Social Services cluster:

- The Department of Social Development reported an improvement in combating fraud and an enhanced communication strategy.
- Provincially, the Free State Department of Education indicated that complaints are addressed in a shorter time and that more complaints are finalised within a week. The department in Gauteng reported improved satisfaction levels, improved access to education and improved quality of education.
- The Gauteng Department of Health has seen a marked difference in the proportion of complaints about hospitality and cleanliness; the Northern Cape Department of Health has seen a change in staff attitudes and a reduction in waiting times; and the Western Cape Department of Health has found that clients are aware of the system and readily use it, which has led to improvements such as faster queues, the upgrading of toilet facilities, improved meals and changes to visiting times.

Figure 27: Identification of problems in the complaints handling systems



A quarter of national departments (24% or 5 out of 21 departments) and 22% of provincial departments (18 out of 83 departments) identified challenges in their complaints handling systems, compared to 19% of national departments and 28% of provincial departments (4 and 23 departments respectively) that reported having few or no challenges. At a national level, the Independent Complaints Directorate and the Department of Home Affairs reported that there is a need for both the public and staff to be made aware of the complaints system, while the Department of Public works, Water Affairs and Forestry and National Treasury have found that bureaucracy delays complaint resolution.

Eleven of the provincial departments identified similar problems in terms of bureaucratic and other delays in complaint resolution, and eight reported that there is a shortage of staff and other resources to handle complaints. Four departments stated that the complaints system needs to be publicised further, and another four noted that complainants are sometimes afraid to make formal complaints or do not provide personal details. Two provincial departments reported challenges but did not elaborate.

At a national level, the departments identified the cause of these problems as a lack of capacity which hinders response speed; the fact that the complaints system or procedure is new and unfamiliar; and the nature of the organisational structure. The provincial departments identified the following causes of challenges in the complaints handling system:

- a lack of capacity causing delays in responses (16 departments);
- a need for management and staff buy-in (6 departments);
- complainants who do not provide contact details (4 departments);
- poor communication between the MEC's office and the office where the complaint was lodged (2 departments); and
- the fact that records of complaints can be destroyed (2 departments).

Measures that have been put in place to address these challenges include:

- Publicising the complaints procedure and the details of offices;
- Implementation of new procedures for making complaints;
- Building the capacity of staff, exerting pressure on staff to deliver and obtaining management buy-in;
- Stakeholder consultation.

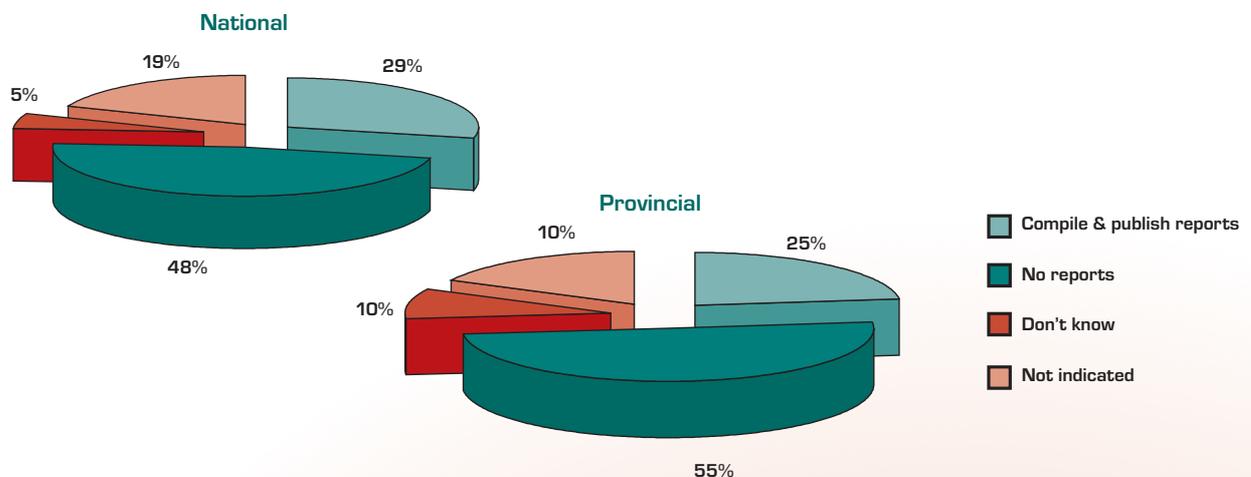
The national departments reported that either these measures have led to an improvement or that to assess effectiveness is premature at this juncture. The same was the case for most of the provincial departments with the exception of one department that noted a few continuing problems.

5.6.1 Compile a report

The core objective of recording complaints is to provide information that can be used to improve service delivery. The *Batho Pele Handbook* suggests that information regarding the number and type of complaints as well as statistics relating to published standards should be published in a report and communicated to all stakeholders²³. In particular this information should be communicated to policy-makers to provide them with the clients' views of the services offered.

²³ *Batho Pele Handbook*, p208

Figure 28: Compilation of reports on complaints and communication to all stakeholders



Approximately a quarter of national and provincial departments reported that they compile and publish reports on complaints (29% or 6 national departments and 25% or 21 provincial departments).

Those departments that communicate their performance on redress to internal and external stakeholders listed a wide range of ways in which they do this. Common methods of communicating performance to internal stakeholders included:

- internal reports on complaints (as indicated above);
- internal publications such as newsletters;
- monthly meetings;
- quarterly reviews; and
- staff briefings.

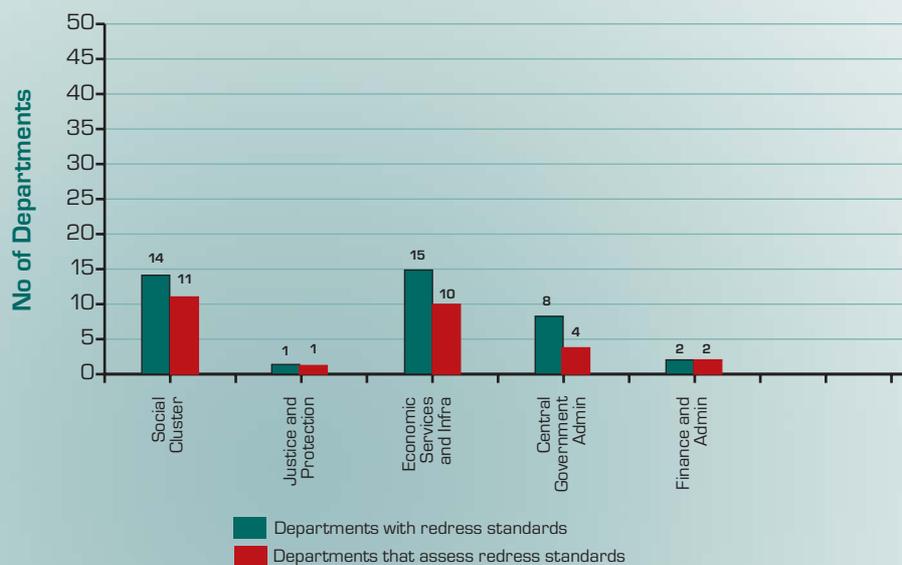
Methods of informing external stakeholders reportedly used by departments include:

- annual reports;
- consultative stakeholder meetings;
- pamphlets and publications;
- media releases;
- farmer days;
- citizen's reports;
- izimbizo;
- *Batho Pele* road shows; and
- 'EXCO meets the people' campaign.

5.7 Service Improvements

The complaints handling systems developed by government departments should not solely end with an apology and explanation to clients. The information gathered from complaints should be analysed to identify areas of service delivery where improvements are needed, and should feed into service delivery improvement plans. In addition to this, the *Batho Pele* Handbook advises departments to constantly review and adapt their complaints handling systems to keep pace with changes in service delivery²⁴.

Figure 29: Departments with Redress Standards in Place and Those That Assess Them, by Cluster



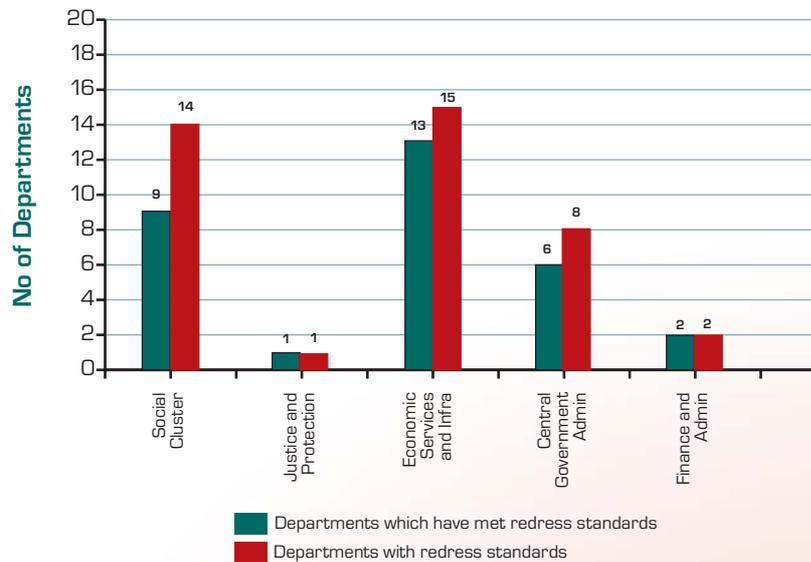
Seventy-nine per cent of the departments in the social cluster (11 of 14 departments) which had redress standards and 67% of departments with redress standards in the Economic Services and Infrastructure Cluster (10 of 15 departments) reported assessing them. Generally, of those departments with service standards, a large proportion in each of the clusters specified some means of assessing them. Only four of the eight departments in the Central Government and Administration cluster, however, reported assessing their redress standards.

Redress standards were commonly assessed by both internal and external consultation. Internal consultation included regular management reviews, departmental *Batho Pele* fora and, in the case of the Treasury of the Eastern Cape, ad hoc reviews by departmental officials. The Limpopo Department of Education and the Western Cape Department of Health reported conducting assessments of the number of complaints received and dealt with for particular periods. External consultation took place primarily through client satisfaction surveys

Assessments took place annually, bi-annually and quarterly, depending on the department and the aspect of the complaints handling system under review. For example, the Western Cape Department of Health conducted assessments on an ongoing basis for complaints lodged directly at the head office, quarterly for complaints and compliments for the province, and annually for client satisfaction surveys.

²⁴ *The Batho Pele Handbook*, p208

Figure 30: Departments which have met redress standards and departments with redress standards, by cluster



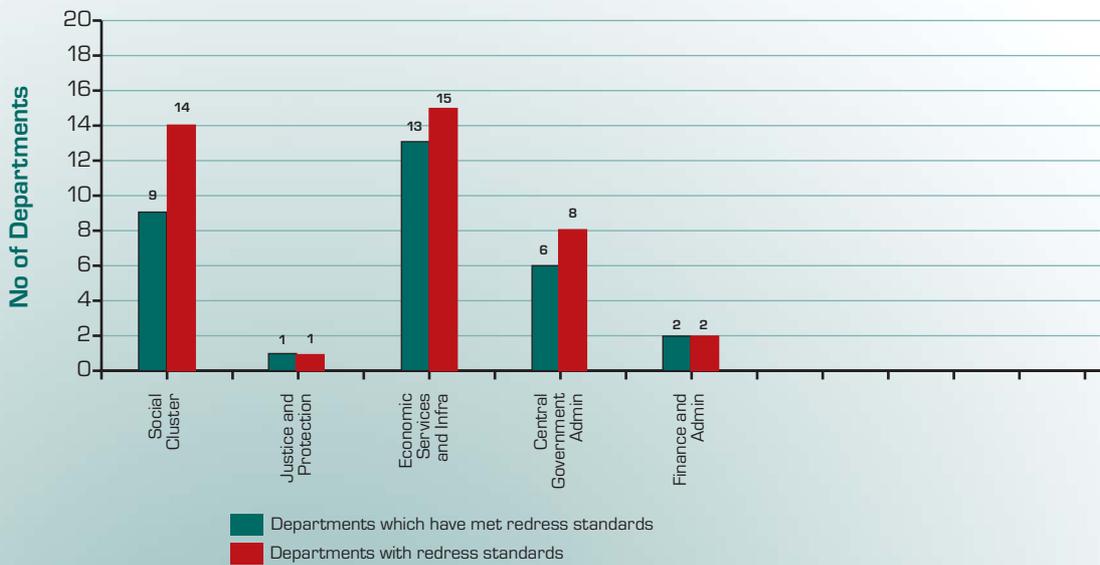
Departments with redress standards generally reported having met them at least to some extent. Sixty-four per cent of departments in the Social Services cluster (9 out of 14 departments) that reported having redress standards and 87% of departments in the Economic Services and Infrastructure cluster (13 out of 15 departments) felt that they had met their redress standards, if only in part.

Redress standards tended to be met in part, with some departments reporting that meeting the standards they had set for themselves is an ongoing process which constantly challenges them. Standards specifying the timelines for handling complaints were particularly mentioned as difficult to fully realise, with some departments saying that complex complaints sometimes take more time to resolve than what they are held to by the redress standards. One of the departments that raised this issue, the Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury, has introduced a Uni-Centre Service Help Desk to ensure that the timelines specified in the redress standards are met.

Departments that reported not having met their standards cited a number of reasons for failing to meet them, including a lack of capacity, conflicting work priorities and poor, or very recently introduced complaints handling systems. The Free State Department of Local Government and Housing reported that they are unable to provide regular training to staff on the complaints handling system due to budgetary complaints, while the Northern Cape Department of Health felt that there was a need to appoint a dedicated official for handling complaints.

The strategies used by departments to overcome obstacles to meeting their standards included the delegation of staff members to monitor standards (Limpopo Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs), and the inclusion of redress standards in performance agreements (Free State Department of Local Government and Housing).

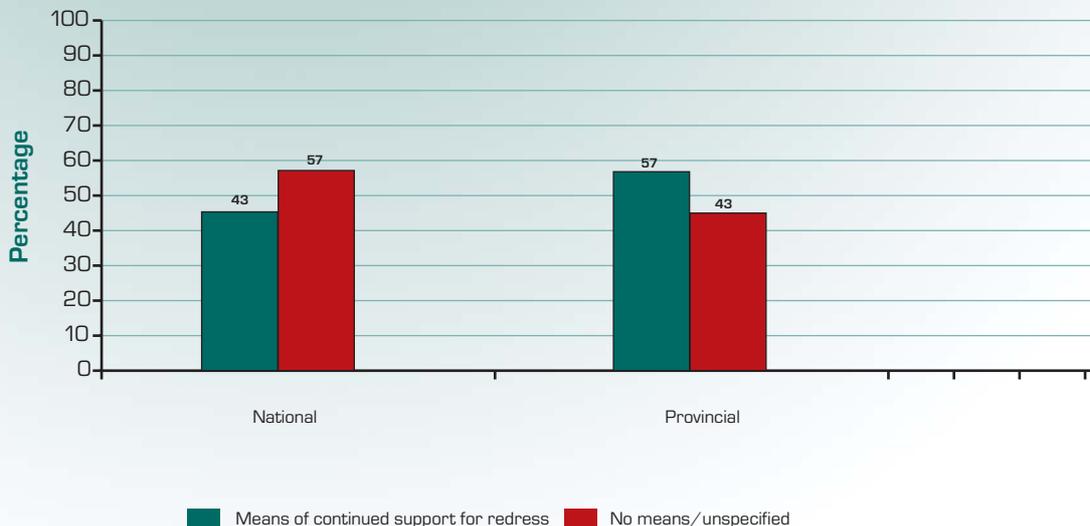
Figure 31: Departments with a system that allows external stakeholder to assess redress performance, by cluster



Thirty eight per cent of the departments in the Social Cluster (38%), 29% of the departments in the Central Government and Administration Cluster, 33% of departments in the Justice and Protection cluster and 36% of departments in the Economic Services and Infrastructure cluster reported having systems that allow for external stakeholders to assess their redress performance. Only 1 out of 9 departments in the Finance and Administration Cluster had such systems. Ideally, departments should publish and communicate to all stakeholders information about complaints. The fact that few departments have made provisions for this process is an area of concern.

Departments that indicated they have these systems in place referred primarily to annual reports, citizens' reports, and quality assessment surveys. The Northern Cape Department of Health referred to the Premier's Excellence Awards, where external stakeholders conduct an assessment of various aspects of the department's performance through community fora and facility boards.

Figure 32: Departments that ensure continued support and resources for redress

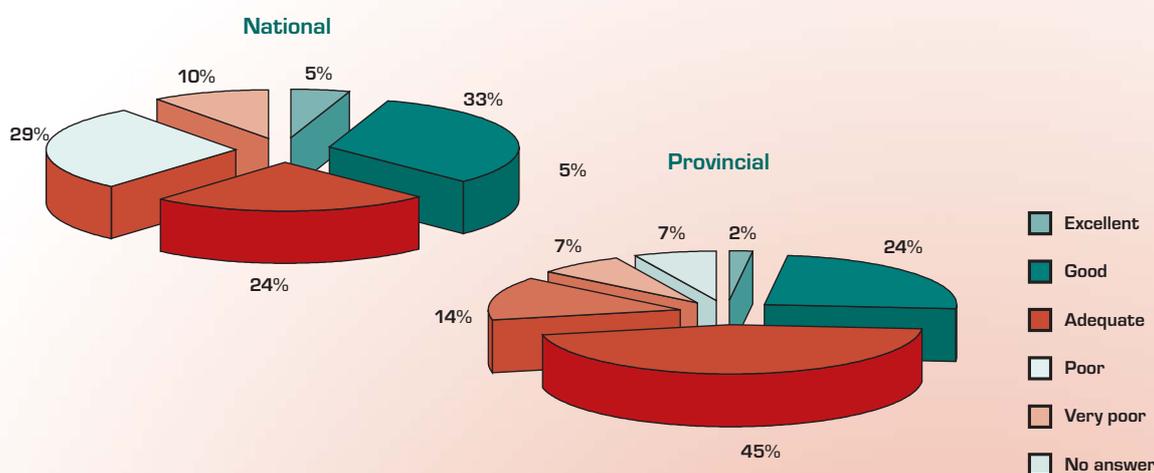


Forty-three per cent of national departments and 57% of provincial departments (9 and 47 departments respectively) specified means of ensuring the continued support and resources for the improvement of redress. These included securing future funding and personnel for the complaints handling system, planned meetings to consult with internal and external stakeholders, continued training of staff dealing with clients, and incorporating redress standards into performance agreements. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Social Development said that recommendations made by clients are used to improve the handling of complaints.

5.7.1 Self-assessment

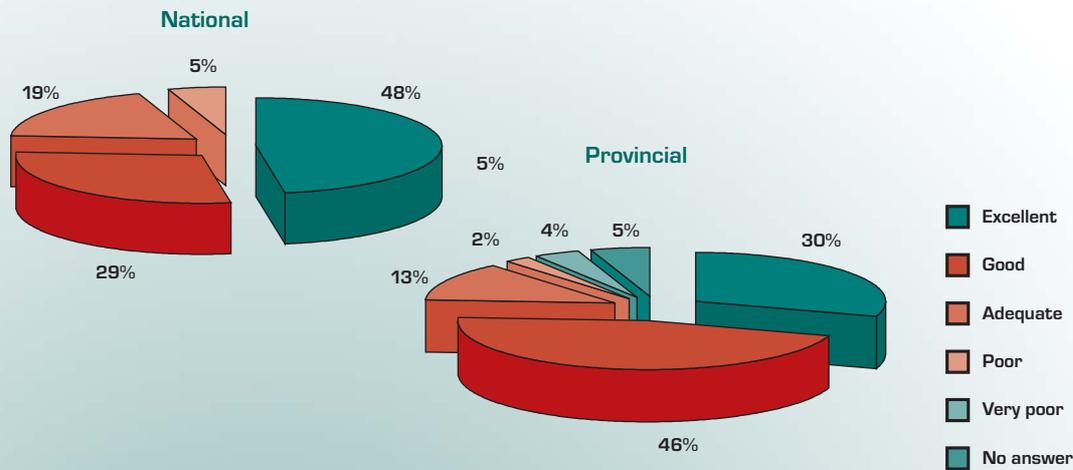
To gain insight into the government departments' own assessments of their performance on redress, the departments were asked to rate their implementation of redress and their overall performance in handling complaints on a five point scale.

Figure 33: Self-rating on the implementation of redress



There was almost an equal split between national departments who felt that they performed poorly and those who felt that they performed well in implementing their redress policies, with 29% national departments (6 departments) rating their performance as 'poor' and 33% (7 departments) rating their performance as 'good'. Forty-five per cent of provincial departments (37 departments) thought that they performed adequately in implementing their redress policies.

Figure 34: Self-rating of departments' overall handling of complaints



National departments were more generous in their self rating when it came to assessing their overall handling of complaints, with 48% of national departments (10 departments) rating their performance as 'good'. While 46% of provincial departments (38 departments) rated their performance as 'adequate', 4 provincial departments (5%) felt that they performed excellently in their overall handling of complaints.

Government departments specified a number of priority areas for the improvement of their complaints handling procedures. These areas indicate a recognition on the part of a number of departments that while they may have informal measures for handling complaints, there is still more progress to be made in terms of formalising these procedures and implementing monitoring and review systems.

The priority areas identified by the departments may be grouped into the following broad categories:

- Improved report back mechanisms and consultation with the end-users and key stakeholders;
- Training of staff in the complaints handling procedure;
- Improved monitoring and evaluation and review mechanisms;
- The use of dedicated staff for the management of complaints; and
- Improved recording and analysis of complaints.

Chapter Six

Good Practice Model and Benchmarking

The purpose of this chapter is to consider a model of good practice for implementing the *Batho Pele* principle of redress and to benchmark departments against this model. The model has been used to develop a checklist of good practice, which forms the basis for assessing the overall performance of departments in implementing the principle of redress.

A benchmarking exercise follows in which departments are compared on their self-assessments in terms of implementing redress. The benchmarking exercise also highlights challenges and gaps that departments face with regards to redress.

6.1 A Model of Good Practice for Redress

The *Batho Pele* Handbook provides guidelines for good practice in developing and implementing a complaints handling system. Below is a generic model of good practice in relation to redress that is based on these guidelines. Specific examples of good practice in the way departments have implemented redress are provided in Section 6.3.

1. Develop a complaints procedure

- When developing a complaints procedure departments should liaise with staff (particularly those who will run the system), members of the public who will use it and other relevant stakeholders.
- Clear written guidelines should be developed.
- Guidelines should specify how to deal with different types of complaints and at what level they should be dealt with.
- Guidelines should include realistic standards and targets for dealing with complaints that are easy to measure and review.

2. Train staff members on how to handle complaints

- Staff members who are in regular contact with clients should be identified for training.
- Training should cover all key aspects of handling complaints (e.g. specific procedures, communication skills, recording, understanding of benefits).

3. Ensure that the complaints procedure is accessible to all

- Procedures for lodging a complaint should be simple and accessible.
- Complaints procedures and targets should be publicised.
- Departments should identify possible barriers that may prevent clients from complaining and make efforts to address these.
- The complaints procedures should also take account of clients with special needs (e.g. clients with disabilities, illiterate etc.).

4. Principles for dealing with complaints in practice

- Complaints should be dealt with in an open, unbiased, thorough and consistent manner.
- Systems should take into account the need to deal with complaints at a local level and to report or record complaints at a central point.
- Guidelines should be provided on when and how to refer complaints.

- Where appropriate, departments should offer an apology, a full explanation and an effective remedy to complainants.
- Confidentiality should be maintained where appropriate.
- Clients' satisfaction with the way in which their complaints were addressed should be monitored on a regular basis.

5. Record and Analyse Information

- Departments should develop a system for recording complaints so that they can be monitored and used to improve service delivery.
- This system should be simple and practical and allow for complaints to be recorded in a consistent and detailed manner.
- Complaints should be monitored on a regular basis e.g. monthly, and reports on the findings should be published.

6. Use to improve service delivery

- The above information should be used to identify problem areas and to improve service delivery (e.g. inform service improvement plans).
- The complaints handling procedures and standards or targets should be reviewed on a regular basis (e.g. annually).

Using this model as a framework, it is possible to develop a checklist of good practice in relation to the implementation of redress. The following outlines a short checklist of indicators that could be seen to make up a model of good practice in implementing redress.

- **Developing a complaints procedure**
The department has some form of complaints handling system and has formalised this by developing written guidelines that differentiate between different types of complaints and how they should be handled. The department would be expected to discuss the complaints handling system with internal and external stakeholders and has a system in place for recording complaints as they come in and are dealt with.
- **Training staff**
The department provides training on the handling of complaints.
- **Ensuring that the complaints system is accessible to all clients**
The department has developed ways of making clients aware of the complaints procedure. The complaints handling system specifically accommodates people with disabilities and the department has set targets and standards for redress.
- **Recording and analysing information**
The department has some system in place to monitor and evaluate performance on redress, either specifically for redress or as part of a broader review process. The department publishes regular reports on complaints and these are communicated to all stakeholders.

- **Implementing service improvements**

The department has noted significant changes or improvements to service delivery as a result of implementing redress procedures. The department assesses its redress targets and standards on a regular basis and these have been met or are on track.

A detailed table that provides an indication of the number of departments in each of the clusters that have initiated or implemented each of the good practices on the checklist is provided in Annexure 3. Each item in the above checklist had an associated question in the study questionnaire that was administered to the national and provincial departments. A summary of responses, classified as yes or no answers is contained in this Annexure.

The following section uses this checklist and the table in the appendix to identify some broad patterns and gaps in the implementation of redress by government departments.

6.2 Performance on Redress in Relation to the Good Practice Model

The findings of the study outlined in the previous chapter demonstrate variation in the implementation of the *Batho Pele* principle of redress. However, by counting the number of departments that reported having implemented each of the items on the good practice checklist, it is possible to identify some overall trends and gaps in terms of implementation.

Most departments reported having some form of complaints handling system, but they ranged from structured, formalised systems in some cases to informal, ad hoc responses in others. Only slightly more than half of the departments (56% or 58 of the 104 departments) have written guidelines that differentiate between different types of complaints and how they should be dealt with. Only 46% of departments (48 departments) reported having set targets for redress and even fewer (38% or 40 departments) have set standards. Less than half of the departments (46% or 48 departments) have systems for recording the complaints they receive, making it difficult to monitor changes over time or to use the complaints to identify areas for service delivery improvement.

In terms of making the complaints handling system accessible to all clients, three quarters of the departments (73% or 76 departments) indicated that they have implemented measures to ensure that clients are aware that they can complain). This is a positive finding but the lack of formalisation makes it difficult for clients to hold departments accountable for dealing with complaints in a helpful and timely manner.

Several departments are not making use of the opportunity to use the complaints handling system as a tool for improving service delivery. Less than half of the departments (45% or 47 departments) reported having a system for monitoring redress or evaluating their performance on redress (either as a separate process or as part of a broader monitoring process), and even fewer (26% or 27 departments) indicated that they compile and publish reports on the complaints they received and how they have been handled. However, a third of departments (35% or 36 departments) were able to describe significant changes or improvements in their service delivery as a result of the implementation of redress procedures.

When considering possible differences between the five clusters in terms of the implementation of redress, it can be noted that the clusters differ in the extent to which they interact with the public. This may suggest that they would differ in the extent to which they have formalised their complaints handling procedures. The *Batho Pele* Handbook states that, despite possible differences in functions, all national and provincial

departments should establish complaints handling systems²⁵, as they provide an opportunity for “free feedback” about services, whether the services are provided to the public or other government departments.

However, the checklist table in Annexure 3 illustrates that the five clusters tended to follow the overall pattern of a lack of formalisation, limited monitoring and evaluation and minimal review of the complaints handling systems.

6.3 Benchmarking Redress

Benchmarking may be defined as a process by which departments seek to increase their effectiveness by learning from the successes of others, and in particular, through identifying the best practices of other successful departments. In particular it entails:

- A continuous, never-ending cycle of looking for new and better ways of doing things;
- A structured process or set of activities that seeks to bring about the desired result; and
- Comparison of performance with other successful departments²⁶.

Departments can benchmark any service which they wish to improve. The Department of Trade and Industry provides a useful example of benchmarking in practice. In 2004 the department conducted a benchmarking and study tour to Australia to benchmark their consumer complaints handling model against the Australian consumer protection agencies to establish best practice.

The benchmarking tour appears to have been a useful exercise that informed the department’s vision of redress. In 2004 the department produced a draft Pilot Plan for Customer Enquiry and Complaint Handling which specifies a timeline of 20 working days (except for complicated issues) in which to investigate and respond to all complaints. It commits the department to an immediate acknowledgement of complaints received via the call centre, and acknowledgement of receipt of complaints received through other channels within 5 working days. The plan also outlines the organisational structure for handling complaints within the department (headed by a Project Manager), as well as call centre process metrics which provide targets for handling calls (e.g. 85% of inquiries to be handled on first contact).

The process of benchmarking requires the identification of existing good practice in the implementation of redress. In order to undertake a rough benchmarking exercise between government departments, the following sections compare departments in relation to their own assessment of how well they have implemented the principle of redress. The self-assessment was based on a question in the survey in which departments were asked to rate their overall implementation of redress on a five point scale of excellent to very poor. The findings are shown in the previous chapter in table 33.

For the purposes of benchmarking, three broad categories are used:

- those departments that are **well-oriented** to implementing redress (the ‘well performing departments’ that exhibit examples of good practice);
- those departments that have complaints handling systems in place but still have some gaps (assessed themselves as **‘average’** performers);

²⁵ *The Batho Pele Handbook*, p194

²⁶ Saul, J. *Benchmarking for Nonprofits: How to Measure and Improve Performance*, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation Press (undated).

- those departments that have informal, more ad hoc systems or no systems at all for handling complaints from external clients – the **‘below average’** performers. These are the departments that rated themselves as poor or very poor.

The following draws on the survey findings and the review of supporting documentation to categorise departments according to the above. It provides examples of good practice and identifies gaps that exist, drawing on the good practice model outlined above.

6.3.1 Examples of Good Practice from Departments ‘Well-oriented’ to Redress

A third of national departments (33%) and a quarter of provincial departments (24%) rated their compliance with the principles of redress as ‘good’. Two percent of provincial departments (2% or 2 departments) rated their performance as ‘excellent’.

While this section on good practice takes departments’ self-assessments into account, it is based primarily on the supporting documentation provided by departments in this study. This is because some departments that rated themselves as ‘good’ or even ‘excellent’ had not implemented some of the steps in the good practice model.

A review of the responses and supporting documentation provided by the departments indicated that departments displayed different strengths in the development and implementation of their complaints handling systems. A number of provincial and national departments stood out in different ways in their efforts to develop fair and effective complaints handling systems. Examples of these efforts are provided below as illustrations of good practice in developing and maintaining a complaints-handling system that complies with the *Batho Pele* principle of redress.

6.3.1.1 Complaints Handling Guidelines

The provincial departments of the Free State were identified as displaying a thorough understanding and commitment to developing comprehensive complaints handling procedures. These efforts were led by the Free State Office of the Premier, which in 1998/1999 developed a ‘Customer Care Strategy’ that focused on providing guidelines for a complaints handling system. The purpose of the Strategy was to:

...realise customer satisfaction by providing customers and staff of the Free State Provincial Government with an opportunity to lodge complaints about poor service, make suggestions on the type, quality and level of services they will receive and to compliment the Government institutions for quality service²⁷.

The document emphasises that complaints from clients are to be viewed as an opportunity for government departments to improve their services. It provides basic guidelines for dealing with complaints telephonically, face-to-face and in writing, as well as guidelines for the development of Service Delivery Improvement Plans. The plan commits the department to responding within a week to all written complaints, and immediately (where possible), to face-to-face and telephonic complaints.

Other government departments in the Free State went on to adopt and adapt these guidelines according to their unique service priorities. The Free State Department of Health, for example, has developed its own Provincial Complaint Procedure Manual, which has expanded on the broad guidelines developed by the Office of the Premier. This manual defines the complaint and the complainant, distinguishes between

²⁷ *Customer Care Strategy: Free State Provincial Government, p1*

complaints from external and internal clients, and provides detailed procedures for handling complaints at different levels of service delivery.

The manual also provides guidelines for local resolution (resolving complaints on the spot), referral to the customer relations officer, and finally referral of the written complaint to the District Manager of the facility. It also specifies that a complaint shall be acknowledged in writing within 3 to 4 working days. In addition, the manual also provides for the development of a complaints register and recommends the development of an electronic database for the recording of complaints, which is to be analysed periodically to identify trends and problem areas²⁸.

6.3.1.2 Training of Staff

An example of a department that has implemented a comprehensive training course on the handling of complaints is the Free State Department of Public Works.

Amongst the documents provided by this department was a training programme for managers and staff on service delivery and client service. The training course is based on a manual developed by the South African Management Development Institute entitled: *Excellent Customer Care: Frontline Personnel Manual*.

The operational managers, senior managers and frontline personnel of the department attended two to three day courses on customer services. The modules of the training course dealt with:

- Understanding quality customer service;
- *Batho Pele* principles;
- Improving service delivery in the public service; and
- Drawing action plans for quality customer service.

The training course makes extensive use of group work and examples of actual complaints to illustrate principles of handling complaints efficiently and with courtesy.

6.3.1.3 Recording and Analysing Information

The South African Police Service and the Free State Department of Sport, Arts, Culture, Science and Technology provided evidence of well-functioning systems for recording and analysing complaints. The Free State department has a 'customer care' register which records the date of the complaint or compliment, the complaint or compliment itself, the person responsible for handling the complaint, and the report of how the problem was solved.

The South African Police Service provided evidence of having taken the step from recording complaints to analysing them for trends and areas of concern. Amongst their documents was a Quarterly Report from the National Evaluations Service: Complaints Investigations. The report provides statistics on the number of complaints disposed of by the sub-component Complaints Investigations and Community Service Line during the report period. The statistics also describe the outcomes of the complaints by province.

The Department of Home Affairs does not have a formal, dedicated system for analysing complaints in this way, but does incorporate the monitoring of complaints to some extent into the broader monitoring of the outcomes outlined in the Departmental Strategic Business Plan. One of the Critical Intervention Areas identified in this Plan was the need to improve service delivery. This includes a 'Client is always right'

²⁸ Provincial Complaint Procedure Manual: A Healthy and Self Reliant Free State Community Free State Department of Health.

campaign, and the performance indicator for this is a 60% reduction in complaints. A standardised monthly feedback instrument that is applicable to all business heads at Head Office and provinces is used to monitor the key outputs, and this includes monthly reporting on efforts to promote this campaign.

6.3.1.4 Developing Redress Targets and Standards

The Department of Labour seems to have adopted a comprehensive approach in terms of incorporating the principle of redress into its Service Standards. The standards include a number of commitments around client services, such as a commitment to ensure that clients do not spend more than 5 minutes at the help desk without being attended to, and ensuring that for telephonic client queries the telephone does not ring more than 3 times before a response at the Client Support service section. The standards also undertake to inform beneficiaries of their rights and obligations by developing and distributing information, education and communication materials taking into account the profile of the targeted audiences.

These are general standards relating to client services. Besides these, the service standards also commit the department to:

Ensure that all complaints are investigated within 10 working days and that all complainants are informed of the outcome of the investigations within a month²⁹.

The Department's Service Charter also makes a commitment to providing 'customer feedback and correction of errors', as well as a 'timeous response to enquiries'.

Finally, it must be noted that this discussion on best practice and benchmarking should serve as a point of departure for an ongoing process of benchmarking for individual departments, a process which seeks to identify best practices relevant to the conditions for redress in each department and which involves key stakeholders in the process.

6.4 Challenges and Gaps in Implementing Redress

A quarter of national departments (24%) and 45% provincial departments rated their compliance with the principles of redress as adequate, while 39% of national and 21% of provincial departments rated their performance as either poor or very poor.

This section will consider those departments that rated their performance 'poor' or 'very poor', as these are the departments where the gaps and challenges are most pronounced. However, it should be noted that there was a noticeable overlap between departments that assessed their performance as 'adequate' or 'poor' – some departments rated their performance as 'poor' not because they do not deal with complaints from external clients, but because they recognise that they still have a long way to go in formalising these systems. Other departments with similar informal, ad hoc systems assessed their performance as adequate. This section considers that gaps that remain in implementation amongst departments that assessed their performance as poor, but some of these observations apply to the 'average' performers as well.

National departments that rated their performance as 'poor' included the Department of Public Service and Administration; the Independent Complaints Directorate; Statistics South Africa; and the National Departments of Public Works, Home Affairs and Education.

²⁹ Service Delivery Standards Department of Labour

Provincial departments included the provincial Treasuries of Mpumalanga, North West and the Western Cape; the Free State and Gauteng Departments of Agriculture; the Western Cape and Free State Departments of Economic Affairs and Tourism; the Gauteng and Western Cape Departments of Local Government and Housing; the Northern Cape Office of the Premier; the Mpumalanga Department of Health; the Gauteng Department of Social Development; and the Royal Household of KwaZulu-Natal.

National and provincial departments that rated their performance in implementing redress as 'very poor' included: the Department of Communication, Northern Cape Provincial Treasury; Mpumalanga Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism; the North West and Western Cape Departments of Arts and Culture; Mpumalanga Department of Safety and Security.

These departments can generally be divided into two categories: departments that have no formalised complaints handling systems but have some practice in the handling thereof; and those that interpreted redress as an internal procedure and gave no indication of having a complaints handling system in place for clients of their services.

6.4.1 Informal Complaints Handling Systems

The Departments of Sports, Arts and Culture³⁰ in the Northern Cape, Western Cape, Mpumalanga and North West are examples of departments with no formalised complaints handling system, but which nevertheless demonstrate sound understandings of the principle of redress and also have experience in handling complaints informally. The departments in the North West and Western Cape assessed this performance as 'very poor' due to the lack of formalisation, while the other departments viewed it as adequate.

These departments have no specific structures or units responsible for handling complaints, nor do they provide specific training in complaints handling (although the staff members view the handling of complaints as part of their normal workload.) None of the departments have formal guidelines differentiating between different types of complaints, or standards related to redress. There are also no procedures for recording complaints.

Nonetheless, all of these departments do respond to complaints, inform clients of the progress of their complaints, maintain the confidentiality of clients in dealing with complaints and refer complaints to higher levels. Two of the departments (in the North West and Mpumalanga) make clients aware of their rights to lodge complaints through outreach and awareness programmes.

The absence of formal procedures and written guidelines in these departments has two broad effects on their complaints handling functions. First, the lack of staff training and absence of formal guidelines may impact negatively on the quality and consistency of complaints handling within these departments. Second, while the departments clearly address complaints that they receive, the absence of recording and monitoring systems deprives them of the benefit of knowing which services clients' feel are in need of improvement.

All of the above departments recognised the need to formalise their complaints handling procedures and direct resources and expertise to this area of their work. In the case of the Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport, the reason for the lack of formalisation was that the department has only recently been established.

³⁰ Alternately called the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport in the Western Cape and the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation in Mpumalanga

Another example at a national level is the Department of Home Affairs. The departments' self-assessment rating for performance on redress was 'poor'. The Department has a number of specific mechanisms for appealing against decisions (such as the Refugee Appeal Board and the Immigration Selection Board), but there is no formalised complaints handling system³¹. The Department of Home Affairs has suggestion boxes and Heads of Offices have an 'open door' policy, but no training is provided on complaints handling, there are no written guidelines differentiating between different types of complaints and the department has not set targets or standards specifically for redress. When identifying priority areas for improvement, it was noted that, "There is no formal complaint system. The current processes need to be formalised and structured in terms of complaints from the public."

Despite these gaps, there are a number of initiatives that suggest that the department is making progress. There has been consultation with both internal and external stakeholders on redress issues, and the department has a system for recording complaints. A newly established Branch: Service Delivery is responsible for overseeing redress and has a Client Service Centre as a sub-directorate. The Client Service Centre deals with enquiries and complaints of a functional nature. It was noted that this Branch is still new and in the process of determining its role and specific tasks. The department also monitors complaints as part of the broader monitoring of the outputs identified in the Departmental Strategic Business Plan.

6.4.2 Complaints Handling Systems in Development

Other departments appeared to equate redress with the internal grievance procedure and did not indicate that they have systems for handling external complaints. Examples included the National Department of Education and the Northern Cape Department of Education.

The respondent for the National Department of Education understood redress in terms of transparency and accountability, and related these to the improvement of the quality and accessibility of services. It was noted that like a number of departments, the Department of Education has not set targets or standards relating to redress. While there was mention of training, this appeared to be an induction course for new staff members where they are informed of a complaints handling procedure designated for internal use.

It would appear that the complaints handling procedure reported on by the Department of Education refers to a grievance procedure rather than a complaints handling procedure. In other words, the procedure reported on by the department refers to the way in which grievances of employees within the Department of Education are dealt with, rather than how complaints from external clients are addressed.

The Northern Cape Department of Education also described their complaints handling systems in terms of referring staff to their immediate supervisors and shop stewards.

Departments that have yet to formalise their complaints handling systems can only benefit from having records of the complaints which they receive. For departments that have yet to come to terms with the principle of redress, this gap represents a serious shortcoming in the effort to transform their service delivery systems.

³¹ The National Immigration Branch is in the process of implementing an Incident Reporting System and the A Counter Xenophobia unit is also in existence to address issues with regard to xenophobia

Chapter Seven

Conclusion & Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that there is generally a good understanding and awareness of *Batho Pele* as a whole and of the principle of redress. Using the definition from the *Batho Pele* White paper, given above as a standard, most government departments have partially complied with the principle of redress in that they report having some form of complaints handling system. Departments have also performed well in terms of implementing procedures to ensure that their clients are aware of their rights and that they can lodge complaints. However, in many cases this is only partial compliance as there is also a lack of formalisation of these systems, in terms of developing written guidelines, recording complaints, conducting regular monitoring and evaluation to improve service delivery and reviewing the standards and complaints procedures to determine if they are meeting the departments' redress and client care objectives. The *Batho Pele* principle of redress, as defined in the *Batho Pele* White Paper, states that "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".

This assessment of partial compliance is borne out by the departments' own rating of their performance. In terms of their overall implementation of the principle of redress, approximately two thirds of both national and provincial departments rated their performance as adequate or poor, rather than good. Departments were slightly more positive about their handling of complaints, but the results of the self-rating suggest that departments are aware that there is room for improvement in terms of their performance on redress.

There was no clear pattern of differences between the performance of the national and provincial departments. A larger proportion of national departments had a system for recording complaints received than provincial departments, but provincial departments were more likely to have written guidelines and to have developed redress standards. There was also little difference in terms of the achievements and gaps in their performance on redress between the five different government clusters.

Across the board there are three broad areas that require further attention:

- The first is the need to formalise complaints handling systems – that is, implementing systems to record and track complaints; developing written guidelines for dealing with complaints; and developing redress standards and targets – as this will assist clients in holding the departments accountable for dealing efficiently and effectively with complaints.
- A second area is the implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system that has a strong link to those sections of the department that are responsible for improving the quality of service delivery. There is a need to formalise the feedback loop that uses the information collected in the monitoring of complaints to identify areas and issues for service delivery improvement.
- A third gap is the reviewing of these systems on a regular basis, to ensure that they continue to meet the redress and client care objectives of the department.

These conclusions suggest a number of key recommendations for the continued support and improvement of government departments' implementation of the principle of redress. Key recommendations include:

1. Implement the model of good practice for redress

Departmental managers and staff should consult the good practice steps outlined in the *Batho Pele* Handbook to guide their department in the development of their own complaints handling system (linked with continued revision of service delivery improvement plans). The steps guide departments through the process



of planning, implementing, monitoring and reviewing a complaints handling system. Implementing these steps will ensure the formalisation and standardisation of procedures and the recording and regular monitoring of complaints to inform service delivery improvement, all of which are currently challenges for a number of departments.

2. Develop targets or standards for redress

Departments should have clear objectives, set targets and standards that are appropriate and achievable for the handling of complaints to ensure progressive improvement. These targets should be developed in consultation with clients to receive feedback on services and should be reviewed on a regular basis.

3. Benchmark redress performance

Departments should benchmark their complaints-handling mechanisms against comparable departments that have demonstrated good performance in implementing redress and handling complaints. This would entail a process of identification and liaison with other government departments as identified in the section on good practice. A continuous benchmarking process should be linked with the regular review of redress targets.

4. Developing indicators for the measurement of compliance with redress

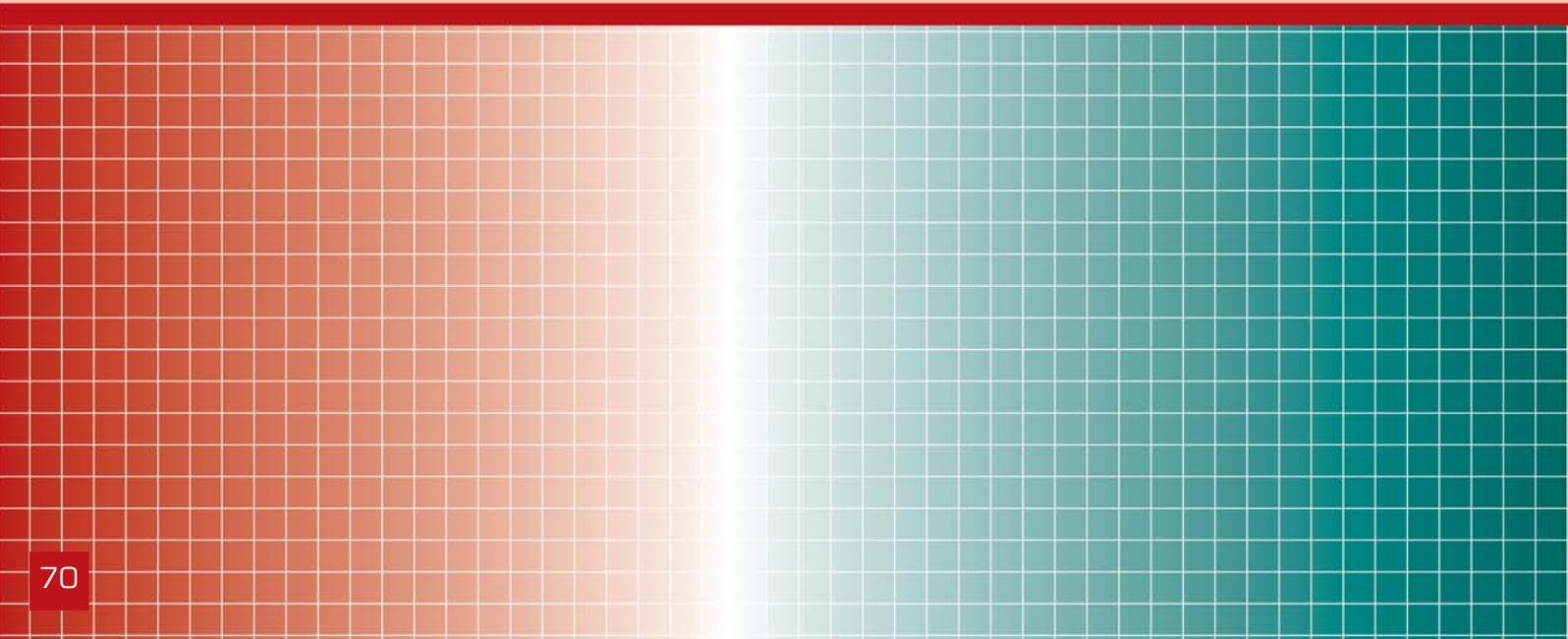
Monitoring of the complaints and evaluations of departments' performance on redress were clearly challenges for a number of departments. Departments need to consider how systems for monitoring redress can be developed or built into existing monitoring systems. One way to address this would be to develop a common set of good practice indicators to measure departments' compliance with the *Batho Pele* principle of redress that can be used as a basis for future evaluations of government departments' performance on redress.

5. Develop guidelines for ensuring accountability for complaints handling systems

Departments should enforce accountability for the complaints handling system and ensure it is embedded within departmental practice and procedure. Possibilities include using the performance management system or identifying the most appropriate sections of a department where the complaints handling system may be located and where accountability can reside.

6. Identify appropriate drivers of redress within departments

The lack of formalisation of the principle of redress within government departments suggests the need for departments to locate the development, implementation, and oversight of redress mechanisms within offices capable of making such mechanisms to focus on people and be a key part of service delivery. It is recommended that such functions should be located where they are capable of having the most impact on the improvement of service delivery.



Annexures

Annexure 1: Government Clusters

Cluster	Departments
Central Government and Administration	Foreign Affairs Home Affairs Parliament (not included in study) Presidency (not included in study) Provincial and Local Government
Economic Services and Infrastructure	Agriculture Communications Environmental Affairs and Tourism Labour Land Affairs Mineral and Energy Affairs Public Works Trade and Industry Transport Water Affairs and Forestry
Financial & Administrative Services	Government Communications and Information System National Treasury Public Enterprises Public Service and Administration South African Management Development Institute
Justice & Protection Services	Correctional Services Independent Complaints Directorate Justice and Constitutional Development Safety and Security
Social Services	Arts and Culture Science and Technology Education Health Housing Social Development Sports and Recreation

Annexure 2: Participating Departments

The following departments submitted responses to the questionnaire on redress questionnaires which were included in the analysis.

National/Provincial	Name of Departments
National	Agriculture Arts & Culture Communications Correctional Services Education Environmental Affairs and Tourism Foreign Affairs Home Affairs Independent Complaints Directorate Labour Land Affairs Minerals and Energy Public Service and Administration Public Works Science and Technology Secretariat for Safety and Security Social Development South African Police Services Statistics South Africa Trade and Industry Treasury Water Affairs and Forestry
Eastern Cape	Agriculture Economic Development, Environment and Tourism Education Office of the Premier Provincial Treasury Roads and Transport Safety and Liaison Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture
Free State	Agriculture Economic Development and Environmental Affairs Education Health Local Government and Housing Office of the Premier

Provincial Treasury

Roads and Transport
Safety and Security
Social Development
Sports, Arts and Culture

Gauteng

Agriculture
Education
Health
Housing
Local Government
Office of the Premier
Social Development
Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture

KwaZulu-Natal

Economic Development
Education
Housing
Local Government & Traditional Affairs
Provincial Treasury
Public Works
Royal Household
Social Welfare and Population Development
Transport

Limpopo

Agriculture
Economic Development, Environment and
Tourism
Education
Health and Social Development
Office of the Premier

Mpumalanga

Agriculture and Land Administration
Culture, Sports and Recreation
Economic Development and Planning
Finance
Health and Social Services
Local Government and Housing
Public Works
Roads and Transport
Safety and Security

Northern Cape

Agriculture and Land Reform
Environmental Affairs and Tourism
Education
Finance and Economic Affairs
Health
Housing and Local Government

Office of the Premier
Public Works, Roads & Transport
Social Development
Sports, Arts and Culture

North West

Agriculture, Conservation and Environment
Health
Developmental Local Government and Housing
Office of the Premier
Finance
Public Works
Transport, Roads and Community Safety
Social Development
Sports, Arts and Culture

Western Cape

Agriculture
Community Safety
Cultural Affairs and Sport
Economic Development and Tourism
Education
Environmental Affairs and Development Planning
Health
Local Government and Housing
Office of the Premier
Provincial Treasury
Transport and Public works
Social Services and Poverty Alleviation

The following departments were not included in the analysis. This was because the departments did not participate in the study; they did not submit questionnaires; or they submitted questionnaires too late for them to be included in the analysis.

National/Provincial

Name of Departments

National

GCIS
Health
Housing
Justice and Constitutional Development
Public Enterprises

Eastern Cape

Health
Social Development
Housing and Local Government
Public Works

Gauteng

Community Safety
Finance and Economic Affairs
Public Transport, Roads and Works

KwaZulu-Natal

Agriculture and Environmental Affairs
Health
Housing
Office of the Premier
Community Safety and Liaison
Sport and Recreation

Limpopo

Local Government and Housing
Sports, Arts and Culture
Safety, Security and Liaison
Provincial Treasury
Public Works
Roads and Transport

Mpumalanga

Education
Office of the Premier

Northern Cape

Safety and Liaison

North West

Education
Economic Development and Tourism

Table 8: Checklist of Good Practice for Redress

Government Clusters	Complaints handling system*	Recording system	Consultation	Guidelines	Training	Awareness-raising	Accommodate special needs	Redress Standards	Redress Targets	M & E System	Improved service delivery	Published reports	Assessing redress standards	Meeting Standards	Total per cluster
Central Government and Administration	14	9	7	9	5	11	7	8	6	5	8	4	4	6	17
Economic Services and Infrastructure	31	12	20	23	26	28	17	15	17	19	10	6	10	13	38
F i n a n c e and Administration	7	5	2	3	4	5	3	2	4	2	4	2	2	2	9
Justice and Protection	8	7	6	5	4	8	5	1	4	4	4	5	1	1	8
Social Services	29	15	13	18	19	24	20	14	17	17	10	10	11	9	32
Total no. of departments	89	48	48	58	58	76	52	40	48	47	36	27	28	31	104

- This table indicates the number of departments in each cluster that answered positively to each indicator i.e. that have implemented this step or process. For a more detailed explanation of these indicators, please see Chapter 6.

Appendix 4: Bibliography

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Appendix 5: Questionnaire

Background information

1. How long have you worked for this department?

Less than a year	
No. of years	

2. In which section of the department do you work?

3. What is your position within this department?

4. Please provide an outline of the main services that your department provides.

Understanding of Batho Pele Principles

5. What is your department's understanding of the Batho Pele principle of Redress?

Existing Redress Mechanisms

6. Please briefly describe the complaints handling system in your department. [Please provide a document that describes the system]

7. Please list the complaints handling systems as prescribed by legislation and describe how these systems are functioning in your department.

Complaints mechanisms	Piece of legislation

Other complaints mechanism or sources:

8. Please specify the persons and/or units responsible for overseeing the implementation of Redress in your department. [Please provide documentary evidence if such a unit or persons exist]

9. How is the department structured to deal with a complaint? (For example, are complaints dealt with locally by members of staff at the service point or centrally by channelling complaints through a customer care complaints section?) [Please provide supporting documentation]

10. Do staff members in general view the handling of complaints as part of their normal workload or as an additional responsibility?

11. Were internal and/or external stakeholders consulted in the development of the complaints handling system? [Record more than one answer if applicable]

Internal stakeholders	1	Go to q. 12
External stakeholders	2	Go to q. 14
No consultation with stakeholders	3	Go to q. 16

12. Please specify the internal stakeholders who were consulted in the development of the complaints handling system.

13. How did this consultation take place with each of the internal stakeholders?

14. Please specify the external stakeholders who were consulted in the development of the complaints handling system.

15. How did this consultation take place with each of the external stakeholders?

16. [Only if NO stakeholders were consulted] If stakeholders were not consulted, why not?

17. Does the complaint system differentiate between different kinds of complaints (such as complaints about procedural issues, about the conduct of a public servant or the result of a decision)? Please elaborate.

18. Does the complaints procedure set out guidelines for handling the following? [Describe briefly and provide documentary evidence]

Complaints in person:

Complaints by telephone:

Complaints in written form:



Referral of complaints to a higher level:

19. Does the complaints system include a method to record all complaints about services and policy matters? [Please provide an example of A complaint record where possible]

Yes	1
No	2

20. Has the department identified any problems in the complaint systems? Please elaborate.

21. If yes, what are the causes of these problems?

22. What strategies or measures have been used to overcome these problems?

23. Have these strategies or measures led to an improvement? [Please provide evidence]

Required Documentation	No.	Yes	No	Comments
1. Description of the complaints handling system	q.6			
2. Evidence of unit(s) or person(s) responsible for overseeing the implementation of redress principles in your department	q.8			
3. Documentation of department's organisational complaint handling structure	q.9			
4. Complaints procedures for complaints made in person, by telephone, in writing, or to a higher level	q.18			
5. Example of a record of complaints made about services or policy matters	q.19			
6. Evidence of improvement from implementation of strategies	q. 22			

Redress Process

24. How does the department respond to complaints?

In writing	1
Telephonically	2
Face to face	3
Other (specify below)	4

25. Is the client informed about the procedures involved in responding to their complaint?

Yes	1	Go to q.26
No	2	Go to q.27

26. How is the client made aware of this?

Client informed in writing	1
Client informed telephonically	2
Client informed face to face	3
Other (specify below)	4

27. How is confidentiality of the complainant maintained? Give examples of departmental measures used to ensure confidentiality of complainants.

28. What procedures are followed when a complaint is made against a staff member by a client? [Please provide documentary evidence]

29. Please explain the steps to be followed when referring complaints to higher levels.

30. Are follow-ups carried out to monitor the fairness of the department's complaints system? [Please provide copies of latest report on follow-ups and feedback from clients]

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3



31. On average, how much time does it take to deal with a complaint?

32. Are there time limits set by law or the internal procedures? Please elaborate.

Required Documentation	No.	Yes	No	Comments
7. Documentation of how the department handles complaints against staff members	q.28			
8. Copies of follow-up reports on monitoring the department's complaints system and any feedback from clients	q.30			

Setting Targets and Service Standards for Redress

33. Does your department have redress standards? [If yes, please include a copy of these standards]

Yes		1	Go to q.34
No		2	Go to q.40

34. Have these standards been met by the department? Please explain your answer. [Go to q.37]

35. If these standards have not been met, what are the reasons for this?

36. What strategies have the department used to overcome these problems?

37. Are redress standards incorporated into individual performance agreements and/or service level agreements?

Yes		1
No		2

38. How does the department communicate its redress standards to internal and external clients? Please provide examples.

39. Have you experienced any problems communicating these standards?

40. What targets has your department set to improve the complaints handling system? [Please provide a list of these targets]

41. What measures does the department have in place to ensure that these targets are met? [Please provide a list of these measures]

42. In what way is your department's policy on redress and the accompanying redress targets aligned to the department's strategic objectives?

Required Documentation	No.	Yes	No	Comments
9. Documentation of departmental redress set standards	q.33			
10. Evidence of mechanisms or systems in place which allow citizens to provide feedback or comment on redress service standards	q.37			
11. Departmental targets to increase redress of services	q.40			

Training

43. Does the department provide specific training in handling complaints?

Yes	1
No	2

44. Who in the department is targeted for training?

Staff directly involved with clients	1
Top management	2
All the staff	3
Other (specify below)	4

45. What does this training cover? [Please provide a copy of the training programme]

Required Documentation	No.	Yes	No	Comments
12. Copy of the department's training programme.	q.45			

Budget

46. Does your department budget specifically for the implementation of the Batho Pele principles? Please explain.

47. What amount has the department budgeted for initiatives (e.g. staff training, signage, etc.) to improve redress on an ANNUAL basis? [Please provide documentation to support this]

Initiatives	Rand - Value	Estimated Percentage of budget of the department

Required Documentation	No.	Yes	No	Comments
13. Budget plan, figures or documentation regarding the department's allocations for developing and implementing redress procedures.	q.47			



Accessing Complaints Mechanisms

48. How does the department make clients aware of the complaints procedures (i.e. what their rights and obligations are) in relation to redress? Please provide examples.

49. What methods does the department use to encourage the lodging of complaints? Please provide examples.

50. Are the following people with special difficulties accommodated in the complaints system?

	Yes	No
Physically disabled	1	2
Sight impaired	1	2
Hearing impaired	1	2
Functionally illiterate	1	2
People who cannot read or understand English	1	2

51. How does the department accommodate these difficulties? [Please Provide documentary evidence and/or examples of measures taken]

Physically disabled:

Sight impaired:

Hearing impaired:

Functionally illiterate:

People who cannot read or understand English:

Required Documentation	No.	Yes	No	Comments
14.Documentary evidence of measures taken to accommodate special needs	q.51			

Monitoring and Evaluation of Redress Mechanisms

52. Please outline the system used by your department to monitor and evaluate redress performance. [Please provide documentary evidence of this monitoring & evaluation system]

53. How often are complaints procedures revisited?

54. How does the department use the results of its redress assessment to improve service delivery? (Please provide examples e.g. does the department reward or penalise business units?)

55. What have been significant changes or improvements in the department's service delivery levels that can be attributed to implementing redress procedures? Please provide examples of solutions.

56. Are reports on complaints published and communicated to all stakeholders? [Please provide a copy of these reports]

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

57. How does your department communicate performance in terms of redress TO internal and external clients? [Please provide documentary evidence]

58. Does the department have a system that allows external stakeholders to assess redress performance? Please elaborate below.

Yes	1	Go to q.59
No	2	

59. How does the department assess redress standards?

60. How often does this assessment take place?

61. How does the department ensure continued support and resources for the improvement of redress? Please explain.

Required Documentation	No.	Yes	No	Comments
15. Evidence of system used to monitor and evaluate redress	q.52			
16. Examples of actions taken by the department to use assessment information to improve redress	q.54			
17. Copy of reports on complaints as communicated to stakeholders	q.56			
18. Evidence of how assessments of departmental performance are communicated to internal and external clients.	q.57			

Measures to improve redress

62. Thinking about your experiences, how would you rate the implementation of the redress policy by this department? [One answer only]

Excellent	1
Good	2
Adequate	3
Poor	4
Very poor	5

63. Thinking about your experiences in this department, how would you rate the overall handling of complaints by your department? [One answer only]

Excellent	1
Good	2
Adequate	3
Poor	4
Very poor	5

64. What are the areas that need to be given priority for the department's complaints handling procedures to be improved?

65. Finally, are there any further suggestions or comments you would like to make about the handling of complaints by your department?

Verification Form for Head of Departments

To be filled in by the Head of the Department for verification purposes.

Statement on Behalf of the Head of Department:

I (Name and surname of Head of Department) hereby verify that the information documented in this questionnaire and the evidence provided by

..... (Name of person delegated to complete the questionnaire) is correct and meets my expectations.

Date:

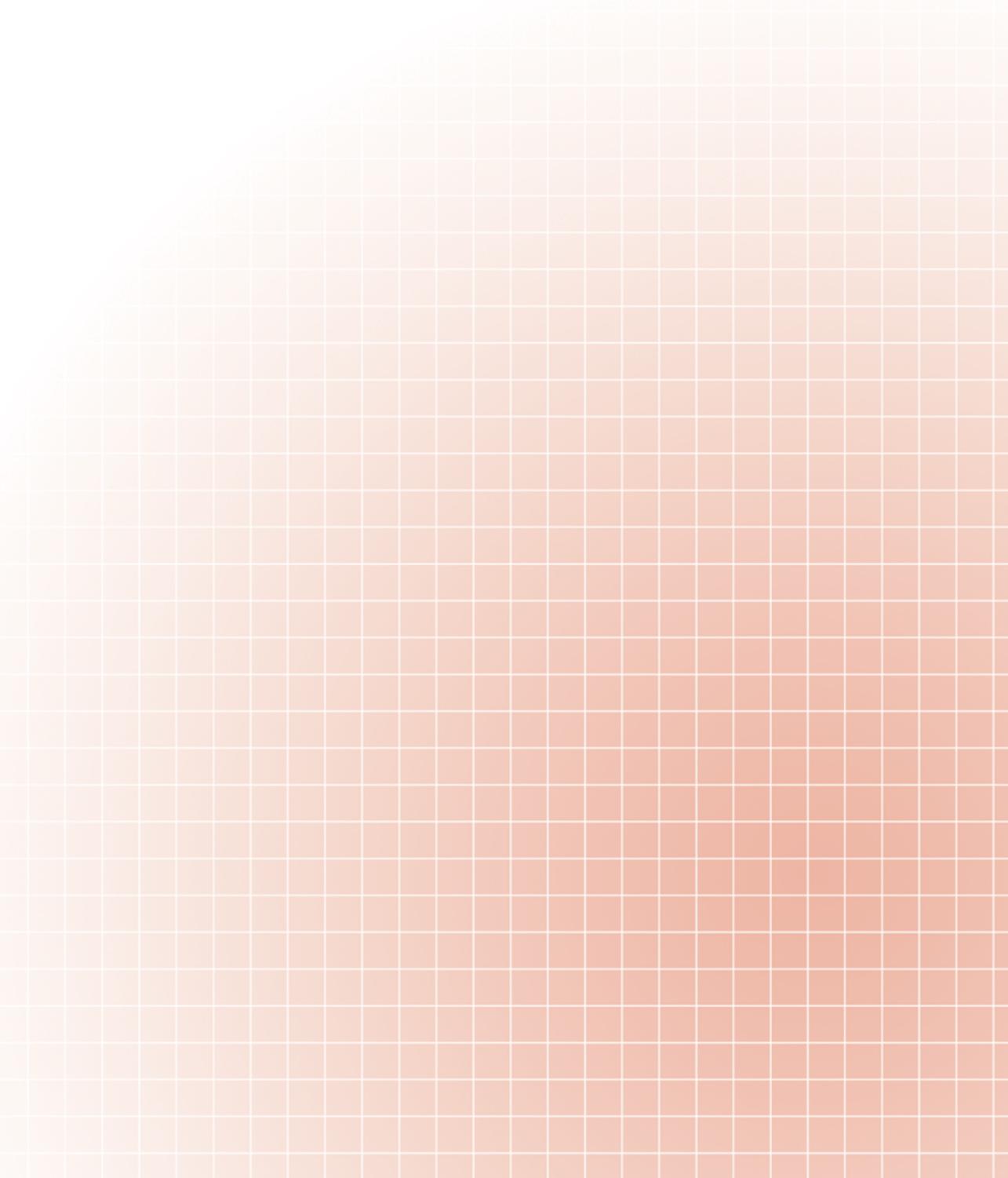
Department/ Place:

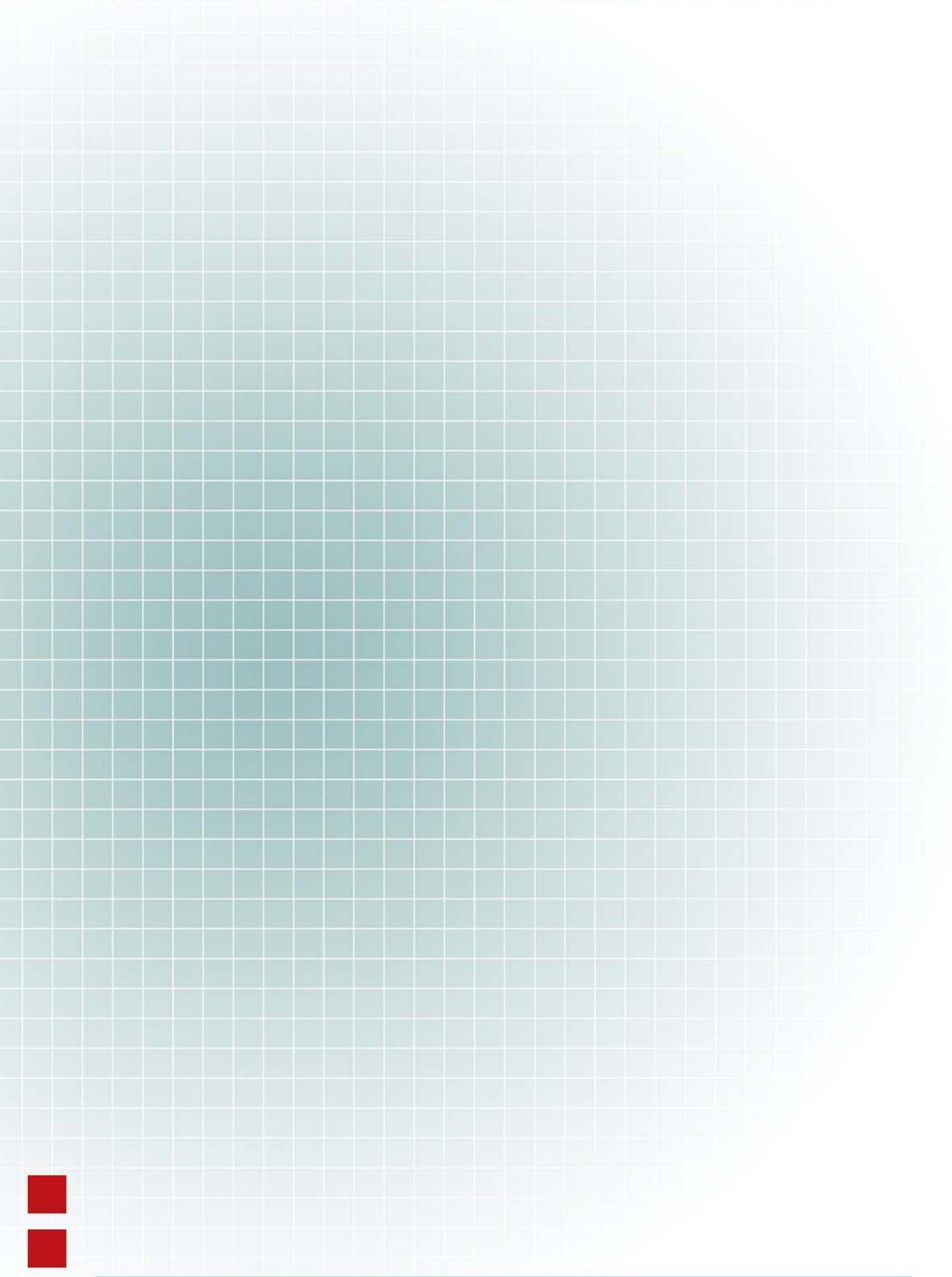
Full Name: (Head of Department)

Signature: (Head of Department)

Signature of Witness:







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