

## Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) Action Plan

### Department/Office/Agency: The Courts Service

#### 1. Summary of Main Progress Achieved in the Six Month Period April 2011 to September 2011

- Combined Court Offices: The establishment of the first three combined Court offices in Naas, Monaghan and Ennis in May 2011
- Digital Audio Recording: DAR is now being operated by Courts Service staff in courts in all jurisdictions.
- Amalgamation of District Court Offices: Two District Court offices have been amalgamated with offices in different locations in the same county and one further amalgamation is planned by the end of 2011.
- Judgements on line: Procurement has been completed to commence development of the system in October 2011.
- Closure of Court Venues: Proposals for further closures are being put to the Courts Service Board.
- Expanding role of County Registrars: 5 County Registrars have received their warrants of appointment as Vice Chairs of Employment Appeals Tribunal. A Statement of Principles has been agreed encompassing future support for the County Registrars in a combined court office environment.

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### 2. Detailed Progress Update for the 6-months – April to September 2011

1. Better human resource management: <i>Actions under this heading include reductions in numbers, redeployment, reconfiguration of service delivery, revisions in attendance arrangements, better attendance and absence management, etc.</i>			
Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014	Action	Target Date as per Current Action Plan	Current Position
P3 1.4 P4 1.9 P5 1.10/11 P27 4.4 P55 6.3.10	Replacement of the current single jurisdictional provincial Circuit and District Court with a unified multi-jurisdictional office in each county	01/06/2012	Naas, Ennis and Monaghan unified offices were established in May 2011. Proposals for a complete roll-out by early 2013 have been agreed by the SMT.
P3 1.4 P4 1.9 P5 1.10/11 P27 4 P55 6.3.10	Maximise the use of the Service Officer Pool	Within period of agreement	A number of meetings have been held with IMPACT and significant progress has been made.  New reporting and performance management arrangements are in place. There has been increased flexibility.
P3.14 P5 1.10 P12.6	General Flexibility i.e. cross jurisdictional working – Reorganisation of service delivery	Within period of agreement	Implementation of the unified multi-jurisdictional office in each county is proceeding. A proposal is being discussed regarding greater efficiency and flexibility in the Criminal Courts of Justice

**2. Better Business Processes:** *Actions under this heading would include efficiency measures and improvements to the processes by which your Department/Body delivers its services to the public, including changes to the technology used, better data management, including around identity, and so on.*

Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 - 2014	Action	Target Date as per Current Action Plan	Current Position
P3.14 P51.10 P29 4.3	<p>Logging/recording of information using Digital Audio Recording (DAR) technology in the Civil Courts</p> <p>Logging/recording of information using Digital Audio Recording (DAR) in the Criminal Courts</p>	End 2011	<p>Agreement has been reached with the staff unions to replace loggers in the High Court Civil and Family Courts with a minimal noting of information by the registrar to allow the provision of a transcript. This commenced in late March and savings are now being realised.</p> <p>A proposal in relation to logging in the Criminal Courts has now been agreed by the SMT and will be discussed with the Staff Unions shortly.</p>
P3.14 P5 1.10 P29 4.3	<p>Optimisation of the use of Courtroom technology such as</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Videolink</li> <li>2. Video display</li> <li>3. 3 Video conferencing</li> <li>4. DAR</li> <li>5. evidence presentation</li> <li>6. evidence dissemination</li> <li>7. the development and use of an electronic courtbook</li> </ol>	Within period of agreement	The Courtroom Technology Group has examined ways to increase the use of Courtroom Technology and realise the possible savings for the Courts Service, Gardai and Prison Service which would be generated by the giving of evidence by videolink. Staff have commenced operating DAR equipment in courts in all jurisdictions.
P3 1.4 P5 1.10	Development and introduction of Interim Case Management System for the CCA, Central and Circuit Criminal Courts	Mid 2011	The system is now implemented in the Criminal Courts of Justice. Detailed plans to extend the system to offices outside Dublin have been formulated.
P3.14 P5 1.10	Reduction in external ICT support	Within period of agreement	<p>The ICT Unit has reduced dependence on external service providers by carrying out a number of functions in - house which were traditionally outsourced. These relate in particular to the areas of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business process analysis</li> <li>• Re- design</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Project Management</li> </ul> <p>Savings have continued to be made during this reporting period.</p>

P3 1.4	The application of Business Process Improvement across the organisation	Ongoing process to be rolled out to full organisation by 2014	Training in the LEAN approach to Business Process Improvement was given to a group of staff from various offices. A report containing recommendations for improvements will be considered by the Senior Management Team shortly. The implementation of agreed recommendations will follow.
P3 1.4 P5 1.10 P12.6	The operation of revised security arrangements in Dublin	End 2011	A new security contract will be in place by the end of 2011 which will result in cost savings.
P5 1.10/11 P29 4.13 P30 4.15 P55 6.3.10	Centralisation of Process which may include but is not limited to 1. Processing legal aid claims 2. Probate Summary Judgements/ Issue of Civil proceedings 3. Phone calls to Court offices 4. Summoning of Juries 5. Small Claims 6. Fines Notice and warrant issue 7. Sheriff's business	Within period of agreement	A report in relation to the centralisation of Jury summoning will be brought to the Senior Management Team shortly. The SMT will consider centralisation of other functions in light of this report.
P3 1.4 P4 1.9	Electronic transmission of Charge Sheets from An Garda Siochana to the Courts Service	2012	Discussions have commenced and a business case for the ICT system is being developed in cooperation with An Garda Síochána. While significant savings would flow from the development of this initiative the project may be deferred or delayed due to funding restrictions.
P3 1.4 P4 1.9	Printing of summonses by outsourced contractor	End 2011	The Courts Service is exploring the use of the Revenue printing facility to print summonses. This would result in both financial and resource savings. However a number of legal issues have arisen which must be resolved before further progress can be made.
P3 1.4 P4 1.9	Extension of Video Conferencing arrangements between prison Service and Courts	Within period of agreement	<p>Video conferencing installations in Letterkenny and Galway have been completed. These sites were prioritised at the request of the Prison Service.</p> <p>A small working group with representatives of both organisations has been established and is currently working on a set of procedures to cover bail and remand hearings. Live videolink between Cloverhill Court and prison is now in operation for District Court sittings and will be extended to the High Court Bail List when legal issues have been resolved.</p> <p>A number of operational issues need to be addressed before further progress can be made.</p>

**3. Delivering for the Citizen:** *Actions under this heading would include efficiency measures and improvements to the processes by which your Department/Body delivers its services to the public, including changes to the technology used, better data management, including around identity, and so on.*

<b>Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 - 2014</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Target Date as per Current Action Plan</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
P3 1.4 P4 1.9	<b>Rationalise the number of stand alone District Court Offices.</b>	Within period of agreement	In accordance with its Strategic Plan the Courts Service is considering the future of a number of stand alone District Court Offices. Savings will be realised following the amalgamation of these offices with those in County Towns  Killarney and Listowel District Court Offices have been amalgamated with the District Court Office in Tralee. The District Court Office in Ballinasloe will close by the end of 2011.
P3 1.4 P4 1.9 P5 1.10/11 P27 4.4 P55 6.3.10	The creation of a single multi-jurisdictional Civil Office in Dublin to include the licensing function	Within period of agreement	The creation of a single staff pool and the merging of business procedures has commenced in Dublin District and Circuit Civil Offices in advance of a move to a fully multi-jurisdictional office.
P3 1.4 P4 1.9 P5 1.10/11 P27 4.4 P55 6.3.10	The creation of a single multi-jurisdictional Family law office in Dublin	Within period of agreement	No report at this stage

<p>P5 1.10 P27 4.4 P55 6.3.10</p>	<p>Expand the adjudicative role of the County Registrars by extending the areas in which County Registrars may exercise adjudicative functions and other functions</p>	<p>Within period of agreement</p>	<p>Discussions have now been successfully completed with the majority of County Registrars and a Statement of Principles has been agreed encompassing future support for them in a combined court office environment.</p> <p>They have acquired a number of additional adjudicative functions under the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 which was less than originally anticipated. It is now anticipated that the balance of the additional functions identified in the Report on the Role of the County Registrar, subject to finalisation of advices from the AG on certain additional functions will be included in a forthcoming Courts Bill.</p> <p>In addition 5 County Registrars have received their warrants of appointment as Vice Chairs of the Employment Appeals Tribunal.</p>
<p>P3 1.4</p>	<p>Rationalisation of Court venues</p>		<p>The programme to rationalise the number of court venues is continuing. The Courts Service Board has approved the closure of a further four venues which will take effect by early 2012. Proposals for further closures during 2012 will be before the next meeting of the Courts Service Board. A further review has been approved by the Building Committee to be completed by the end of 2011.</p> <p>Separately, an exercise has been initiated to rationalise the sittings of the High Court on circuit and integrate them with High Court personal Injury sittings in regional venues. The recommendations would effect a reduction of 107 judge sitting days and would secure a reduction in the expenditure on sittings of the High Court on Circuit of approx. €2,779, while freeing up the sitting days saved for motions or trial work, or for writing of reserved judgments.</p> <p>Provisions amending the Courts of Justice Act 1936 to facilitate this exercise have been enacted in the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011. As an initial step, the Courts Service Board has on the 11th April last made an order transferring Donegal County to the Western Circuit, with effect from the 1st January next year</p>

P3 1.4 P5 1.10 P29 4.3	The Introduction of e-filing	Within period of agreement	Initial consideration of this issue is being undertaken as part of the Judgements on-line project
P5 1.10/11 P29 4.13 P30 4.15 P55 6.3.10	Introduction of 1 <sup>st</sup> phase of CCMS – Judgements online	End 2011	CCMS is being introduced on a modular basis. The first module is Judgments Online.  Procurement has been completed for resources to develop the system. Development work will commence in October 2011.  Amendments to legislation are required to implement this across all jurisdictions and initial enquiries have been made to the Dept of Justice in this regard.
P3 1.4 P5 1.10	Standardised Office opening hours	By 2012	No report at this stage
P3 1.4	Introduction of pilot Mediation Service in Dublin District Family law Courts Building	2011	An initiative to encourage and facilitate couples to seek mediation in respect of matters pertaining to childcare commenced in March 2011. The Courts Service is providing office facilities to both the Legal Aid Board and the Family Mediation Service. This represents a significant improvement in customer service.  At this stage a total of 126 mediated agreements have been concluded, thus freeing up court time for contested cases.
P5 1.10/11 P29 4.13	Restructuring of Estates and Buildings Unit	2011	The Courts Service has recently combined the Estates and Buildings Unit, the PPP Unit and the Dublin Buildings Unit. This restructuring has allowed the area to discharge its remit despite the loss of two Principal Officers and has increased flexibility and efficiency in the management of the Courts Service estate.
P3 1.4 P5 1.10/11 P29 4.13 P30 4.15 P55 6.3.10	Transfer all Criminal business transacted in Dublin to the Criminal Courts of Justice facility.		The benefits of the transfer of business to the CCJ are now being realised. They include savings in the areas of jury minding, transport and management of prisoners, the cost of jurors' meals and the reduction in leasing costs of vacated buildings.

P3 1.4	Reduction in external support – Legal Services		The Directorate of Reform and Development are providing in-house advice and assistance on a number of legal matters thus reducing the spend on externally sourced legal services. Through a combination of introduction of the protocol on access to legal services managed by the Directorate and the assumption by that Directorate of the provision of informal in-house legal advice, where appropriate, expenditure on pure legal services (i.e. extracting compensation claims) was reduced from approx. €845,000 in 2008 to €15,000 in 2009, to €203,000 in 2010 (not accounting for approx. €40,000 invoiced late in 2010).
P3 1.4	Revised arrangements for the provision of interpretation services		The revised scheduling of cases requiring the use of interpreters is delivering financial savings in a number of areas outside Dublin.
P3 1.4	Transfer of the Richmond Courthouse to Chancery Street	New Item	In August 2011 the Richmond Courthouse closed and the business was transferred, mainly, to the Chancery Street Courthouse. This has resulted in a saving for the Office of Public Works (which held a lease costing approx. €50,000 per year) and a smaller saving for the Courts Service in maintenance and other building-related costs.