

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

Department/Office/Agency: The Courts Service

1. Summary of Main Progress Achieved in the 12 Month Period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012

- Combined Court Offices: The establishment of combined Court offices in Naas, Monaghan, Ennis, Carlow, Carrick on Shannon, Waterford, Galway and Portlaoise
- Digital Audio Recording: DAR is now being operated by Courts Service staff in courts in all jurisdictions.
- Amalgamation of District Court Offices: Three District Court offices have been amalgamated with offices in different locations in the same county and one further amalgamation is planned by mid 2012.
- Judgements on line: System on target for completion in mid 2012. Implementation will depend on legislation.
- Closure of Court Venues: No of Court venues reduced. Proposals for further closures are being considered.
- 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.

Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) Integrated Progress Report

2. Detailed Progress Update for the 12-months – 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012

1. Better human resource management: Actions under this heading include reductions in numbers, redeployment, reconfiguration of service delivery, revisions in attendance arrangements, better attendance and absence management, etc.			
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	February 2013	Combined Court Offices have been established in Naas, Monaghan, Ennis, Carlow, Carrick on Shannon, Waterford, Galway and Portlaoise. The roll-out is scheduled to be completed by the target date.
P3 1.4 P4 1.9 P5 1.10/11 P27 4 P55 6.3.10	Maximise the use of the Service Officer Pool	March 2012	Following a comprehensive agreement with IMPACT new reporting and performance management arrangements are in place. There has been increased flexibility in the deployment of Service Officers.
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 2012	<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 the Judiciary and will be progressed 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"> 1. Videolink 2. Video display 3. 3 Video conferencing 4. DAR 5. evidence presentation 6. evidence dissemination 7. the development and use of an electronic courtbook 	Within period of agreement	<p>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. Further efficiencies in this area will be implemented when roles and responsibilities in relation to the logging of criminal cases are clarified and agreed.</p>
P3 1.4 P5 1.10	Development and introduction of Interim Case Management System for the CCA, Central and Circuit Criminal Courts	Early 2013	The system is now implemented in the Criminal Courts of Justice. The system has now been rolled out to a number of offices outside Dublin in conjunction with the Combined Court Office Project It is envisaged that full rollout will be completed in early 2013.

P3.14 P5 1.10	Reduction in external ICT support	End 2012	<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"> • Business process analysis • Re- design • Training • Project Management <p>Savings continue to be made during this reporting period. In addition the Unit has assumed responsibility for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The processing of the electoral register element of the Jury System previously carried out by an external contractor ▪ Support for the telephone system previously carried out by the external provider
P3 1.4	The application of Business Process Improvement across the organisation	Ongoing process to be rolled out to full organisation by 2014	A LEAN (Business Process Improvement Team) has been established in the Courts Service. A report from the team containing recommendations for improvements was considered and agreed by the Senior Management Team. The implementation of the agreed recommendations is progressing in conjunction with the rollout of the Combined Court Office Project.
P3 1.4 P5 1.10 P12.6	The operation of revised security arrangements in Dublin	End 2011	A new security contract was put in place in late 2011. This contract will deliver savings of 10 - 15% on the previous arrangement. A number of additional measures are planned which will result in further cost savings in 2012.
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 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Processing legal aid claims 2. Probate 3. Summary Judgements/ Issue of Civil proceedings 4. Phone calls to Court offices 5. Summoning of Juries 6. Small Claims 7. Fines Notice and warrant issue 8. Sheriff's business 	Phased within period of agreement and beyond	The SMT have agreed to progress the centralisation of the Judgments and jury summoning functions. Detailed planning is now in progress.
P3 1.4 P4 1.9	Electronic transmission of Charge Sheets from An Garda Síochána to the Courts Service	Early 2013	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 has been delayed due to funding restrictions.

<p>P3 1.4 P4 1.9</p>	<p>Printing of summonses by outsourced contractor</p>	<p>2013 depending on legislation</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>P3 1.4 P4 1.9</p>	<p>Extension of Video Conferencing arrangements between prison Service and Courts</p>	<p>Phased within period of agreement</p>	<p>Video conferencing installations in Letterkenny, Galway Cork and Sligo have been completed. These sites were prioritised at the request of the Prison Service.</p> <p>Video viewing and evidence display facilities were installed in Waterford. A mobile video/evidence display unit is also now available for use.</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> <p>In addition a Department of Justice and Equality led group is identifying possible efficiencies in the Criminal Justice System. The area of video conferencing is being examined.</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.*

Terms of the Public Service Agreement 2010 - 2014	Action	Target Date as per Current Action Plan	Current Position
P3 1.4 P4 1.9	Rationalise the number of stand alone District Court Offices.	Further office closures in 2012 Balance phased thereafter	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 has been amalgamated with the District Court office in Loughrea. The District Court office in Drogheda will amalgamate with the District Court Office in Dundalk by mid 2012.
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	2014	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>Ongoing depending on legislation</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>Implement findings of review during 2012 and beyond</p>	<p>The programme to rationalise the number of court venues is continuing. The number of Court venues outside Dublin (excluding Cork City) is now 96 from a high of 267. There were 16 closures in the reporting period.</p> <p>A further review is under consideration by the Building Committee.</p> <p>Since January 2012 sittings of the High Court on circuit have been rationalised and integrated with High Court personal Injury sittings in regional venues. This initiative has reduced the number of judge sitting days with a corresponding reduction in travel and subsistence costs for these sittings and has increased judicial availability for motions, trial work and writing reserved judgments.</p>
<p>P3 1.4 P5 1.10 P29 4.3</p>	<p>The Introduction of e-filing</p>	<p>Within period of agreement</p>	<p>E Filing for money judgements will commence on live implementation of the Judgements on-line system</p>
<p>P5 1.10/11 P29 4.13 P30 4.15 P55 6.3.10</p>	<p>Introduction of 1st phase of CCMS – Judgements online</p>	<p>Pilot by mid 2012</p>	<p>CCMS is being introduced on a modular basis. The first module is Judgments Online.</p> <p>Following a procurement exercise development work commenced in October 2011.</p> <p>The system is now 50% completed and on target for final completion at end Q2 2012.</p>

			Amendments to legislation are required to implement this across all jurisdictions and this requirement is being addressed by the Department of Justice and Equality.
P3 1.4 P5 1.10	Standardised Office opening hours	In 2012	A report on this item is now being considered by the Senior Management Team
P3 1.4	Introduction of pilot Mediation Service in Dublin District Family law Courts Building	2011	<p>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.</p> <p>During the reporting period a total of 293 mediated agreements were concluded, thus freeing up court time for contested cases.</p>
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 €340,000 in 2011
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	2011	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. €550,000 per year) and a smaller saving for the Courts Service in maintenance and other building-related costs.
	Implementation of the provisions of the Fines Act, 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Payment of fines by instalments 2. Statutory Receiver 	End 2012	Work is continuing to develop systems to support the implementation of the Fines Act 2010. Legislation necessary for the full implementation of the Act is now being drafted.
P3 1.4 P5 1.10	Merger of Accountants Office and Courts Accounts Office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merge into one office in a single location, two separate offices in different locations • Implement new office structure • Streamline processes 	End 2012	Detailed planning is in progress for the merger. Subject to the completion of renovation works the merger of the two offices into a single location will take place by end Q2 2012