



COURTS SERVICE  
*An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna*

Digital Audio Recording

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**Information Guide**

**to**

**Digital Audio Recording in Court**

## **Introduction of Digital Audio Recording in Court**

### **What is Digital Audio Recording?**

Digital Audio Recording (DAR) is a technology based way of recording what is said in a courtroom. The recording can be played to confirm what was said during a case. After the case ends a written transcript of what was said can be produced. A transcript may be needed for an appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal, for example, or may be required by the judge who heard the case.

### **DAR Services**

DAR is operated by Fujitsu Services under an agreement with the Courts Service. Fujitsu Services are responsible for the introduction of DAR to courtrooms nationwide and manage the DAR system and associated services, including the preparation of transcripts, on behalf of the Courts Service.

### **Pilot and First Live Phase**

DAR was tested in a pilot project in 2008. The pilot project was successful and as a result DAR was used in live cases in the Circuit Criminal Court, the Central Criminal Court and High Court Family Law courts from October 2008.

### **Recording Process**

The following is a general outline of the recording process within the courtroom:

1. A standard Courts Service computer has been installed in each courtroom. This acts as the recording device. Each microphone in the courtroom is connected to this computer. This computer is known as the primary recorder. A recording clock on the Registrar's desk displays the current time when recording is taking place. A series of dashes on the clock indicates that the recorder is not switched on.
2. The primary recorder is connected to the Courts Service computer network. It is subject to Courts Service computer network security policies and procedures. As the case proceeds the recording is stored on the primary recorder in the courtroom. The recording is copied over the Courts Service and Government

computer networks to an external data centre where it is permanently stored. Appropriate security measures incorporating a high level of encryption have been introduced to ensure the security and privacy of the recording while being transmitted to the data centre.

3. A backup recorder has also been installed in courtrooms in the event of failure of the primary recorder. This back up system operates automatically during the hours that courts normally sit. Recordings made on the backup recorder are held securely. They are only accessible by a service engineer on request from the Courts Service. Backup recordings are automatically overwritten after a pre-determined period of time.

4. The software being used to make and play recordings is from *For The Record* (FTR) software products.

### **Transcript Preparation**

1. Transcripts are a word for word text record of what was said during court proceedings. Fujitsu Services may, at the direction of the Courts Service, use recordings of court proceedings for the preparation of transcripts of such proceedings.

2. Transcribers will only be given access to those parts of the recording, stored at the external data centre, that are needed for the preparation of transcripts of the case they are working on. Appropriate security measures incorporating a high level of encryption have again been implemented to ensure the security and privacy of the recording which is being accessed by transcribers.

3. Recordings and transcripts of recordings may be relied upon as the record of court proceedings in the course of the administration of justice in accordance with Rules of Court.

4. Recordings of court proceedings may be sent outside the European Economic Area for the preparation of transcripts i.e. to New Zealand and Australia

## Benefits of DAR

- Judges can access recordings of proceedings instantly in court or in chambers
- Evidence can be clarified quickly using audio playback
- Judges can make notes of the time different parties spoke which allows them to locate specific parts of a recording easily
- Court Recording is managed in a centralised, secure and flexible manner
- Judicial Reviews may be supported by court recordings being available
- The Courts Service can take advantage of future technology advances

*For further information on DAR email  
DARinfo@Courts.ie*

### Data Protection and You

Where a person is either a participant in court proceedings or is involved in the subject matter of the proceedings, recordings of the proceedings may contain personal data in relation to that person only on the basis of what was said in court.

Appropriate security measures have been put in place by both the Courts Service and Fujitsu Services to prevent unauthorised access to, or unauthorised alteration, disclosure or destruction of any personal data contained in recordings of court proceedings and transcripts of such proceedings.

The Courts Service Data Protection Policy is available from the Information Office, Phoenix House, Phoenix Street North, Smithfield, Dublin 7. Alternatively a copy of the policy is available on our website [www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie)