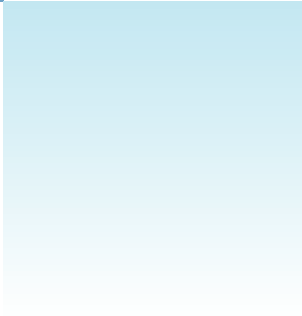
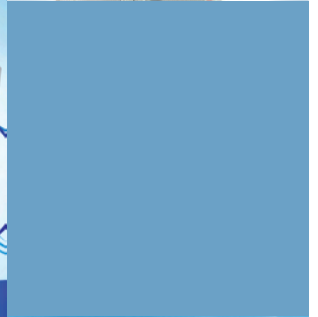




COURTS SERVICE
An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna

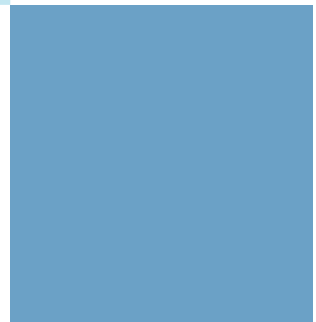


Putting the
Needs of Court
Users First



2008-2011

Courts Service Strategic Plan



The Courts Service Strategic Plan

2008-2011

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Foreword by Chief Justice

The Hon. Mr Justice John L Murray
Chief Justice and Chairperson of the Board of the Courts Service



The Courts Service has a critical role in supporting the administration of justice. It has built a strong reputation on its effective management and modernisation of courts administration.

It continues to carry out its mandates in an increasingly busy and changing legal environment.

The progress is evidenced by the vastly improved status of court services compared with just 9 years ago. Continuous modernisation has seen many courthouses built and refurbished. Services have been expanded with the aid of advanced information technology accompanied by a consistent focus on facilitating the administration of justice.

Citizens now have much greater access to information through the publication of leaflets, reports, brochures and our website. Statistical material on the work of our courts is improving on a yearly basis, as illustrated by our latest Annual Report and the Reports of the Family Law Reporting project.

It is nine years since the Courts Service was established and given the important role of managing and modernising court services. Many of the lessons learned in that period have influenced the ambitious content of this, our fourth, plan. This Strategic Plan for the period 2008 to 2011 builds on this valuable experience and responds to the challenges that arise from increasing caseloads and the public's desire for quality service from its public bodies.

Strong forward planning and the continued implementation of change greatly assist us responding to these challenges. This plan sets out how that will be achieved, delivering a template for the future evolution of courts administration through strategic management and planning. By setting out key goals, it displays our future vision of how the courts system will operate in 2020. The challenge is in converting this vision to a reality, one which is underpinned by a traditional emphasis on public service excellence.

The targets of this plan, essential as they are to the good administration of justice, will be much aided by the support given by Government, as was the case in past plans. As Chairperson of the Board, I acknowledge the assistance the Courts Service has received from the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Minister for Finance in fulfilling its mandates. The Board is confident that it can rely on this support to achieve the key objectives of the plan.

The exceptional progress in recent years has been in no small measure due to the initiatives and co-operation of the Judiciary whose role is wholly independent of that of the Courts Service. The Courts Service is grateful for the contribution and assistance it has received from the Judiciary in achieving many of its ambitious objectives.

The culture of co-operation and partnership with court groups has been a great asset. I would also like to acknowledge the major contribution made by our staff to the effective ongoing operation of the courts. The legal profession have also played an important role in the recent achievements of the Courts Service. The voices of such groups will continue to inform and direct this organisation in its decision-making process.

I wish to thank the Chief Executive Officer and the staff involved in the production of this Strategic Plan. I look forward to working with the Board and staff in the implementation of the ambitious vision which it sets out.

John L. Murray
Chief Justice of Ireland



Introduction by Chief Executive Officer



This fourth Strategic Plan is guided by our vision of what the Courts Service might look like in the year 2020. The plan contains the specific actions that will assist us achieve that vision during the three year period 2008 – 2011. It provides the focus and framework for the planning and management of services for all citizens and court users, and support for the administration of justice by Judges.

The plan has at its centre inclusiveness and transparency. It defines “what the Courts Service is about” and sets objectives which reflect our mission and purpose.

Working with the Judiciary, our staff and court users we will build on the achievement of the past nine years and using our strengths will maximise opportunities for the organisation’s benefit and minimise risks and threats. Our core values will continue to guide our day to day work, personal standards and professionalism as we strive to achieve our vision.

This plan is an important reference point for planning, determining priorities and measuring progress and performance. Central to this is ensuring citizens have access to our services when they need it. The plan provides for further expansion of the methods of accessing our services, including online 24/7, 365 days per year access to many services using the internet.

The resources available to us are finite. There is a very strong emphasis in the plan on delivering value for money and ensuring best use is made of all the resources available to us. This is particularly relevant in the current challenging economic times. The use of resources and improving the quality of service for court users are complimentary. By linking them we can concentrate on services that deliver the best possible results for court users. Developing strong and transparent risk and quality assurance programmes and processes is central to this.

I have every confidence that this plan will be implemented with the same level of success as were our three previous Strategic Plans. That confidence is based on the extraordinary level of support we have received, since our establishment, from the Judiciary, our staff nationwide and the many organisations and groups who represent those who use the Courts. Their openness and willingness to embrace change and modernisation has been second to none. The support we received from the Secretary General of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and his staff has been critical to our success during the past 9 years. We look forward to a continuation of that.

We will continue to report progress on the implementation of this through regular reports to our Board and to the public through the publication of our Annual Reports.

As this plan charts the direction for the Courts Service for the years ahead it also allows me the opportunity to reflect on the truly magnificent efforts by so many, which ensured the success of the past nine years. I can assure everyone that their contributions and support were much appreciated by me at all times.

PJ Fitzpatrick

Chief Executive Officer



The Board of the Courts Service



The Hon. Mr Justice John L. Murray,
Chairperson
Chief justice of Ireland



The Hon. Mr Justice Richard Johnson
President of the High Court



The Hon. Mrs. Justice Susan Denham
Elected by the judges of the Supreme Court



The Hon. Mr Justice Iarfhaidh O'Neill
Elected by the judges of the High Court



The Hon. Mr. Justice John Quirke
Nominated by the Chief Justice in respect of his experience or expertise in a specific area of court business



The Hon. Mr Justice Matthew Deery
President of the Circuit Court



His Honour Judge Patrick Moran
Elected by the judges of the Circuit Court



Her Honour Judge Miriam Malone
President of the District Court



Judge Flann Brennan
Elected by the judges, other than the President of the District Court



Mr. P.J. Fitzpatrick
Chief Executive Officer



Mr. Eoghan Fitzsimons, S.C. *
Nominee of the Council of the Bar of Ireland



Mr. Owen Binchy, Solicitor
Nominated by the President of the Law Society of Ireland



Mr Kevin Fidgeon
Elected by the staff of the Service



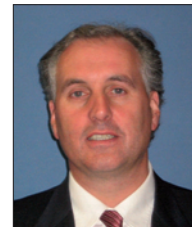
Mr. Noel Waters
An officer of the Minister nominated by the Minister



Ms. Olive Braiden
Nominated by the Minister to represent consumers of the services provided by the courts.



Ms. Esther Lynch
Nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions



Mr. Liam Farrell
Nominated by the Minister for relevant knowledge and experience in commerce, finance or administration

* Replaced Turlough O'Donnell S.C. in October 2007



Mission, Mandate, and Values

Mission:

Our mission is to manage the courts, support the Judiciary and provide a high quality and professional service to all users of the courts.

Mandate:

Under the Courts Service Act 1998 our statutory mandates are:

1. To manage the courts
2. To provide support services for the Judiciary
3. To provide information on the courts system to the public
4. To provide, manage and maintain court buildings
5. To provide facilities for users of the courts

The Act also empowers us to make proposals to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in relation to the distribution of jurisdiction and business among the courts and on matters of procedure.

Values:

- **Focus on the needs of court users:** We will focus on the needs of all court users, and ensure that their requirements are met when they need to use the courts and court offices.
- **Support the Judiciary:** We will provide the support necessary for judges to carry out their functions.
- **Fairness and Transparency:** We will operate in a manner which is open to scrutiny and which will be characterised by impartiality and equity.
- **Value and Develop our Staff:** We will be a listening, learning and empowering organisation. We will listen to the ideas and concerns of our staff and use their experience to make the Service a good place to work.
- **Commitment to Excellence:** We will seek to provide the highest quality service in all areas of our business.
- **Respect:** We are committed to treating all with whom we deal with dignity, respect and courtesy.
- **Integrity:** We will be guided by honesty, propriety and accountability in all our actions and decisions.
- **Competence:** We are committed to maintaining a highly skilled and knowledgeable staff through leadership, training, development and commitment to continuous improvement in the delivery of our services.
- **Value for Money:** We are committed to delivering our services in the most efficient and effective way possible so as to achieve value for money.



Core Objectives, Operational Priorities, and Supporting Activities





Environment Analysis

We are operating in an environment characterised by great change and ever increasing expectations among court users.

Central to these changing expectations is a desire for us to provide more convenient access to the courts. We will place a strong emphasis on the use of new communications technologies to deliver a cost effective and world class standard of service.

Demographic trends are creating a growing and more diverse population with substantial consequences for the Courts Service in the coming decade. The 2006 census shows the extent of these changes in recent years. Compared with the previous census in 2002 we have witnessed an 8% increase in our population, a 70% increase in the number of divorced people in a society where 10% of the population are non-Irish nationals.

The changing economic environment requires all public bodies, including the Courts Service, to deliver improved value for money. This has been confirmed by recent Government decisions regarding levels of public expenditure. Also the expectation of higher performance standards within the public sector generally has been addressed in a recent OECD report on the Irish Public Service (Towards An Integrated Public Service, April 2008). While acknowledging the progress made in reforming the public service over the past ten years, the report identified a number of areas which needed to be addressed if further progress is to be made in improving the services delivered to citizens. These include more effective performance management systems, improved resource allocation, better human resource management and cross-service integration.

The current Programme for Government places a high priority on the reform of public services. The Social Partnership Agreement, "Towards 2016", also includes a range of initiatives and opportunities to improve the provision of public services. This strategic plan continues to address these issues, which include; better regulation, public private partnerships, organisational reform, technology deployment, increasing service delivery options, team working, redeployment of staff and the management and introduction of change and modernisation.

These changes and aspirations were summed up earlier this year in a speech by An Taoiseach, Mr Brian Cowen, T.D, when speaking on the OECD Report on the Irish Public Service stated,

"Public services are about the people that use them. And Public Service modernisation is about delivering excellent public services. It is about improving the service provided to citizens at all levels in the most efficient and cost effective way. This requires that we have good structures and business processes in place. But it also requires that the quality of service delivery to the citizen is central to the work of public servants at all levels."

In preparing this plan we have also had regard to recent reports of the Law Reform Commission, The Company Law Review Group, The National Crime Council, The Youth Justice Strategy, The Interim Report from the Restorative Justice Group and recent developments in relation to energy conservation. We have also taken account of the Programme for Government and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform's statement of strategy.

These external factors are fundamental drivers of change in the Courts Service. This strategic plan outlines the vision we have developed within the Courts Service and the critical steps we will take to deliver a consistent and modern service that meets or exceeds the expectations of court users.



Our Vision

The Judiciary and the Courts, as one of the three branches of Government, have an essential role in the social and economic wellbeing of the State. The Courts Service has a critical role in providing an effective and efficient courts administration system that supports an independent judiciary and meet the needs of court users.

In developing this plan we took a long term development view of the organisation and the services we provide. In that context we projected forward to the year 2020 and what citizens and court users might expect and how we would meet those expectations.

We have learnt much over the past nine years from our experience of taking the courts from a position where there was very little investment in modern technologies, buildings in very poor condition and where information on the operation of the courts was very limited, to a position where the Courts Service is at the forefront of service performance in the public sector in modernising service delivery.

Our vision is to develop a world class organisation that has as its primary objective, meeting the needs of court users. In seeking to do this we will develop an organisation that delivers on its statutory mandates and accounts for its performance.

Examples of how this vision will translate in practical terms for court users include:

1. Having cases processed as quickly as possible.
2. Having single points of contact, where possible and practical, for court users.
3. Making court procedures simpler and more accessible locally.
4. Having more services available on a 24/7 basis using the internet and telephone systems.
5. Enabling agencies and practitioners involved in the justice system exchange information and documents with court offices electronically.
6. Improving on line access to information on the progress of cases.

It is our objective for the Courts Service to be a satisfying place in which to work and an employer of choice. We will be a listening, learning and empowering organisation. We will value diversity and reward good performance, innovation and commitment. We will ensure the contributions and ideas of every member of staff are acknowledged and respected.

We will continue to engage with court users through our User Groups to inform them of new developments and obtain feedback and suggestions from them on new developments and existing services.

We will ensure that our structures reflect the changing environment we operate in and support the delivery of our services in the most effective and efficient way possible and that resources are deployed to best effect.

We will be flexible and adaptable in meeting the needs of court users. We will carry out a comprehensive review of our structures nine years on and adjust them to meet the needs of a rapidly changing public service environment and society in general. We will operate a culture of openness and transparency. We will encourage and support open communications and feedback both internally and externally. We will foster an ethos of professionalism and will continue to adopt a quality approach to



all our work and ensure staff have the training and motivation to get things right first time. Transparent performance measurement will be the norm, which will include the alignment of operational plans and the individual objectives of our staff.

In consultation with the judiciary we will continue to promote and assist the reform and development of court practice and procedures. We will also promote regulatory reform, simplified and standardised procedures, to improve access to the courts and court offices, to further improve service delivery. We will also promote and assist legislative and procedural reform that will seek to reduce the costs of litigation.

Our ability to deliver a significant change programme depends on our internal capacity and capability to adapt and change to meet the expectations of citizens and court users. We will ensure that the resources available to us are deployed in the most efficient and effective way and that our structures are aligned with the changing environment within which we operate.

The transformation from where we are now to the vision will be an evolutionary process. We will target resources at the key priorities and the key services required for an effective courts administration that provides value for money.

This strategic plan is designed to provide objectives and activities for our coming three year planning horizon from 2008 to 2011. In order to set a long term course for the Service it is set in the context of a vision for the year 2020. The operational priorities and strategic actions contained in this plan have been chosen to enable us realise the vision contained in this section.



Operational Priorities

The long term vision for the Courts Service which has been set out in the previous section provides the context for determining our operational priorities. The operational priorities set out below represent the core business objectives which will provide the focus for the organisation in the years ahead. By focusing on these priorities we will ensure that the longer term vision will be achieved.

1. Put the Needs of the Court Users First

We are a service organisation and will focus on meeting the needs of all court users. We are aware of the onerous obligation we have to ensure all court users receive a professional, sensitive and impartial service. In seeking to deliver on this obligation we will ensure that:

- All court users are treated with dignity and respect.
- We continue in consultation with the judiciary to develop case progression and case management programmes which will be underpinned by appropriate changes to legislation and or court rules.
- Our planning and decision-making will be informed by the views of those who use the courts, and the Judges and staff who work in them, supported by better information on our performance.
- Services will be available when and where they are needed - at the court offices, by telephone and on the internet on a 24/7 basis.
- We optimise the use of technology internally and also enable court users transact business electronically with us.

2. Support the Judiciary

Supporting the Judiciary is one of our key statutory mandates. We will continue to support the Chief Justice and the Presidents by ensuring that sufficient resources and support staff are in place for all judges.

We will through our dedicated judicial support unit continue to provide financial and administrative support for the Judicial Studies Institute and the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board, both of which are independent of the Courts Service.

We will also continue to provide secretarial, research and drafting support for the three court rules making committees through our recently established unified Rules Support Unit.

We will provide the support necessary for judges to carry out their judicial functions by, ensuring that:

- The courts are adequately resourced with sufficiently skilled and trained staff.
- ICT, buildings, research, secretarial and other resources and facilities are sufficient for the operation of the courts.



- The tasks delegated by judges are expertly and professionally discharged.
- We continue to work with the judiciary to improve the services provided to court users.

3. Improve Access to the Courts

Court users will have greater choice and convenience in accessing our services, including:

- Making services available when and where they are needed – at court offices, by telephone, and via the internet.
- Processes will be as simple and consistent as possible.
- Improved facilities will be provided for all court users, including legal practitioners, jurors, victims vulnerable witnesses and defendants.
- Where appropriate we will provide telephone and video technology to make it easier to participate in proceedings.

4. Improved Understanding of the Courts

We will continue to build on the work already done over the past nine years in meeting our statutory mandate to provide information on the courts to the public. In particular we will:

- Provide information about the courts in plain English and make it easier for court users to get information regarding the progress of cases.
- Develop customer service standards and a new customer charter that will further improve our services.
- Continue to promote understanding of the courts, the role played by citizens and professionals, and how cases are decided, through open days, school and other outreach programmes.

5. Transform Service Delivery

We will provide access to the courts in new ways that meet the expectations of court users for modern standards of service. Our underlying organisation structure will reflect the shift of work from traditional structures to services that are citizen centred. We will make optimal use of technology in providing services in the most convenient and affordable way. Our administrative structures will be reviewed and modified to reflect the changing environment we operate in. In particular we will:

- Seek to make the most efficient and effective use of resources by having an agile, modern, flexible and adaptable organisation. Structures and human resource policies will be aligned with business needs.
- Develop performance standards for the services we deliver.
- Increase the proportion of business that will be transacted electronically.



- Develop systems for the electronic management of cases and court documents.
- Ensure court users will get assistance or information about progress in a case at any court, regardless of where the case was initiated.
- Increase our focus on performance management and ensure that resources are allocated in line with business requirements.

6. Be an Employer of Choice

We will be a listening, learning and empowering organisation. We will listen to the ideas and concerns of staff and use their experience to improve the services we deliver. We will;

- Develop our staff by equipping them with the necessary skills and resources to respond to the increasing volume and complexity of our work.
- Build knowledge and expertise among our staff to ensure they have the necessary competencies and skills to deliver world class services.
- Use the human resource and training and development strategies to ensure we develop our staff and provide opportunities to progress.
- Ensure staff are representative and understanding of the diverse communities we serve.
- Develop and realise the benefits of an effective partnership process together with maintaining good relationships with trade unions representing staff in the organisation.



Strategic Actions

The previous section outlined our operational priorities, which when achieved will enable us fulfil the vision of becoming a world class organisation. The achievement of our vision and operational priorities will necessarily be an evolutionary process. There is a clear alignment between our vision, our operational priorities and the goals and actions set out in this section. In the next three years, by implementing the following goals and activities, we will have taken a major step towards achieving our vision.

Goal 1: Serving Court Users

One of our core functions is to ensure that the courts are managed efficiently and effectively and that those using the criminal, civil and family courts, or related services, are provided with the best possible service.

Strategic Actions	Performance Indicators
Establish a unified Office in the new Criminal Court Complex in Dublin (one stop shop).	Unified public office operational in 2010.
Review standards for the provision of services and conduct satisfaction surveys.	New Customer Service Action Plan and court user satisfaction surveys implemented in 2009.
Standardise processes for civil and family law within and across jurisdictions.	Progress the standardisation of civil and family law processes within and across jurisdictions by 2010.
Introduce lodgement of documents in High Court by post.	Postal lodgement arrangements in place in the High Court by end of 2009.
Extend the Drugs Court Project.	Increase in places available through Drugs Courts project by 2010.
Implement family law case progression by County Registrars in the Circuit Courts.	Reduced waiting times and time at trial and improve certainty of hearing dates for family law cases in the Circuit Courts.
Re-organisation of District Courts and Venues.	Re-organisation of District Courts and Venues completed in 2009.
Provide videoconferencing and digital audio recording in all courts nationwide.	Video conferencing and digital audio recording facilities in all county town courts by the end of 2011.
Extend the range of information on the courts system to the public.	Level of public awareness of the courts system as determined by customer feedback surveys.



Goal 2: Supporting the Judiciary

The provision of support services to judges to enable them discharge their judicial functions, is a core strategic objective and statutory function of the Service. We will continue to support judicial initiatives in relation to case progression and management, reform of court rules and procedures and ongoing administrative changes particularly in relation to facilities, venues, new technology, and court funds.

Strategic Actions	Performance Indicators
In consultation with the President and judges of the High Court evaluate contribution of judicial fellows scheme with a view to its expansion.	Complete evaluation of judicial fellows by mid 2009.
In consultation with the Presidents of the courts continue to develop and expand liaison mechanisms with judiciary for periodic review of operational issues.	Effective arrangements for cooperation with the Judges to deal with operational issues.
Digital Audio Recording, Video Conferencing and other technologies deployed in courts.	Digital Audio Recording, Video Conferencing and other technologies implemented in courts by 2010.
Further develop our support for the judiciary through the dedicated judicial support unit.	Satisfactory level of support available to the judiciary, including the Judicial Studies Institute. Satisfaction survey completed in 2009.
Continue to provide the accommodation, technological, financial and human resources to support the judiciary discharge their judicial functions.	Adequacy of accommodation, technological, financial and human resource support provided to judiciary.

Goal 3: Developing our Staff

The skills and experience of our staff, together with their commitment, enthusiasm, openness to and willingness to embrace change and modernisation and pride in their work, are all vital in enabling the Service discharge its functions. It is essential that we have a well trained workforce and a culture of high performance. We also value and actively support the importance of working in partnership with the trade unions and staff representatives.

Strategic Actions	Performance Indicators
Develop a Human Resource Management strategy.	Human Resource Management strategy completed by the end of 2009.
Develop a Training and Development Strategy.	Training and Development strategy completed by the end of 2009.
Implement actions required to secure Excellence Through People accreditation.	Excellence Through People Accreditation obtained by the end of 2011.
Continue to use and further develop Partnership structures, national and regional, to implement our change programme.	Improved management/staff partnership, improved communication, engagement and stable industrial relations environment.
Further develop PMDS, including upward feedback and integration with promotion and disciplinary processes.	Effective operation of PMDS.
Human Resource policies aligned with judicial, courts and courts service requirements.	More effective recruitment, development and deployment of staff.
Carry out staff satisfaction surveys.	Level of staff satisfaction based on staff surveys.



Goal 4: Optimising the Use of Technology

Our objective is to optimise technology to provide more choice and easier access to services, including where appropriate, online access 24/7. We will also use technology to achieve value for money. We will work with other justice agencies to implement “cross cutting” technology initiatives to deliver “joined up” services across the criminal justice system.

Strategic Actions	Performance Indicators
Continue to upgrade ICT infrastructure and systems to provide judges and staff with modern tools and support.	The Criminal Case Tracking System will be fully operational across all jurisdictions by the end of 2010.
Develop and implement Case Management Systems supporting the management of civil cases, case progression and court hearings.	The Civil Case Management System will be available on a pilot basis in designated offices by the end of 2011.
Continuing to develop online access services and electronic service delivery channels specifically designed to meet the requirements of court users.	Prioritised Public Registers will be available online by the end of 2010. Level of availability and utilisation of electronic services.
In consultation with other justice agencies, continue to provide integration across the criminal justice system by participating in a programme of “joined up” services.	Integration between the Criminal Case Tracking System and the Garda PULSE system for all summons applications and court results fully operational by end of 2009.

Goal 5: Procedural Reform

In consultation with the judiciary and the Court Rules Committees we will promote and assist the reform and development of court practice and procedures. We will simplify and standardise procedures. We will do this in consultation with the judiciary, staff, court users and the Court Rules Committees.

Strategic Actions	Performance Indicators
Implement fully integrated support (including secretarial and drafting services) for the Court Rules Committees.	Rules Committee Support Unit arrangements for integrated support to Court Rules Committees fully operational by end 2008.
In consultation with and subject to the approval of the judiciary and the Court Rules Committees, facilitate implementation of procedural solutions for the progression of cases through the courts.	Submit proposal for case progression regime for High Court litigation, within three months of approval by judiciary, to appropriate Court Rules Committee. Submit to relevant President of Court concerned, proposal for pre-trial preparation regime in respect of criminal proceedings on indictment, within three months of approval by judiciary, in form of draft practice direction, or draft rules of court.
Rationalise and simplify, where appropriate, forms for use in litigation.	Scheme of standardised family law writs for High and Circuit Courts available for presentation to relevant rules committees by March 2009; Scheme of rationalised District Court forms finalised, for presentation to District Court Rules Committee by end of 2009.
Propose legislative and procedural changes to facilitate deployment of Civil Case Management System.	Proposals for necessary legislative and procedural rules presented to Court Rules Committees, or Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, as appropriate, within three months of completion of evaluation.
Propose legislative and procedural changes to facilitate Combined Courts Office (“one stop shop”) concept.	Provision for Combined Courts Office included, subject to approval of Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, in next available Courts-related or other appropriate Bill.



Goal 6: Providing Court Accommodation and Facilities

All buildings will be universally accessible and will be designed, constructed and equipped to cope with and maximise new and existing technologies required to respond to the challenge of providing 'State of the Art' facilities for all court users.

Strategic Actions	Performance Indicators
Implement the Capital Building Programme.	Court buildings refurbished as follows: 2009: Kilkenny, Gorey, Kilmallock 2010: Monaghan, Mullingar, Youghal, Swinford, Manorhamilton, New Ross, Enniscorthy, Macroom, Ennistymon, Killaloe. 2011: Wexford, Wicklow and Tralee, Shannon, Birr, Castleblayney, Killarney, Boyle & Dungloe.
Provide a Criminal Court Complex in Dublin and other building projects by way of Public Private Partnership (PPP)	Dublin Criminal Courts Complex completed and operational in 2010. Projects in Letterkenny, Limerick, Cork and Drogheda completed or at an advanced stage of construction by the end of 2011.
Commence the development of the Four Courts as a Civil Court Complex.	First phase of the redevelopment of the Four Courts as a Civil Court Complex commenced by the end of 2011.

Goal 7: Managing Performance

The effective management of our financial and non-financial resources is critical to ensure the effective operation of the courts, the discharge of our statutory functions, and the delivery of value for money. It is also essential that we have robust governance and risk management processes in place.

Strategic Actions	Performance Indicators
Undertake efficiency review to ensure that resources are deployed to best effect, taking account of the needs of a rapidly changing environment.	Efficiency review completed by the end of 2009 Progress made in implementing recommendations from the efficiency review by the end of 2010.
Establish Management Information function.	Established by the end of 2009.
Develop performance standards for administrative financial and non financial activities.	Indicators in place by the end of 2009.
Continue to implement governance and risk management framework.	Effective operation of risk management framework, with effective monitoring and reporting arrangements fully in place by the end of 2009.



Implementation

This plan has been developed with a focus on implementation. The achievements and progress of the past nine years and the willingness of Judges, staff and court users to embrace change provide a solid foundation for the implementation of this plan. We have sought to build on the areas we already do well and further develop those areas which have the capacity to contribute further to improving our services. We have set challenging but achievable targets. We will review our performance against these targets on a regular basis. We will report on the implementation of the targets in our Annual Reports.

Accounting for our Performance

To insure the efficient and effective use of the resources allocated to us, we will account for our performance in an open, transparent and public manner. In particular, we account for our performance as follows:

- **Courts Service Board**

The Board and its Committees will receive regular progress reports on the implementation of the plan.

- **The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform**

We report to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law reform in our Annual Reports on progress made in achieving the targets in this plan.

- **Independent External Audit**

The Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) conducts annual audits of our receipts and expenditures, our systems, procedures and practices, together with periodic value for money reviews. The outcomes of these audits and reviews are published in the C&AG's Annual Report. The annual financial statement of the Accountant of the Courts of Justice for funds held in trust is audited by independent external auditors and published annually.

- **Houses of the Oireachtas**

The Chief Executive Officer, as Accounting Officer, appears before the Committee of Public Accounts to deal with issues raised by the C&AG in his Annual Report and any other matter relating to our activities that the Committee might wish to examine.

- **Senior Management Team**

There is a strong emphasis in this plan on managing performance. Setting performance standards for both financial and non financial activities, together with monitoring progress against those standards will be a key task for the Senior Management Team.

Annual Business Plans

Annual business and operational plans will translate this strategic plan into detailed business unit work programmes. Directorates and offices will develop business plans using an employee involvement, partnership and team approach, allowing staff the opportunity to have a meaningful input into the implementation of the plan.



Performance Management

Performance management and measurement will be essential for the successful implementation of the plan. Alignment of the high level goals and strategies in this plan with the detailed annual plans for offices and staff will be essential. This will be achieved in conjunction with further developing the operation of the performance management and development system (PMDS). This will enable individual staff see how their work contributes to the achievement of the goals set out in this plan.

Key Challenges

There are a number of challenges in successfully implementing the goals set out in the Plan. These include;

- **Resources**

The delivery of good quality services is dependent on our ability to recruit, develop and deploy staff with the necessary competencies and knowledge. The availability of adequate financial resources is also a critical success factor.

- **Partnership**

We are committed to further developing our partnership approach at central, regional and individual office level. There is an abundance of intellectual capacity and talent at every level within the organisation. We will ensure that this is fully utilised.

- **Communication**

We will continue to improve internal and external communication strategies.

- **Court User Groups.**

We will continue to develop our national, regional and local user group forums.

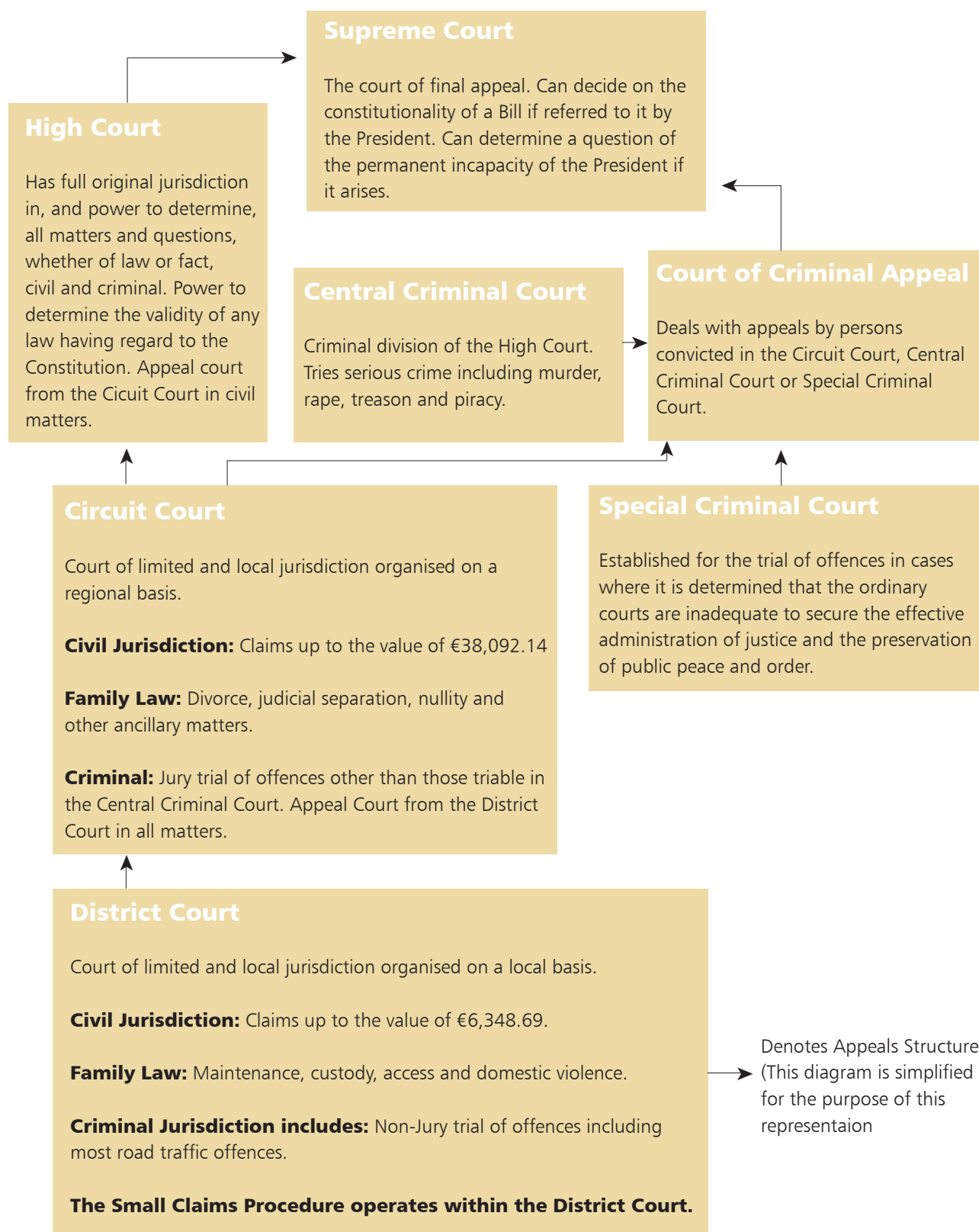
- **Review and Renewal**

We will constantly review our effectiveness and contribution. We will on a regular basis revisit our mandates, the reasons for our establishment and what we have contributed.



Appendix 1

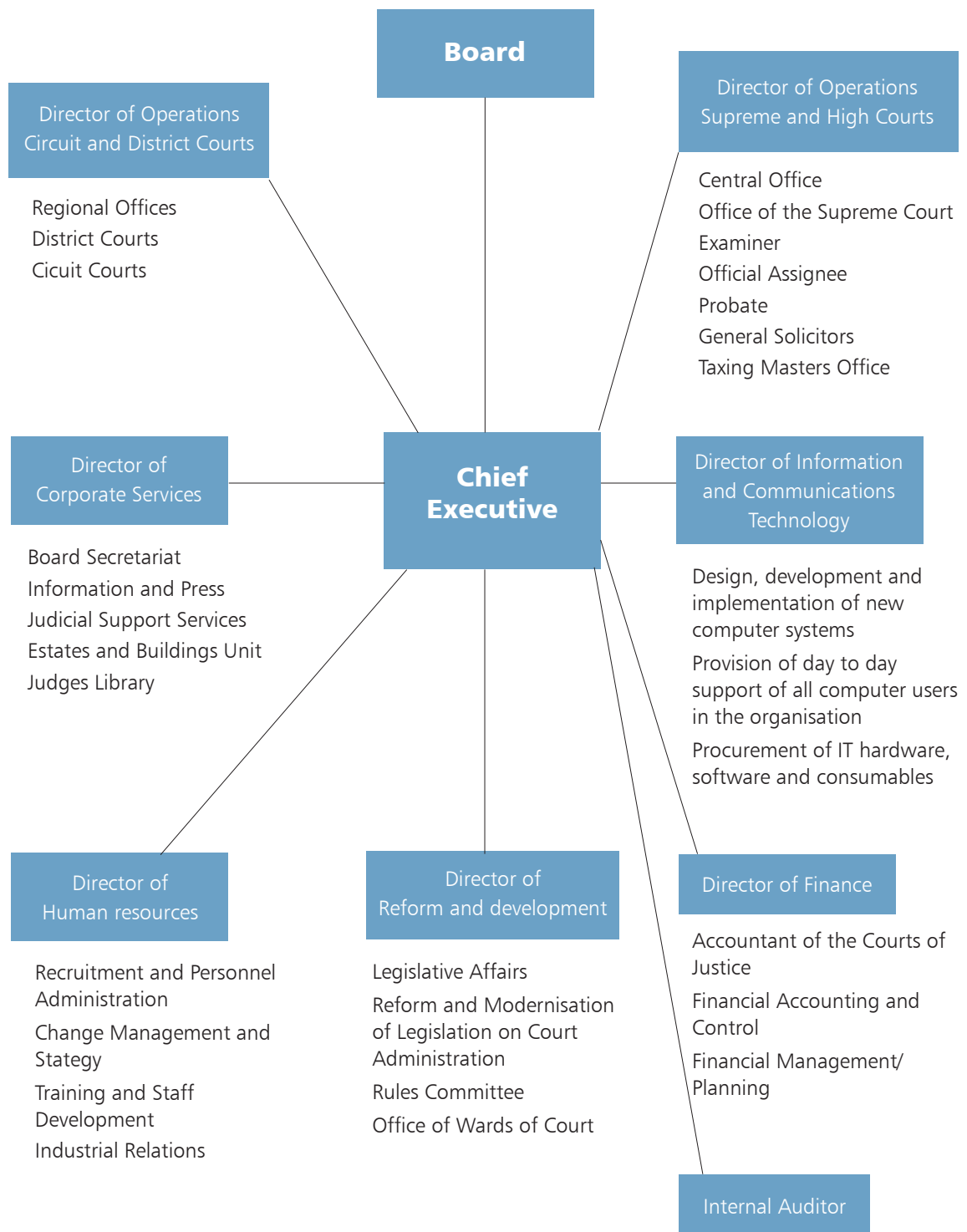
Structure of the Courts





Appendix 2

Courts Service Organisational Chart





Appendix 3

Profile of the Courts Service

The Courts Service in Numbers

Annual Budget €136m (2008)

Total funds held in trust by the Courts: €1,022m

Fines collected in 2007 €22m

Court Fees collected in 2007 €39m

Value of family law transactions processed in District Court Offices €22m

Number of staff: 1,100

Number of court offices: 82

Number of court locations: 173

Number of judicial positions 148

Caseload 770,000

Statistical Highlights (Annual Report 2007)

Over 15% increase in criminal cases dealt with in 2007

€22m collected in fines as 114,000 persons fined in the courts

11% increase in number of fines imposed by the courts

23,000 prison sentences and 4,000 community service orders

26% increase brings new cases in the High Court to 19,435

73% increase in new cases entering the Commercial Court list

30% increase in Solicitors Act cases

11% increase in Probate of estates with wills

42% of Small Claims cases received online

15% increase in number of domestic violence applications

21% increase in protection orders

18% increase in murder and manslaughter cases

26% increase in rape cases

25% increase in road traffic offence cases

1,352,087 hits on www.courts.ie



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