

Innovation Strategy

2024 – 2026



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

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An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

Foreword

Minister for the
Department of Justice

Republic of Ireland

An tSeirbhís Chúirtean
Court Service



Foreword



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Following the success of the inaugural Courts Service Innovation Strategy launched in 2021, I am excited to launch our Innovation Strategy for 2024 to 2026. When taking over as Innovation Sponsor in February 2023, I was heartened to see the great progress that we've made in innovation in the Courts Service.

Over the past 3 years, we have built a strong foundation for innovation. Our key achievements include upskilling our staff on innovative ways of working, creating a pathway to submit innovative ideas and converting these ideas into initiatives that have been rolled out across the Courts Service. Some great examples of our innovation successes include our Trauma Informed Practice training, our 360 Virtual Tours and JAM Cards (these are outlined on pages 9 and 16-17 of this strategy).

Thank you to everyone who has engaged with innovation with an open mind and for giving your time to innovation projects. We are truly making a difference in transforming the Courts Service for our colleagues and court users.

As we look ahead, this new Innovation Strategy will refresh our innovation vision, help focus our intent, and deliver an action plan to continue to embed innovation in the Courts Service.

We've made significant progress to date and have ambitious goals to lead the way in innovative transformation in the Irish Justice Sector. To achieve our vision, we need your support to continue building our innovation mindset and ways of working across all teams in the Courts Service.

Emer Darcy

Acting Head of Strategy and Reform Directorate

Our achievements during our first Innovation Strategy



Our achievements during our first Innovation Strategy

The inaugural Innovation Strategy for the Courts Service was launched in April 2021 and built a strong foundation of innovative thinking and ways of working. Some of the key innovation achievements during the 2021-2023 strategy include:

1

Created an innovation team and advocate network

We created teams and groups to deliver innovation priorities and initiatives. This includes a core innovation team, an innovation working group and an innovation advocate network from all areas of the Courts Service.

2

Created an innovation ideas pathway

We created a structured pathway for our colleagues to submit innovation ideas. There were 48 ideas submitted through the pathway and we are proud that we have been able to deliver or commence work on over half of these ideas, including:

- 6 projects delivered by the innovation team
- 8 projects currently underway
- 15 ideas shared with teams across the Courts Service to be incorporated into existing project plans

You can read more about some of the examples of our innovation successes on pages 9 and 16-17 of this strategy.

3

Upskilled Courts Service teams on innovation

We launched the first innovation eLearning module and commenced our first 'learn by doing' service design project.

4

Collaborated with other public sector organisations

We worked with our public sector colleagues to implement innovative change and share learnings across organisations. For example:

- We worked with the Department of Justice Innovation network to develop innovative concepts to improve cross sector justice services.
- We presented at Public Sector Innovation Network events.
- We collaborated with the Dublin Coroner's Court and the Irish Prison Service to roll out JAM cards across our organisations.

Our vision and focus for innovation in the Courts Service

Our vision for innovation in the Courts Service

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“Our vision is to lead the way in innovative user centred practices, collaborating with our partners and stakeholders, to help drive transformation in the Irish justice sector.”

We want to empower all our Courts Service colleagues to identify challenges, make evidence-based decisions and pitch creative solutions. We hope to create an environment where innovation is part of the mindset of all our colleagues and creates a strong culture of innovative change in the Courts Service.

We want to seamlessly interlink the Courts Service Innovation Strategy with our modernisation efforts to drive measurable benefits and impactful change throughout the Courts Service.

Our Guiding Principles

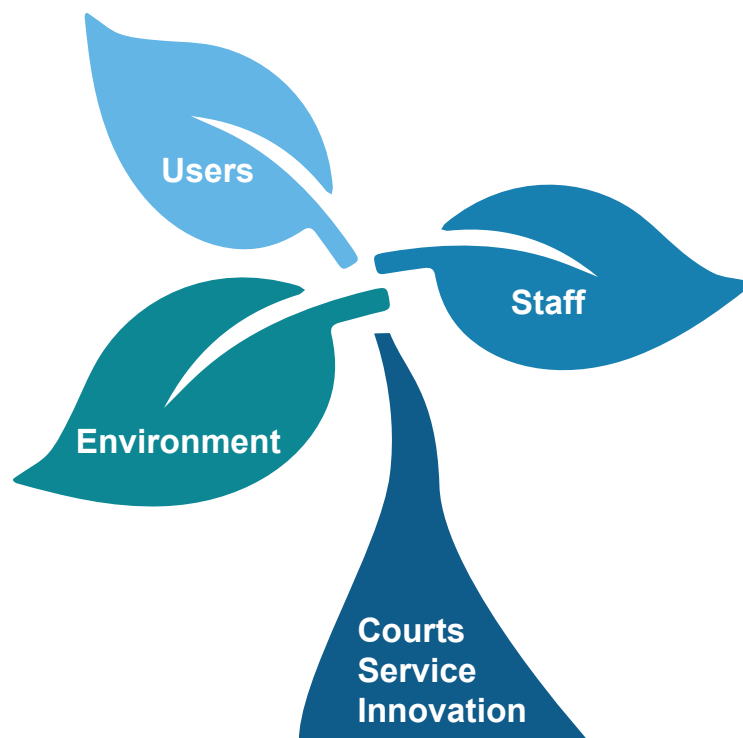
Through innovation we believe we can support continuous improvement and create better experiences for court users, our Courts Service colleagues, the judiciary and our stakeholders. To guide us on our innovation journey, we have set out four guiding principles:



Our focus for innovation

We want innovative change to assist the progression of our strategic goals, while also allowing space for experimentation and testing of new ideas that will benefit our users, colleagues, community and the judiciary.

To ensure the Courts Service Innovation Strategy reflects and complements the goals of the Courts Service Strategic Plan and the Modernisation Programme, we have identified 3 broad areas where we aim to focus our innovation efforts and resources.



User Focus

We will use innovation to tailor more of our services to meet our users' needs.



Staff Focus

We will use innovation to help us improve experiences and ways of working for our Courts Service colleagues, contributing to a healthy place to work.



Environment Focus

We will use innovation to help us improve our environment.

2020

Delivering excellent services to court users; working in partnership with the Judiciary and others to enable a world-class Courts system

2030

You can read about examples of previous successful innovations for each of our focus areas below:



User focus

JAM Cards

For some users, attending Court can be a stressful experience. We identified an opportunity to support users by becoming a JAM Card friendly organisation. JAM cards are a physical card or app that allows people with a learning difficulty, autism, or any communication barrier to ask for 'Just a Minute' of patience. This was a collaborative project with the Dublin Coroner's Court and the Irish Prison Service.



Staff focus

Trauma Informed Practice Training

Our Learning and Development team launched Trauma Informed Practice training in 2021 to support our staff interacting with Court users. This training teaches people delivering services to understand how life events can impact users and impact how they behave or interact with services. Over 400 staff have completed the training with overwhelmingly positive feedback.



Environment focus

Repurposing Office Supplies

During COVID restrictions in 2020, users needed a safe way to lodge documents at court offices. A staff member from the Estates Management Unit had an idea to repurpose unused document shredding consoles into document drop boxes at court offices. This idea solved an urgent user need while also ensuring we minimised our impact on the environment.

Innovation Action Plan



Innovation Action Plan

To achieve our innovation vision, we have created an Action Plan with four key areas. The Action Plan will help us develop our innovation capability and governance, allowing us to embed an innovation culture throughout the Courts Service and deliver innovations across our three focus areas (users, staff and environment).

This plan builds on the successes of our Innovation Strategy 2021-2023 with actions to improve on existing innovation structures and approaches, but also identifies new areas where action is needed.

Where appropriate, we will align our actions to the Government's 'Action Plan for Designing Better Public Services'.

We have set 4 key action areas for this strategy:

- 1 Improve Innovation Awareness & Capability**
We will improve innovation awareness and capability in the Courts Service.
- 2 Drive Idea Generation**
We will encourage the generation of innovation ideas through new ways of working.
- 3 Improve Innovation Pathway and Project Delivery**
We will have a simple pathway for our colleagues to submit ideas to the innovation team. We will have a clear process for reviewing and prioritising ideas to be progressed to project delivery.
- 4 Improve Participation Within the Innovation Team and Innovation Advocate Network**
We will redefine the roles and responsibilities of our innovation team and innovation advocate network.

1 Improve Innovation Awareness & Capability

To fulfil this action, we will:

Improve awareness and understanding of innovation in the Courts Service

We will regularly showcase innovation work from across the Courts Service with our colleagues. We will engage and collaborate with our justice and public sector colleagues to share innovation learnings.

Provide innovation training opportunities

We will increase the innovation training opportunities available to our colleagues, mixing learning methods to allow all to participate. For example, eLearning modules and/or in person workshops.

Courts Service wide innovation

We will provide opportunities for our colleagues throughout the country to participate in innovation activities, maximising the benefits of new ways of working.

2 Drive Idea Generation

To fulfil this action, we will:

Recognise innovation ideas and work

We will implement a consistent process for providing recognition to our colleagues who have supported the delivery of innovative change and/or who have submitted ideas through the innovation pathway.

Organise innovation events

We will organise events to promote and support rapid innovation and idea generation from all areas of the organisation.

Collaborate within the Courts Service and across the public sector

We will continue to participate in events and collaborate on innovative ideas with our Courts Service, justice and public sector colleagues.

3 Improve Innovation Pathway and Project Delivery

To fulfil this action, we will:

Review the existing innovation pathway

We will review the existing innovation pathway to understand what works well and what doesn't.

Develop an improved pathway

We will develop an improved pathway which supports our innovation vision and encourages innovation among our colleagues. The pathway will outline how innovation ideas can be submitted and the process for ideas becoming real innovative change in the Courts Service.

Define the supports and structures available to deliver innovative ideas

We will work with our Senior Management Team to define how innovative ideas will be supported and delivered in the Courts Service.

4 Improve Participation Within the Innovation Team and Innovation Advocate Network

To fulfil this action, we will:

Review and redefine innovation roles in the Courts Service

We will review the roles in the innovation team and innovation advocate network to provide further definition and implement improvements.

Define commitment required from innovation team and innovation advocate network

We will outline the learning, ongoing commitment and term of service expected of all roles in the innovation team and network of innovation advocates.

Provide colleagues with opportunities to get involved in innovation projects

We will develop and communicate a clear process that outlines how our colleagues can get involved in supporting change in the Courts Service by working as part of the innovation team and innovation advocate network.

Courts Service Innovation Team Contact Details

If you would like to hear more about our Innovation Strategy and Action Plan, or about innovation projects in the Courts Service, you can contact us via email at **Innovations@courts.ie**.

2020

Delivering excellent services to court users; working in partnership with the Judiciary and others to enable a world-class Courts system

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Innovation Successes in the Courts Service



Innovation Successes in the Courts Service

360 virtual tours

360 tours immerse users in locations including the Four Courts, the Criminal Courts of Justice and the Dublin District Family Law building. This virtual tool provides audio-visual information on what to expect when visiting a court building, information on ‘the who’s who of the courtroom’, support services available and more. 360 tours can be accessed at: <https://services.courts.ie/virtual-tours>



Child distraction spaces

Child friendly spaces have been set up in family courts to make attending court more accessible for users with children. The child distraction spaces initiative began in the Dublin District Family Law Office to enhance customer experience for court users. Child distraction spaces received €10,000 in funding from the inaugural Public Service Innovation Fund.



Inclusion lanyards

To promote diversity and inclusion within our offices, the Courts Service lanyard was redesigned to include the disability pride flag and the progression pride flag. This idea was submitted by a member of the Legal Research Unit through the innovation pathway.



Centralised legal aid panel

In November 2021, the Legal Aid panel was centralised after an idea was submitted through the innovation pathway. Previously solicitors had to apply in each county to be placed on the panel. Solicitors can now apply to be placed on any panel in any county through a single form that is processed in a centralised office in Castlebar.



Jury support project

The Jury Support Project originated from an idea that was submitted through the innovation pathway and is currently in the pilot stage. The project focuses on providing support to jurors both pre-court and post-court. This was the Innovation Team's first 'learn by doing' project which allowed our innovation advocates to participate in a series of service design workshops to identify and solve for the pain-points experienced by jurors.





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