



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

Courts Service Annual Report 2023

Plain language guides

What are they?

Plain language refers to the way that someone understands it. It is the most efficient way of writing that conveys information quickly and effectively.

To write in plain English, you should:

When you use plain language:

- write in clear language
- keep things simple
- use short sentences
- give relevant information
- talk to people



Mission Statement

*To manage the courts,
support the judiciary and provide a
high quality and professional service
to all users of the courts.*



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

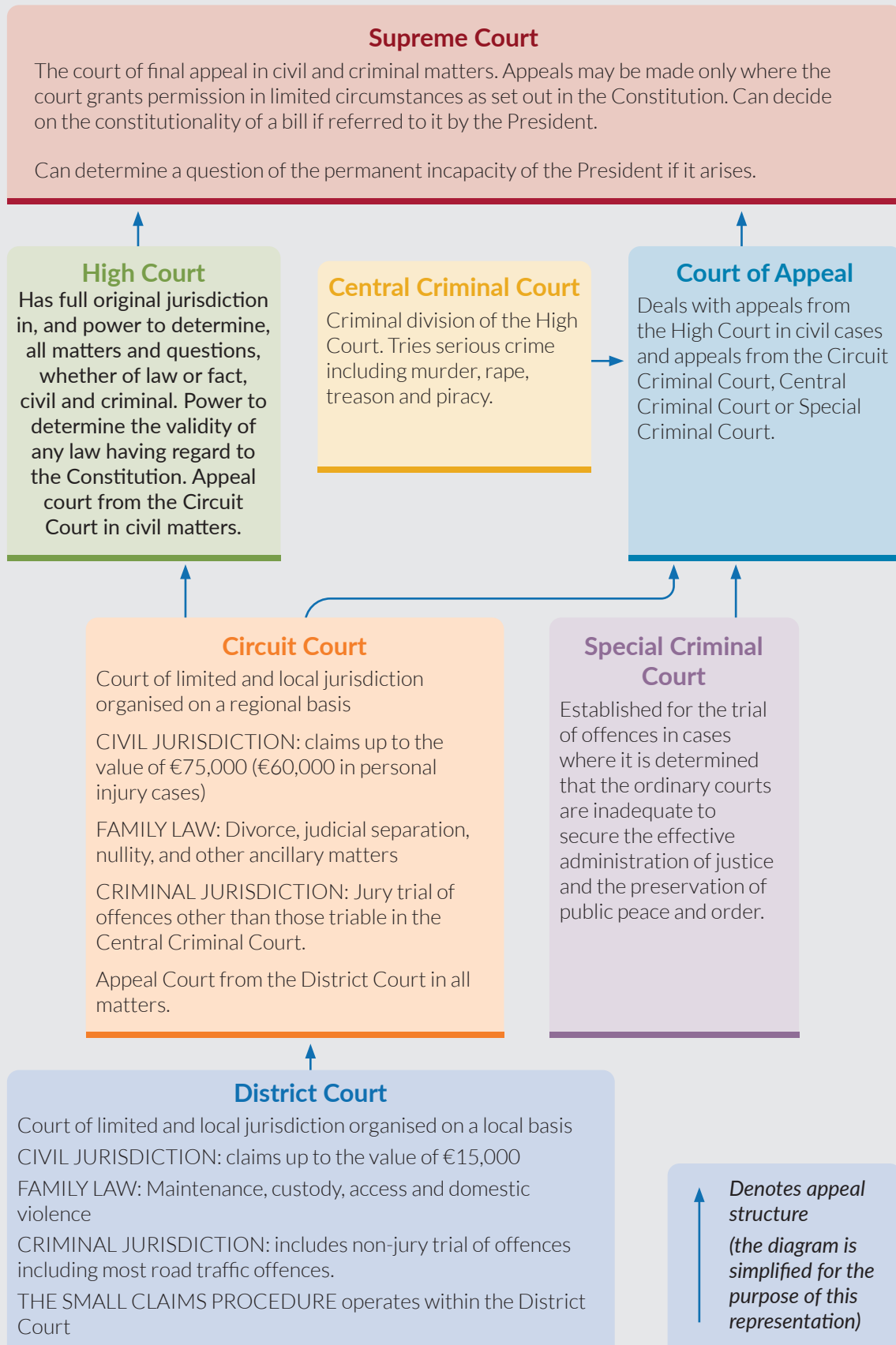
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Structure of the Courts





Foreword

The Hon Mr Justice Donal O'Donnell Chief Justice of Ireland Chairperson of the Board of the Courts Service

The pages of this 2023 annual report reflect another busy year for the Courts Service which is now close to reaching its 25th birthday. The Courts Service Act, 1998 prescribed the Service's functions as: managing the courts; providing support services for the judges; providing information on the courts system to the public; managing court buildings; and providing facilities for court users. It is clear from the overview of work and key developments captured by this report, that the Courts Service of 2023 is a mature and constantly evolving organisation which has at its heart a commitment to providing the vital support and infrastructure needed to enable access to justice. Throughout 2023, in addition to meeting the everyday demands of a busy courts system, the Courts Service and Judiciary embraced many new challenges.

A particularly significant reform was the introduction of a new regime to replace the centuries old Wards of Court system with the coming into effect on 26 April 2023 of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015. The 2015 Act established the Decision Support Service and introduced a three-level system of decision support arrangements for those who need it. The Circuit Court is responsible for considering applications when there is a concern in relation to a person's decision-making capacity. During the first eight months of the operation of this process in the Circuit Court in 2023, 413 applications were made, resulting in 270 orders. The 2015 Act also provides for the discharge of all adult Wards of Court from wardship within three years from 26 April 2023. In 2023, the Office of Wards of Court Office received 82

applications for discharge. It is hoped that the enormous effort and work invested by the Courts Service and all others involved in the establishment of this new legal framework for supported decision making will result in improvements for people in need of such support.

Looking at cases statistics from across the court jurisdictions in 2023, some key trends are worth noting. Both the Central and Circuit Criminal Courts experienced an increase of 7% in new cases in 2023. Yet the number of cases finalised increased by 10% in the Central Criminal Court and 5% in the Circuit Court. This increased throughput reflects further progress in alleviating waiting times which had built up during the years of the pandemic.

The Central Criminal Court continued to make progress in dealing with the volume of cases on hand. At its peak in 2022, that volume was 76% higher than in 2019. Despite progress last year, the volume of cases on hand remains 61% higher than in 2019. There was an increase of 56% in new cases in 2023 in comparison with 2019. Disposal rates have increased by 73% since 2019.

In the Circuit Criminal Court, the figure for cases awaiting finalisation peaked in 2021, which saw a 37% increase in comparison with 2019. Progress was made in this area in 2023, for which the percentage increase was 22% above 2019, and reduced by 10% since its peak in 2021.

In 2023, adjournments accounted for 59% of District Court orders, with a corresponding



increase in disposal to 41%, illustrating the finalisation of more cases this year.

There were 12,901 new cases in the High Court during 2023 – an almost 5% increase on 2022 figures. In October 2023, a new case management system was launched in the High Court which will provide a radical improvement in the service provided to users, and an improvement in the quality of court data.

This is but a snapshot of the work of the courts in 2023, which highlights the strides being made in dealing with the legacy of challenges associated with a post pandemic era, and consistently driving and implementing change to improve court services to users.

I was pleased to see the appointment of 24 new judges in 2023 in the wake of the publication in February 2023 of the report of the Judicial Planning Working Group. That report provided an independent and objective assessment of the need for a greater number of judges in the short to medium term, and the introduction of a model to assess future judicial resource needs, including associated support, on an ongoing basis in the future. The additional judges will allow the Judiciary and Courts Service to begin the process of implementing the recommendations of the Judicial Planning Working Group.

Like many of the changes identified in the introduction by the CEO and body of this report, the implementation of the Judicial Planning Working Group report will present challenges for all involved. But to borrow from an Irish seanfhocail, ‘Más cam nó díreach an ród, ‘s é an bothar mór an t-aicearra’ – The longest road out is the shortest road home. I hope that the work which has commenced on the implementation of the JPWG report, together with the changes in progress under the Courts Service Modernisation Programme and other areas of reform will be an investment



into an improved courts system for Ireland.

I would like to thank the Board and the staff of the Courts Service and my colleagues in the Judiciary for their continued work, energy and commitment to serving the public. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the cooperation and insights of all others in the justice landscape with whom we regularly engage, such as the legal profession, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, governmental and non-governmental agencies and civil society groups. The Courts Service is also grateful to the Minister for Justice and Department of Justice for their support and collaboration throughout 2023.

I commend this report to you, which I hope will serve as an informative insight into a productive year in our modern courts system which provides an important service to Irish society.

Donal O'Donnell

Donal O'Donnell
Chief Justice
Chairperson of the Courts Service Board



1

About the Courts Service



About the Courts Service

The Courts Service is responsible for the administration and management of the Courts in Ireland. Our primary functions are to manage the Courts, provide support services to the Judiciary, provide information on the courts system to the public, and provide court buildings and facilities for court users. Our ancillary powers include acquiring, holding, and disposing of land, entering into contracts, designating court venues, and making proposals to the Minister for Justice regarding, for example, reform and development matters.

We are responsible for the management of all aspects of court activities (except for judicial functions which are a matter exclusively for the Judiciary). In fulfilling our functions, our 1,200+ people nationwide provide services in Civil, Criminal and Family Law to court users daily. These offices, supported by directorates established as part of our management structure, facilitate the work of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court, Circuit Court and District Court.

The Courts Service Board

The Courts Service is governed by a Board consisting of a chairperson and 17 other members.

The Courts Service Act, 1998 provides that the Board should contain judicial representatives from each Court, a staff representative, a representative of the Minister for Justice and representatives from the legal professions, trade unions and business world. The Board considers and determines policy in relation to the Courts Service and oversees the implementation of that policy by the Chief Executive Officer. The Act provides that the Board consider the most beneficial, effective,

and efficient use of organisation resources and how any policy or objective of the Government or Minister might affect or relate to the functions of the organisation.

The Act also enables the Board to establish committees to advise on the performance of its functions, and may appoint committee members who are not Board members, but have specialist knowledge and experience related to the purposes of the committee. Committees and their actions are subject to confirmation by the Board as deemed necessary. The committees of the Board as of 31 December 2023 were:

- ▶ Finance Committee.
- ▶ Audit and Risk Committee.
- ▶ Family Law Court Development Committee.
- ▶ Building Committee.
- ▶ Modernisation Committee.



'In fulfilling our functions, our 1,200+ people nationwide provide services in Civil, Criminal and Family Law to court users daily.'



Courts Service Board



Mr. Justice Donal O'Donnell Chief Justice and Chairperson of the Board



Mr. Justice George Birmingham President of the Court of Appeal



Mr. Justice David Barniville President of the High Court



Ms. Justice Elizabeth Dunne Elected by the ordinary judges of the Supreme Court



Mr. Justice Patrick McCarthy Elected by the ordinary judges of the Court of Appeal



Mr. Justice Tony O'Connor Elected by the judges of the High Court



Ms. Justice Patricia Ryan President of the Circuit Court



Her Honour Judge Alice Doyle Elected by the ordinary judges of the Circuit Court



His Honour Judge Paul Kelly President of the District Court



Judge Alan Mitchell Elected by the judges of the District Court



Ms. Angela Denning Chief Executive Officer, Courts Service



Ms. Sara Phelan Nominee of the Bar Council



Ms. Michele O'Boyle Nominee of the Law Society



Ms. Hilary McSweeney Elected by the staff of the Courts Service



Ms. Rachel Woods* Official of the Department of Justice nominated by the Minister



Ms. Karen Kiernan Nominated by the Minister to represent consumers of the services provided by the Courts



Ms. Patricia King Nominee of Irish Congress of Trade Unions



Ms. Deirdre Kiely Nominated by the Minister because of her relevant knowledge and experience in commerce, finance and administration



* Ms. Rachel Woods replaced Mr. Doncha O Sullivan on 27 February 2023.

A new term was established on 9 November 2023. At that time, the following Board members stepped down;

- The Hon Mr. Justice Patrick McCarthy
- Ms. Hilary McSweeney
- Ms. Karen Kiernan
- Ms. Patricia King
- Ms. Deirdre Kiely
- Ms. Michelle O'Boyle

And were replaced by;

- The Hon. Ms. Justice Tara Burns
- Mr. Derek Bunyan
- Ms. Sarah Benson
- Mr. Owen Reidy
- Mr. Noel Beecher
- Mr. Stuart Gilhooly



The Hon. Ms. Justice Tara Burns
Elected by the ordinary judges of the Court of Appeal



Mr. Owen Reidy
Nominee of Irish Congress of Trade Unions.



Ms. Sarah Benson
Nominated by the Minister to represent consumers of the services provided by the Courts



Mr. Derek Bunyan
Elected by the staff of the Courts Service.



Mr. Noel Beecher
Nominated by the Minister because of his relevant knowledge and experience in commerce, finance and administration



Mr. Stuart Gilhooly
Nominee of the Law Society



Committees of the Board

Finance Committee

The Hon. Mr. Justice George Birmingham, President of the Court of Appeal (Chair)

The Hon. Mr Justice Donal O'Donnell, Chief Justice

The Hon. Mr. Justice David Barniville, President of the High Court

The Hon. Ms. Justice Patricia Ryan, President of the Circuit Court

His Honour Judge Paul Kelly, President of the District Court

Ms Angela Denning, Chief Executive Officer of the Courts Service

Ms. Rachel Woods - Board member representing the Department of Justice and Equality

Ms. Deirdre Kiely* - Board member representing commercial and financial interests

Ms Amelia Casey - External member

*Ms Kiely left the Committee in October, 2023. Replacement in 2024

Audit and Risk Committee

Ms. Deirdre Kiely* - Board member (representative of commercial and financial interests) - (Chair)

The Hon. Mr. Justice Seamus Noonan*, Judge of the Court of Appeal

His Honour Judge Francis Comerford, Judge of the Circuit Court

Judge John Hughes*, Judge of the District Court

Ms. Rachel Woods - Board member representing the Department of Justice

Ms. Michelle Mc Greal - External Member

Mr Andrew O'Sullivan* - External Member, CIO An Garda Síochána

* 4 members left by end of year. Replacements in 2024

Building Committee

Ms. Patricia King*, Courts Service Board Member (Chair)

The Hon. Mr. Justice Patrick McCarthy*, Judge of the Court of Appeal.

The Hon. Mr. Justice Seamus Noonan*, Judge of the Court of Appeal

The Hon. Mr. Justice John Jordan, Judge of the High Court

Her Honour Judge Kathryn Hutton*, Judge of the Circuit Court

Judge Brendan Toale, Judge of the District Court

Ms. Angela Denning, Chief Executive Officer of the Courts Service

Mr Jack Nicholas, Nominee of the Chairman of the Bar Council

Mr. Audrey Leonard, Assistant Secretary of Circuit and District Court Operations

Mr. John Cleere, Assistant Secretary of Corporate Services Directorate

Mr. Ciaran O'Connor, representative of the Office of Public Works

Ms. Deirdre Browne BL who was nominated for the Bar Council

* 4 members left by end of year, replaced 2024.



Family Law Court Development Committee

Ms. Karen Kiernan, member of the Courts Service Board (Chair)
The Hon. Mr. Justice John Jordan, Judge of the High Court
Her Honour Judge Alice Doyle, Judge of the Circuit Court
Her Honour Judge Sinéad Ní Chúlacháin, Judge of the Circuit Court
Her Honour Judge Sarah Berkeley, Judge of the Circuit Court
Judge Carol Ann Coolican, Judge of the District Court
Judge Máire Conneely, Judge of the District Court
Ms. Joan Crawford, Legal Aid Board
Mr. Seán ÓhÚaláchain, Bar Council
Mr. Peter Doyle, Law Society
Mr. Tom Ward, Assistant Secretary of Superior Courts Operations
Ms. Hilary McSweeney, Courts Service representative on Courts Service Board
Mr. Stephen Owens, Head of Family Law Reform
Mr. Audrey Leonard, Assistant Secretary of Circuit and District Court Operations
Mr. Alan Byrne, Courts Service, Family Law Reform (Committee Secretary)
Ms. Rita Considine, Dublin County Registrar
Ms. Sarah Benson, CEO, Women's Aid

* **Alternative Member** – Ms. Emily Sherlock (ES) Legal Aid Board. Alternative on behalf of Ms. Joan Crawford.

* Mr. Peter Doyle replaced Ms. Helen Coughlan, March 2023

* Mr. Stephen Owens replaced Ms. Emer Darcy, March 2023

* The Hon. Mr. Justice John Jordan joined the Committee in April 2023

* Ms. Joan Crawford replaced Mr. John McDaid, April 2023

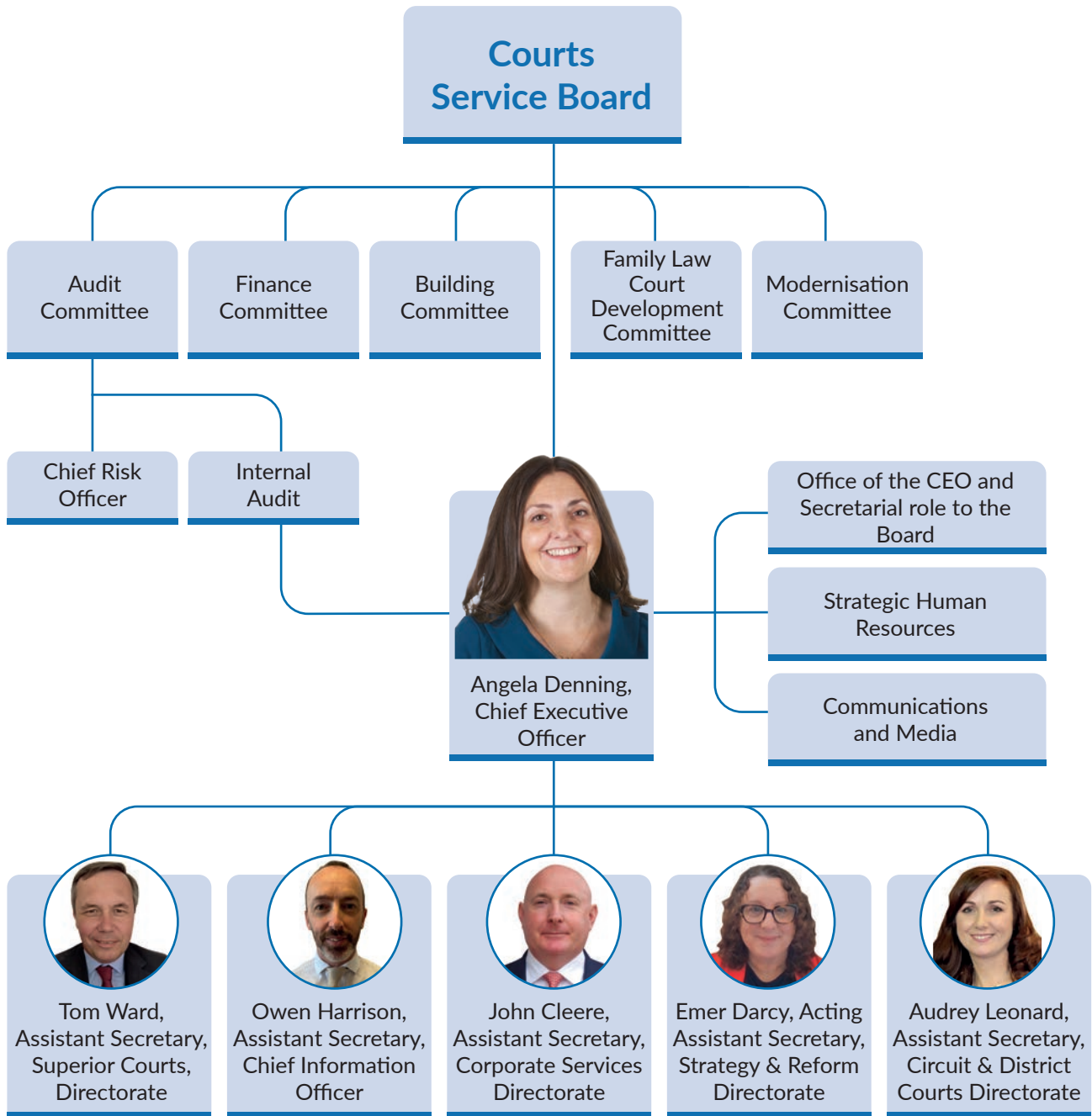
Modernisation Committee*

The Hon. Justice Donal O'Donnell, Chief Justice, Chair
His Honour Judge Colin Daly, Judge of the Circuit Court
Mr. Michael Quinlan, Board Member nominated by the Law Society
Catherine Treacy, former CEO of Property Registration Authority
Ms. Angela Denning, Chief Executive Officer, Courts Service
Ms. Brita Hegarty (Committee Secretary).

* Mr. Justice Liam Kennedy and Ms. Louise Jevens joined the Modernisation Committee in December 2023, as additional members



Organisation Structure



Ms. Audrey Leonard replaced Mr. Peter Mullan as Assistant Secretary, Circuit and District Court Operations – January 2023

Ms. Emer Darcy, Acting Assistant Secretary, became head of Strategy and Reform Directorate – January 2023



Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Team

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation of policies approved by the Board, the day-to-day management of the staff, administration and business of the Courts Service and is also the Accounting Officer for the Courts Service. The Chief Executive Officer is supported by the Senior Management Team comprising Assistant Secretaries with responsibility for Superior Courts, Circuit and District Courts, Strategy and Reform, Corporate Services, the Chief Information Officer together with the Head of Strategic Human Resources, a representative of the Principal Officers and the Principal Officer in the Office of the CEO and Communications.

Organisation structure

The Courts Service is a largely decentralised organisation with administrative responsibility for courthouses and court venues throughout Ireland. In Dublin, court offices support the work of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court, Dublin Circuit Court and Dublin

Metropolitan District Court in the Four Courts, Criminal Courts of Justice, Dolphin House, Swords, Dun Laoghaire and Cloverhill.

Outside of Dublin, 25 court offices support the work of both the Circuit Court and the District Court, and eight offices support the work of the District Court only.

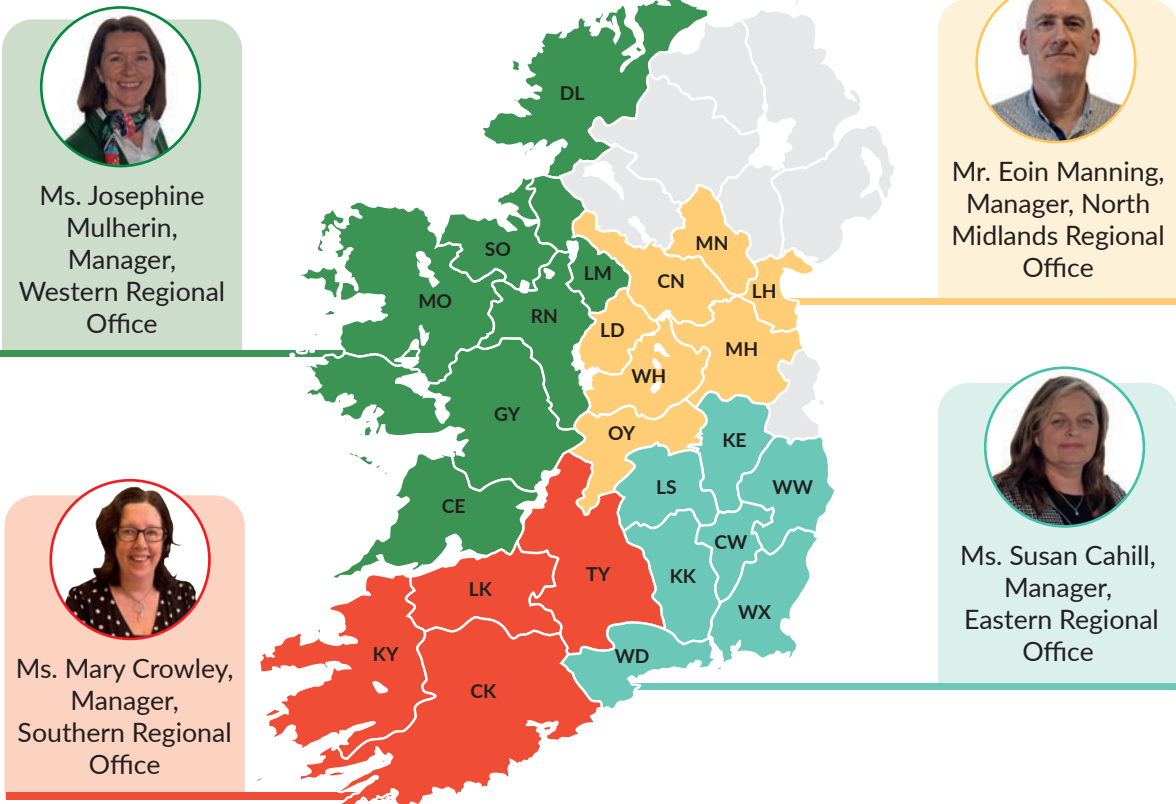
The Southern Regional Office includes the administrative area of counties: Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, and Kerry.

The Eastern Regional Office includes the administrative area of counties: Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.

The Western Regional Office includes the administrative area of counties: Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo.

The North Midlands Regional Office includes the administrative area of counties: Cavan, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly and Westmeath.

Regional Offices by County





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**The Year
in Review**



Introduction by Angela Denning Chief Executive Officer



One of the most significant events in 2023 was the publication of the report and recommendations of the Judicial Planning Working Group (JPWG). You will read more about it in this chapter, but at its heart, the Report recognises that the courts system needs extra resources to meet the needs of all court users and provide timely access to justice.

The appointment of 24 additional judges across District, Circuit, High Court and the Court of Appeal had an instant impact, reducing backlogs and waiting times, and supporting initiatives like the new Planning and Environment Court and administration associated with the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015, which commenced in 2023.

There is also Government commitment to a process that could see a further 20 additional judges appointed in 2024. To achieve this, staff of the Courts Service, and members of the Judiciary, along with other justice sector representatives, have been appointed to a group that will review reforms and efficiencies implemented over the coming years.

Some of the Report's recommendations will take time to put in place, but I'm delighted with the Minister for Justice's commitment to implementation, and I look forward to continuing dialogue with the Department of Justice and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform to progress this significant systemic change. Alongside our Modernisation Programme, the JPWG recommendations provide further momentum for delivering continued court system improvements.

As mentioned above, the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015 (ADMC) commenced in April. It introduces a tiered system of decision support arrangements for people who have difficulties with their

decision-making capacity. We have provided user-friendly information on our website and a dedicated helpdesk which supports both our own staff as internal customers and external enquiries from families, legal and medical professionals.

The Act abolishes the current wardship system and requires all adult wards of court to be discharged from wardship within three years. The application rate for discharge has been a little disappointing so far. The emerging reasons include contentment with the existing system and costs involved. More information is available later in this chapter.

In 2019, we adopted a ten-year strategy to support a whole-of-system reform, driving behavioural and organisational change. Having been in existence for almost 25 years, this long-term vision of our future is the Courts Service's most ambitious programme to deliver a modern, transparent and accessible courts system that is quicker, easier to access and more efficient.

This chapter details the milestones we achieved in 2023, as we moved into the implementation phase of our programme. We rolled out user-friendly Family Law and debt-related information, presented in a plain English, easy-to-understand way and embraced design-led thinking to simplify certain court forms. We completed the implementation of our digital jury system. To further assist users who are not familiar with court we launched our 360° virtual tours of a number of our court buildings and our virtual reality introduction to the people who work in our courtrooms.

In 2023, we expanded access to our online appointment booking system to allow users the option to attend our offices on a date and at a time that best suits them. We upgraded a



further 19 courtrooms with video technology to enable remote participation in proceedings and we completed the provision of modern desktop facilities to members of the Judiciary.

Access to data supports effective change and we need reliable, accurate and easily accessible data to achieve this. In 2023, we took great strides to deliver improvements in data availability, reliability, consistency and quality. A range of data dashboards, all available to senior judges and managers from a single portal, were delivered for multiple areas of work. The data available on the portal will expand during 2024 and beyond.

We reached a very significant milestone in 2023 as we introduced our transformational Unified Case Management System (UCMS) to a number of offices. This has allowed us to replace a set of outdated case management systems that did not communicate with each other and did not provide easily useable data. The UCMS solution also supports the ADMC Act, which was accompanied by a programme of onsite training in all Circuit Court offices in the country, with over 200 staff trained.

As with most change management initiatives, the introduction of the new system presented challenges and I want to acknowledge the assistance and understanding of judges and legal practitioners and the remarkable commitment of our staff to the switchover while continuing to support busy courts as normal. We can now begin to see the possibilities the future will bring as we continue to build upon the work undertaken to date.

Similar to 2022, 2023 saw a high turnover of staff for various reasons, including retirement, resulting in a loss of experience and expertise. Sustainable and targeted recruitment was therefore a priority for us. Our managers nationwide worked with our HR team to recruit directly in local and specialised areas. A number of successful campaigns saw us end the year with 1,269 FTE (full-time equivalent) staff, our highest number since our formation.

Needless to say, it is vital to train and support our new colleagues as well as to prepare our existing staff for changing roles. During the year we provided a comprehensive range of



Our managers nationwide worked with our HR team to recruit directly in local and specialised areas. A number of successful campaigns saw us end the year with 1,269 FTE (full-time equivalent) staff, our highest number since our formation.

specialised training courses, including induction and new-to-grade training modules.

Our People and Organisation Strategy sets out how we are supporting the organisation and its ambitions by providing the right support, structures, skills and environment for our people. The strategy is a significant commitment to embed ways of working that promote inclusivity, diversity and human rights in our workforce. By embedding these responsibilities, we ensure that our staff will have a greater appreciation and awareness of challenges faced by minorities and vulnerable users accessing justice.

I cannot finish this introduction without mentioning the Dublin Family Law Courts project. A milestone was reached in November when planning permission was submitted for development of the site at Hammond Lane. I'm delighted - spoiler alert for the 2024 Annual Report - to report that planning permission has now been granted to proceed.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the efforts of the Judiciary and our partners across the justice and support sectors who engage and work with us to help keep the court user at the heart of all services provided. And, of course, my gratitude to the staff of the Courts Service - we are a geographically scattered organisation, but we're unified in our commitment to provide timely and efficient access to justice across our island.

Angela Denning
Chief Executive Officer
The Courts Service



About this Chapter

This chapter provides an overview of Courts Service operations across all jurisdictions, specifically highlighting trends and the evolving nature of our work as we progress on our Modernisation Programme journey.

At the end of the chapter, we report on our target activities for 2023. These activities are aligned to our strategic goals from the Corporate Strategic Plan 2021-2023, which supports overall delivery of our Strategic Vision 2030.

Judicial Planning Working Group

The Judicial Planning Working Group (JPWG) was set up in line with commitments in the Programme for Government and Justice Action Plan 2021 to establish a working group to “identify reform initiatives and evaluate staffing needs required to enhance the efficient administration of justice over the next 5 years”.

The JPWG Report, published in February 2023, makes 54 recommendations for change in Courts Service and judicial work practices, including the appointment of additional judges, improved use of data, shorter vacation periods, better case management and new and improved IT systems.

As a direct result of the Report, 24 new judges were appointed in 2023 – eight each to the District and Circuit Courts, six to the High Court and two to the Court of Appeal. Proposals for a second phase include the appointment of an additional 20 judges, subject to satisfactory review. This will ultimately increase the overall number of judges to 217. Additional numbers in further phases should be determined by a review in 2025 of judicial needs up to 2028. The report also recommends that through the annual estimates process adequate resources would be provided to the Courts Service to support additional judges and to implement the recommendations.

The Report supports the maximisation of courtroom use and recommends that “District Court and Circuit Court sittings, should,



24 new judges were appointed in 2023 - eight each to the District and Circuit Courts, six to the High Court and two to the Court of Appeal.

where possible, be scheduled over five days (Monday to Friday) subject to the direction of the relevant Court Presidents” and that, “subject to adequate resources being available, a number of hearings should be scheduled over longer hearing days through, for example, allocated time slots”.

A high-level Implementation Steering Group was established in June 2023 to oversee the delivery of the recommendations of the Report. This group met three times during the year. Membership of the Group includes representatives from the bodies charged with delivery of the recommendations, including the Courts Service, Department of Justice and the Judicial Council as well as judicial observers.

The Steering Group established two sub-groups to examine the powers of court presidents and the roles of quasi-judicial office holders, and on stakeholder engagement.

One of the recommendations of the JPWG was to establish a data working group to establish a review process relating to the potential appointment of a further 20 judges. This working group, which includes members of the Courts Service and the Judiciary, met over the year to identify key data that will be used to track progress on both the implementation and impact of the Report’s recommendations. A standard set of data is now collected quarterly across a broad range of Court activity and made available to



Steering Group members.

The full complement of new judges in the Court of Appeal and High Court were in place for the final quarter of the year. As the Court of Appeal is a divisional court, the arrival of new judges allowed their colleagues to work on reserved judgements.

In the High Court, the additional judges allowed for the establishment of the new Planning and Environment List. The additional judges also presided over new work associated with the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015, as well as existing and new Wardship cases, and new Wardship-type applications under the High Court's inherent jurisdiction. An additional judge also sat in the Central Criminal Court.

In the Circuit Court, an extra judge was assigned to Dublin to deal with civil matters which allowed for hearings under the Assisted Decision-Making Capacity Act, and also facilitated the hearing of long cases in Dublin. A judge was also assigned to hear District Court Appeals in the Criminal Courts of Justice for nine weeks to deal with lists which had previously been adjourned due to a shortage of Judges. Eleven weeks of additional sittings were also scheduled across the circuits because of the appointment of additional judges.

Most newly appointed District Court judges completed their induction by October and were available for court sittings. In the final quarter, 129 special courts were held, involving 271 days. Notably, the assignment of new judges allowed backlogs of lengthy child care cases in some districts to be dealt with, including a small number in which the children had been in interim care for 5+ years.

There was also a notable increase in resolved cases in District Court family law, from 12,077 to 14,281 (i.e., from a clearance rate of 82% in Q3 to 94% in Q4). In Dublin (Dolphin House) the clearance rate improved from 66% in Q3 to 74% in Q4. Furthermore, an additional judge was assigned to a fifth

Family Law court in Dublin. This has resulted in a decrease in Dublin waiting times from an average of 18 weeks at the end of Q3 to 12 weeks by year-end.

Court Operations

Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015 (ADMC) came into effect on 26 April 2023, and established a new legal framework for supported decision-making in Ireland. It allows people to make legal agreements on how they can be supported to make decisions about their personal welfare, property, and affairs. The Act abolished the Wards of Court system.

The Circuit Court is now the Court with responsibility to hear applications when there are serious questions of capacity in respect of individuals. This is a completely new area of law which is a challenge to court offices, the Judiciary, legal practitioners, and other court users, as there are no established precedents or norms that can be relied upon. In 2023, during its first eight months of operation there were 413 applications made to the Circuit Court and 270 orders.

The Act includes a statutory provision whereby all adult Wards of Court must be discharged from wardship within three years from the 26 April 2023.

There were 82 applications for discharge under ADMC legislation received by the Office of Wards of Court in 2023, of which 61 were made by the General Solicitor on behalf of Wards for whom her office acts as Committee. During 2023, 18 orders for discharge have been made, each of which had the General Solicitor as committee. However, this was outweighed by the newly declared Wards of Court in 2023, which need the General Solicitor to act as Committee. As can be seen in Figure 1, the average cases on hand for the Office of the General Solicitor has continued this upward trend:

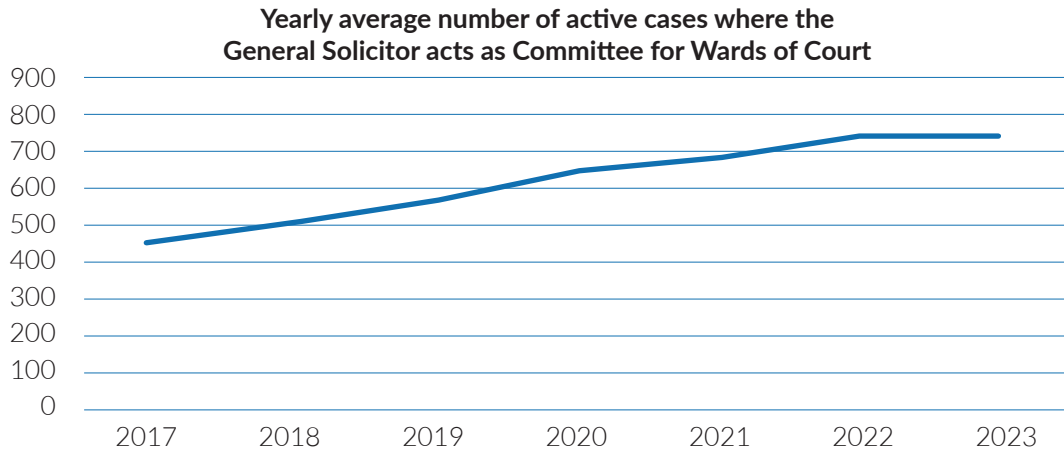


Figure 1: Average of cases where General Solicitor acts as committee

Prior to the commencement of the new Act, there was an increase in applications to be admitted to Wardship. In 2023, 239 adults and minors were declared Wards of Court, a 42% decrease on the total in 2022. By the end of the year, there were 2,143 active Adult Wards of Court and 177 Minor Wards of Court for which the Office of Wards of Court was responsible. Figure 2 demonstrates the drop in new applications for Wardship in 2023 in comparison with previous years:

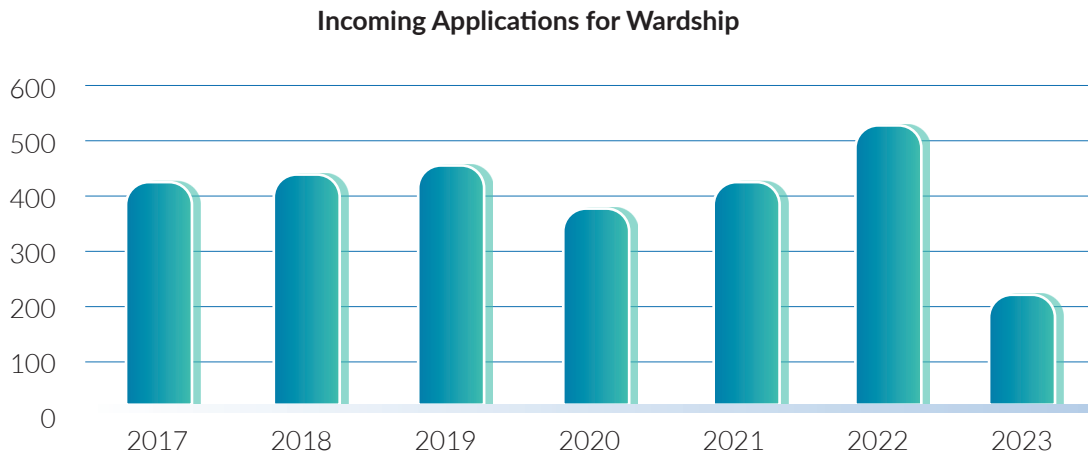


Figure 2: Applications for Wardship 2017 - 2023

In the months before the commencement of the new Act, the Service worked intensively with the Decision Support Service to ensure that a consistent and supportive approach was taken to service users, regardless of which organisation they contacted. There was intensive sharing of information and approaches. Joint information sessions were arranged for legal practitioners and committees, as well as for health professionals. Webinars were run with HSE professionals to answer any questions on how the new statutory arrangements would work in hospitals and other care settings. These efforts have continued since the date of commencement.



A dedicated area on our website has been established to provide information to all court users about the Act. This includes general information on the Act, contact information for queries and application forms to use when applying to Court. Court forms have been designed with a user-centric approach to make complex legal applications as straightforward as possible, while recognising all requirements of the legislation.

Despite this, the numbers of applications to the Circuit Court for decision making support and to the High Court for discharge for wardship were lower than anticipated. Factors that contribute to the numbers in each jurisdiction include:

Circuit Court:

- The number of litigants without legal representation and their unfamiliarity with their role in proceedings. 35% percent of applicants are unrepresented.
- A low base of expertise in the legal profession as a whole and the slow emergence of specialist practitioners focusing on the Act,
- A lack of legal aid for family members applying on behalf of relatives with capacity issues. Legal Aid is assessed on basis of the family member’s income rather than that of the Relevant Person.

High Court

- Contentment with the existing wardship processes.
- Cost and effort in applying for discharge from wardship.
- The life expectancy of the Ward.
- The absence of support for sometimes elderly committees, and
- Uncertainty and cost associated with the new supervision regime.

Efforts will continue in 2024 to promote an increase in the numbers for both types of application.

Enduring Powers of Attorney

2023 also saw a continuation of the trend of high numbers of registrations of Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPA). The ADMC Act has changed the arrangements for registering an EPA, and from 26 April onwards, people interested in taking out an EPA needed to do so with the Decision Support Service. Figure 3 shows the numbers of EPAs previously executed which were registered in the Office of Wards of Court. As time goes on, this number is expected to decrease.

Incoming Applications for registration of Enduring Powers of Attorney

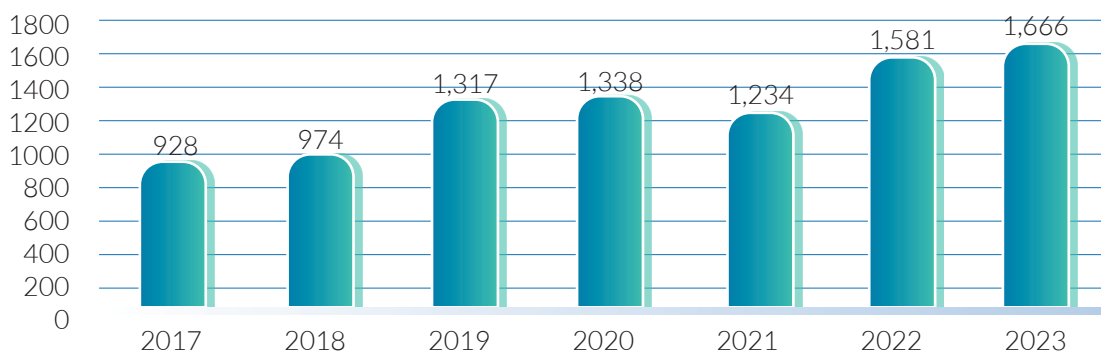


Figure 3: Applications for registration of Enduring Powers of Attorney



Trends in the Criminal Courts

Positive progress was made across all criminal jurisdictions during 2023. Both the Central and Circuit Criminal Courts saw growth of 7% in new cases. Case disposals increased at a faster rate of 10% in the Central Criminal Court and 5% in the Circuit Court.

The Central Criminal Court (see Figure 4 below) continues to make progress in dealing

with the volume of cases on hand. It peaked in 2022 when it was 76% higher than 2019 but, even with progress last year, it remains 61% higher now. New cases were 56% higher in 2023 than 2019 and, while disposal rates have increased by 73% over 2019 levels, the lost capacity during the pandemic along with the increased volume of new cases has left a higher number of cases waiting to be dealt with by the Court.

Central Criminal Court Activity Profile 2019 - 2023

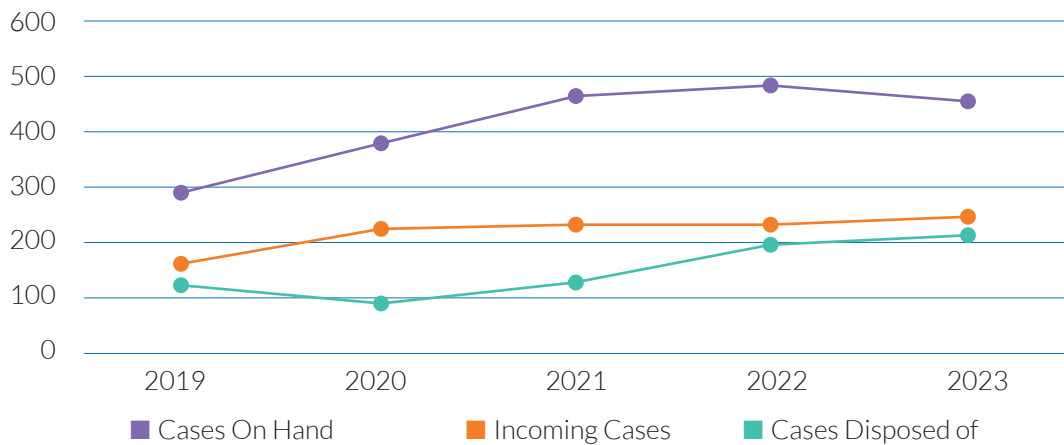


Figure 4: Central Criminal Court activity profile 2019 - 2023

Circuit Criminal Court Activity Profile 2019 - 2023

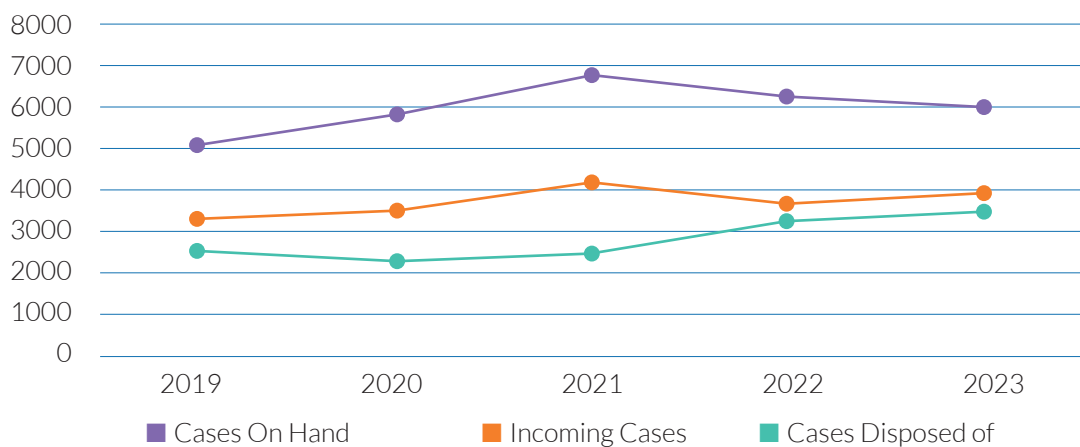


Figure 5: Circuit Criminal Court activity profile 2019 - 2023

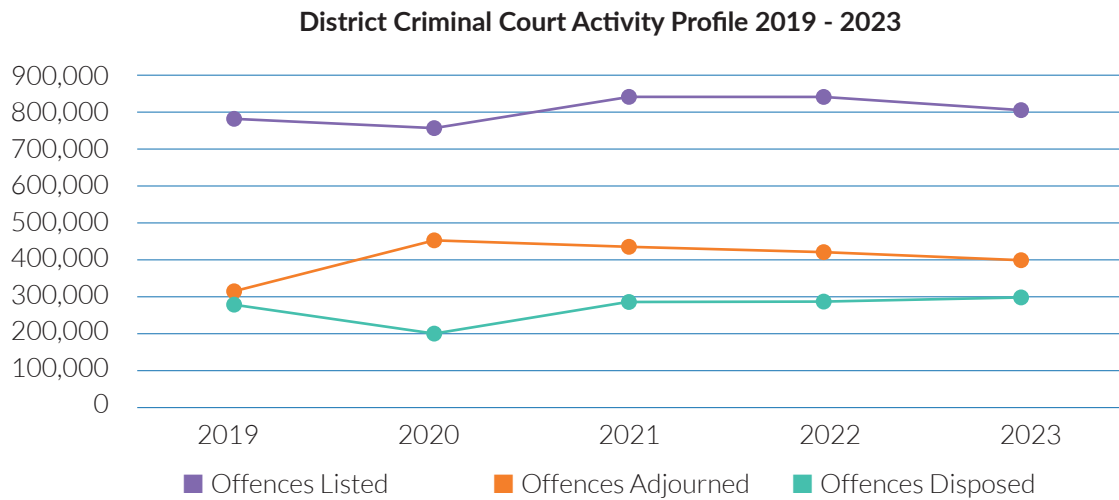


Figure 6: District Criminal Court activity profile 2019 - 2023

The Circuit Criminal Court (see Figure 5, left) continued to make progress in dealing with the volume of cases on hand. This peaked in 2021 with a 37% increase of cases awaiting hearing as compared to 2019. It is now 22% of 2019 levels and down by 10% since the peak in 2021. The volume of new cases coming into the Court has seen a general increase since 2019 but there has been a corresponding increase in the level of disposals, so they have balanced themselves out to a degree. There is still a long way to go to get back to pre-pandemic levels of cases on hand.

In the District Court (see Figure 6, above), the total number of offences listed in court and adjournment orders made decreased during the year while the number of offences being disposed of by the Court increased. Before the pandemic, adjournment orders made up 52% of all District Court orders with the balance of orders being disposal orders. During the pandemic, the percentage of adjournments increased to 69% and led to busier Courts with more appearances but left less time to finalise and dispose of offences. In 2023, adjournments accounted for 59% of District Court orders with a corresponding increase in disposals of 41%. While we are not back to a pre-pandemic equilibrium, there

are now more offences being finalised before the courts.

Data Retention Court

The legislation introducing the Data Retention Court, the Communications (Retention of Data) (Amendment) Act, 2022, commenced on 26th June 2023. This Court operates in the Dublin Metropolitan District and can make orders, on applications from An Garda Síochána and other State agencies, requiring communication services (e.g. Telecom Companies) to retain and provide data in specified circumstances. The Act provides that such applications must be reviewed and approved by the District Court. In its first six months of operation, the Court dealt with 452 applications.

Trends in Family Courts

The Circuit Family Court saw a decrease in new cases and those disposed of during 2023. Activity had been particularly high in 2021 and 2022 and may now have simply returned to a more normal level. The District Court saw no similar reduction as new applications are nearly 10% higher than 2022 and there was also an increase of 12% in the number of applications dealt with by the Court (Figure 7. overleaf).

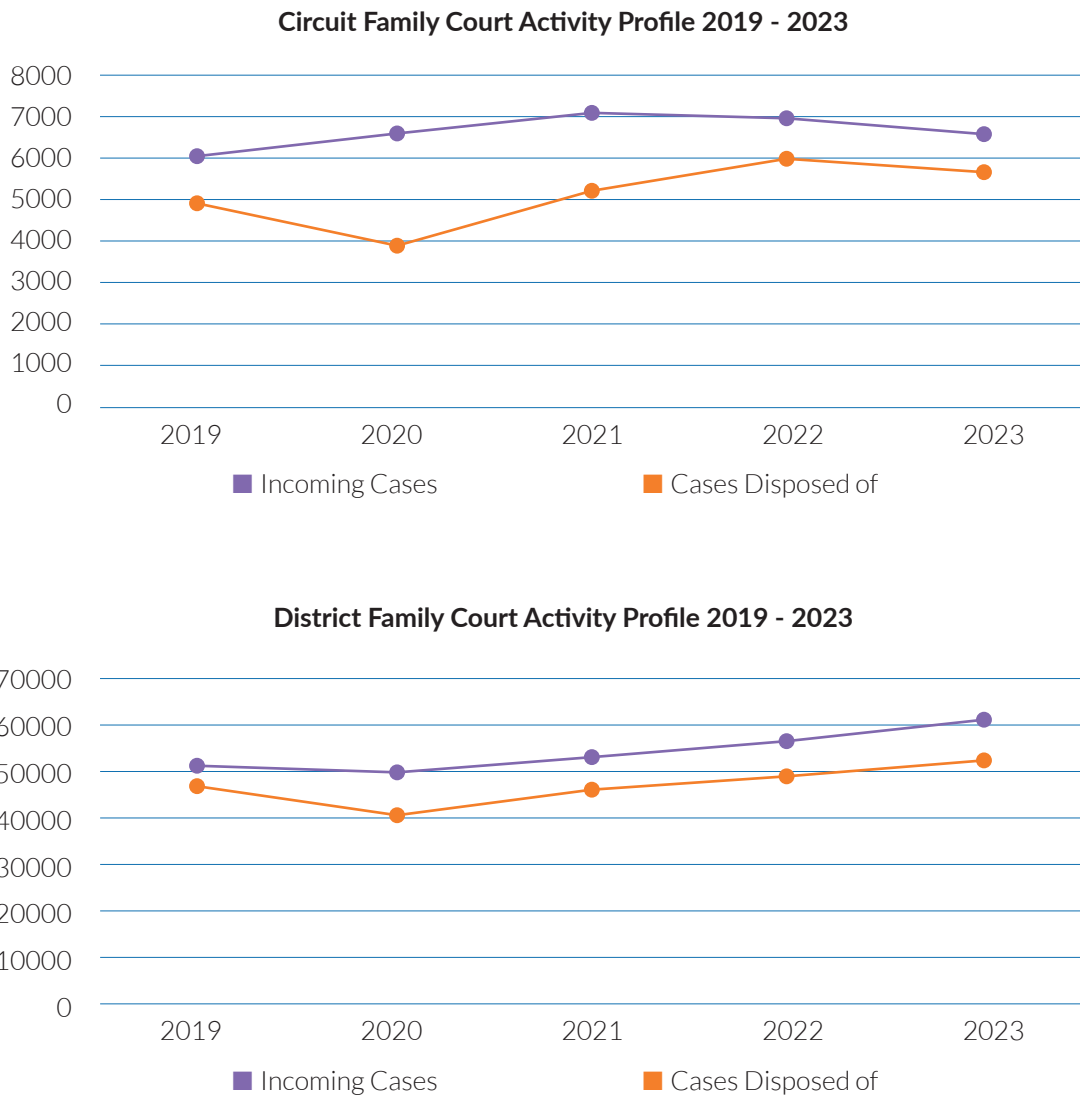


Figure 7: Circuit and District Family Courts activity profile 2019 - 2023



Trends in Civil Courts

Supreme Court

2023 saw an increase of 10% in the number of applications for leave filed when compared to 2022 as well as a 9% increase in the number of applications determined. However, there was a reduction in the total number of appeals determined, in significant part, due to the Court being required to determine the Reference by the President within the timeframe required by Article 26 of the Constitution.

Currently litigants at final appellate level where leave to appeal has been granted can ordinarily expect a hearing within 20 weeks. In this context, the Court has no backlog or delays other than by the extent to which parties require time to fulfil necessary procedural steps.

Court of Appeal

2023 saw a significant shift in the new types of cases coming into the Court of Appeal. While new civil cases were broadly along the lines of previous years, new criminal cases continued their upward trend, showing a 24% increase on the numbers of incoming cases since 2021. This has necessitated a rebalancing of the time devoted to each type of business.

High Court

2023 saw a small reversal of the recent trend of reducing numbers of cases issued in the High Court.

The High Court saw 12,901 incoming cases during 2023, an almost 5% increase on 2022 figures. In October 2023, a new cases management system was launched in the High Court and the expectation is that this will be the platform to drive a radical improvement in the services provided to users as well as an improvement in the quality and quantity of court data.

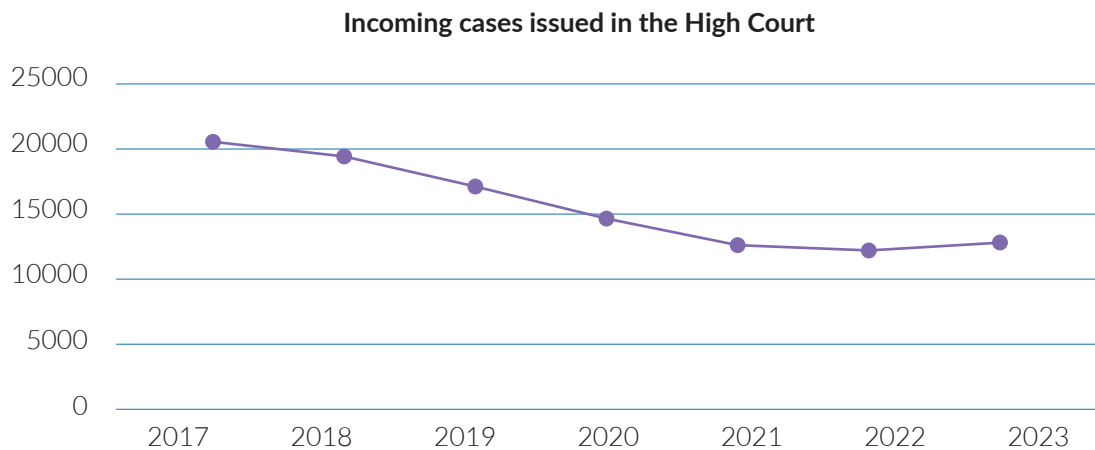


Figure 8: Incoming cases to the High Court



In relation to notable case types, the increase in new asylum cases appears to be linked to an increase in decisions by the Department of Justice in asylum and citizenship applications. Judicial Review applications significantly exceed recent years, including the last pre-covid year.

Personal Injury applications

Medical negligence cases in the High Court maintained their trend upwards, but other

types of new personal injuries applications are showing only a marginal uptrend. This can be put down to the application from April 2021 of the Personal Injuries Guidelines adopted by the Judicial Council at its meeting on 6 March 2021 (Figure 9).

This change is not reflected in a consequent increase in the numbers of incoming personal injury applications commenced in the Circuit or District Courts, as can be seen in Figure 10:

Incoming personal injury applications in the High Court

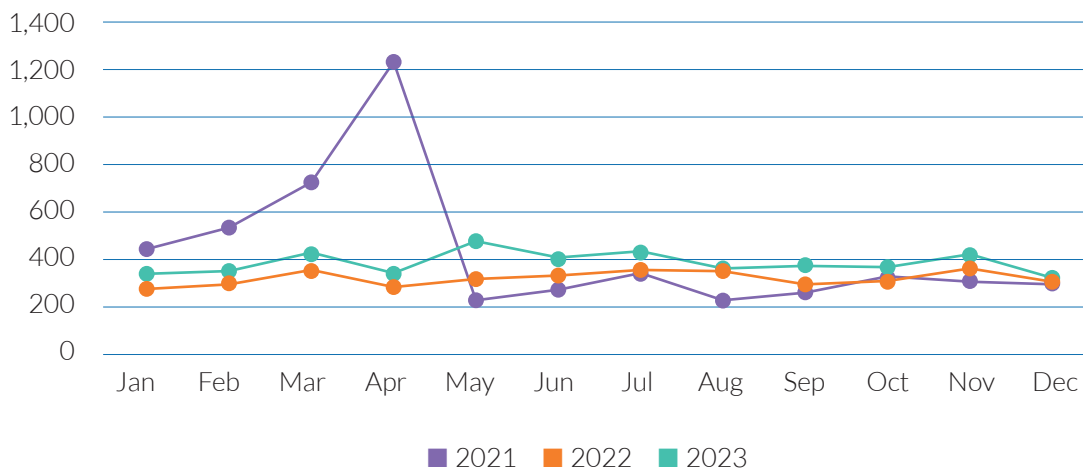


Figure 9: Incoming Personal Injury applications to the High Court

	2021	2022	2023
Incoming - Circuit	8,856	7,151	7,495
Incoming - District	1,070	1,542	1,401

Figure 10: Personal Injury applications to District and Circuit Courts 2021 - 2023



Launch of the Planning and Environment Court: Picture shows (L to R) Minister of State for Law Reform, James Browne; AG Rossa Fanning SC; Ms Justice Emily Farrell; Mr Justice David Barnville; Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee; Mr Justice Richard Humphreys; Mr Justice David Holland.

Planning and Environmental Court

Another major initiative was the formal introduction of a new Planning and Environmental Division List in the High Court, replacing the Strategic Infrastructure Development List. Previously, cases involving environmental or planning matters could end up being listed in a range of lists. The new specialist list streamlines the handling of major environmental and infrastructural cases and will provide greater consistency in the handling of such cases, ensuring that the courts have the necessary expertise to deal with complex planning and environmental issues.

The court, which operates with three full-time

judges, will be a centre of excellence in the planning and environmental law space, on the model of the Commercial Court.

The new list was launched on 4 December 2023, attended by a number of distinguished guests, including the Minister for Justice, Ms. Helen McEntee, TD, the Minister of State in the Department of Justice, Mr. James Browne TD and the Attorney General, Mr. Rossa Fanning, SC.

Circuit Court

2023 saw a similar trend in Circuit civil cases to that of 2022. There was a 3% increase in the number of incoming cases, with a marginal increase the number of resolved cases.

Circuit Civil Court Activity Profile 2019 - 2023

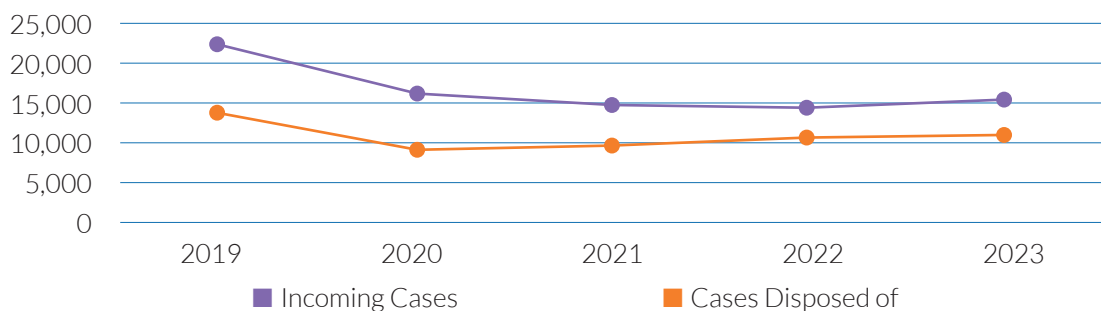


Figure 11: Circuit Civil Court activity profile 2019 - 2023



District Court

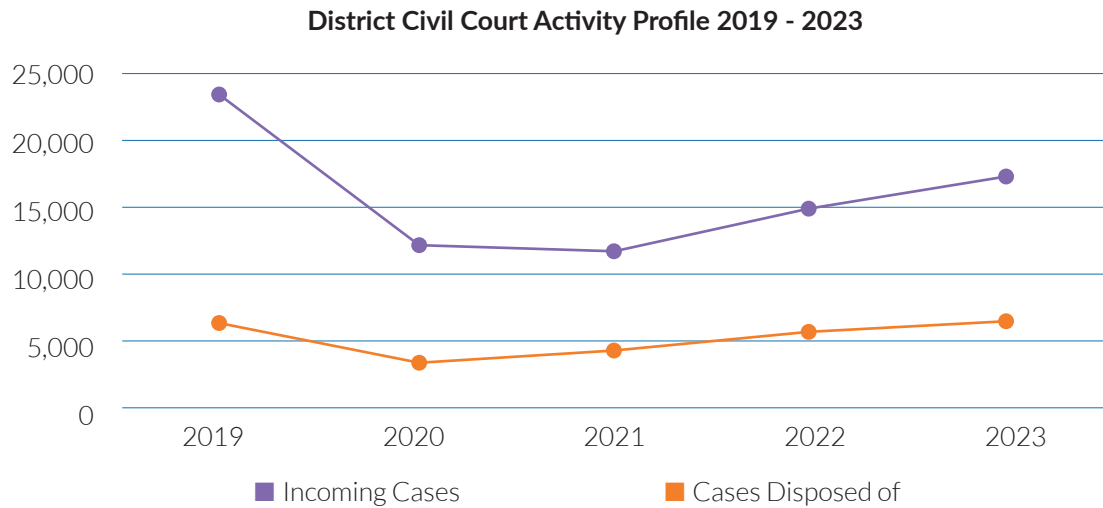


Figure 12: District Civil Court activity profile 2019 - 2023

Data shows that there was a slight upturn in incoming business into the District Civil Court during 2023, but remains short of the levels prior to the pandemic (Figure 12).

Probate

The issue of delays on the probate process has been a cause of frustration to the Service as well as to users of the Probate Office. The current probate process is complex and heavily paper based. There is a high rate of errors in new applications received, requiring rework which can cause delays in issuing grants. This, coupled with resourcing challenges, has led to a large backlog of applications and therefore a long waiting time for applicants. From an existing technology perspective, the existing system that is used is outdated and runs on infrastructure that is no longer supported and difficult to secure.

During the year, funding was promised by Government to commence an **eProbate** project. A project board was established, and its purpose is to:

- Modernise and streamline the probate process through extensive digitisation.
- Enable Courts Service staff, legal practitioners, and personal applicants alike to manage probate cases more efficiently, securely, and transparently.
- Retire the existing out of date case management system.

The project is a Government priority under the Housing for All programme and work is continuing in 2024 with the aim of having a partial release by mid-2025.

In relation to the existing process for dealing with probate applications, the data shows that applications processed nationally are the highest they have been since 2018, as can be seen in Figure 13:

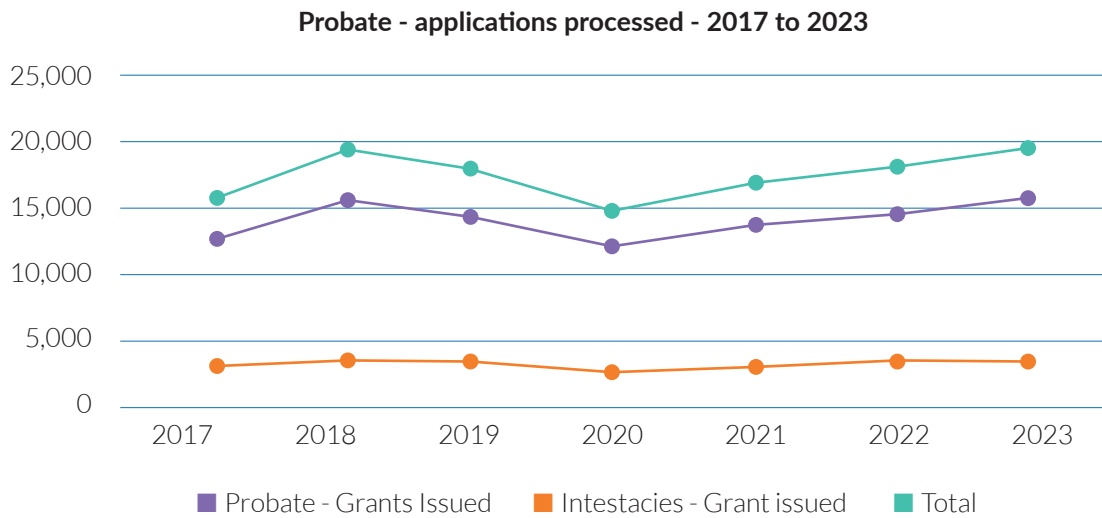
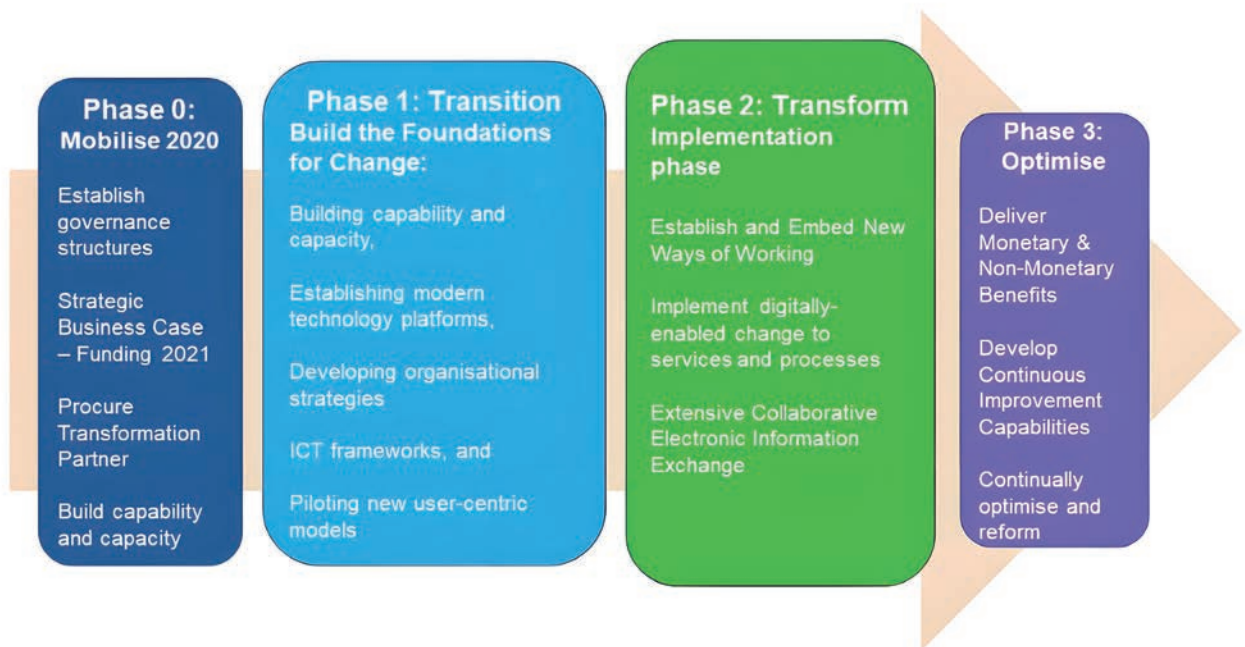


Figure 13: Probate applications processed 2017 - 2023

There remains very significant pressure on the Probate Office in Dublin and the District Probate Registries to keep pace with incoming work.

Modernisation Programme



Our Modernisation Programme roadmap



We moved into the Implementation phase of our Modernisation Programme journey in 2023, and are seeing the benefits of our work unfold in the areas like Family Law, Civil Law and innovation. During 2023 we continued to engage with a wide range of people to understand their experiences and to co-design, test and iterate better services. We established a Civic Society Forum to inform the various groups that are involved in the Courts about the Modernisation Programme. It provides us with an opportunity to keep participants informed on progress being made and allows for information sharing and constructive feedback.

Family Law Reform


In 2023 we focused on improved provision of information, simplifying court forms and actions in the Family Justice Strategy.

Building on work commenced in 2022, in March 2023 we published comprehensive Family Law information on our website, courts.ie. This includes Divorce, Maintenance, Children's arrangements (including

Guardianship, Custody, and Access) and Domestic Violence. This new information offers accessible step-by-step guides, eligibility criteria for court applications and information on preparing for and what to expect during a court process.


Supporting actions in the Family Justice Strategy we expanded information resources about mediation including benefits, explaining the process and how to find a mediator.

Both judges and court users asked us to simplify District Court forms. There are over 90 different forms for use in family law in the District Court alone. Feedback highlighted that they can be difficult to complete and don't always provide judges with the information needed to support efficient decision making in court. During 2023 we developed, tested, and iterated a prototype form with a range of people including court users, colleagues and judges. The prototype was considered by the District Court Rules Committee who asked that additional forms be designed. This work will continue into 2024.



Video: Preparing for Family Law Court

This video outlines how to prepare for a court hearing in Family Law Court. It covers how to plan your journey, what documentation you are required to bring, as well as other topics, like accessibility needs.



Video: Attending your Family Law hearing

This video outlines what happens at the courthouse on the day of your court hearing. It covers what to do when you arrive, who can accompany you, where to wait, and other helpful tips.

We launched Family Law information and accompanying videos in March 2023

Appointment Booking Service

The Appointment Booking Service allows court users to make an appointment online to visit certain offices at a date and time that suits the user. Urgent matters do not need an appointment. The service eliminates long waiting times previously experienced during busy periods. The ongoing rollout of the Appointment Booking Service project to various offices progressed in 2023. 19 offices have successfully implemented the service, and an additional 12 Circuit and District Court offices are scheduled to go live before the end of the first quarter of 2024.

Civil Reform

To improve the 'user journey' through our website, work to redesign Civil information content, initially in the area of Debt, was a focus for the Civil Reform team. New Debt

information was developed in plain English and tested with a wide number of internal and external stakeholders, and went live on the website before the end of the year.

Innovation

In March 2023, we launched our 360° virtual tours, an initiative made possible through funding from the Public Service Innovation Fund. These tours empower court users to familiarise themselves with the court environment before their visit. Viewers can rotate a camera around a building or room and click on information points to learn more. To date four 360° tours are available on courts.ie, the Criminal Courts of Justice in Parkgate Street, Dublin 8, the Four Courts and Áras Uí Dhálaigh on Inns Quay, Dublin 7 and Dolphin House, home of the Dublin District Family Courts in Dublin 2. Tours of additional venues will be added over time.



Inside the 360° tour of the Dublin District Family Courts



ICT, Digital and Data

In 2023, we continued to make progress on multiple fronts to achieve our vision of a modern courts system. We continue to invest in the interdependent fields of ICT, Digital and Data to incrementally design and build towards a coherent, efficient, and accessible digital courts experience.

Unified Case Management System

One of the cornerstones of a coherent digital experience with the courts is the creation of the Unified Case Management System (UCMS). This system will in time support the work of Courts Service staff, the judiciary and court users enabling digital end-to-end journeys for case work, improving the administration of justice, increasing transparency, and significantly improving access to quality data.

Work continued in 2023 on this multi-year initiative to migrate all case-related activity from a variety of different, often outdated, IT systems to the UCMS. The launch of a UCMS solution commenced with support for the newly introduced Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act in April, which was accompanied by a programme of onsite training in all Circuit Court offices in the country, with over 200 staff trained to date.

A major milestone was reached in October, when we moved all High Court case tracking to the new UCMS system, replacing a 30-year-old case management system. At the same time, we launched a new High Court Search portal for the public and legal practitioners. We are very grateful for the support and patience of solicitors and other court users during the rollout early in Michaelmas term.

Replacement of twenty-seven legacy Circuit Court systems for Family Law cases commenced with a pilot of the UCMS for Family Law work in Portlaoise during the year. Cavan and Cork offices joined the second wave of the pilot programme ahead of a planned nationwide rollout in 2024.

A further expansion of the UCMS also commenced this year with the approval of a business case to deliver a future eProbate solution. This solution will deliver a new more streamlined online application process for probate applicants. The project team are engaging with probate staff and legal practitioners to help shape the future solution design following an agile methodology with the aim to deliver an internal system for staff in 2024 and an online portal in 2025.

The continued consolidation of case activity into the modern UCMS allows us to move forward and build in a series of improvements to case processing. It importantly paves the way to introduce an electronic portal that will support online filing, payments, and case tracking in the future.

Digital Jury System

Following the initial launch of a new digital system supporting the jury process at the end of 2022, 2023 saw its full nationwide rollout. This system enables members of the public receiving a jury summons to respond, track updates and receive notifications about their jury journey online. Approximately 47% of all summonses responded to are being replied to digitally as of the last quarter of the year. As part of our user centric service design methodology the project engaged members of the public to give insights into the jury response process. An example of the insights gained is the ranking of the online experience, where 93% of people ranked the digital experience as Easy, with 6.1% ranking it as Ok.

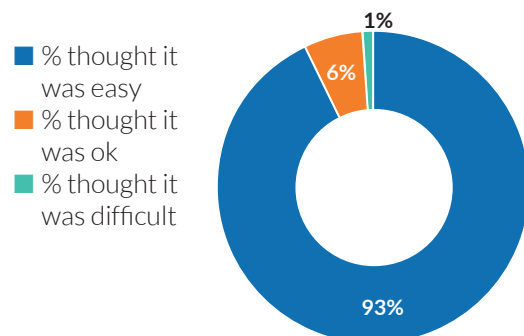


Figure 14: Digital Jury ranking of online experience



Technology Enabled Courts

In 2023, we created a further 19 new video-enabled courtrooms, facilitating the remote participation of parties, witnesses and prisoners in remote and hybrid hearings, along with the capability to display digital evidence. This brought the number of video-enabled courtrooms to 136 by the end of the year. Our video-enabled courtrooms facilitated 20,612 videolink calls with the 'Irish Prison Service over the year.

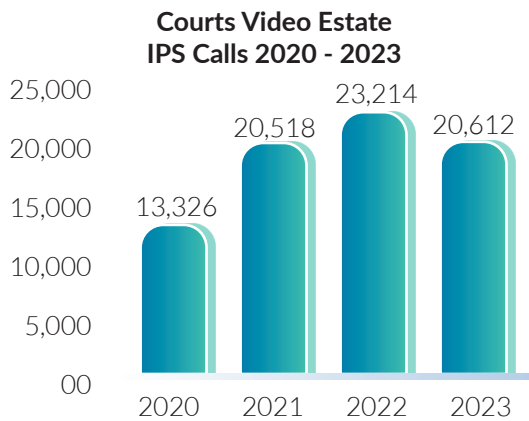


Figure 15: Number of video calls with Irish Prison Service 2020 - 2023

Planning for a further 20 new video-enabled courtrooms has commenced with installation work scheduled for 2024. This will complete the current 3-year video courtroom expansion programme.

In 2022 we successfully delivered modern digital desktops (Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Teams, etc.) for all our staff. This year, a similar upgrade was rolled out to the Judiciary, including to mobile devices. This desktop technology is designed to facilitate access to modern solutions by the judiciary in chambers and in court.

A programme of work is underway to “tech-enable” all judicial benches within courtrooms to support judges’ use of technology in court. A full nationwide estate survey of our courtrooms was completed in the year, with the works to be carried out during 2024.

A new multi-year project for the expansion of Wi-Fi services throughout all networked buildings managed by the Courts Service was commenced in 2023. This project delivered a total of 24 Wi-Fi enabled sites during the year. We have commenced a verification exercise to ensure that the experienced coverage of these new installations matches user expectations. We are also planning to improve Wi-Fi at a further 25 courthouse sites in 2024.

Data



Data Dashboards are available through a single reporting portal

A focus on the importance of data-driven decisions provided momentum for developing data dashboards across all areas of our business. Along with quarterly reports to support the implementation of the JPWG recommendations referenced earlier, a range of management dashboards were delivered for court sittings, waiting times, probate, jury, video court utilisation, among others. All data reporting is now launched from a new single reporting portal accessible by management and will expand over 2024.

A commitment to “Open Data”, which promotes access to, and understanding of, our courts system via statistical information, led to the development of a public data portal with a test launch for Court Presidents and senior officials at the end of the year. The Open Data portal will launch online in 2024.

We continue to support the Department of Justice Criminal Justice Operational



HUB (“HUB”) programme of work where improved operations are driven by targeted and appropriate data sharing. This year we supported efficiencies in the Probation Service via improvements in how we share District Court outcomes.

Court and Courts Service records are a rich source of information about the affairs of the country and are key to the national archival policy as set out in the National Archives legislation. We are continuing to invest in this area to ensure that the Courts and the Courts Service meet their obligations in this area. During the year we worked with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to add the Courts Service to the Schedule to the National Archives Act 1986 explicitly to address a legislative ambiguity. We have also commenced a wide scale review of records keeping and archival processes across the country starting with a pilot programme in our Dundalk office. This nationwide exercise will continue into 2024 and subsequent years thereafter.

Other Technological Developments

As we increase the digitisation of the Courts, it becomes increasingly important that we similarly increase our investment and focus on cybersecurity. Over the year we continued

to mature our defence in depth posture against cyber-attacks, improving our security governance, proactive monitoring, and automated response capabilities. We ran an organisation wide cybersecurity awareness drive during the year, improving users’ understanding and behaviour in relation to ICT security. This culminated in an awareness campaign that comprised of a simulated phishing (fraudulent imitation of a reputable business) attack and the introduction of staff training. This ongoing awareness campaign is set to continue into the future.

The General Solicitors Office took delivery of a new digital practice management system helping the office to digitise their operations. Separately, following detailed review of existing content, a new Intranet and organisation chart went live in October, using technology supported by the Office of Government Chief Information Officer’s ‘Build to Share’ programme. Several other internal corporate processes were digitised over the year driving small scale but meaningful improvements.

Human Resources

At the end of 2023, we had a staff complement of 1,269 FTE (full-time equivalent), a 4% increase on 2022, and 24% on 2017 (see Fig. 16).

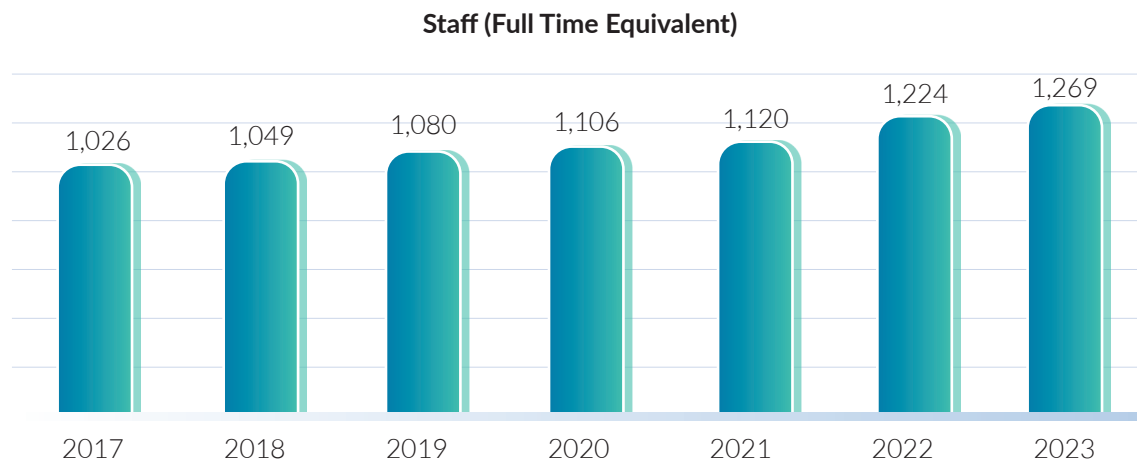


Figure 16: Staff Complement 2017 - 2023



We recruited 287 new members of staff during the year, including people on fixed-term contracts (which includes Judicial Assistants and paid interns). 242 staff left the organisation, for various reasons including retirement, promotion, mobility, or resignation. This turnover rate (excluding fixed-term contracts) of 11% is not unusual in a buoyant labour market, but does present challenges to maintain continuity of services.

We held promotion competitions at Principal Officer, Assistant Principal Officer, Higher Executive Officer and Executive Officer levels.

People and Organisation Strategy

Our People and Organisation Strategy 2022-2024 sets out how we aim to support the organisation and its ambitions by providing the right support, structures, skills and environment for our people.

In 2023 we procured an external resource to partner with us on a Leadership in Action programme. This is to facilitate our Senior Management Team and other senior staff to further develop in their leadership roles. This investment in our senior leaders uses the science of positive psychology and a growth mindset.

We also adopted a plan to deliver training to build high performing teams. 12 internal teams were engaged through the end of 2023, with over 30 teams requesting this training in 2024.

Our Learning and Development team supported our Clerical Officers to develop their capabilities through a skills development programme. 73 staff benefited from this schedule in 2023. We also provided staff induction and new-to-grade training, and a 'Management Development Academy', specialist management training for newly appointed managers at Higher Executive Officer and Assistant Principal grades.

We designed training courses for staff on the operation of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act. We also continued to offer Trauma Informed Practice Training, which has been delivered to over 500 staff by year-end.

We also supported staff to take plain English training, in partnership with the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA).

Safety, Health & Wellbeing

Our second **Healthy Place to Work** survey was carried out in November. 75% of staff responded which was 3% up on 2022 and our overall score increased by 1% to 52%. Over 50% of staff took the time to provide comments. Areas of concern to staff include training, staff numbers, facilities, flexible and blended working together with operational demands on court-going staff.

The survey measures four pillars that are important to people to feel healthy at work: Physical Health, Mental Resilience, Connections and Purpose.

Inclusion

Throughout 2023 our Inclusion Group's focus remained on organising activities, impactful events, and refining policies to create a more inclusive organisational culture.

This year we supported talks on international justice systems, equality (on International Women's Day), Legal Guardianship (during Pride month), neurodiversity and disability awareness.



Members of the Traveller community were present to hear from Courts staff in October in relation to recognising and responding to unmet needs of minority applicants and the supports in place. Our Traveller Court Support Initiative aims to develop advocacy programmes for culturally sensitive, peer-led court supports for Travellers in the District Court.

Our Estate

Our estate consists of 103 court venues, with an average age of over 160 years. We have a continual programme of works to ensure that our buildings properly serve our users' needs and at the same time support our Modernisation Programme.

In 2023, works by the OPW on the Four Courts Gandon building progressed, with scaffolding erected to prop the dome. Work to replace the original damaged capitals will proceed in early 2024.



Example of a damaged capital beneath the dome.

Works also took place in Dublin on Balbriggan and Blanchardstown courthouses, the Children's Court, Áras Uí Dhálaigh, Green Street and Dolphin House. A major heating project began at our headquarters building, Phoenix House.

The sale of the Island of Geese site by Kerry County Council to the Courts Service closed in December. The site is now owned by the Courts Service, and the acquisition means that we have sites for new county town courthouse development projects at Tralee, Wicklow, Portlaoise, Roscommon and Naas. The development of these sites is subject to funding in the National Development Plan.

Dublin Family Courts Project

The Dublin Family Courts Project continued to gather momentum during 2023 and a major milestone was reached on 27 November when the development was submitted for planning permission. The Hammond Lane site, currently owned by the OPW, is being transferred into Courts Service ownership.

The project will provide a modern, purpose-built court facility where family law cases can be held in a dignified, secure environment, with a range of support services at hand. The new building will meet the specific needs of family law court users. It will include 19 courtrooms, consultation/mediation rooms and will accommodate support services.

On completion it will replace existing family law facilities at Dolphin House, Chancery Street and Phoenix House.



Design image of the new Dublin Family Courts building



Climate Action in 2023

Sustainability activities report

In 2023, the Courts Service focused our Sustainability resources on the public sector Climate Action Mandate and on key 2023 actions set out in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2024. Actions taken include:

- ▶ We published our first Climate Action Roadmap in Q1 2023 aligned with Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2021, followed by our second Climate Action Roadmap in Q3 2023 aligned with CAP23, fully compliant with the mandatory timelines.
- ▶ We developed a full Gap-to-Target analysis, identifying and quantifying the projects required to reach our public sector 2030 energy efficiency and decarbonisation targets, which was central to an evidence-based Climate Action Roadmap.
- ▶ We invested €1.5m in upgrades to thermal plant and systems, fuel switching/migration to electric heating, building controls and automation, energy efficient lighting, digital monitoring and insulation.
- ▶ We expanded our staff engagement programs and green team activities.
- ▶ We participated in the Optimising Power at Work program in 26 of our venues, and organised staff workshops and engagement events nationwide.
- ▶ We engaged with the Department of Justice on sourcing suitable Climate Action training for all staff at PO level and above (as required per CAP) with selection complete in December 2023.
- ▶ We participated in the Reduce Your Use campaign, a Public Sector wide energy efficiency initiative developed by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and the Office of Public Works.
- ▶ In preparation for 2024 mandate requirements, we have allocated resources to achieve ISO50001 certification.
- ▶ We commenced a full review of our estate to inform the development of a greener travel policy and continue to monitor central Government guidance in this regard.
- ▶ We produced an Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Action Plan for the Criminal Courts of Justice (CCJ) in June 2023. The Plan proposes a set of targeted actions and upgrades until 2027. We estimate that the plan could reduce energy consumption by 50%, or estimated avoided costs of €0.650m annually, between now and 2027 if fully implemented.

The Pathfinder Project is a programme of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) to assist public bodies to carry out deep decarbonisation on their buildings to meet Climate Action Plan targets, and to achieve a Building Energy rating of B or better. Ennis and Sligo courthouses were accepted onto the project in 2021 and were the only protected structures within the programme. The SEAI agreed to co-fund works at 50% of project cost to the value of €3 Million. A detailed report was delivered in December and an assessment of next steps will take place early in 2024.

Monitoring and Reporting 2023

In 2023 the Courts Service was fully compliant with all reporting requirements via SEAI's Public Sector Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) System for our energy consumption across our estate and our provisional M&R results (as of June 18, 2024) are provided below. From 2024, the annual report will include as section on our progress in implementing the individual mandate requirements using the M&R data.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland Monitoring and Reporting provisional result for 2023 for the Courts Service Monitoring indicate:



- Total carbon emissions of 4,734,526 kgCO₂, an improvement of 10.8% compared to 2022.
- Energy Efficiency improvement of 35.8% compared to 2009.
- Total final energy consumption, weather-adjusted of 20,582,889 kWh.
- Total energy expenditure of €4,387,091.

Official Air travel

In 2023 the Courts Service was fully compliant with Circular 1/2020: *Procedures for offsetting the emissions associated with official air travel*. We calculated the carbon generated from air travel in 2023 as 21.93 tonnes and paid an on-time contribution of €1,063.63.

Communications and Outreach

In 2023, we joined 200,000 attendees and more than 1,700 exhibitors at the National Ploughing Championships, where we had two stands in the Justice and Industries tents.

We interacted with hundreds of visitors, answering various questions on the courts system and promoting the Courts Service as an employer of choice. We shared part of our space with a number of victim support NGOs.

Our **Virtual Reality courtroom experience** made its debut at the Championships.

The VR headset-based experience offers victims/witnesses a unique opportunity to familiarise themselves with a real courtroom environment before their actual court appearance and to learn about the individuals involved in the court proceedings. The headsets travelled to events around the country afterwards, garnering much positive feedback.

During the year, we welcomed 159 school groups to the Criminal Courts of Justice building, for barrister-led visits, while many of our regional courthouses also facilitated visiting pupils from all over the country. We also welcomed transition year pupils on our work experience programme throughout the school year.



Minister McEntee meets some of our staff and tries out the VR Experience at the Ploughing Championships.



The National Schools Mock Trials returned to the CCJ in 2023, after a 3-year COVID-related gap. Organised by Public Access to Law, 16 schools took part over successive weekends in May. The Mock Trials help students to develop their skills and enhance their abilities in advocacy, as well as highlighting skills in art, journalism, TV reporting, and photography.

Once again, we greeted hundreds of interested visitors to courthouses for Culture

Night and Open House, where we held our first ever Irish sign-language tour. Tours were also given to visiting groups from home and abroad.

Our Social Media channels experienced steady growth in 2023, especially on LinkedIn, where we featured job opportunities, court notices, cultural and outreach events and much more. Overall, our posts across all platforms had over 1.3 million impressions.

Social Media Following 2023

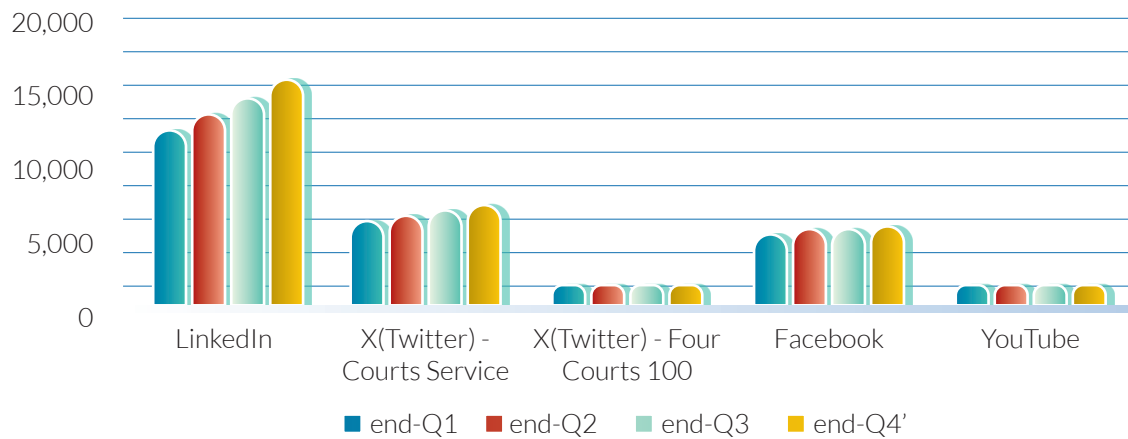


Figure 17: Social Media following 2023



Teresa O'Donnell and Denise Doyle who provided a musical recital in the Four Courts for Culture Night in September



Corporate Strategic Plan: Target Activities 2023



Goal

1

Take a user-centric approach

Strategic Goal

We will adopt new collaborative ways of working, taking a user-centric approach, to provide improved and enhanced service delivery.

Key Outcomes 2021 - 2023

- A Service Delivery Model in place that supports a user-centric, evidence-based approach to provide equal service to all sectors of society.
- Better understanding of the needs of all service users.
- Culture of collaborative working.
- User-friendly and efficient experience for those who engage with the Courts.

Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
Establish User Research and Service Design function to partner with the Judiciary and stakeholders to ensure best outcomes for all court users, with a specific focus on vulnerable users.	1. Customer Service High Level Design Agreed.	Complete.
	2. Following introduction of Design in Government Principles, the Modernisation Programme Board decided to review processes to determine necessity for a specific service design function. Modernisation Programme Board to incorporate Design for Government Principles into approval and review processes.	Complete.
	3. Identify and develop training needs/supports to build capacity in embedding design principles.	Innovation advocates participating in a learning by doing project using design principles.

2020

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

2030



Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
Implement the Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and plan to effectively engage stakeholders.	4. Complete a review of the Communications and Stakeholder engagement strategy.	Complete.
	5. Improve engagement with Judicial, Legal Practitioners and Civic Society Working Groups.	Multiple meetings held across the year with all working groups.
	6. Increase the visibility of the Modernisation Programme internally and externally.	Social Media channel engagement grew during 2023. Multiple internal channels used to keep our staff up to date. External visibility improved through participation in conferences and attendance at events.
	7. Improve access to information on Courts.ie website.	See (8) below. Website accessibility improvements continued in 2023.
Standardise and simplify appropriate court procedures.	8. Provide plain English, online information, and user-friendly information for family law and civil topics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Law Q1 Civil Q4 	Plain language Family Law and Debt information and 360 Virtual Tours launched in 2023.
	Develop simplified court forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> User centric simplified forms developed to support the commencement of the ADMC Act to be brought to the Circuit Court rules committee for their approval by end of Q1 2023 Standard claims notice for Debt piloted across all jurisdictions 	Plain English court forms to support the launch of the Assisted Decision Making Capacity Act were made available online. Ongoing.
	Design and launch priority family law forms.	Design complete of expanded group of forms with a view to consideration by the District Court Rules Committee in 2024.
	Design and implement streamlined marriage exemption process.	Design complete with a view to 2024 launch.
	Implement Courts Service actions committed to in Family Justice Strategy which includes the Family Law Bill.	Ongoing.



Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
	<p>9. Implementation of the targets agreed as part of the Kelly Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courts Service working group established by end of Q1 2023. This working group will track implementation of the targets agreed as part of the Kelly Review Project Implementation plan, published in 2022 and facilitate streamlined reporting to the Department of Justice. 	<p>Complete.</p> <p>Continued participation at regular meetings of Implementation Group chaired by Department of Justice.</p>
Support legislative initiatives as prioritised in the Programme for Government such as the Family Courts Bill.	<p>10. Continue to contribute to the preparation of legislation that will impact on the operations of the Courts.</p> <p>Continue to embed business practice to identify draft and completed legislation, enabling better engagement with other Government Departments in understanding impact of legislation on the Courts.</p>	<p>Proposals for and observations on primary and secondary legislation provided throughout the year.</p> <p>Work underway on Protocol for the Assessment of Impact of new legislation on the Courts and Courts Service. The Government Legislation Programme is monitored to promote awareness of proposed legislation which may impact the operation of the Courts.</p>
	<p>11. Agree a process with the Department of Justice by which the recommendations of the Judicial Planning Working Group which require action by the Courts Service can be resourced and tracked.</p>	<p>CEO represents the Courts Service on JPWG.</p> <p>Implementation Steering Group established by Department of Justice.</p>
	<p>12. Consultations with government departments in relation to proposed and draft legislation are ongoing.</p>	<p>The Courts Service provided observations to government departments on proposed and draft legislation and on a number of EU Regulations.</p>



Goal 2

Support the Judiciary

Strategic Goal

We will work collaboratively with the Judiciary to define and provide the resources needed to effectively carry out their judicial functions.

Key Outcomes 2021 - 2023

- Efficient, effective, and suitable support services provided to the Judiciary to enable fulfilment of their judicial functions.
- Reform of court procedures and practices progressed through stronger collaboration.

Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
Engage with the Judiciary to define requirements, to improve efficiencies and share information and best practice.	1. Planned and coordinated bi-Monthly meetings with the Judicial Engagement Working Group to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> identify potential areas for reform within the wider judicial community. Provide judicial perspective and insight into potential impact of Modernisation Programme activities on the judiciary and environment. Ensure subject matter experts /members of the wider judiciary are involved in providing feedback to the Modernisation Programme and change projects i.e., piloting/ testing initiatives; and Ensure judicial colleagues are informed of the broader reform activities. 	Full schedule of meeting held with judges participating in pilots, testing and providing feedback on reform initiatives.
	2. Monitor Implementation of Judicial Communications Committee recommendations to improve communication with the Judiciary by increased and relevant communications from the Chief Justice and Presidents, increased engagement at the conferences, increased engagement through Committees/ working groups and run the survey again.	Agreed channels used for all communications with the judiciary with a review scheduled for 2024.



Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
Develop and implement a framework for collaborative working with Judges, the Judicial Council, and the Courts Service.	<p>3. Arrange quarterly meetings with the Judicial Council regarding shared areas of work and opportunities for synergies.</p> <p>Review MOU with the Judicial Council.</p>	Collaborative working continues.
Review the business and structure of the Judicial and Library Research Services (LRLS),	<p>4. Engage with stakeholders and staff to ascertain the value and effectiveness of the services provided by the LRLS.</p> <p>5. Review the current and assess the future requirements of the current Research Tools including the Library and Knowledge Hub to increase their effectiveness as Research Tools.</p> <p>6. Analyse the organisational structure of the LRLS to provide a first-class service to its users and a focus on improved Judicial, Research functionality.</p> <p>7. Review the recruitment and appointment model for Judicial Assistants and Research Support Staff.</p>	Review of judicial support model under way as part of implementation of JPWG recommendations.
Support strategy to promote Ireland as the leading venue for dispute resolution in the EU.	<p>8. Participate in activities by stakeholders to develop materials for the promotion of Ireland post Brexit., including hosting visiting delegation for knowledge sharing.</p>	Courts Service participates in any events requested.



Goal 3

Digital First

Strategic Goal

We will adopt a digital first approach.

Key Outcomes 2021 - 2023

- Digital channels in place reflecting user-centric approach and best practice in online service design.
- Reduced reliance on paper-based processes and outdated technology.
- Improved customer service that is inclusive and provides for digital first solutions, taking account of human and equality rights of all users and ensures that no user is disadvantaged when interacting with the Courts.
- A robust, secure, and transparent data ecosystem supporting the functioning of the Courts, effective decision making, and collaboration with justice agencies and government in line with GDPR.

Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
Implement the ICT and data strategies which define the application, infrastructure, and data architecture to support a modern and digitally enabled Courts Service.	1. Rollout of Internal Case Management System for Assisted Decision-Making Capacity.	Complete.
	2. Replace Progress system in the High Court with a modern case management system capable of supporting public facing online portal.	Complete.
	3. Build and launch online portal for Civil Law – Debt and Assisted Decision-Making Capacity.	Moved to early 2024.
	4. Replace Lotus Notes system in the Family Circuit Court with a modern case management system capable of supporting public facing online portal.	Pilot project complete ahead of nationwide roll-out in 2024.
	5. Build and launch online portal for Family Law – Divorce/Judicial Separation.	Moved to 2024.
	6. Rollout: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modernised Judicial Desktop (outlook teams etc). - Digitally enhanced Judicial Bench nationwide (subject to site survey and suitability). 	Complete. Site Survey complete ahead of 2024 roll-out.



Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
	7. Continued expansion of Wi-Fi coverage (multi-year programme).	23 sites completed with planning for phase 2 underway.
	8. Complete nationwide rollout of new system to allow people summonsed for jury duty to confirm their attendance online.	Complete.
	9. Develop intranet including the organisation chart.	Complete.
	10. Video Courtroom Expansion – Continue to expand the number of technology-enabled courtrooms by 17 by year end.	Complete.
	11. Trial alternative solutions to current remote courtroom platform.	Proofs of Concept for the use of alternative solution underway with assessment to follow.
	12. Launch improved Judicial ICT Support Model, including proactive support.	Complete.
	13. Commence DAR Modernisation Hardware Rollout.	Design work is ongoing.
	14. Design of new DAR Solution.	
	15. Continue with a programme of work to strengthen our cyber security and disaster recovery posture, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upgrade our device protection solution. - Upgrade our vulnerability scanning solution. - Cyber security awareness campaign. 	Complete.
	16. Agree target system recovery times and points and establish a programme of work to meet said targets.	



Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
Improve Data Management supporting a modern and efficient courts system.	17. Launch of initial version of Management Data Dashboard.s	Management Information Dashboards launched for High Court Civil; Circuit Court Family; District Court Sentencing.
	18. Establish new Records Management Policy.	Moved to 2024 on foot of lessons learned during data retention pilot.
	19. Establish a Data Retention Policy and commence implementation	Complete.
	20. Work with Judiciary and Staff to agree key data terms for inclusion in the Data Dictionary. This will ensure the right reports for the right audiences are produced; and new systems will capture the right data points needed.	Complete.
	21. Launch of initial version of Open Data Portal.	Design work ongoing, for early 2024 launch.
	22. Define the requirements and scoping and support the implementation of the An Garda Síochána, Probation and Forensic Science Ireland HUB Projects.	HUB work continues with Probation Service data sharing implemented.
	23. Scope the replacement of existing Criminal Case Management Systems (ICMS & CCTS).	Scoping work continues to define requirements of new system.



Better ways of working

Strategic Goal

We will continue to invest in and support our people to create a high-performing organisation, delivering on the modernisation agenda and broader government priorities.

Key Outcomes 2021 - 2023

- Learning and development supporting delivery of user centric services to court users and staff learning for the new skills required to deliver the Modernisation Programme.
- A culture of continuous improvement with flexible working arrangements in place which maximise staff members' contribution to a high-performing organisation.
- Skilled staff with the capability to deliver on the Modernisation Programme, public service, and court reform.
- Innovation culture embedded where staff are inspired, empowered, and equipped to innovate.

Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
Implement the people and organisation strategy to create a diverse organisation that supports digitally enabled operations and new ways of working.	1. Healthy Place to Work 2022 report issued and action plan developed based on findings.	Complete.
	2. 2023 Employee engagement survey issued.	
	3. Develop competency framework for COs and EOs.	High-level plan agreed, for 2024 implementation.
	4. Develop and implement a 2023 workforce plan.	Analysis has commenced and is on plan.
Build on existing Health and Safety Authority 'Work Positive' programmes.	5. Deliver the 2023 actions as per the Health & Wellbeing Plan for 2023 to 2024.	Implementation of Action Plan Ongoing.
Implement our three-year Learning and Development strategy, including training to develop awareness of human rights, equality and supporting those who are vulnerable.	6. Align vision for Learning and Development with the progress of the Modernisation Programme, to focus on delivery of training based on immediate need and further requirements.	Ongoing. Specific priority training courses for ADMC, Mediation, Family Law Hub developed in 2023.



Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
	7. In partnership with the operational directorates, develop suite of technical training programmes, partnering with outside organisations as appropriate.	Ongoing.
	8. Roll out year 2 of Principal Officer Leadership in Action Programme.	Year 2 of Programme underway.
	9. Implement “workforce for the future” pillar actions of the People and Org Strategy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the organisation to deliver better ways of working by supporting development of capabilities needed. Maintain roll out of developing your career pathway programme to EO and CO grades. Review by getting feedback and integrate agreed improvements. Roll out High Performing Teams Programme. Continued Roll out of current suite of Self Development Programmes. 	Ongoing. Career Development Programmes for multiple grades rolled out. High Performing Teams training underway. Good uptake of Self Development Programmes from learners.
Implement our Innovation Strategy.	10. Establish Innovation Educational Programme.	First module complete. Work ongoing in 2024.
	11. Review innovation strategy to feed into the development of Innovation Strategy 2024- 2026.	Completed.
	12. Scale up Innovation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cultivating connections and collaborate across the ecosystem, share insights, knowledge and lessons learnt, scale successful innovations. 	Ongoing.
Prevent discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of staff and of those to whom we provide services and meet our obligations under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014.	13. Develop updated action plan to promote human rights and equality to cover 2023 and 2024, building on the progress made in the previous action plan.	Ongoing.



Goal 5

Provide a modern and improved estate and facilities

Strategic Goal

Provide buildings that are modern, fit-for-purpose, safe and accessible and support the new ways in which we will conduct business.

Key Outcomes 2021 - 2023

- Enhanced facilities in our buildings for court users.
- Advanced progress on the development of user informed Family Law Court, supporting objectives of the Programme for Government.
- Biodiversity programme.
- Implementing and meeting our public service energy usage targets.
- An emphasis on sustainability is included in our fiscal, enterprise, innovation, and environmental approach and policies.

Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
Conduct a National Review of Venues and develop and implement the Estates Strategy to align with the future operating model.	1. Complete Estate Venue Review.	Ongoing. Draft guiding principles completed for presentation to Building Committee in Q1 2024.
	Pilot reconfiguration of spaces for Phoenix House in support of Blended and Flexible working policy, Healthy Place to Work and our sustainability commitments.	Postponed to 2024 to allow work commence on heating system which necessitates more flexible use of space for duration of project.
Review condition assessment surveys and develop a strategy to move towards a Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) regime.	2. Commence process of exploring enhanced facility management arrangements and planned preventative maintenance regime.	Ongoing.
Develop a user-centric approach to the development of new specialist Family Law Courts at Hammond Lane in Dublin.	3. Finalise exemplar design.	Complete.



Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
	4. Part 9 Planning process complete.	Part 9 planning application lodged on 27 November 2023.
	5. Tender and appoint project advisors.	Evaluation of tenders received underway.
	6. Commence work on output specifications.	To commence in 2024.
	7. Commence work on Public Sector Benchmark (PSB).	
	8. Prepare PQQ documentation.	
	9. Transfer site into Courts Service ownership.	Conveyancing underway.
Progress preparatory work on the priority capital projects in the National Development Plan 2018 – 2027	10. Advance site acquisition or identification at Tralee, Galway, and Navan.	Acquisition of Tralee site completed. A potential preferred site has been identified in Galway.
Implement Environmental Sustainability vision for the Courts Service, including a strategy to achieve 2030 public sector energy and carbon targets.	11. Run a pathfinder 2030 courthouse project to identify the technical, financial, and operational challenges embedded in the 2030 targets.	Report completed, for review in 2024.
	12. Develop a Climate Action Roadmap.	Complete.
	13. Develop individual sustainability strategies and targets for ten significant energy users buildings.	9 of 10 completed.
	14. Develop a greener travel and electric vehicle charging policy.	Delayed to 2024, due to new requirements in Climate Action Plan.
	15. Implement a structured waste management program to measure and compare waste generation and recycling rates across the estate.	Report completed, for review in 2024.
	16. Implement a structured water management program to measure and compare water usage across the estate.	Postponed to 2024 due to water metering issues.
	17. Develop a project pipeline of biodiversity initiatives throughout our estate.	Complete.



Goal 6

Accountability and Leadership

Strategic Goal

We will put in place robust governance structures to ensure effective accountability and leadership for our modernisation and reform agenda.

Key Outcomes 2021 - 2023

- A single organisational approach to managing change is embedded.
- Robust business continuity, analysis, and risk structures in place.
- Benefits of Modernisation Programme and reform agenda are realised.

Priorities	Target Activity for 2023	Status 2023
Develop and implement a Single Change Governance Framework.	1. Amend Single Approach to Change to include Benefits Governance and Change Model.	Ongoing.
	2. Embed amended Single Approach to Change.	Ongoing.
Ensure the governance framework for the Modernisation Programme is reviewed and monitored regularly.	3. Regular review meetings held to monitor and update framework as necessary, necessary reporting protocols in place.	Ongoing.
Ensure a process to review, adapt, evaluate, and test Business Continuity Plans (BCP) for all offices, including a supporting ICT Disaster Recovery (DR) Plan.	4. Put in place appropriate infrastructure to support the implementation of the BCP and DR plans developed.	Governance structure and eLearning module in place. BCP continues to be monitored and embedded within existing structures.
Monitor progress and performance of the actions set out in this strategic plan.	5. Quarterly review of progress against strategic plan and CEO report to Board.	Quarterly reports presented to Board.
Monitor and report on the benefits accruing from the Modernisation Programme and reform agenda.	6. Modernisation Programme Benefits Governance and Reporting Structure established.	Ongoing.
	7. First report on benefits realisation.	Reports completed for: Charge Sheets project, Digital Jury Platform project, Appointment Booking Service project and the Video Courtroom Expansion project.



3

**The Year
in Numbers**



This chapter offers a comprehensive overview of data within the Court Service, presenting breakdowns across all jurisdictions and areas of operation.

As part of the Courts Service Modernisation Programme, we're actively enhancing our utilisation of digital technology and driving improvements in data management. Implementation of new case management systems in the High Court, Circuit Court, and the associated enhanced data collection practices signal our commitment to progress.

This year, the Annual Report has undergone a transition towards semi-automation of the data collection exercise, reducing reliance on paper and manual processes. This shift brings benefits such as improved standardisation and consistency in our data, with more changes to come.

In 2023, the Courts Service launched its Open Data portal, data.courts.ie, aimed at facilitating easy access to Courts data. This platform presents the data in a simple and understandable manner and allows interrogation to better understand trends and patterns. It not only promotes greater awareness but also fosters a deeper understanding of Courts data. It includes data from previous years' Annual Reports and will soon include data from the 2023 Annual Report.

Overview

Civil Business By Jurisdiction	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
District Court	133,000	127,289	107,635	100,607
Circuit Court	28,954	26,663	21,120	23,504
High Court	17,346	15,971	14,374	12,473
Court of Appeal	325	311	368	362
Supreme Court	175	191	147	213
Total	179,800	170,425	143,644	137,159

Civil Business By Type	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Civil and commercial litigious cases	113,457	102,921	81,902	72,937
Civil and commercial non-litigious cases	61,047	62,905	56,545	59,693
Non-litigious enforcement cases	3,555	3,262	3,718	3,317
Appeals	1,701	1,314	1,450	1,189
Cases Stated	40	23	29	23
Total	179,800	170,425	143,644	137,159



Criminal Offences and Appeals By Jurisdiction	Incoming*		Resolved*	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
District Court	329,714	338,825	294,100	266,922
Circuit Court	31,906	33,124	39,347	37,902
Special Criminal Court	35	69	55	57
Central Criminal Court	2,659	3,021	2,998	2,134
Court of Appeal	2,701	2,022	1,847	1,872
Supreme Court	41	33	45	28
Total	367,056	377,094	338,392	308,915

*by offence

Criminal offences and appeals total	Incoming*		Resolved*	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Offences	349,283	359,849	320,586	291,164
Appeals	17,773	17,245	17,806	17,751
Total	367,056	377,094	338,392	308,915

*orders made in respect of offences

Civil Business

Civil Business Is Categorised By Case Type:

1. Civil And Commercial Litigious Cases

Comprise Cases Where One Party Is Suing Another; European Payment Order Applications; Corporate Insolvency Cases; Personal Insolvency Cases (Concerning Applications By Creditors); Appeals To The District Court And Litigious Enforcement Matters.

2. Civil And Commercial Non-Litigious Cases

Comprise Proceedings Issued In Ireland That Are Not Inter-Partes (Including Probate, Wards Of Court And Personal Insolvency Cases Concerning Applications By Debtors In Person); And Certain Foreign Proceedings.

3. Non-Litigious Enforcement Cases

Comprise Proceedings By Creditors Following Judgment To Procure Payment Of Debts Due.

4. Appeals

Comprise Civil And Family Law Appeals From The District Court To The Circuit Court; From The Circuit Court To The High Court; And From The High Court To The Court Of Appeal. They Also Include Applications For Leave To Appeal And Appeals To The Supreme Court.

5. Cases Stated

Are Instances Where A Court Asks For An Opinion On A Point Of Law From A Higher Court.



Civil statistics are presented by reference to cases/matters received and cases/matters resolved during the year. The majority of civil cases initiated in Ireland do not proceed to trial. Typically, they are either settled between the parties (with or without a court approving a settlement), are formally discontinued (involving notification to the defendant and the court), or are not pursued further by the plaintiff (without the plaintiff notifying the court). It is therefore not possible to provide figures for pending caseloads in most courts. Cases referred to as 'resolved' may include cases commenced in years other than 2022 or 2023.

1. Civil and Commercial Litigious Cases

Cases where one party is suing another: General

1. Personal injury (including medical negligence)

A person may pursue a claim for damages for personal injuries through the courts upon receipt of an authorisation from the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB). This is a legal document issued in the absence of consent from the person responsible for the injury (the respondent) to the assessment of the claim by the PIAB or the rejection by either party of a PIAB assessment. PIAB does not deal with medical negligence claims.

Settlements in personal injury cases involving persons under 18 years (infant rulings) must be brought before the relevant court for approval prior to being accepted.

In a change from 2022 to ensure consistent counting across the High Court, Resolved Out of Court now only relates to matters that are withdrawn or discontinued.

Personal Injury	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court*	Out of court	By court*	Out of court
High Court	4,538	3,766	4,415	N/A	563	3,336
Circuit Court	7,495	7,151	6,539	337	6,172	400
District Court	1,401	1,542	718	N/A	704	0
Total	13,434	12,459	11,672	337	7,439	3,736

* Cases dealt with by the court include all cases assigned to a judge. The majority of these cases are dealt with without a substantive court hearing.



The District Court has power to award up to €15,000 in damages in personal injury cases and the Circuit Court has power to award up to €60,000, though both courts can make higher awards with the consent of the parties. The High Court has unlimited power to award damages.

Personal Injury Awards Amount	District Court	
	Cases	
	2023	2022
€0 to €7,500	278	290
€7,500 to €15,000	124	154
€15,000+	1	6
Total	403	450

Personal Injury Awards Amount	Circuit Court	
	Cases	
	2023	2022
€0 to €15,000	367	346
€15,000 to €60,000	499	447
€60,000+	5	1
Total	871	794

Personal Injury Awards Amount	High Court	
	Cases*	
	2023	2022
€0 to €60,000	136	144
€60,000 to €199,999	105	118
€200,000 to €499,999	29	33
€500,000+	66	59
Total	336	354

* includes medical negligence awards

	High Court		Circuit Court		District Court	
	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022
Amounts awarded*						
Lowest amount	€1,279	€1,000	€1,000	€900	€500	€543
Highest amount	€20,500,000	€19,000,000	€76,841	€75,000	€15,000	€16,402
Total amount	€256,515,241	€253,486,344	€16,700,875	€15,041,482	€2,158,170	€2,801,164

* includes medical negligence awards



Medical Negligence Awards: Amount	High Court	
	Cases	
	2023	2022
€0 to €60,000	38	40
€60,000 to €199,999	17	20
€200,000 to €499,999	13	6
€500,000+	38	41
Total	106	107

Medical Negligence Awards: Amount	High Court	
	Cases	
	2023	2022
Lowest amount awarded	€14,000	€10,000
Highest amount awarded	€19,000,000	€19,000,000
Total amount awarded	€167,162,945	€178,711,076

2. Negligence (excluding medical negligence causing personal injury)

Negligence claims are claims for damages against a person or persons against whom it is alleged breached a duty of care owed to the claimant resulting in pecuniary loss.

Negligence	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	132	185	70	119	44	32



3. Commercial

Commercial proceedings are defined in Rule 1 of Order 63A of the Rules of the Superior Courts. In short, they include claims in contract or tort arising out of business transactions where the value of the claim is not less than €1 million, intellectual property cases (including passing off), certain types of arbitration claims and appeals from, or judicial review applications in respect of, any statutory body where the judge in charge of the list considers that, having regard to the commercial or any other aspect of such an application it is one appropriate for entry into the commercial list.

Entry into the commercial list is not mandatory for any case types. Cases are only admitted to the list if one of the parties makes an application and the judge admits the case. They are not automatically admitted to the commercial list because of the relief sought and can be prosecuted in the chancery or in the non-jury lists if the parties so wish.

This area of the High Court has seen changes in 2023 due to the making of High Court Practice Direction 119 on 17 April 2023 which provided for the establishment of the Commercial Planning and Environmental List and thereby removing cases which would have previously commenced in the Commercial List. The number and nature of cases listed in the Commercial Court changed again with the making of a further Practice Direction (HC PD 124) on 11 December 2023. This further codified the matters to be listed in the Planning and Environment List and will have a knock-on effect on the Commercial List.

Commercial	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022*	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	106	126	89	0	106	0

* 2022 Resolved figures have been updated due to counting error.



4. Chancery

Chancery matters are dealt with in the High Court. They include injunction applications, company law motions, specific performance/rescission of contracts, administration of estates of deceased persons and trust actions.

Chancery	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	1,306	1,132	415	193	337	188

Analysis Of Incoming Cases	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Specific performance	100	93	99	125	145	144
Injunction	326	188	238	212	247	314
Declaration	348	425	487	663	633	792
European Communities Regulations*	12	5	6	2	3	10
Other	520	421	430	550	596	646
Total	1,306	1,132	1,260	1,552	1,624	1,906

* Cross Border Mergers S.I. No. 157 of 2008



2020

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

2030



5. Property

Property (possession) cases are cases in which the plaintiff is seeking possession of lands and/or premises including family homes.

Other property cases include ‘mortgage suits’ (cases where the creditor has a mortgage on the property in which the defendant has an interest but does not have power to sell that property unless the court declares the mortgage well-charged on the debtor’s interest), applications for ejectment, applications under Landlord & Tenant legislation, applications involving the Private Residential Tenancies Board and ground rent matters.

Property (Possession)	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	72	61	52	34	47	23
Circuit Court	1,019	837	381	0	548	0
Total	1,091	898	404	34	595	23

Property (Possession)	Orders Granted		Orders Not Granted	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Circuit Court	212	208	169	340

Property (Other)	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	10	23	18	2	65	19
Circuit Court	134	137	626	132	639	176
District Court	120	484	144	0	58	0
Total	264	644	788	134	762	195



6. Breach of contract

Where a party refuses or fails to fulfil an obligation imposed by a contract, the injured party can bring an action for damages. In this context, breach of contract cases do not include claims for liquidated damages (see section 7 below).

High Court					
Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
336	1,458	81	72	47	16

7. Recovery of debt (liquidated claims)

Actions to recover debt are generally taken by financial institutions seeking to recover specified amounts of money, often in respect of loans.

	Incoming		Resolved					
	2023	2022	2023			2022		
			By court	Out of court 1	Out of court 2	By court	Out of court 1	Out of court 2
High Court	857	604	188	276	202	109	24	16
Circuit Court	1,987	1,499	168	129	865	159	148	716
District Court	17,648	15,188	1,261	0	6,683	1,165	0	6,968
Total	20,492	17,291	1,617	405	7,750	1,433	172	7,700

1 Discontinuance

2 Judgments marked in the office – these figures are also on page 86 as part of the civil and commercial non-litigious statistics.



8. Defamation

Defamation is defined by the Defamation Act 2009 as the “publication, by any means, of a defamatory statement concerning a person to one or more than one person (other than the first-mentioned person)”.

	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	68	104	28	19	17	11
Circuit Court	292	282	7	35	8	18
Total	360	386	35	54	25	29

9. Assault

Assault claims are claims for damages against a person or persons against whom it is alleged intentionally attempted or threatened to inflict injury that placed the claimant in fear of imminent bodily harm or brought about an unconsented harmful or offensive contact with the claimant.

	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	148	102	66	35	49	19



10. Employment

Employment cases include those relating to the enforcement of and appeals relating to decisions of the Workplace Relations Commission brought under legislative provisions relating to matters such as unfair dismissal, payment of wages, adoption leave, parental leave and organisation of working time.

Employment (Dismissal)	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	2	2	0	0	2	1
Circuit Court	8	3	10	1	5	0
Total	10	5	10	1	7	1

Employment (Other)	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	5	13	3	0	3	1
Circuit Court	22	26	14	4	20	4
Total	27	39	17	4	23	5



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11. Small claims

The Small Claims procedure provides an inexpensive way for consumers to resolve consumer complaints and business to make claims against other businesses, without the need to employ a solicitor. To make a claim under the Irish Small Claims procedure both the claimant and the respondent must be living or based within the State and the claim cannot exceed €2,000. Claims can be made on-line or lodged in person in the court office.

The European Small Claims Procedure, provided for in Regulation (EC) No. 861/2007 and the District Court Rules 1997-2014, is an alternative method of commencing and dealing with civil and commercial matters in respect of a small claim in cross-border cases. These are cases where at least one of the parties lives in a Member State of the European Union (excluding Denmark) other than the Member State of the court dealing with the claim. The claim cannot exceed €2,000. Claims cannot be made online.

Small Claims: Ireland* And EU: District Court					
Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
2,527	2,159	444	1,759	462	1,594

* claims include those made online.

** includes applications deemed to fall outside the scope of the rules for small claims.

Analysis Of Cases Dealt With	2023		2022	
	Ireland	EU	Ireland	EU
Not proceeded with	244	33	264	28
Decrees by default	336	15	312	9
Settled by registrar	936	105	862	65
Referred to court	439	5	437	25
Settled after notice to pay	90	0	54	0
Total	2,045	158	1,929	127

Adjudicated By The Court	2023		2022	
	Ireland	EU	Ireland	EU
Decrees granted	167	5	201	15
Cases dismissed	78	0	87	2
Withdrawn/struck out	194	0	149	8
Total	439	5	437	25



12. Proceeds of crime

The Proceeds of Crime Act 1996 provides for the civil forfeiture of property which is the proceeds of crime. Applications to the High Court under the Act are usually made by the Chief Bureau Officer of the Criminal Assets Bureau. If the court is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that a person is in possession or control of property which is or represents the proceeds of crime, it may order the freezing of the property and, after seven years, its disposal for the benefit of the Exchequer.

High Court					
Incoming			Resolved		
2023		2022	2023		2022
	43		34	15	36



13. Judicial review

Judicial review applications are made when a person seeks an order in respect of the actions or decisions of certain courts, tribunal or regulatory bodies. Applications in asylum related cases generally seek an order quashing the decision of a body such as the International Protection Appeals Tribunal, or an injunction restraining the Minister for Justice from deporting them.

In a change from 2022 to ensure consistent counting across the High Court, Resolved Out of Court now only relate to matters that are withdrawn or discontinued.

Judicial Review (Asylum Related): High Court

Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
779	336	406	0	349	20

Judicial Review (Other): High Court

Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
627	576	466	0	326	64

Judicial Review: High Court	Asylum Related		Other	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Incoming	779	336	627	576
Orders made:				
Liberty to apply for judicial review granted	129	212	191	298
Liberty to apply for judicial review refused	1	1	15	22
Interim orders	100	53	615	490
Final orders – relief granted	7	54	233	178
Final orders – relief refused	2	44	82	55
Final orders – miscellaneous	368	251	146	93
Final orders – struck out (no order)	31	20	27	64
Total	638	635	1,309	1,200



14. Regulation of professions

The High Court deals with cases relating to the confirmation of, and appeals relating to, sanctions imposed by bodies regulated by statute affecting the ability of a registered professional to practice.

High Court			
Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
		By court	By court
189	280	163	261

15. Garda compensation

Members of An Garda Síochána who sustain injuries maliciously inflicted upon them in the performance of their duties or acting in their general capacity as a member of the force are entitled to apply to the High Court for compensation. Off-duty members assaulted by virtue of them being a member of the force may also apply for compensation.

High Court			
Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
132	56	95	80



16. Habeas Corpus

Persons who believe they are being detained or held unlawfully, may apply to the High Court for an order of habeas corpus under the Habeas Corpus Act 1782. This requires the person or institution detaining them to either produce the person detained before the court or release that person from such detention. The expression 'order of habeas corpus' does not include an order made pursuant to Article 40.4 of the Constitution.

In some instances, applications are issued and do not proceed. In others, the matter is resolved without recourse to the court following the making of an interim order.

Habeas Corpus: High Court					
Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
68	63	43	0	52	1

17. European Arrest Warrants

The High Court is responsible for the execution of European Arrest Warrants received by Ireland. A European Arrest Warrant, valid throughout the EU, may be issued by a national judicial authority if the person whose return is sought is accused of an offence for which the maximum penalty is at least a year in prison or if he or she has been sentenced to a prison term of at least four months. Likewise, the Director of Public Prosecutions may apply to the High Court for the issue of a European Arrest Warrant where a person in another member state is facing charges or is required to serve a sentence in Ireland.

While applications to execute European Arrest Warrants are now being brought to the Court more efficiently, it is putting extra pressure on the Court to process them in accordance with the statutory timeframes.

High Court*:					
Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
245	259	236		274	

*includes extradition



18. Bail

Most Bail Applications in the High Court relate to appeals from the District Court where bail has been refused. However, there are some bail applications (i.e. in relation to murder and offences against the State etc.) which can only be dealt with in the High Court and such cases that specifically must go before the High Court Bail List are outlined in Section 29 of The Criminal Procedures Act.

Other examples of bail applications that are dealt with by the High Court are variations to High Court and District Court Bail, Revocations of Bail, Arrest and Committal Warrants, Consolidation Orders and Compassionate Bail Applications.

High Court: Bail					
Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
1,828	1,676	1,297	0	1,247	1

19. Planning and Environment

A new Planning and Environment Court division of the High Court was formally launched in December 2023. This Court will deal with cases involving commercial planning and strategic infrastructure and will replace those that were previously sent to the Strategic Infrastructure list. For comparison purposes - the number of cases in the Strategic Infrastructure list are provided below.

High Court: Strategic Infrastructure List						
Strategic Infrastructure List	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By Court	Out of Court	By Court	Out of Court
High Court	108	85	129	0	89	0



Cases where one party is suing another: Family Law

The High Court and the Circuit Court have concurrent jurisdiction in family law matters. However, the majority of judicial separation, divorce and nullity applications are made to the Circuit Court. There is a right of appeal from the Circuit Court to the High Court.

1. Divorce

A decree of divorce dissolves a marriage and allows each party to remarry. Before a court can grant a divorce, the parties must have been married and living apart for at least 2 out of the previous 3 years (previously this was 4 out of the previous 5 years). There must be no reasonable prospect of reconciliation; and proper arrangements must have been made or will be made for the spouse and any dependent members of the family.

Divorce:	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	64	53	41	0	35	15
Circuit Court	5,154	5,498	4,809	0	4,891	0
Total	5,218	5,551	4,850	0	4,926	15

Divorce:	2023			2022		
	Granted	Refused	Other	Granted	Refused	Other
High Court	27	0	4	25	0	0
Circuit Court	4,804	5	5	4,890	1	0
Total	4,831	5	9	4,915	1	1



2. Judicial separation

A decree of judicial separation removes the obligation on spouses to co-habit. The most common ground on which a decree is granted is where the court considers that a normal marital relationship has not existed between the spouses for at least one year before the date of the application for the decree.

Judicial Separation:	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	27	18	16	1	18	5
Circuit Court	540	468	247	0	314	0
Total	567	486	263	1	332	5

Judicial Separation:	2023			2022		
	Granted	Refused	Other	Granted	Refused	Other
High Court	9	0	2	27	0	0
Circuit Court	246	1	0	314	0	0
Total	255	1	2	340	0	0

3. Dissolution of partnership

The Courts can dissolve civil partnerships in a similar way to the granting of divorce. A decree of dissolution allows both parties to a civil partnership to marry.

Dissolution Of Partnership	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
Circuit Court	72	79	33	0	39	0

Dissolution Of Partnership	2023			2022		
	Granted	Refused	Other	Granted	Refused	Other
Circuit Court	32	1	0	39	0	0

4. Cohabitation

These are claims made under the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations Of Cohabitants Act 2010 in respect of claimants who are living together in an intimate and committed relationship, not married to each other, not in a registered civil partnership and not related to each other.

High Court					
Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
9	8	2	0	7	0

5. Nullity

Nullity of marriage (civil nullity or civil annulment) is a legal declaration by the court which states that although two people went through a marriage ceremony, their marriage never actually existed in the eyes of the law or the State. There are two types of marriages that may be annulled or cancelled - void marriages and voidable marriages.

A void marriage is considered to have never taken place. A voidable marriage is considered to be a valid marriage until a decree of annulment is made.

Nullity of civil partnership is a declaration by a court that a supposed civil partnership is null and void and that no valid civil partnership exists between the partners. In nullity of civil partnership law, there are only void civil partnerships.

Nullity (Of Marriage)	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	0	1	0	0	1	0
Circuit Court	9	5	0	0	8	0
Total	9	6	0	0	9	0

Nullity (Of Marriage)	2023			2022		
	Granted	Refused	Other	Granted	Refused	Other
High Court	0	0	0	1	0	0
Circuit Court	0	0	0	7	1	0
Total	0	0	0	8	1	0



6. Guardianship, custody, access

Guardianship means the rights and duties of parents in respect of the upbringing of their children. **Custody** is the right of a parent to exercise physical care and control in respect of the upbringing of his or her child on a day-to-day basis. **Access** is contact between a child and its parent or other relative with whom the child does not live. The majority of applications in all three areas are made to the District Court.

Guardianship, Custody, Access: District Court

Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
10,901	10,822	10,597	0	10,143	0

Custody And Access: Circuit Court – Outcomes

	Judicial Separation				Dissolution				Divorce			
	2023	2022	2021	2020	2023	2022	2021	2020	2023	2022	2021	2020
Orders made	120	130	138	162	3	16	6	5	1,417	1,313	1,268	920

7. Maintenance

Maintenance is financial support (money) paid by a person for the benefit of a dependent spouse/civil partner and/or dependent children. Spouses/civil partners are required to maintain each other according to their means and needs. Parents, whether married or not, are responsible for the maintenance of their dependent children. If the parties cannot reach an agreement about maintenance an application can be made to the court for a maintenance order. The majority of applications for maintenance are made to the District Court.

Applications for maintenance in the Circuit Court are usually made as part of applications for judicial separation and/or divorce and are not separately calculated

Maintenance	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	1	0	0	0	1	0
District Court *	5,730	5,862	5,295	0	5,025	0

* excludes foreign maintenance – see Page 94 (Section under 'Foreign Proceeding')

8. Domestic violence

Domestic violence legislation protects spouses/civil partners and children and offers legal remedies to dependent persons and persons in other domestic relationships where their safety or welfare is at risk because of the conduct of the other person in the relationship. It also gives An Garda Síochána powers to arrest without warrant where there is a breach of a court order.

Safety order

A safety order prohibits the person against whom the order is made (the respondent) from engaging in violence or threats of violence. It does not oblige that person to leave the family home. If the person does not normally live in the family home, it prohibits them from watching or being in the vicinity of where the person applying for the order (the applicant) and dependent children lives. A safety order can be made for up to five years.

Barring order

A barring order requires the respondent to leave the family home and stay away from the family home of the applicant and/or dependent children. It may also include terms prohibiting the respondent from using or threatening to use violence. A barring order can be made for up to three years.

Once a summons has been issued for a safety order or a barring order the applicant can apply for a protection order or an interim barring order while waiting for the application to be heard in court.

Protection order

This is a temporary safety order. It gives protection to the applicant until the court decides on a safety or barring order application. It is intended to last until the case is heard and a decision made. It does not oblige the respondent to leave the family home.

Interim barring order

This is a temporary barring order. It is intended to last until the barring order application is heard in court and a decision made. Under the Domestic Violence Act, 2002 a full court hearing must take place within eight working days of the granting of an interim barring order. The Court must be of the opinion that there are reasonable grounds for believing there is an immediate risk of significant harm to the applicant or any dependent person if the order is not made immediately and the granting of a protection order would not be sufficient to protect the applicant or any dependent person

Domestic Violence: District Court

Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
25,570	23,536	24,194	0	20,830	0

Domestic Violence: Circuit Court - Outcomes

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Orders Made	71	48	40	38	38	59	51



District Court: Domestic Violence - Trends*

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Barring order applications	3,326	2,933	2,987	3,577	3,323	3,343	2,613	2,658
Barring orders granted	849	732	810	1,159	1,137	946	822	1,329
Protection order applications	9,641	8,719	8,269	7,649	7,049	6,390	5,869	5,365
Protection orders granted**	7,971	5,815	6,917	6,592	5,864	5,515	5,006	4,627
Safety order applications	9,913	9,317	8,918	8,887	8,061	7,280	6,368	6,069
Safety orders granted	2,975	2,475	2,461	2,467	2,688	2,327	2,255	3,316
Interim barring order applications	2,064	1,951	1,917	1,918	1,643	1,270	917	880
Interim barring orders granted	1,105	951	1,141	1,251	1,209	982	693	676
Other applications	619	616	505	915	418	289	195	255
Orders granted	346	223	291	376	184	147	151	107

* Figures do not include applications struck out or withdrawn

**Some interim barring orders were granted on foot of applications for protection orders. Likewise, some protection orders were granted on foot of interim orders.

9. Adoption

These are applications made under the Adoption Act 2010 for the making of adoption orders and challenges thereto.

Adoption: High Court

Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
31	55	34	44

10. Child abduction: Hague Luxembourg Convention

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980) is the main convention covering child abduction. The Convention seeks to protect children from the harmful effects of abduction and retention across international boundaries by providing a procedure to bring about their prompt return. It is based on the principle that the court of the child's habitual residence is best placed to decide any custody disputes.

Ireland is a signatory to *The Hague and Luxembourg Conventions*. These conventions have been incorporated into Irish domestic law by the Child Abduction and Enforcement of Custody Orders Act 1991.

Child Abduction: High Court - Analysis

Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
33	30	24	20

Domestic Violence: Circuit Court - Outcomes

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Incoming	33	30	32	21	34	37	36
Orders made							
Assess child	22	7	17	7	11	8	14
Interim order*	149	103	85	44	81	102	126
Child returned (on consent)	11	3	15	6	6	11	8
Child returned (court order)	7	2	8	4	7	9	10
Child remain (on consent)	7	7	9	5	7	5	10
Child remain (court order)	5	8	1	1	1	3	6
Other	14	0	10	5	20	2	0
Total	215	130	145	72	133	140	174

* there may be a number of interim orders made in individual cases



11. Childcare - Supervision and care orders

The courts deal with applications for orders in respect of the care or supervision of minors, or on behalf of minors concerning the arrangements made by Tusla - the Child and Family Agency for their care. Tusla can apply to the courts for a number of different orders when dealing with children who are at risk or who are in need of care. These orders give the courts a range of powers about the type of care necessary and about access to the children for parents and other relatives. The vast majority of applications are made to the District Court.

Emergency care orders

Tusla can apply for an emergency care order for a child who is still at home or for one who has been removed by An Garda Síochána. In exceptional cases this type of order can be sought 'ex parte' without notice to the parent (e.g. a child may be found in a very vulnerable position unaccompanied with no adult carer). While exceptional applications may be made without notice being given to the parents or guardians of the child, generally, when An Garda Síochána remove a child, Tusla notify the parent and the parent is in Court when the matter is heard. The order will be made if the judge considers that there is an immediate and serious risk to the health or welfare of the child requiring him/her to be placed, or to remain in, the care of Tusla.

Care orders and interim care orders

Tusla must apply for a care order or a supervision order (see below) if a child needs care and protection which he/she is unlikely to receive without an order. The District Court judge may make an interim care order while the decision on a full care order is pending. This means that the child is placed in the care of Tusla for 29 days. It may be extended if Tusla and the parents agree or if the court finds that the threshold criteria for the making of the order continue to exist. Parents/guardians must be given notice of an interim care order application or the extension of the order unless exceptional circumstances exist making this impossible.

Supervision orders

A supervision order is an alternative to children being taken into the care of Tusla. It may be applied for by the Tusla instead of a Care Order. Tusla may consider that a care order is not necessary or appropriate in the circumstances, but that the child should be visited regularly by a social worker under a court supervision order.

The court can make a supervision order as an alternative, more proportionate remedy at the care order stage – but not at the interim care order stage. During the application for a care order the court may decide that a supervision order will address the risk of harm identified by Tusla. A supervision order may also be made when the court has heard most of the evidence but needs more time to conclude the care proceedings.

The number of applications does not necessarily reflect the number of children in respect of whom orders are made, as several orders may be made in respect of an individual child. There may also be applications for a variety of orders in the same case.

Supervision and Care Orders	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court	79	71	25	50
District Court	17,504	14,914	11,457	9,994
Total	17,583	14,985	11,482	10,044



Child Care: High Court – Analysis

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Received	71	71	156	112	67	30	32
Orders made	208	279	259	205	125	234	313

Child Care: District Court - Analysis

	Incoming				Resolved			
	2023	2022	2021	2020	2023	2022	2021	2020
Supervision order	417	439	376	397	319	343	299	356
Care order	951	926	871	1,563	974	767	661	1,463
Extension of care order	784	708	697	692	793	693	748	610
Interim care order	1,529	1,388	1,369	1,194	736	832	860	860
Extension of interim care order	6,002	6,087	6,052	5,015	5,942	5,252	5,782	4,889
Emergency care order	288	322	325	480	274	255	267	392
Review of care order	2,052	1,582	1,238	1,158	573	427	529	505
Re-entry of case	910	563	448	477	386	204	253	249
Other*	4,571	2,899	2,662	2,115	1,460	1,221	1,296	1,002
Total	17,504	14,914	14,038	13,091	11,457	9,994	10,695	10,326

* includes applications for adjournments, costs, production orders and vacation of hearing dates; and applications under:

s.23 Children Act, 1997 (to allow admission of hearsay evidence)

s.37 Child Care Act 1991 (access to children in care)

s.47 Child Care Act 1991 (applications for directions) which may include applications by parents or interested relatives where children are in voluntary care.



Child Care: Court - Analysis of applications resolved

	Application granted		Application not granted	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Supervision order	262	304	57	39
Care order	744	556	230	211
Extension of care order	748	630	45	63
Interim care order	640	624	96	208
Extension of interim care order	5,799	5,041	143	211
Emergency care order	260	201	14	54
Review of care order	488	321	85	106
Re-entry of case	329	158	57	46
Other	1,261	960	199	261
Total	10,531	8,795	926	1,199

Family: Other

Family Law: Other	Incoming		Resolved			
	2023	2022	2023		2022	
			By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
High Court	78	121	43	1	19	2
Circuit Court	319	207	27	0	20	0
District Court	1,492	1,616	1,726	0	1,492	0
Total	1,889	1,944	1,797	1	1,531	2



Assisted Decision Making

The Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was signed into law on the 30 December 2015. The Act is about supporting decision-making and maximising a person’s capacity to make decisions. The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Act 2022 was signed into law in 2022. This amending legislation was necessary for the full commencement of the 2015 Act and to streamline processes and improve safeguards.

The 2015 Act brings about important changes for people who may require support to make decisions. These decisions can be about their personal welfare, health, social care, and their property and affairs. The Act abolishes the current wardship system and requires all adult wards of court to be discharged from wardship within three years of commencement of the Act. It introduces a tiered system of decision support arrangements for people who need help with making decisions.

Circuit Court: Assisted Decision Making	
Incoming Applications	2023
Capacity Application	299
Ex Parte Consent Application	114
Total	413
Resolved Applications	2023
Capacity Orders	174
Ex Parte Consent Orders	96
Total	270





Corporate insolvency

1. Examinership

Examinership is a process in Irish law whereby the protection of the court is obtained to assist the survival of a company. It allows a company to restructure with the approval of the court.

Examinership: High Court																
Incoming				Resolved												
		Out of court		By court												
		Petition Withdrawn		Appoint interim examiner*		Appoint examiner*		Extend time		Order reports		Wind up company		Misc.		
2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	
7	6	5	12	15	13	8	9	9	6	2	0	3	2	1	1	

* Figures for appointment of interim examiner and examiner may not be mutually exclusive as appointment of interim examiner often precedes appointment of examiner.

Examinership: Circuit Court					
Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		By court	Out of court	By court	Out of court
0	2	1	0	1	0

2. Liquidation

The Examiner's Office of the High Court continues to assist the Court in the supervision of pre-Companies Act 2014 liquidations, with particular regard towards bringing any outstanding liquidations to a timely conclusion.

Since the commencement of the Companies Act 2014 (on 1st June 2015), the High Court may direct, following the making of an order to wind up a company and the appointment of a liquidator, that the liquidation continue using the rules relating to a creditor's voluntary winding up.

Wind Up Company Orders: High Court					
Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		Settled/ struck out/ withdrawn	Order made	Settled/ struck out/ withdrawn	Order made
44	37	41	128	35	102



3. Restrict Directors

In certain circumstances an application can be made to the High Court to have a company director restricted from acting as a director or secretary of a company or be concerned or take part in the formation or promotion of a company. Restriction orders remain in force for a period of five years and confine a person to being a director in certain types of companies that have been adequately capitalised by their shareholders.

Restrict Directors: High Court

Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		Order made	Order refused	Order made	Order refused
4	12	5	0	29	0

4. Disqualify Directors

In certain circumstances the High Court may disqualify a person from being appointed or acting as a director or other officer, statutory auditor, receiver, liquidator or examiner or being in any way, whether directly or indirectly, concerned or taking part in the promotion, formation or management of certain corporate bodies. These circumstances include where the court is satisfied that the person is guilty of fraud or is in breach of his/her duty under Company Law or that the conduct of the person makes him/her unfit to be concerned in the management of a company.

Disqualified Directors: High Court

Incoming		Resolved			
2023	2022	2023		2022	
		Order made	Order refused	Order made	Order refused
1	4	1	3	6	1



Personal insolvency

Personal insolvency (creditors' applications) (see also page 91)

Applications to have a person adjudicated bankrupt are filed in the Office of the Examiner of the High Court. Following the making of an adjudication order ownership of the bankrupt's property is transferred to the Official Assignee in Bankruptcy (who manages the Bankruptcy Division within the Insolvency Service of Ireland). He/she is an independent statutory officer who administers the estate of the bankrupt person and is answerable to the High Court.

Bankruptcy applications may be made by creditors or by debtors in person. See below for details of pre-bankruptcy applications by creditors ('bankruptcy summonses') and applications by creditors to have debtors adjudicated bankrupt. Details of applications by debtors to be adjudicated bankrupt ('self-adjudications') and information about debt settlement procedures introduced under the Personal Insolvency Act, 2012 are on page 91.

Under the provisions of the Bankruptcy (Amendment) Act 2015 a person is automatically discharged from bankruptcy one year after the order of adjudication unless the period is extended by the High Court upon application by the Official Assignee in Bankruptcy.

Personal Insolvency: High Court	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
			Adjudicated / granted / approved	Adjudicated / granted / approved
Bankruptcy summonses	10	32	11	31
Bankruptcy petitions (creditors)	78	17	78	12



Appeals to District Court

There are a number of statutory entitlements to appeal decisions of regulatory bodies to the District Court. They include decisions regarding the award of taxi licences and gun licences.

Appeals To The District Court		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
86	70	66	46

Litigious enforcement

Following judgment, the creditor in a case can apply to the District Court for an Instalment Order against the debtor requiring him/her to pay the debt in instalments. The District Court can subsequently vary the amount ordered to be paid (variation order). If the debtor fails to make the instalments as ordered by the District Court, the creditor can apply for an Order committing the debtor to prison (committal order).

Summons For Attendance Of Debtor: District Court					
2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
949	1,094	1,243	1,240	1,954	2,236

Litigious Enforcement	Outcome	
	2023	2022
Instalment orders issued	1,097	1,334
Variation orders issued	67	92
Committal orders issued	1	2



2. Civil and Commercial Non-Litigious Cases

Proceedings in Ireland

1. Judgment marked in the office

Where a defendant does not respond to a summary summons in the High Court, a civil bill in the Circuit Court, or a claim notice in the District Court; or where the Master of the High Court gives liberty to enter 'final' judgment, the plaintiff can apply to have judgment 'marked' (awarded) against the defendant in the court office.

Judgement Marked in the office	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court	220	33	220	33
Circuit Court	887	656	865	716
District Court	6,649	7,084	6,683	6,968
Total	7,756	7,773	7,768	7,717

2. Deed poll

Persons requiring documentary confirmation of a change of name, other than on marriage, may need to execute a document called a 'deed poll'. The deed poll can be lodged in the Central Office of the High Court.

Deed Poll: High Court			
Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
835	713	835	713

3. Probate

A legal document called a **Grant of Representation** is required for authority to administer the estate of a deceased person. If there is a will, the executor needs to take out probate. If there is no will, or, if no executor has been appointed or the appointed person cannot act, an administrator may be appointed, and he/she takes out a Letter of Administration (or a Letter of Administration with Will Annexed if there is a will).

The Principal Probate Registry in the country is located in Dublin and the 14 District Probate Registries are in the Combined Court Offices in Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford, Cork, Tralee, Limerick, Clonmel, Castlebar, Galway, Letterkenny, Sligo, Dundalk, Cavan and Mullingar.

Probate: Incoming Applications

	2023	2022
Applications Lodged	11,331	13,287
Local registries	10,199	8,015
Total	21,530	21,302

Probate	Probate (And Administrations With Wills Annexed): Grants Issued		Intestacy - Grants Issued	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Principal Registry	8,418	9,960	1,988	2,304
Local registries	7,153	4,631	1,682	1,135
Total	15,571	14,591	3,670	3,439





4. Wards of Court

When a person becomes unable to manage his or her assets because of mental incapacity, an application can be made to the courts for the person to become a ward of court. The court must decide as to whether the person is capable of managing his or her own property for his or her own benefit and the benefit of his or her dependants. If it is decided that the person cannot manage his or her own property because of mental incapacity, a committee is appointed to control the assets on the ward's behalf. A person under 18 years of age may also be taken into wardship as a minor.

A series of additional figures have been included in this year's Wards of Courts numbers, these follow on from the commencement of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (ADMCA).

Wards Of Court: High Court			
Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
206	520	241	360

Wards Of Court: High Court		
	2023	2022
Wardship cases	2,944*	2,907
Applications awaiting hearing	85	163
Adults and minors taken into wardship (declaratory orders)	239	338
Dismissed/discharged	142	187
Orders signed	2,066	2,318
ADMCA Discharge Applications Received	82	
ADMCA – Discharge	3	
ADMCA – Discharge - Co-Decision Maker	0**	
ADMCA – Discharge - Decision Making Representative	13	

* This figure includes all Adult and Minor declared and deceased wardship cases, as they are active cases in the office.

** Two cases have been approved by the court for discharge with a Co Decision Maker but are pending the registration of a co-decision making agreement by the Decision Support Service.



Wards Of Court: Active Cases:

Reason admitted to wardship	2023	2022
Brain injury	27	29
Dementia and age-related illness	116	211
Learning/intellectual disability	36	41
Minors (under 18 years of age)	28	21
Psychiatric illness	32	36
Total	239	338

5. General Solicitor for Minors and Wards of Court

The General Solicitor for Minors and Wards of Court is a solicitor in the service of the State appointed by the President of the High Court to act in certain wardship matters. He/she is accountable to the High Court for all monies and assets under his/her control relating to the affairs of a minor or ward. The General Solicitor can only act as solicitor in those matters assigned to them by the registrar of the wards of court. He/she cannot take on private clients like a solicitor in private practice.

Due to the increase in number of wardship cases that now encompass the previous inherent jurisdiction applications to protect and vindicate the rights of vulnerable adults lacking capacity and minors, the number of cases where the GS is appointed as independent Committee has increased in both volume and complexity since 2015/2016. This has resulted in an increased level of expertise and work by the Case Officers to ensure their rights are vindicated and maintain the level of standard expected in accordance with legislation and court directions.

General Solicitor For Minors And Wards Of Court

	2023	2022
Active (yearly average)	763	752
Pending	4	4
Dismissal	392	398
Total cases	1,159	1,154

General Solicitor For Minors And Wards Of Court: Active Cases

Reason admitted to wardship	2023	2022
Brain injury	94	94
Dementia and age-related illness	187	182
Learning/intellectual disability	265	261
Minors (under 18 years of age)	12	11
Psychiatric illness	193	192
Other	14	14
Total	765	754



6. Enduring Powers of Attorney (registered)

An enduring power of attorney (EPA) allows another specially appointed person ('the attorney') to make 'personal care decisions' on the donor's behalf once he/she is no longer fully mentally capable of taking decisions him/herself. Personal care decisions may include deciding where and with whom the donor will live, who he/she should see or not see and what training or rehabilitation he/she should get.

Enduring Powers Of Attorney (Registered): High Court

Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
1,666	1,581	1,452	1,245

7. Care representatives

Where a person has reduced capacity to make certain decisions (that is, diminished mental capacity) and wishes to apply for a Nursing Home Loan, the Circuit Court can appoint a Care Representative to act on behalf of the person in respect of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme and especially in respect of the Nursing Home Loan. The Care Representative can also act on behalf of the person in relation to making an application for a Care Needs Assessment, State support, or any other matter relating to the scheme.

Care Representatives: Circuit Court

Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
267	716	286	611

8. Mental Health Act applications

A person can appeal the making of an admission order or a renewal order by a mental health tribunal to the Circuit Court under the Mental Health Act 2001.

Mental Health Act Applications: Circuit Court

Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
119	112	42	30

9. Personal insolvency (self) (see also page 84)

The Insolvency Service of Ireland administers the debt settlement procedures introduced under the Personal Insolvency Act 2012. The Act introduced three debt resolution mechanisms for people who cannot afford to pay their personal debts. Applications may be made to the Circuit Court or to the High Court.

A **Debt Relief Notice** allows for the write-off of qualifying debt up to €35,000, subject to a 3-year supervision period. The Circuit Court has exclusive jurisdiction to hear applications.

A **Protective Certificate** (PIA & DSA) offers a debtor and their assets protection from legal proceedings by creditors in respect of debts for a limited time while they are applying for a DSA or PIA. A Protective Certificate remains in force for a period of 70 days but may be extended in limited circumstances.

A **Debt Settlement Arrangement** applies to the agreed settlement of unsecured debts, usually over a period of 5 years. The Circuit Court has exclusive jurisdiction to hear applications where the total value of unsecured debts does not exceed €2.5m. Where qualifying debts exceed €2.5m but do not exceed €3m, jurisdiction is vested in the High Court. For debts above €3m, the Act does not apply, and people are expected in the main to consider applying for bankruptcy.

An **Objection of Creditor to a Proposal for Debt Settlement Arrangement** is an objection made by a Creditor to the proposal for a Debt Settlement Arrangement

A **Personal Insolvency Arrangement** applies to the agreed settlement and/or restructuring of secured debts up to a total of €3 million (as well as unsecured debts) over a period of 6 years. The Circuit Court has exclusive jurisdiction to hear applications where the total value of qualifying debts does not exceed €2.5m. Where qualifying debts exceed €2.5m but do not exceed €3m, jurisdiction is vested in the High Court.

An **Objection of Creditor to a Proposal for Personal Insolvency Arrangement** is an objection made by a Creditor to the proposal for a Personal Insolvency Arrangement.

An Application Pursuant to Section 115A(9) of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012-2015 affords a debtor an opportunity to have Personal Insolvency Arrangements ("PIA"s), which has been rejected by creditors, reviewed by the Court under certain circumstances.

An **Objection of Creditor to a Proposal for Application Pursuant to Section 115A(9) of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012-2015** is an objection made by a Creditor to the proposal for an Application pursuant to Section 115A(9) of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012-2015

Bankruptcy applications may be made to the High Court by creditors or by debtors in person ('self-adjudications'). See below for details of applications by debtors to be adjudicated bankrupt. Details of pre-bankruptcy applications by creditors ('bankruptcy summonses') and details of applications by creditors to have debtors adjudicated bankrupt are on page 84.



Personal Insolvency: High Court

	Incoming		Resolved – by court							
			Approve request		Refused		Struck out		Withdrawn	
	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022
Debt settlement arrangements	3	3	4	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
Personal insolvency arrangements	5	7	10	17	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	10	14	26	2	0	0	0	0	0

Personal Insolvency: Circuit Court

	Incoming		Resolved – by court							
			Approve request		Refused		Struck out			
	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022
	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022
Debt relief notices	171	173	163	173	1	0	0	0	0	0
Debt settlement arrangements	96	75	98	75	0	0	1	1	1	1
Personal Insolvency Arrangements	548	614	535	593	0	2	0	0	0	0
Protective Certificate (PIA & DSA)	1,369	1,114	1,296	1,099	0	1	2	1	2	1
Application Pursuant to Section 115A(9) of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012-2015	337	225	109	64	36	13	13	1	13	1
Application to Extend the Period of a Protective Certificate (PIA and DSA)	576	469	563	458	5	2	0	0	0	0
Objection of Creditor to a Proposal for Application Pursuant to Section 115A(9) of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012-2015	264	152	38	19	18	1	12	2	12	2
Objection of Creditor to a Proposal for Personal Insolvency Arrangement	25	14	6	1	2	1	1	0	1	0
Total	3,386	2,836	2,808	2,482	62	20	29	5	29	5



Bankruptcy Petitions (Self): High Court

Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
		Adjudicated / granted / approved	Adjudicated / granted / approved
78	92	72	93

Personal Insolvency Appeals from the Circuit Court to the High Court

	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court	7	58	46	42

10. Licensing

The majority of applications for licences are made to the District Court. They include pub, restaurant, dance and lottery licences with applications for special exemption orders comprising over 80% of applications in any year. Special exemption orders exempt the holder of an on-licence from the provisions of the Intoxicating Liquor Act relating to prohibited hours in respect of licensed premises.

Licensing	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Circuit Court	250	203	209	146
District Court	41,884	44,052	41,844	42,067
Total	42,134	44,255	41,693	42,213

11. Marriage exemption

The Circuit Court can exempt persons wishing to marry from the requirement to give three months' notice to the Registrar of Marriages. It can also exempt persons from the age requirements for marriage.

Marriage Exemption: Short Notice: Circuit Court

Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
521	743	484	674



Foreign proceedings

1. Service of documents

Service Of Documents	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court*	102	89	58	49
Circuit Court	3,720	3,588	94	113

* Hague Convention (proceedings initiated in non-EU countries)

2. Maintenance (foreign)

Maintenance (Foreign)	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court*	30	7	0	2
District Court	124	127	83	102

* applications under Regulation (EC) 4/2020

3. Other

Taking Of Evidence: Circuit Court			
Incoming		Resolved	
2023	2022	2023	2022
88	116	88	116

3. Non-Litigious Enforcement Cases

Following judgment, a creditor can choose a number of routes to obtain payment of money adjudged to be owed by a debtor, or the return of property the subject of possession proceedings ('enforce the judgment'). In general, once the creditor has a judgment order, the judgment can be enforced. Enforcement orders can be issued by court offices – the creditor does not have to go back to court for the order. Creditors have 12 years from the date of the judgment to look for enforcement orders.

1. Execution orders issued – following judgments marked in the office in debt cases

	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court*	213	100	100	100
Circuit Court	630	656	865	716
Total	843	756	965	816

* includes execution orders issued on foot of court orders

2. Execution orders issued – on foot of court orders

	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Circuit Court	360	288	383	287

3. Execution orders issued – possession cases

	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court	8	8	8	8
Circuit Court	216	145	234	141
Total	224	153	242	149

4. Judgments registered

Judgments Registered *	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court; Circuit Court; District Court	1,238	1,257	1,238	1,257

* judgments of High Court, Circuit Court and District Court are registered in High Court Central Office



5. Judgment mortgage certificates issued

Judgment Mortgage Certificates Issued	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court	261	200	261	200
Circuit Court	225	253	225	253
District Court	266	198	266	198
Total	752	651	752	651

6. Satisfaction piece issued

Satisfaction Piece Issued	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
High Court	51	34	51	34
Circuit Court	26	49	26	49
District Court	61	74	61	74
Total	138	157	138	157





4. Appeals

Appeals				
Civil and Family Law	Incoming		Resolved	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Circuit Court to High Court	318	295	225	202
District Court to Circuit Court	883	812	710	614
Total	1,201	1,107	935	816

5. Cases Stated

Case stated is a procedure by which a court or tribunal can ask another court for its opinion on a point of law. There are two kinds: consultative case stated and appeal by way of case stated.

	2023		2022	
	Received	Orders made	Received	Orders made
District Court to High Court	13	9	14	9
Revenue to High Court	27	20	9	45

6. Miscellaneous

1. Written judgments

The High Court may decide following the hearing of a matter to 'reserve' its decision to another date. The decision may subsequently be delivered in the form of a written judgment. Many High Court judgments are available on the website of the Service: courts.ie.

High Court				
Written Judgments	2023	2022	2021	2020
Delivered	691	738	810	677



2. Notices of motion

A Notice of Motion is a formal notice to participants in litigation of an intention on the part of another party to seek particular relief from the court. There may be numerous notices of motion issued in the course of an action and notices of motion may be adjourned a number of times before they are dealt with.

Notices Of Motion	Issued/dealt with	
	2023	2022
High Court	10,172	12,217
Circuit Court	25,947	26,423

* includes adjournments

3. Case progression (family law)

Case progression is the term given to the management of a case before it comes to trial. Its purpose is to ensure that proceedings are prepared in a manner which is fair, efficient and likely to keep the costs as low as possible. It also ensures that time and other resources of the court are put to best use.

Case Progression: Family Law	Number of hearings	
	2023	2022
Circuit Court	5,650	5,634



Criminal Business

Criminal Business: By Offence	Incoming		Resolved (orders made)*	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Serious criminal offences: Central Criminal Court; Special Criminal Court; Circuit Criminal Court	19,569	21,024	26,486	24,242
Misdemeanour and/or minor criminal offences: District Court	329,714	338,825	294,100	266,922
Appeals: Supreme Court; Court of Appeal; Circuit Court	17,773	17,245	17,806	17,751
Total	367,056	377,094	338,392	308,315

* orders made in respect of offences. Note that there may be more than one order made in respect of an individual offence

	Number of Trials		
	2023	2022	2021
Special Criminal Court	4	7	7
Central Criminal Court	125	118	74
Circuit Criminal Court	362	357	256

District Court

The District Court exercising its criminal jurisdiction deals with four particular types of offences: summary offences, indictable offences which are triable summarily (these include 'minor offences'), indictable offences that may be dealt with summarily and indictable offences which are not triable summarily. When the District Court hears a criminal case, the judge sits without a jury. The District Judge decides the issues of fact and whether to convict. He or she also determines the sentence. In the case of most indictable offences which have to be tried by a judge sitting with a jury, the District Court may impose sentence where the accused pleads guilty provided that the Director of Public Prosecutions consents and the judge accepts the guilty plea. Otherwise, the accused is sent forward to the Circuit Court on his signed plea of guilty for sentencing. The District Court has a limit on the sentence it may impose in respect of a single criminal charge of 12 months imprisonment.

It is important to note that there can be more than one order made in respect of an offence.



Criminal Business: District Court Categories	Incoming		Resolved: offences: orders made		
	Offences	Defendants	Summary	Indictable dealt with summarily	Sent forward for trial*
Drugs	29,809	15,858	1,018	20,889	3,343
Larceny/Fraud/Robbery	33,829	13,278	12	24,356	4,618
Other	48,276	30,169	33,177	7,520	6,347
Public Order/Assault	43,750	23,689	34,134	3,098	2,588
Road Traffic	170,839	115,747	148,772	849	315
Sexual	3,211	680	76	177	2,811
Total	329,714	199,421	217,189	56,889	20,022

*Note: There is usually only one order made when an offence is being sent forward for trial

Summary Offences: Outcomes: Orders Made: District Court													
	Dis	S/O	TIC	Fine	Bond	Disq	C/S	Prob	Imp*	Susp	Other	3rd Pay	Total
Drugs	56	253	198	125	7	0	8	89	87	68	127	0	1,018
Larceny/ Fraud/ Robbery	1	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	12
Other	1,348	12,040	4,865	7,678	98	31	61	1,713	841	788	3,714	0	33,177
Public Order/ Assault	1,236	8,187	8,026	6,327	393	4	227	2,976	1,446	1,288	4,024	0	34,134
Road Traffic	3,744	48,922	17,269	38,141	10	9,681	274	631	976	1,205	14,592	13,327	148,772
Sexual	4	14	4	10	0	0	0	18	10	9	7	0	76
Total	6,389	69,420	30,363	52,282	508	9,716	570	5,427	3,361	3,359	22,467	13,327	217,189

Note: There is usually only one order made when an offence is dismissed, struck out or taken into consideration. There may be more than one order made when the penalty imposed in respect of an offence is a fine, bond, disqualification, community service, probation, imprisonment/detention, or sentence suspended.

Key: Dis = dismiss S/O = strike out TIC = taken into consideration Disq = disqualified C/S = community service Prob = probation Imp = imprisonment or detention* Susp = suspended sentence Fixed = fixed penalty 3rd Pay = 3rd Pay Option

* refers to detention of a person under 18 in a detention centre



Indictable Offences Dealt With Summarily: Outcomes: Orders Made: District Court 2023

	Dis	S/O	TIC	Fine	Bond	Disq	C/O	Prob	Imp*	Susp	Other	3rd Pay	Total
Drugs	609	5,952	2,919	3,201	39	7	265	1,958	653	1,028	4,258	0	20,889
Larceny/ Fraud/ Robbery	660	5,318	5,833	1,749	183	28	212	2,652	3,310	1,722	2,689	0	24,356
Other	347	2,206	1,217	492	65	3	86	686	655	499	1,264	0	7,520
Public Order/ Assault	242	1,072	103	134	70	1	49	269	207	334	617	0	3,098
Road Traffic	46	229	112	44	1	42	14	66	116	42	137	0	849
Sexual	15	74	4	9	1	0	0	20	6	20	28	0	177
Total	1,919	14,851	10,188	5,629	359	81	626	5,651	4,947	3,645	8,993	0	56,889

Note: There is usually only one order made when an offence is dismissed, struck out or taken into consideration. There may be more than one order made when the penalty imposed in respect of an offence is a fine, bond, disqualification, community service, probation, imprisonment/detention, or sentence suspended.

Key: Dis = dismiss. S/O = strike out TIC = taken into consideration Disq = disqualified C/S = community service 3rd Pay = 3rd Pay Option Prob = probation Imp = imprisonment or detention* Susp = suspended sentence

* refers to detention of a person under 18 in a detention centre

Specific Road Traffic Offences: Orders Made: District Court 2023

	Dis	S/O	TIC	Fine	Bond	Disq	C/S	Prob	Imp*	Susp	Other	3rd Pay	Total
Dangerous Driving	146	1,265	422	563	0	783	38	48	117	109	1,469	0	4,960
Drink/ Drug Driving	627	1,262	129	3,253	2	3,808	30	41	106	196	530	0	9,987
Offences attracting Penalty Points	1,559	13,764	2,071	17,622	0	4,465	126	150	500	685	3,324	8,746	53,012
Total	2,332	16,291	2,622	21,438	2	9,056	194	239	723	990	5,323	8,746	67,959

Note: This is a selection of specific road traffic offences - not the full total. There is usually only one order made when an offence is dismissed, struck out or taken into consideration. There may be more than one order made when the penalty imposed in respect of an offence is a fine, bond, disqualification, community service, probation, imprisonment/detention, or sentence suspended.

Key: Dis = dismiss. S/O = strike out TIC = taken into consideration Disq = disqualified C/S = community service

Prob = probation Imp = imprisonment or detention* Susp = suspended sentence 3rd 3rd Pay = 3rd Pay Option

* refers to detention of a person under 18 in a detention centre



Juvenile Crime

The age of criminal responsibility in Ireland is 12 years (section 52 Children Act 2001, as amended by section 129 Criminal Justice Act 2006). Children who have not reached the age of 12 years cannot be charged with an offence. There is an exception for children aged 10 or 11 who can be charged with murder, manslaughter, rape, rape under section 4 of the Criminal Law (Rape)(Amendment) Act 1990 or aggravated sexual assault. In addition, where a child under 14 years of age is charged with an offence, no further proceedings can be taken without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The majority of children who come before the courts are aged between 15 and 17 years.

District Court: Juvenile Crime. Orders made.

	Dis	S/O	TIC	Fine	Bond	Disq	C/S	Prob	Imp*	Susp	Other	3rd Pay	Total
Drugs	70	157	94	22	0	0	15	119	4	5	32	0	518
Larceny/ Fraud/ Robbery	75	221	155	25	10	0	19	237	61	12	97	0	912
Other	29	116	110	15	9	0	9	69	8	4	70	0	439
Public Order/ Assault	49	229	117	41	18	0	9	276	27	10	110	0	886
Road Traffic	48	256	222	70	2	72	11	104	41	4	84	1	915
Sexual	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	2	1	0	11
Total	271	983	698	173	39	72	63	809	141	37	394	1	3,681

Note: There is usually only one order made when an offence is dismissed, struck out or taken into consideration. There may be more than one order made when the penalty imposed in respect of an offence is a fine, bond, disqualification, community service, probation, imprisonment/detention, or sentence suspended.

Key: Dis = dismiss. S/O = strike out TIC = taken into consideration Disq = disqualified C/S = community service Prob = probation Imp = imprisonment or detention Susp = suspended sentence 3rd Pay = 3rd Pay Option*

** refers to detention of a person under 18 in a detention centre*

Circuit Court

The Circuit Court deals with all indictable offences except murder, rape, aggravated sexual assault, treason, piracy and related offences. This jurisdiction is exercisable in the area where the offence has been committed or where the accused person has been arrested or resides. In Circuit Courts outside Dublin, the trial judge may transfer a trial to the Dublin Circuit Criminal Court on application by the prosecution or the defence and if satisfied that it would be unjust not to do so. Criminal cases dealt with by the Circuit Criminal Court begin in the District Court and are sent forward to the Circuit Court for trial or sentencing. Where a person is sent forward to the Circuit Criminal Court for trial the case is heard by judge and jury although a person can change their plea to guilty and dispense with a trial. Certain indictable offences of a minor nature can be heard in the District Court where the DPP and or the accused consents.

Offences:	Incoming		Resolved: offences							Total
	Offences	Defendants*	Guilty	Trials		N/P	TIC	Quash	Deceased	
				Convicted	Acquitted					
Assault	1,609	1,071	1,832	65	70	399	180	1	5	2,552
Child Abuse	69	28	36	4	4	11	15	0	0	70
Drugs	3,368	865	2,803	69	12	946	486	0	23	4,339
Firearms	851	645	517	27	40	315	220	0	1	1,120
Larceny/ Fraud/ Robbery	4,626	1,275	3,450	93	30	1,142	1,398	0	9	6,122
Mans- laughter	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Other	4,308	1,906	2,908	133	84	1,004	787	0	16	4,932
Road Traffic	336	205	694	71	25	226	232	0	0	1,248
Sexual	1,707	275	987	296	245	676	793	0	51	3,048
Total	16,875	6,271	13,229	758	510	4,719	4,111	1	105	23,433

* Note: There is usually only one order made when an offence is being sent forward for trial.



Offences: Outcomes Following Convictions : Circuit Court

	TIC	Fine	Bond	Disq	C/S	Prob	Imp*	Susp	Other	Total
Assault	69	8	577	16	36	138	579	321	156	1,900
Child Abuse	1	1	14	0	0	1	9	10	30	66
Drugs	237	13	680	3	31	134	395	500	909	2,902
Firearms	90	1	137	1	10	10	142	81	72	544
Larceny/ Fraud/ Robbery	541	9	1,059	2	31	198	1,055	415	198	3,508
Mans- laughter	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Other	248	98	874	19	77	115	756	552	269	3,008
Road Traffic	122	25	97	204	5	9	193	87	17	759
Sexual	155	2	311	0	1	48	530	85	181	1,313
Total	1,463	157	3,750	245	191	653	3,660	2,051	1,832	14,002

Key: TIC = taken into consideration Disq = disqualified C/S = community service Prob = probation Imp = imprisonment or detention* Susp = suspended sentence

* refers to detention of a person under 18 in a detention centre.

Appeals From District Court : Circuit Court

Categories	Incoming		Resolved: offences					Total
	Off	Def	Aff	Var	Rev	Withdrawn	S/O N/A	
Drugs	1,078	677	124	420	64	178	149	935
Larceny/Fraud/Robbery	2,084	1,901	294	669	68	602	614	2,247
Other	2,196	1,879	331	648	240	434	479	2,132
Public Order/Assault	2,157	1,484	388	661	147	484	456	2,136
Road Traffic	7,491	3,541	1,422	2,598	2,070	1,191	1,152	8,433
Sexual	25	23	0	24	1	4	2	31
Total	15,031	9,505	2,559	5,020	2,590	2,893	2,852	15,914

Key: Off = offences Def = defendants Aff = affirmed Var = varied Rev = reversed S/O = struck out S/O N/P = struck out no appearance

Special Criminal Court

The Offences Against the State Act 1939 provides for the establishment of Special Criminal Courts. The Special Criminal Court sits with three judges and no jury. The rules of evidence that apply in proceedings before the Court are the same as those applicable to trials in the Central Criminal Court. The Court is authorised by the 1939 Act to make rules governing its own practice and procedure.

Special Criminal Court		
Categories	Incoming	
	Offences	Defendants
Membership Of Illegal Organisation	2	2
Murder	0	0
Other	22	10
Possession of firearms/ammunition/explosive substance	2	2
Theft	9	1
Threaten To Kill	0	0
Total	35	15

* there may be more than one offence brought against a defendant

Categories	Offences : (All Outcomes)					
	Conviction (Guilty plea)	Conviction (trial)	Acquittal	TIC	Nolle Prosequi	Total Offences resolved
Murder	0	0	1	0	0	1
Other	3	3	0	35	2	43
Possession of firearms/ammunition/explosive substance	5	0	0	2	0	7
Theft	0	0	3	0	0	3
Threaten To Kill	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	9	3	4	37	2	55



Offences : (Convictions)			
Categories	Num Offences	Num Defendants	Total Convictions
Murder	0	0	0
Other	5	1	6
Possession of firearms/ ammunition/explosive substance	5	0	5
Theft	0	0	0
Threaten To Kill	1	0	1
Total	11	1	12





High Court: Central Criminal Court

The High Court exercising its criminal jurisdiction is known as the Central Criminal Court. It consists of a judge or judges of the High Court. The court sits at such time and in such places as the President of the High Court may direct and tries criminal cases which are outside the jurisdiction of the Circuit Court. The court mainly hears murder and rape trials and criminal trials under the Competition Act 2002. An appeal against conviction or sentence by the Central Criminal Court may be taken to the Court of Appeal.

Offences: Trials And Defendants: Central Criminal Court	Trials	Defendants
Assault	17	12
Murder (Including Attempted Murder)	29	22
Other	21	15
Rape (Including Attempted Rape)	721	101
Sexual Offences	697	68
Total	1,485	218

Offences: Outcome (All Outcomes) : Central Criminal Court									
Central Criminal Court Offence type	Incoming		Resolved						
	Off	Def	Guilty Pleas	Trials	Nolle Prosequi	TIC *	Quash	Dec	Total
Assault	63	31	18	14	30	10	0	0	72
Murder (Including Attempted Murder)	52	48	15	25	8	0	0	0	48
Other ***	90	38	39	21	46	14	0	0	120
Rape (Including Attempted Rape)	1,168	184	92	569	363	174	0	58	1,256
Sexual Offences **	1,286	135	240	614	255	296	0	97	1,502
Total	2,659	436	404	1,243	702	494	0	155	2,998

* TIC – ‘taken into consideration’ – offences may be taken into consideration where an offender is sentenced on other multiple offences.

** includes serious offences such as sexual assault and sexual offences against children, previously reported under ‘other’.

*** includes impeding a prosecution, accessory to manslaughter, false imprisonment, criminal damage, possession of a knife, burglary.

Key: Off = offences Def = defendants G/P = guilty pleas N/P = nolle prosequi Dec = accused deceased


Offences: Resolved: Outcome Of Trials : Central Criminal Court

Offence type	Convicted	Acquitted	Disagreed	Committal: not guilty by reason of insanity	Prohibited	Total*
Assault	9	2	2	1	0	14
Murder (Including Attempted Murder)	23	4	2	3	0	32
Other	11	5	4	2	0	22
Rape (Including Attempted Rape)	672	94	31	0	0	797
Sexual Offences	594	100	27	0	0	721
Total	1,309	205	66	6	0	1,586

*The no. of offences for the Trial Outcomes is higher than the no. of offences that are resolved by trials, because a single offence may have more than one result. For example, 'Imprisonment Part Suspended' and 'Probation'

Offences: Resolved: Penalties Imposed On Conviction : Central Criminal Court

	Fines	Det (minors)	Imp F/S	Imp P/S	Imp	Total
Assault	0	1	1	8	15	25
Murder (Including Attempted Murder)	0	0	0	15	19	34
Other	0	4	0	12	28	44
Rape (Including Attempted Rape)	0	6	0	218	316	540
Sexual Offences	0	9	13	76	607	705
Total	0	20	14	329	985	1,348

Key: Det (minors) = detention of a person under 18 years in a detention centre Imp F/S = imprisonment fully suspended Imp P/S = imprisonment/detention* part suspended

* includes manslaughter

**Offences: Resolved: Length Of Sentences Imposed On Conviction*: Central Criminal Court**

	Up to 2 years	Over 2 years to 5 years	Over 5 years to 10 years	Over 10 years	Life	Total
Assault	2	9	12	2	0	25
Murder (Including Attempted Murder)	0	1	5	12	16	34
Other	3	20	16	4	1	44
Rape	38	34	135	290	42	539
Sexual Offences	112	262	256	75	0	705
Total	155	326	424	383	59	1,347

Figures include suspended sentences

* Other includes manslaughter

Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017

The Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017 gives effect to provisions of Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25th October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA. The Courts Service commenced the collection of statistical information in compliance with section 30 of the Act during 2018.

Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017

Evidence given by video link	Evidence given behind a screen	Intermediaries used
24	1	6

Court Of Appeal**Court of Appeal: Civil**

The Court of Appeal hears appeals in civil proceedings from the High Court except for those cases in which the Supreme Court has permitted an appeal to it on being satisfied that the appeal meets the threshold set out in Article 34.5.4° of the Constitution.

The Court also determines questions of law referred to it by the Circuit Court and the High Court and also a Military judge hearing a Court-Martial (cases stated).

During 2023, the Court continued to actively manage the balance of the appeals transferred from the Supreme Court which had been initiated before the establishment of the court on 28 October 2014 and had not been fully or partly heard by the Supreme Court by that date (Article 64 appeals). Of the original 1,360 appeals transferred from the Supreme Court in 2014, 14 were disposed of leaving a very small balance of 6. However, it should be noted that all outstanding legacy cases were listed before the Court and have been allocated hearing dates.

The Court continued to operate a weekly directions list for new appeals which allows the court to case manage every new appeal lodged and this was done through the use of both physical attendance and Virtual/Hybrid attendance. There was a small increase (4.5%) in the number of Appeals issued when compared to 2022.



New appeals

New Appeals : Court Of Appeal			
Incoming 2023	Incoming 2022	Resolved 2023	Resolved 2022
325	311	368	362

New Appeals : Court Of Appeal								
Case type	Incoming 2023	Incoming 2022	Resolved 2023			Resolved 2022		
			In Court		Out of court	In Court		Out of court
			Determined	Withdrawn	Withdrawn	Determined	Withdrawn	Withdrawn
Article 40/ Habeas Corpus	1	3	5	0	1	5	1	0
Bail	1	6	2	0	0	3	3	0
Chancery	49	53	57	4	7	42	11	3
Commercial	58	27	17	5	6	24	10	1
Company	7	5	9	1	0	12	3	0
Constitution	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Contract	0	1	4	0	0	4	0	0
Criminal	19	16	13	0	0	13	3	0
Extradition	1	0	3	0	0	2	1	0
Family	14	12	16	1	0	6	4	0
Insolvency (Corporate)	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0
Insolvency (Personal)	4	5	4	1	0	7	3	0
Judicial Review (Asylum related)	15	10	9	1	2	8	3	7
Judicial review (Other)	43	38	37	11	6	23	15	7
Personal injury	23	19	22	1	1	23	13	4
Plenary	32	26	34	2	3	18	3	0
Proceeds of Crime Act	1	6	2	0	0	3	0	0
Security for costs	0	1	1	0	0	3	1	0
Summary judgment	12	27	32	4	6	13	8	1
Other	45	54	30	2	4	34	8	3
Total	325	311	298	34	36	245	91	26



2. Article 64 appeals

There were 6 Article 64 appeals pending as of the end of 2023 with 14 Article 64 appeals having been disposed of in 2023.

Article 64 Appeals (Appeals Transferred From Supreme Court)

Resolved 2023	Resolved 2022	Resolved 2021	Resolved 2020
14	4	13	22

3. Cases stated

Cases Stated : Court Of Appeal

	Received	Orders made
Circuit Court to Court of Appeal	4	6
High Court to Court of Appeal	0	0
Military Judge to Court of Appeal	0	0
Total	4	6

4. Additional matters

Additional Matters : Court Of Appeal

	2023	2022
Motions listed before the Court	113	115
Appeals from appellants in person	92 (28%)	85 (27%)
Written judgments delivered	337	315
Length of appeal hearing:		
• One day or less	325	284
• Greater than one day but less than two days	3	2
• Two days or more	4	2



Court of Appeal: Criminal

The Court of Appeal also deals with appeals from the Circuit Criminal Courts, Central Criminal Court and Special Criminal Court. Hearing dates are allocated during the subsequent legal term for the majority of cases included in the List to Fix Dates which is held once a term. Appeals are actively managed on a weekly basis by the judge assigned to the management of criminal lists to ensure that cases are dealt with as efficiently as possible and delays in cases progressing to the List to Fix Dates due to procedural issues arising are kept to a minimum. Applications for priority may be made at the weekly management list.

In addition, Civil appeals with a custody/criminal element (bail, Article 40/habeas corpus, judicial review and extradition) and Appeals from a Military Judge were accommodated as required without impacting on the waiting time for criminal appeals.

There were 308 appeals issued in respect of 2,701 offences lodged in the Court of Appeal (Criminal) in 2023. This compares to 261 appeals in respect of 2,022 offences lodged in 2022 marking an 18% increase year on year and is significantly up on the increase of 5% in 2022 over 2021. The Court disposed of 304 appeals in respect of 1,847 offences (270 appeals in respect of 1,872 offences in 2022).

Appeals: Criminal

Incoming	Resolved		
	In court		Out of court
	Determined	Withdrawn	Withdrawn
308	172	70	62

Court of origin	Appeals		Percentage of appeals	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Central Criminal Court	78	73	25%	28%
Circuit Criminal Court	224	175	73%	67%
Court Martial	2	0	1%	0%
Special Criminal Court	4	13	1%	5%
Total	308	261	100%	100%

Appeals: Outcomes

Court of origin	Conviction	Sentence (severity)	Sentence (leniency)	Other	Total
Central Criminal Court	44	14	9	1	68
Circuit Criminal Court	51	141	32	1	225
Court Martial	1	0	0	0	1
Special Criminal Court	8	2	0	0	10
Total	104	157	41	2	304



Appeals - Incoming (By Court Of Origin) : Court Of Appeal

Categories (by offence)	Incoming			Total
	Central Criminal Court	Circuit Criminal Court	Special Criminal Court	
Assault	57	146	1	204
Drugs/Misuse of Drugs	0	179	0	179
Firearms/weapon/possession of explosives/ ammunition	10	58	2	70
Manslaughter	2	0	0	2
Murder	18	0	0	18
Public Order	0	18	0	18
Rape	294	1	0	295
Road Traffic	0	85	0	85
Sexual Offences	442	653	0	1,095
Theft/Fraud/Robbery	2	174	0	176
Other	39	506	14	559
Total	864	1,820	17	2,701

Appeals : Outcomes : Court Of Appeal

Categories (by offence)	Resolved			Total
	Central Criminal Court	Circuit Criminal Court	Special Criminal Court	
Assault	7	106	1	114
Drugs/Misuse of Drugs	0	127	0	127
Firearms/weapon/possession of explosives/ammunition	4	44	2	50
Manslaughter	0	0	0	0
Murder	17	0	2	19
Public Order	0	17	0	17
Rape	285	22	0	307
Road Traffic	0	89	0	89
Sexual Offences	334	231	0	565
Theft/Fraud/Robbery	1	136	11	148
Other	21	365	25	411
Total	669	1,137	41	1,847



Appeals: Resolved (By Offence) Court of Appeal

Categories (by offence)	Resolved							Total
	Conviction	Sentence (severity)	Conviction and Sentence	Sentence (leniency)	DPP (dismissal)	MC*	Other	
Assault	12	57	22	23	0	0	0	114
Drugs/ Misuse of Drugs	3	107	6	11	0	0	0	127
Firearms/ weapon/ possession of explosives/ ammunition	8	33	4	5	0	0	0	50
Manslaughter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Murder	13	4	1	1	0	0	0	19
Public Order	1	13	1	2	0	0	0	17
Rape	97	82	55	69	0	0	4	307
Road Traffic	0	67	11	11	0	0	0	89
Sexual Offences	160	83	137	183	0	0	2	565
Theft/Fraud/ Robbery	18	100	12	18	0	0	0	148
Other	67	174	57	113	0	0	0	411
Total	379	720	306	436	0	0	6	1,847

* miscarriage of justice



Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is the court of final appeal in civil and criminal matters. Appeals may be made only where the court grants permission in limited circumstances as set out in the Constitution. The court therefore concentrates on cases raising important constitutional and legal questions that have far reaching consequences for individuals and have systemic implications for the administration of justice as a whole.

The 2023 year-end position has seen an increase of 10% in the number of applications for leave filed when compared to 2022. In addition, there has been a 9% increase in the number of applications determined. There has also been a reduction in the total number of appeals determined, in significant part, due to the Court being required to determine the Reference by the President within the timeframe required by Article 26 of the Constitution. Currently litigants at final appellate level where leave to appeal has been granted can ordinarily expect a hearing within 20 weeks. In this context the Court has no backlog and the cases not disposed are not delayed other than by the extent to which parties require time to fulfil necessary procedural steps.

Incoming: Origin Of Applications For Leave To Appeal	2023	2022
High Court to Supreme Court	59	60
Court of Appeal to Supreme Court	101	85
Total	160	145

Overview : Supreme Court						
Overview Applications for Leave			Overview Appeals (current)		Overview Total Cases	
	Incoming	Resolved	Incoming	Resolved	Incoming	Resolved
Civil	129	123	46	27	175	147
Criminal	31	37	10	5	41	45
Total	160	160	56	32	216	192

Other Matters : Supreme Court	2023	2022
Motions listed before the court	5	5
Reserved judgments delivered	61	80
Applications for leave to appeal from appellants in person	51	53
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cases at hearing for one day or less 	25	26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cases at hearing for two days or more 	17	16
Commissioners for Oaths appointed	22	15
Notaries Public appointed	11	12



Case analysis

Average length of proceedings - first instance courts

Civil : In Days - From Issue To Disposal		
	High Court	
	2023	2022
All	796	733
Asylum	203	175
Bail	15	14
Chancery	553	517
Extradition	71	100
Family	714	664
Judicial Review	217	208
Personal Injury	1,120	1,188

Criminal: District Criminal: Average Length In Days					
Summary		Indictable dealt with summarily		Return for trial	
2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022
397	369	441	440	136	117

Summary: time from issue of summons to disposal of offence in the District Court

Indictable dealt with summarily: time from lodgement of charge sheet to disposal of offence in the District Court

Return for trial: time from lodgement of charge sheet to transfer of offence to higher court for trial.

Criminal: Circuit Court - Average Length In Days *		
	2023	2022
All	622	569

** time from receipt of return for trial in Circuit Court to final order*

Criminal: Central Criminal Court - Average Length In Days *		
	2023	2022
All	888	738

** time from receipt of return for trial to final order*



Criminal: Special Criminal Court - Average Length In Days *

	2023	2022
All	386	464

* time from receipt of charge sheet to final order

Average length of proceedings (in days) (from issue to disposal) (second instance courts)

Civil: Court Of Appeal – Appeals*

	2023	2022
All (new appeals and Article 64 appeals)	553 Days	527 days

* time from issue of notice of appeal to final order

Criminal: Court Of Appeal – Appeals*

	2023	2022
All	426 Days	461 days

* time from issue of notice of appeal to final order

Average length of proceedings (in weeks) from issue to disposal (highest instance courts)

Supreme Court	2023	2022
Application for Leave Determined (issue to determination date)	17	18
Application for Leave Determined (from papers being ready to determination)	4	5
Appeals (from grant of leave to case disposal)	47	62



Waiting times

District Court – criminal, civil and family

Criminal: Waiting Time

Summons:

The time from receipt of summons application to scheduled date for hearing. There is an agreement with An Garda Síochána as part of Criminal Justice Interoperability Project that a period of 12-14 weeks will be allowed between the issuing of a summons and the first court date to allow time for service of the summons. The waiting times for criminal summonses generally reflect this agreement. Summonses may not be disposed on the first scheduled hearing date.

Charge sheets:

The time from receipt of a charge sheet to the first court date. Charge sheet cases are initially listed before the court usually within a day of the person being charged by An Garda Síochána. The first listing may not be the date of the hearing of the matter as the court may adjourn/postpone the hearing for a variety of reasons. The time between the first appearance before the court and the final disposal of the case is outside the control of the Courts Service, but details are provided here.

Civil: Waiting Time

Applications:

The time from receipt of application to date when application is listed for hearing. This may not be the date that the matter is disposed of. A waiting time of up to 12 weeks is maintained in most offices with no waiting times of more than six months in recent years.

Family : Waiting Time

Applications:

The time from receipt of application to date when application is listed for hearing. This may not be the date that the matter is disposed of. Emergency domestic violence applications are dealt with on the date of first application to the court. In the majority of District Court Districts, waiting time for the hearing of these applications have not increased despite an ongoing increase in the volume and complexity of cases. Cases are listed for hearing in most instances within four to eight weeks of the date of the initial application.



District Court: Waiting Times Shown In Weeks (average of the waiting times across the year)

Office	Criminal		Civil	Family Law	
	Summonses	Charge sheets	Applications	Domestic violence applications *	Maintenance / Guardianship applications
	1	2	3	4	5
Athlone	35	33	6	7	8
Ballina	21	35	13	4	8
Bray	36	50	36	14	15
Carlow	22	31	8	14	14
Carrick-on-Shannon	39	52	14	9	14
Castlebar	24	33	16	12	24
Cavan	48	45	10	12	12
Clonakilty	24	44	8	3	4
Clonmel	24	23	8	4	7
Cork	20	24	11	9	14
Donegal	38	43	8	4	8
Dublin	39	61	14	14	17
Dundalk	15	39	7	10	9
Ennis	17	24	19	7	10
Galway	22	31	9	13	14
Kilkenny	13	25	4	7	8
Letterkenny	44	48	8	9	10
Limerick	27	42	10	5	8
Longford	27	34	12	11	20
Loughrea	25	42	11	3	10
Mallow	19	29	7	5	6
Monaghan	25	32	4	10	5
Mullingar	40	60	7	7	8
Naas	53	41	18	9	33
Nenagh	31	46	8	10	13
Portlaoise	20	21	11	11	11
Roscommon	44	27	10	3	6
Sligo	41	36	4	16	15
Tralee	29	34	9	3	5
Trim	24	57	6	6	6
Tullamore	11	28	7	9	9
Waterford	31	34	9	6	6
Wexford	25	37	19	14	14



* Urgent interim applications are dealt with immediately i.e. on next sitting day in every District

- (1) Time FROM the date of the first hearing of an offence TO the date of the Final Order (when the offence is resolved).
- (2) Time FROM the date of the first hearing of an offence TO the date of the Final Order (when the offence is resolved).
- (3) Time from receipt of application to date when it is actually heard - not just listed for adjourning or fixing a date.
- (4) Time from receipt of application to listing for hearing in domestic violence matters.
- (5) As (4) but for other family law applications.

Circuit Court – criminal, civil and family

Criminal

Waiting times for criminal cases vary, depending on whether the accused is on bail or in custody; on whether the plea is 'guilty' or 'not guilty'; on whether the trial is scheduled to last two days or two weeks. In most Circuit Courts outside Dublin, the majority of guilty pleas will be dealt with at the next criminal session – making the waiting time approximately three months. Defendants who are in custody take precedence so their trials are dealt with first, followed by trials of those who are on bail.

Waiting times in Dublin Circuit Court have been impacted in recent years by the number of so-called 'white collar' cases taken by the State in the wake of the financial collapse that followed the global recession in 2008. The complicated nature of the evidence in these cases together with the number of witnesses called and the additional legal argument required has lengthened the trials with a resulting impact on the number of trial courts available for other cases.

Measures introduced to address this situation include the allocation of the additional judges (subject to the availability of courtrooms) and the listing of only one long trial at any one time.

Nature Of Matter	Waiting Time
Trials	The time from receipt of return for trial to hearing date of trial
Sentences	The time from receipt of return for trial to sentence hearing (where plea of guilty entered)
Appeals	The time from receipt of District Court appeal to date of appeal hearing



Civil

Waiting times for civil cases vary with precedence given to criminal and family law cases where resources are limited. The nature of civil business has changed in recent years with fewer short cases and an increase in longer contested cases. Waiting times for longer cases tend to be longer than for so-called 'ordinary' cases and can distort waiting times. Some longer cases are dealt with by the allocation of additional sittings to the circuit.

Nature Of Matter	Waiting Time
Trials	The time from receipt of notice of trial to hearing date
Appeals	The time from receipt of District Court appeal to date of appeal hearing

Family

Waiting times are generally less than those for civil cases due to the priority afforded to family law cases. In most circuits, consent matters are heard in the 'next session' (a waiting time of three months or less). Additional sittings are arranged for long cases.

Nature Of Matter	Waiting Time
Cases	The time from receipt of notice of trial/notice of motion to hearing date
Appeals	The time from receipt of District Court appeal to date of appeal hearing




Circuit Court: Waiting Times Shown In weeks (average of the waiting times across the year)

Office	Criminal			Civil		Family Law		
	Trials	Sentences	Appeals	Trials	Appeals	Contested cases	Non-contested cases	Appeals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Carlow	36	12	26	26	26	20	20	20
Carrick on Shannon	91	65	117	52	52	38	18	38
Castlebar	65	19	37	17	15	12	12	12
Cavan	104	17	63	52	33	52	14	14
Clonmel	97	25	39	37	20	33	5	20
Cork	19	25	19	37	22	43	14	15
Dublin	103	14	22	33	24	14	5	8
Dundalk	124	25	33	62	23	13	8	8
Ennis	66	26	16	30	30	30	23	34
Galway	95	33	19	34	27	32	4	24
Kilkenny	24	11	8	15	15	16	13	13
Letterkenny	78	30	78	83	57	44	9	70
Limerick	109	33	16	128	14	73	9	60
Longford	165	15	34	65	10	49	14	14
Monaghan	112	44	36	21	21	21	12	20
Mullingar	70	15	15	29	29	29	12	29
Naas	69	48	20	102	9	131	22	8
Portlaoise	82	55	14	14	13	19	13	13
Roscommon	55	28	21	59	26	52	14	21
Sligo	78	15	13	37	17	21	15	17
Tralee	72	48	48	48	40	36	12	36
Trim	42	54	8	54	9	52	18	18
Tullamore	75	17	14	22	22	18	15	14
Waterford	48	26	12	18	16	26	14	15
Wexford	104	6	12	49	18	20	12	18
Wicklow	65	39	20	42	20	46	30	20

- (1) Time from receipt of return for trial to hearing date of trial
 (2) Time from receipt of return for trial to sentence hearing where plea of guilty entered (3), (5), (8)
 (3) Time from receipt of District Court Appeal to date of appeal hearing
 (4) Time from receipt of notice of trial to hearing date
 (6) Time from receipt of notice of trial/notice of motion to listing for hearing in contested matter
 (7) As (6) but for uncontested matters Details of the sittings of the Circuit Court are available on the website of the Service (www.courts.ie).



High Court – civil and family

High Court: Personal Injury

Waiting time: Dublin

The High Court tries personal injury cases in Dublin every week during court sittings. Cases that are ready for hearing can obtain a date within six weeks

Waiting time in other venues

The High Court tries personal injury cases for a limited number of weeks in each of the venues below. The time from when a case is set down for trial to the date on which it is listed in the selected venue is shown below in months for each venue

Venue	2023	2022
Cork	4 weeks	12 Months
Dundalk	9 weeks	4 Months
Galway	9 weeks	2 Months
Kilkenny/Waterford	9 weeks	7 Months
Limerick	63 weeks	24 months
Sligo	4 weeks	12 months

High Court: Insolvency (Corporate)

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Applications to appoint examiner	The time from the issue of a petition to the allocation of the first return date before the High Court	Date immediately available	Date immediately available
Applications to wind up company	The time from the issue of a petition to the allocation of the first return date before the High Court	2 weeks	2 weeks

High Court: Other Corporate Applications

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Restrict directors	The time from the issue of a notice of motion to the first return date before the High Court	4 weeks	2 weeks



High Court: Insolvency (Personal)

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Applications to issue summons	The time from the issue of a summons/ petition to the first return date before the High Court	2 weeks	2 weeks
Applications for adjudication	The time from the issue of a summons/ petition to the first return date before the High Court	2 weeks	2 weeks

High Court: Commercial List (Proceedings Defined In Order 63a Rule 1 Rules Of The Superior Courts)

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Liberty to enter list (motion)	The time from the issue of a summons to the first return date before the High Court	Date immediately available	Date immediately available

High Court: Competition List

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Monday motion list	The time from the issue of a notice of motion to the first return date before the High Court	4 weeks	3 weeks

High Court: Chancery

Chancery matters commenced by plenary summons or special summons (including injunction applications, company law matters, specific performance/rescission of contracts, administration of estates of deceased persons, trust actions).

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Monday motion list	The time from the issue of a notice of motion to the first return date before the High Court	3 weeks*	3 weeks Chancery 1 Motions / 2 Weeks Chancery 2 Motions
Hearing of certified cases	The time from when a case is certified ready for hearing to the allocation of the first date for hearing before the High Court	16 weeks	4 months
Special summonses (Master's Court)	The time from the issue of a summons to the first return date before the Master of the High Court	11 weeks	7 weeks
Special summonses (High Court)	The time from the date of transfer from the Master's Court to the first return date before the High Court	3 weeks	3 weeks

*Average waiting time for Chancery 1 and Chancery 2 Motions

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2030



High Court: Possession

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Special summons for possession	The time from the issue of a summons to the first return date before the Master of the High Court	4 weeks	7 weeks
Full hearing	The time from the date of transfer from the Master's Court to the first return date before the High Court	3 weeks	3 weeks

High Court: Mortgage Suits

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Special summons for well charging order	The time from the issue of a summons to the first return date before the Master of the High Court	4 weeks	7 weeks
Full hearing	The time from the date of transfer from the Master's Court to the first return date before the High Court	3 weeks	3 weeks

High Court: Non-Jury (Breach Of Contract, Professional Negligence, Debt Collection)

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Miscellaneous (motions that require more time than they can be given in the Monday list)	The time between listing in the common law List and hearing in the non-jury List	8 weeks	7 weeks
Full hearing – cases less than one week in duration	The time from when a case is certified ready for hearing to the allocation of the first date for hearing before the High Court	21 weeks	7 months
Full hearing – cases more than one week in duration	As above	21 weeks	7 months

High Court: Possession

Nature of application	Waiting time	
	2023	2022
Full hearing - cases less than one week in duration	8 weeks	The time from the lodgement of the books of appeal to the allocation of the first date for hearing before the High Court
Full hearing - cases more than one week in duration	8 weeks	As above



High Court: Judicial Review: Asylum Related

Nature of application	Waiting time	
	2023	2022
Pre-leave	9 weeks	2 weeks
Post leave	1 week	1 month

High Court: Judicial Review: Other

Nature of application	Waiting time	
	2023	2022
Pre-leave	6 weeks	7 weeks to make ex parte application
Post leave	9 weeks	2 months
		Urgent applications are prioritised both at the pre leave and post leave stage

High Court: Jury (Defamation; False Imprisonment; Assault)

Waiting time	2023	2022
The time from when a case is certified ready for hearing to the allocation of the first date for hearing before the High Court	64 weeks	9 months

High Court: Garda Compensation Act

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Full hearing	The time from the date of transfer from the Master's Court to the first return date before the High Court	5 weeks	5 weeks

High Court: Proceeds Of Crime Act

Waiting time	2023	2022
The time from receipt of application to hearing	Date immediately available	Date immediately available

High Court: Master's Court

Nature of application	Waiting time	2023	2022
Motions	The time from the issue of a notice of motion to the first return date before the Master	8 weeks	9 weeks



High Court: Common Law Motions

Waiting time	2023	2022
The time from the issue of a notice of motion to the first return date before the High Court	5 weeks	10 weeks

High Court: Family

Nature of application	Waiting time	
	2023	2022
Urgent applications	1 week	Within 1 week
Non-contested cases	2 weeks	Within 3 weeks
Contested cases	12 weeks	Within 3 months
Applications under Hague Luxembourg Convention	0 weeks	1 week
Appeals from Circuit Court	11 weeks	Within 3 weeks

High Court – Criminal

Change to this table from previous years to add clarity and better demonstrate the waiting times.

Central Criminal Court – Waiting Times (Weeks)

	2023	2022
Priority/Custody cases	65	55
Bail Cases	95	71

Priority/Custody refers to cases that are considered urgent (e.g. where juveniles are involved) or where the accused is in custody thereby considered a priority as they are being denied liberty.

Bail refers to cases where the accused is on bail, and do not have their liberty denied while awaiting trial.

Waiting time:

	2023	2022
The time from when a charge sheet is received to the trial date	18 Months	10 Months



Court Of Appeal - Civil

Waiting time:		
The time from when an appeal is entered into the court list to the date of hearing		
	2023	2022
Appeals*	21 weeks	24 weeks
Fast tracked short appeals**	3 weeks	3 weeks

* *appeals requiring more than two hours*

***depends on time available*

Court Of Appeal - Criminal

Waiting time:		
The time from when an appeal is entered into the court list to the date of hearing		
	2023	2022
Appeals	19.5 weeks	29 weeks
Article 40/habeas corpus appeals	0.5 weeks	3 weeks
European Arrest Warrant / Judicial Review appeals	1 week	During the subsequent legal term (if no time available within the current legal term)

Supreme Court

See table on page 117.

A photograph of a modern, multi-story building with a light-colored, textured facade. The building features large glass windows and a prominent glass-enclosed entrance area. The text "Teach Cúirte Courthouse" is visible on the upper part of the facade, accompanied by a small harp logo.

Teach Cúirte
Courthouse

4

**Governance and
Transparency**



About this chapter

Governance can be described as the set of responsibilities, practices, policies, and procedures that provide strategic direction to an organisation. Good governance supports the organisation to realise the intended outcomes for members of the public, manage risks, and use its resources in an effective, efficient and ethical manner.

In this chapter we outline compliance with the various standards, we provide an organisational overview on our governance and reporting measures across the organisation, the Courts Service Board, and its various Committees. We also provide an update on our audit and assurance arrangements, requests for information, data protection, customer complaints and compliments, and our Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Governance standards and practices

The Courts Service continues to strive for effective governance arrangements at organisational and Board level. The arrangements follow the legislative framework set out in the Courts Service Act, 1998; the Corporate Governance Standard for Civil Service and all applicable provisions of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (CPGSB); the Civil Service Code of Standards of Behaviour and developments in the Civil Service Renewal Plan. We benchmark our governance arrangements against the principles developed by the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform (DPENDR), to ensure they are effective and robust.

Corporate Governance Standard for the Civil Service

Published in December 2018 by DPENDR, the Corporate Governance Standard for the Civil Service is to be used by each department and office to guide the development of their individual governance frameworks.

The Courts Service's framework document is in line with the Corporate Governance Standard. It sets out the statutory basis for the organisation, as described in legislation, as well as providing information on:

- Organisational structure,
- The roles of the Board and its Committees,
- The roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Team, and
- The governance and accountability/assurance arrangements in place.

Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (CPGSB)

The CPGSB provides a framework setting out best practice in corporate governance by both commercial and non-commercial State bodies. It details both the internal practices of the State bodies and their external relations with Government, the relevant Minister under whose aegis they fall, the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform and their respective parent departments.

The revised and updated code, introduced in 2016, placed additional obligations on State bodies. It placed significant emphasis on the responsibility and accountability of Board members, the role of management and the importance of the Audit and Risk Committee in the governance of State bodies. To further strengthen and enhance the governance arrangements, the Court Service has adopted all applicable provisions of the code. Specifically, in relation to the Board and the Audit and Risk Committee, we have implemented additional governance arrangements. The Chief Executive Officer provides an annual report on behalf of the Board to the Minister for Justice providing assurance on compliance with the relevant provision of the code.



Agency Framework Agreement between the Courts Service and the Department of Justice

In accordance with best corporate governance practice and the requirements of the CPGSB, the Courts Service and the Department of Justice signed a three-year oversight agreement in 2023 to cover the period to 2023 - 2025.

This agreement is supported by Annual Performance Delivery Agreements. The agreements aim to enhance the working relationship between us and the Department and to support us in carrying out our functions. The Agreements recognise our status as an independent State agency governed by its Board. They encompass all the legal and other obligations we face, as well as providing the necessary accountability and oversight for the Minister.

Organisation Overview Courts Service Board

The Courts Service is governed by a Board consisting of a Chairperson and 17 other members. The Board is responsible for determining organisational policies and for overseeing their implementation. It performs these functions directly and through the committees of the Board. In accordance with the Courts Service Act, 1998 the term of office of the Board is three years. As the term of the existing Board ceased on 9 November, 2023, a new Board was established and had its first meeting on 11 December.

Standing items on the agenda for Board meetings include minutes of meetings and reports from the committees of the Board, financial reports, reports from the Chief Executive Officer, reports from the Chief Risk Officer and Head of Corporate Services, and details of all new contracts (over €25,000) entered into by the Courts Service and recorded on the contract register.

The Board monitors the implementation of our Strategic Plan and provides strategic direction to the executive. It also approves an annual corporate business plan which it reviews quarterly with performance assessed by reference to the Corporate Strategic Plan 2021-2023. The Board approves the annual budget for the organisation and regularly considers reports on budgets and expenditure. Annual corporate documents considered or approved by the Board in 2023 included:

Corporate Business Plan 2023
Risk Management Policy for 2023
Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Committee 2022
Annual Budget 2023
Annual return to Minister for Justice under the CPGSB

The Board approves proposals for contracts and arrangements, including the acquisition or disposal of any interest in land or property with a value more than €5m; leases for periods more than four years and nine months irrespective of value; and contracts for consultancy in excess of €500,000. In 2023, the Board considered and approved 3 contracts exceeding €5m.

- Approval of contracts for Interpreting Services
- Approval of contract for provision of Security Services.
- Approval of contract for maintenance, support & installation services of digital evidence presentation technologies, video conferencing and associated systems.

The Board also approved a proposal to renew the lease for Dolphin House for a period of five years.



Disclosures of Conflict of Interest & Declaration of Interest

Prior to the consideration of any procurement proposals by the Board or its Committees, the Chairperson, as a matter of good governance, requests that any member who considers that they have an interest which might represent a conflict absent themselves from discussion on the matter. The minutes record any such declarations or abstentions. Following the requirements of the CPGSB, the Board also makes periodic disclosure of interests which they, or a family member, may hold which could represent a conflict of interest for them in their role as members of the Board.

Board Meetings

The Board receives regular reports from the Chief Executive Officer on the operation of the Courts Service, the implementation of Board policy, the implementation of the annual Corporate Business Plan, expenditure and budgetary matters and other relevant issues and/or developments. The Board regularly receives reports in relation to the implementation of risk management systems.

During 2023, the Board monitored progress of the implementation of the Courts Service Strategic Vision 2030; and progress being made towards the development of the Dublin Family Law Complex.

The Board held meetings on 23 January, 27 February, 27 March, 25 April, 22 May, 17 July, 25 September, 6 November, 11 December with an overall attendance rate of 97%.

Information on individual attendance at Board meetings is in the schedule at the end of this chapter.

Five committees supported the Board in its work in 2023:

- The Finance Committee.
- The Audit and Risk Committee.
- The Building Committee.
- The Modernisation Committee and.
- The Family Law Court Development Committee.

(see Chapter 1: About the Courts Service for membership details).

Meetings of Committees of the Board continue to be held in advance of, and close to, the date of Board meetings where possible, to allow any issues which require Board consideration to be brought to the attention of the Board without any undue delay.

Meetings of Committees of the Board 2023:

Audit and Risk Committee	20 February, 20 March, 15 May, 3 July, 16 October,
Building Committee	17 January, 28 February, 13 June, 12 September, 14 November,
Family Law Court Development Committee	18 January, 01 March, 19 April, 15 May, 3 July, 10 October, 21 November
Finance Committee	20 February, 20 March, 15 May, 3 July, 16 October, 27 November
Modernisation Committee	25 January, 03 May, 26 July, 25 October,



An annual fee is payable to non-judicial members of the Board (except for the Chief Executive Officer) in the sum of €11,970 together with travel and subsistence expenses at rates sanctioned by the Department of Finance. In accordance with Department of Finance regulations, fees are not paid to Board members who are public servants.

Minutes of meetings of the Board, are published on our website courts.ie.

Board Effectiveness Review

In 2020, we engaged the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the Board and its committees. In 2023, several recommendations made by the IPA in its review were adopted.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for the implementation of policies approved by the Board, and the day-to-day management of the staff, administration, and business of the Courts Service. The CEO prepares an annual budget for approval by both the Finance Committee and the Board with support from the Senior Management Team. The CEO also provides regular updates to the Board, the Finance Committee, and other Committees of the Board, detailing the management of the organisation, implementation of policies, progress on the strategic plan and the modernisation agenda.

The CEO provides an annual report on behalf of the Board to the Minister for Justice providing assurance on compliance with the CPGSB. The report outlines the organisation's system of internal controls and confirms compliance across a range of headings. In particular, the report affirms compliance with:

- Appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, travel.

- Procurement, and asset disposals.
- Inclusion of a statement on the system of internal financial control.
- Adherence to Codes of Business Conduct for Board members and employees.
- Compliance with Government guidelines on the payment of Board members' fees and provision of a draft strategic plan to the relevant Minister prior to the plan being finalised and adopted by the Board.

Appropriation Account

As Accounting Officer, the CEO is responsible for the signing the annual Appropriation Account of the Courts Service together with a Statement of Internal Financial Controls providing assurance on the internal financial controls in place across the organisation.

The Appropriation Account is the annual financial account of the Courts Service and is furnished to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) on or before 31 March each year. An extract from the Appropriation Account 2023 submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General can be found in Chapter 6: Financial Statements.

Internal Financial Control

The Board has overall responsibility for the internal financial control of the Courts Service. It delegates responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of risk management and the internal controls in place to the Audit and Risk Committee. The Committee receives regular reports from management, the Chief Risk Officer, Internal Audit, and external auditors. Such arrangements are designed to manage rather than eliminate the risks facing the Courts Service.

The Statement of Internal Financial Control (SIFC), signed by the CEO for the purpose of the Appropriation Account, addresses



the internal control environment within the Courts Service with regard to the financial control environment, the framework of administration, management reporting and internal control. It includes a statement of compliance with procurement guidelines and confirmation that the Courts Service has an Audit and Risk Committee and Internal Audit function.

The National Shared Services Office (NSSO) continues to perform a number of administrative functions of the Courts Service, including payroll, travel and subsistence and human resource services. Furthermore, the Courts Service is a client of the Financial Management Shared Service Centre (FMSSC), Killarney. The FMSSC provides financial and accounting services and other ancillary activities for the Courts Service. As part of the Appropriation Account process and for the signing of the SIFC by the Chief Executive Officer, the Accounting Officers for both the NSSO and the FMSSC provide letters of assurance as to the adequacy of controls systems in place within the NSSO and FMSSC for the provision of shared services to the Courts Service.

In the case of internal controls, systems can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss. Breaches of controls, in particular instances of fraud or irregularity, must be brought to the attention of the Comptroller and Auditor General in accordance with public financial procedures. The Courts Service has a policy statement on the prevention and detection of fraud with all cases irrespective of value being reported to the Head of Corporate Services, the Senior Management Team, the Audit and Risk Committee and An Garda Síochána.

Financial Management

The Courts Service is represented on the Department of Justice Financial Management Committee as part of the governance arrangement for budget



Budgets are monitored closely with monthly reports furnished to the Senior Management Team.

management within the justice sector. The Committee is comprised of representatives from the main justice group of votes including, amongst others, the Department of Justice, An Garda Síochána, the Prison Service and the Courts Service. It provides for a further level of assurance to the Department regarding vote management, adherence to Government financial guidelines and ensuring that value for money is achieved in the expenditure of public funds.

Budget Management

The Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Management Team prepare an annual budget based on the funding allocation contained in the annual estimates approved by the Oireachtas. The Finance Committee recommends the annual budget for approval by the Board. Day-to-day responsibility for managing expenditure within budgetary limits is assigned to the Assistant Secretaries responsible for each directorate. Budgets are monitored closely with monthly reports furnished to the Senior Management Team. Quarterly financial reports are submitted to the Finance Committee and the Board.

Performance budgeting

Performance budgeting forms part of the published Estimates and attempts to link funding provided to measurable results. The Courts Service complies with the performance budgeting format which identifies key outputs, context, and impact indicators. The expanded performance budgeting targets for 2023 were set out in the Revised Estimates Volume.



Risk Management

The Board has overall responsibility for overseeing the management of risk within the Courts Service. To support good governance, we continue to use a risk management framework which clearly defines roles and responsibilities at the Board, Audit and Risk Committee, and at all levels of management.

The Board recognises that the effective management of risk is the responsibility of all staff of the Courts Service and seeks to encourage and promote a culture of risk management through the operation of a formal risk management process.

We have adopted key principles of the CPGSB and the Risk Management Guidance for Government Departments and Offices. A risk management policy is approved by the Board and defines the risk appetite of the organisation. This, in turn, is supported by risk management guidelines aligned to the policy.

The risk management framework and policy provide for a planned and systematic approach to identifying and managing a range of risk categories:

- Financial
- Service delivery
- Buildings
- ICT
- People
- Governance and compliance
- Reform, and
- External

The Chief Risk Officer is a member of the Senior Management Team and reports directly to the Audit and Risk Committee and the

Board. Risks are identified at corporate and business unit level and managed accordingly by assigning responsibility to the relevant directorate and office manager.

The Courts Service maintains a corporate risk register that is reviewed regularly by the Chief Executive Officer, Senior Management Team, Audit and Risk Committee and the Board. The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed at the start of each year.

Strategic risks are rated based on their impact and likelihood of occurrence, with new and emerging risks being added as they arise. The Risk Register is linked to the annual business planning process and is a key document in enabling the organisation deal with the challenges it faces. It sets out the major risks facing the Courts Service together with existing controls and actions to mitigate them and identifies owners and target dates for completion. It also provides the context through which each Assistant Secretary prepares risk registers for their respective directorates. In particular, we recognise the importance of cyber security and the impact an adverse ICT event could have on the operation of the Courts. We continuously review our ICT security systems and processes, taking action to further protect the organisation where appropriate.

Procurement

The Courts Service seeks to comply with the principle of competitive tendering in respect of the expenditure on works, supplies and service contracts. The Public Procurement Guidelines provide direction for all procurement policy activity of the organisation. They ensure the objectives and key principles of competition, equality of treatment and transparency, which underpin national and EU rules, are complied with, and observed. Procurement within the Courts Service is informed by the Office of Government Procurement public procurement guidelines for goods and services.



We avail of centralised managed contracts put in place by the Office of Government Procurement and continue to engage with the Office for advice on current and future procurement requirements.

Throughout 2023, the Courts Service awarded a total of 24 contracts and Framework Agreements (FWA) with a total value over the lifetime of each contract of €31.840m (excluding VAT).

Responsibility for procurement is devolved to each Assistant Secretary responsible for their Directorate, with the Corporate Services Directorate taking a lead coordination role in promoting awareness of obligations at both national and EU level. The Directorate provides training for all colleagues, maintains a contract register and a procurement plan, and monitors the expenditure subject to the procurement process. The annual procurement plan is approved by the Senior Management Team.

Protected Disclosures

The Board maintains a role in relation to oversight of the operation of the policy of the Courts Service under the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022.

Audit and Assurance Arrangements

Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee is chaired by a member of the Board and includes a judicial representative from the Court of Appeal, Circuit Court and District Court, and members with significant business expertise and experience within the public and private sectors. The Committee plays a fundamental role in ensuring that the Courts Service functions according to good governance, accounting and auditing standards and adopts appropriate management and risk arrangements. The Committee held five meetings in 2023 at which it reviewed and

considered a wide range of reports including the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee 2022 and the Annual Report of the Internal Audit Unit for 2022.

Internal Audit Function

Internal Audit is an independent appraisal function whose role is to provide assurance to the Board, Audit and Risk Committee, Chief Executive Officer and all levels of management as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems on governance, risk and internal controls operating within the Courts Service.

The Internal Audit Unit operates in accordance with an audit charter approved by the Board and an annual audit plan approved by the Chief Executive Officer and the Audit and Risk Committee. In carrying out audits, the Unit complies with the Institute of Internal Audit Standards, as adapted by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform for use in Government Departments.

All audit reports are submitted directly to the Chief Executive Officer and to the Audit and Risk Committee who also receive periodic reports showing progress against the plan. The Unit completed nineteen audits during the year.

External audit

The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) performs the external audit of voted funds. The C&AG's authority extends to the audit of public funds and therefore does not include court funds managed by the Courts Service on behalf of Minors and Wards of Court. The audit of court funds managed by the Accountant's Office to financial year end 30 September 2023 was carried out by external auditors, Mazars.



We continue to meet our legal obligations in relation to responding to FOI requests and maintaining a well-informed network of decision-makers and internal reviewers

Requests for information

The Courts Service continued to respond to requests for information from the public, government departments and parliamentary representatives during the year. We provided material for responses to 140 parliamentary questions tabled by members of the Oireachtas. Our Office of the Chief Executive Officer dealt with 110 letters/representations from other government departments, TDs, senators, and members of the public.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

In 2023, we received 135 requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. Many of these requests related to personal information contained in court records, which are not covered by Freedom of Information legislation and access therefore had to be refused.

We continue to meet our legal obligations in relation to responding to FOI requests and maintaining a well-informed network of decision-makers and internal reviewers. The Freedom of Information Officer continues to participate in the FOI Public Service User Network.

FOI Requests and Decisions are outlined below:

Freedom of Information Requests 2023

On hand 01/01/2023	2
Received	135
Dealt with	132
On hand 31/12/2023	5

Outcomes

Access granted/part granted	37
Refused*	79
Transferred/withdrawn	11
Handled outside of FOI	5

*Includes access requests for court records which are exempt under Freedom of Information legislation (section 42(a)(i) of the 2014 Act)

Data Protection

We are committed to meet our data protection obligations and to process personal data in accordance with relevant legislation. The Data Protection Unit continues to work with managers and staff to achieve full regulatory compliance by ensuring data protection is embedded into business practices from the outset. The Data Protection Officer participates in the Civil Service Data Protection Officer Network.

In 2023, the Data Protection Unit dealt with 85 data subject access requests for personal data held on CCTV, personnel files, and other Courts Service records under Data Protection legislation.

In the case of personal data processed by or on behalf of a Court when acting in a judicial capacity, the data protection rights of data subjects are restricted in law to the extent that the restrictions are necessary and proportionate to safeguard judicial independence and court proceedings. Access



requests for personal information held on the court record must be addressed to the relevant court office under the existing rules of court.

Customer complaints and compliments

The Customer Comments Co-ordination Office, supported by Directorate Liaison Officers, manages formal complaints as well as compliments received from members of the public. It is important for the Courts Service to understand services that are valued and appreciated by our customers as well as services or actions that need to be improved. Feedback, both positive and negative, can provide unique insights into the standards of service being provided to court users.

Conduct or decisions in relation to court business are matters for the judiciary and are therefore not dealt with under the formal complaint procedure. We received 231 formal customer complaints during 2023.

Business Continuity Planning

The importance of Business Continuity Planning (BCP) became clear during the pandemic. Throughout 2023, we developed and refined our BCP processes. We began to devise a programme of testing our plans and processes. Disaster recovery processes also took a step forward with the completion of a new enterprise backup service. This is a significant step forward in increasing the resilience of court operations.

An Energy Planning Group was established to develop a unified response to planned power outages and these were successfully implemented in conjunction with the BCP Unit.

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 establishes a positive duty on public bodies to try to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and

protect the human rights of staff and persons to whom services are provided.

We published a Public Duty Action Plan in November 2021. This work aligns with our commitment to the modernisation agenda, which is aimed at providing a modern Courts Service to meet the needs of everyone who lives in Ireland. The goals of our Public Sector Duty Action Plan in 2023 included:

- ▶ Incorporating our commitment to embed Human Rights into how we conduct our business; and lead, develop and manage our people through the inclusion of our Public Sector Duty in our People and Organisation Strategy.
- ▶ Developing a framework of living and behaving in a manner that underpins Human Rights and our Public Service Duty,
- ▶ Developing a culture in which the Public Sector values are embedded by ensuring the values are known by all; how they are demonstrated is informed by our stakeholder engagement and our people are trained and developed to live these in the course of their work, and
- ▶ Creating an awareness of diversity and inclusion and how individual views may be challenged.

The equality, diversity and inclusion agenda in the Courts Service is being driven by our Inclusion Group. The group aims to ensure the Courts Service is not just compliant with equality and human rights legislation but that we change our culture so that we proactively strive to achieve a diverse and inclusive work environment, protecting the human rights of staff and users.

The targets set out for 2023 were largely implemented and will be updated in a plan to be developed in 2024 for the period 2024-2027.



Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021

The Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 was commenced in 2023 and introduced some changes to the Official Languages Act of 2003. The new Act expands on the existing obligations of public bodies to promote the use of the Irish language and improve the services we deliver through Irish.

The most noteworthy achievement by the Courts Service during 2023 was the successful implementation of the project to issue jury summonses in both Irish and English, from the start of October 2023, in advance of the commencement of the relevant section of the Act. During 2023, we also worked to increase the use of Irish in official forms, signage and digital media, collating the definitive translated versions of forms and introducing a practice whereby recruitment campaigns are conducted in both languages. Furthermore, we initiated changes to our branding by enhancing the Irish language element of our logo, launched as part of our new style guide.

The new Act has also imposed new reporting arrangements on state bodies. In accordance with section 4B of the Official Languages Act 2003, as amended, Tom Ward, Assistant Secretary, was appointed to oversee the Courts Service's performance of its obligations under the Official Languages Acts. During 2023, a recruitment campaign was conducted to employ an Irish Language Strategy Manager to support the Service in our efforts to meet the statutory objectives, including that by 2030, 20% of new recruits employed in the Courts Service should be proficient in Irish. In 2024, Mr. Ward will be reporting to the Chief Executive Officer on how the Service is meeting its obligations.

Climate Action

The Government's Climate Action Plan sets out the mandatory requirement for all Public Sector Bodies within a section known as the Climate Action Mandate. The Mandate sets



The Government's Climate Action Plan sets out the mandatory requirement for all Public Sector Bodies within a section known as the Climate Action Mandate.

out requirements under four headings: Our Targets, Our People, Our Ways of Working, Our Buildings and Vehicles and aims to support public sector bodies to lead by example on climate action and thereby inspire action in wider society. The Mandate requires every public body to publish a Climate Action Roadmap with details on actions planned under the four headings.

The Courts Service Climate Action Roadmap is a comprehensive document including narrative on our estate, our Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2024 and the decarbonisation and energy efficiency projects required to achieve our 2030 targets. 2023 saw the publication and approval by the Senior Management Team and Board of two Climate Action Roadmaps, the latest of which is aligned with CAP23 and is available on our website. In line with requirements, our Climate Action Roadmap will be updated annually with the national Climate Action Plans.



Board Meeting Attendance

Board member attendance at meetings in 2023

Name	Attendances
Mr. Justice Donal O' Donnell, Chief Justice and Chairperson	8/8
Mr. Justice George Birmingham	8/8
Mr. Justice David Barniville	8/8
Ms. Justice Elizabeth Dunne	8/8
Mr. Justice Patrick McCarthy	6/7
Mr. Justice Tony O'Connor	8/8
Ms. Justice Patricia Ryan	8/8
Her Honour Judge Alice Doyle	7/8
His Honour Judge Paul Kelly	8/8
Judge Alan Mitchell	8/8
Ms. Angela Denning	8/8
Ms. Sara Phelan	8/8
Ms. Michele O'Boyle	6/7
Ms. Hilary McSweeney	7/7
Ms. Karen Kiernan	6/7
Ms. Patricia King	7/7
Ms. Deirdre Kiely	7/7
Ms. Rachel Wood	7/7
The Hon. Ms. Justice Tara Burns	1/1
Mr. Stuart Gilhooly	1/1
Mr. Derek Bunyan	1/1
Ms. Sarah Benson	1/1
Mr. Owen Reidy	1/1
Mr. Noel Beecher	1/1

Additional Information

Solicitors

Byrne Wallace LLP, 88 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2.

McCann FitzGerald LLP, Riverside One, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2

Auditors

The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General,
3a Mayor Street Upper, Dublin 1

Mazars, Block 3, Harcourt Centre, Harcourt Road, Dublin 2



5

**Legislative
Provisions
and Reports Of The
Rules Committees**



Legislative Provisions

The implementation of new legislation impacting on criminal proceedings and civil actions can place significant demands on the resources of the Courts Service. We review the content of, and provide input into, proposed legislation to ascertain whether provisions affect court operations or require new court procedures. Legislation in this context includes schemes of bills, bills, draft statutory instruments and draft EU legal instruments.

It is important that the Service is afforded the opportunity to assess the impact of proposed legislative initiatives at an early stage. This is particularly relevant in the context of the development of strategies across a range of areas including ICT, buildings and human resources. The following are examples of legislation, or proposed legislation, which impacted on the work of the courts or the Service, or into which we provided input in 2023.

Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015

While some sections of this Act were commenced on 17 October 2016 and on 17 December 2018, the bulk of the Act and also the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Act, 2022 were commenced on 26 April 2023. This Act makes significant changes to the law relating to capacity and decision-making arrangements. It provides for the repeal of the legislation regulating wardship and the replacement of wardship with a new regime of decision-making assistance, support and representation. Jurisdiction under the Act is exercised primarily by the Circuit Court. Appeals to the High Court may be made on a point of law only. The following matters are reserved to the High Court:



The implementation of new legislation impacting on criminal proceedings and civil actions can place significant demands on the resources of the Courts Service.

- (a) decisions on organ donation where the donor lacks capacity, and
- (b) applications on withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment from a person who lacks capacity.

Part 5 of the Act provides that the Circuit Court may make declarations as to capacity and where appropriate may appoint decision-making representatives to make decisions on behalf of relevant persons.

Part 6 of the Act provides for the discharge from wardship of all wards of court over a three-year period and for appropriate orders to be made in relation to their property and affairs and/or personal welfare.

The Act also provides for applications to be made to the Circuit Court in relation to a number of other matters, including assisted decision-making agreements, co-decision-making agreements, enduring powers of attorney and advance healthcare directives.

The Courts Service is represented on an Inter-Departmental Steering Group to support the Act's operation. An internal working group continues to oversee the implementation of the 2015 Act in court offices.



Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Act, 2022

This Act, which contains several amendments to the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015, was signed on 17 December, 2022 and along with the 2015 Act was commenced on 26 April, 2023. This Act increased the number of ordinary Circuit Court judges from 37 to 40. Also, from date of commencement, applications for appointment as care representative under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009 can no longer be made and applications relating to matters contained in section 21 of the 2009 Act must be made to the Circuit Court under Part 5 of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015.

Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2023

This Act, which was signed into law on 4 July, 2023, contains a range of provisions relating to the courts and the Courts Service.

Part 4, which will be commenced in 2024, amends the Juries Act 1976 to allow for centralisation of the empanelling and summoning of jurors by a designated court office, thus providing a statutory basis for jurors to be summoned for all jury districts by one centralised office.

Sections 52 – 55, which were commenced on 31 July, 2023, amend the Courts and Civil Liability Act, 2004 to allow for dormant funds of the Circuit Court and District Court to be dealt with similarly to dormant funds of the High Court and to allow dormant funds to be applied for the provision, management and maintenance of court buildings and ICT facilities for courts, court offices and the Courts Service.

Section 77, which was commenced on 11 January, 2024, amends section 117 of the Data Protection Act, 2018 and gives the District Court jurisdiction to hear and determine data protection actions. The Circuit Court and High Court already have jurisdiction to determine such actions.

Sections 93 – 99, which were commenced on 31 July, 2023, allow the Courts Service to



This Act increased the number of ordinary Circuit Court judges from 37 to 40.

designate court offices as centralised court offices for the purpose of carrying out certain types of court business exclusively or in addition to a local office.

Section 101 which was commenced on 31 July 2023 allows for the maintenance of electronic registers by court offices and for online searches of public registers.

Section 104, which was commenced on 31 July, 2023, amends the Court Officers Act, 1926 and extends the criteria for appointment to the role of Deputy Master.

Section 108, which was commenced on 31 July, 2023, amends section 65 of the Courts of Justice Act, 1936 and is designed to enable recovery of unpaid court fees, mostly in the Legal Cost Adjudicators office and where a County Registrar has taxed costs.

Section 109, which was commenced on 31 July, 2023, amends section 39 of the Offences Against the State Act, 1939 and authorises the Courts Service to appoint registrars to a Special Criminal Court.

Section 110, which was commenced on 31 July, 2023, provides greater legislative protection for sheriffs in the discharge of their functions by creating an offence of obstruction or interference with the sheriff without lawful authority.

Section 111, which was commenced on 31 July, 2023, authorises the Court of Appeal to hear and determine certain appeals by way of one judge sitting alone. These appeals include appeals without substance or foundation, appeals against orders for costs and appeals against orders made in the case management of proceedings.



Sections 112 and 113, which were commenced on 31 July, 2023, authorise the Presidents of the Circuit Court and District Court respectively to make practice directions in relation to the conduct of court proceedings.

Section 115, which was commenced on 31 July, 2023, amends the Courts (Supplemental Provisions) Act, 1961 by providing that a court make a determination as to costs without an oral hearing.

Section 116, which was commenced on 31 July, 2023, amends the Courts (Supplemental Provisions) Act, 1961 by extending the criteria for appointment as Master of the High Court.

Section 121, which was commenced on 1 November, 2023, amends section 36 of the Succession Act, 1965 to allow District Probate Registries issue grants of representation without the need for a certificate from the Probate Office in Dublin.

Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2023

This Act, in addition to providing for several new offences and increased sentences, provides, in Part 5 of the Act, for a new civil restraining order.

Part 5, which is expected to be commenced in 2024, provides for an application to the District Court for a civil restraining order under section 28 for the protection of the applicant's safety and welfare, where the respondent has engaged in conduct that is likely to cause the applicant to fear violence or serious alarm or distress. Proceedings under Part 5 are to be heard in camera and breach of this civil order is an offence.

The section 28 order may be made for a period of up to five years. Section 28 also provides for an ex-parte section 28 order, in cases of immediate risk to safety and welfare of the applicant, for a maximum of 8 days.

Courts Act 2023

This Act, which was commenced on 19 May, 2023 increased the number of ordinary judges in a number of courts. The Act:

- increased the number of ordinary judges of the Court of Appeal from 15 to 17
- increased the number of ordinary judges of the High Court from 42 to 48
- increased the number of ordinary judges of the Circuit Court from 40 to 45
- increased the number of ordinary judges of the District Court from 63 to 71

Family Courts Bill

The Courts Service continues to provide observations on the Family Courts Bill. This Bill provides for a dedicated family law jurisdiction and the appointment of dedicated family court judges for the District Court, Circuit Court, and the High Court.

Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act 2014 (Section 6) (Amendment) Regulations 2023

These amending regulations came into operation on 24 January, 2023 and extend the options for payment of court fines to allow payment of fines through the Courts Service by credit card and debit card.



District Court Rules Committee Annual Report 2023

The rule making authority for the District Court is the District Court Rules Committee established under section 71 of the Courts of Justice Act, 1936. The Committee may annul or alter rules and make new rules with the concurrence of the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Members of the Committee at 31 December, 2023:

- ▶ The President of the District Court, His Honour Judge Paul Kelly (Chairperson).
- ▶ Judge Anne Watkin, Judge of the District Court.
- ▶ Judge Alan Mitchell, Judge of the District Court.
- ▶ Judge Marie Quirke, Judge of the District Court.
- ▶ Judge Sandra Murphy, Judge of the District Court.
- ▶ Dr. Shane McCarthy, Solicitor, nominated by the Law Society of Ireland.
- ▶ Ms. Ann McGarry, Solicitor, nominated by the Law Society of Ireland.
- ▶ Mr. Eoin Martin, B.L., nominated by the Council of the Bar of Ireland.
- ▶ Ms. Ciara McMahon, Chief State Solicitor's Office, appointed to act in place of the Attorney General under section 71(9)(c) of the Courts of Justice Act 1936, as amended.
- ▶ Mr. James Finn, Strategy and Reform Directorate, Courts Service, to whom membership has been delegated by the Chief Executive Officer under section 71(9)(b), Courts of Justice Act 1936, as amended.
- ▶ Eoin Manning, Deputy Chief Clerk, Dublin Metropolitan District Court, nominated by the Chief Executive Officer of the Courts Service under section 71(3)(d) of the Courts of Justice Act, 1936, as amended.

Secretary: Liz Hughes, Strategy and Reform Directorate, Courts Service

Drafting Services: Mr Sean Barton of McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors

The Committee held 4 hybrid meetings during 2023. The following Rules of the District Court were signed by the Minister for Justice and Equality between 1 January, 2023 and 31 December, 2023.

S.I. No.	Title	Date signed by Committee	Date effective from
418 of 2023	District Court (Costs) Rules 2023	11 July, 2023	28 August, 2023
457 of 2023	District Court (Companies Act 2014: search warrants) Rules 2023	11 July, 2023	22 September, 2023
561 of 2023	District Court (Service of Book of Evidence) Rules 2023	29 November, 2022	24 November, 2023



At year-end the following Rules signed by the Committee were awaiting the concurrence of the Minister:-

- District Court (Garda Síochána (Compensation) Act 2022) Rules, 2023

The following matters were under consideration by the Committee at year-end:

- Draft District Court (Data Protection) Rules, 2023.
- Draft District Court (Mutual Recognition of Decisions on Supervision Measures) Rules, 2023.
- Draft District Court (Criminal Procedure Act 2021) Rules, 2023.
- Draft District Court (Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015) Rules, 2023.
- District Court (Civil Restraining Orders) Rules, 2023.
- Draft District Court (Guardianship) Rules, 2023.
- Draft District Court (Digital) Rules, 2023.

Liz Hughes
Secretary



Circuit Court Rules Committee Annual Report 2023

The rule-making authority for the Circuit Court is the Circuit Court Rules Committee established under section 69 of the Courts of Justice Act, 1936. The remit of the Committee is fixed partly by section 66 of The Courts of Justice Act, 1924 which empowers it to annul or alter rules and make new rules with the concurrence of the Minister for Justice, including rules for regulating the sessions, vacations and circuits of the Circuit Judges and the practice, pleading and procedure generally (including liability of parties as to costs and also the entering-up of judgment and granting of summary judgment in appropriate cases) of the Circuit Court and the use of the national language therein amongst other things.

The members of the Committee at 31 December, 2023 were:

- ▶ The Hon. Ms. Justice Patricia Ryan, President of the Circuit Court (Chairperson).
- ▶ Her Honour Judge Sarah Berkeley, Judge of the Circuit Court.
- ▶ His Honour Judge John Aylmer, Judge of the Circuit Court.
- ▶ Mr. Tomás Keys B.L., nominated by the Council of the Bar of Ireland.
- ▶ Ms. Tracy Ennis Faherty B.L., nominated by the Council of the Bar of Ireland.
- ▶ Ms. Siún Hurley, Solicitor, nominated by the Law Society of Ireland.
- ▶ Mr. Martin Lawlor, Solicitor, nominated by the Law Society of Ireland.
- ▶ Ms. Ann Spaine, Principal Solicitor, Office of the Chief State Solicitor – appointed to act in place of the Attorney General under section 69(9)(c), Courts of Justice Act 1936, as amended.
- ▶ Mr James Finn, Principal Officer, Courts Service, to whom membership has been delegated by the Chief Executive Officer of the Courts Service under section 69(9)(b), Courts of Justice Act 1936, as amended.
- ▶ Ms. Rita Considine, County Registrar, Dublin.
- ▶ Ms. Bridín Concannon, County Registrar, Meath and Westmeath, nominated by the Chief Executive Officer of the Courts Service under Section 69(4)(d) of the Courts of Justice Act 1936, as amended.

Secretary: Liz Hughes, Directorate of Reform and Development, Courts Service.

Drafting Services: Mr Sean Barton of McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors.

The Committee met on 5 occasions during 2023. Meetings held were remote and hybrid. The following Rules of the Circuit Court were signed by the Minister for Justice between 1 January, 2023 and 31 December, 2023.

S.I. No.	Title	Date signed by Committee	Date effective from
201 of 2023	Circuit Court Rules (Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015) 2023	26 April, 2023	27 April, 2023
561 of 2023	Circuit Court Rules (Affidavits) 2023	26 July, 2023	31 November, 2023



At year-end the following Rules were awaiting the concurrence of the Minister:

- ▶ Circuit Court Rules (Garda Síochána (Compensation) Act 2022) 2023

At year-end the following Rules were under consideration by the Committee:-

- ▶ Draft Circuit Court Rules (Costs) 2023
- ▶ Draft Circuit Court Rules (Combined Court Offices) 2023
- ▶ Draft Circuit Court Rules (Personal Insolvency) 2023
- ▶ Draft Circuit Court Rules (Evidence Regulation) 2023
- ▶ Draft Circuit Court Rules (Digital) 2023
- ▶ Review of the Administration of Civil Justice
 - Standardising in the rules provisions relating to appearances

Liz Hughes

Secretary



Superior Courts Rules Committee Annual Report 2023

The Superior Courts Rules Committee was established by Section 67 of the Courts of Justice Act 1936. Under Section 68 of the 1936 Act the power to make, annul or alter rules of court is exercisable by the Committee with the concurrence of the Minister for Justice.

Membership of the Committee at year ending 31 December, 2023

- ▶ The Chief Justice, the Hon. Mr Justice Donal O'Donnell (Chairperson).
- ▶ The President of the Court of Appeal, the Hon. Mr Justice George Birmingham (Vice Chairperson).
- ▶ The President of the High Court, the Hon. Mr Justice David Barniville.
- ▶ The Hon. Ms Justice Elizabeth Dunne, Judge of the Supreme Court.
- ▶ The Hon. Mr Justice Brian Murray, Judge of the Supreme Court.
- ▶ The Hon. Ms Justice Maire Whelan, Judge of the Court of Appeal.
- ▶ The Hon. Ms Justice Nuala Butler, Judge of the Court of Appeal.
- ▶ The Hon. Mr Justice Richard Humphreys, Judge of the High Court.
- ▶ The Hon. Ms Justice Siobhan Phelan, Judge of the High Court.
- ▶ The Master of the High Court, VACANCY.
- ▶ Ms Yvonne McNamara S.C., nominated by the Council of the Bar of Ireland.
- ▶ Ms Grainne Larkin B.L., nominated by the Council of the Bar of Ireland.
- ▶ Ms Michele O'Boyle, Solicitor, nominated by the Council of the Law Society of Ireland.
- ▶ Ms Áine Hynes, Solicitor, nominated by the Council of the Law Society of Ireland.
- ▶ Mr James Finn, Strategy and Reform Directorate, Courts Service, to whom membership has been delegated by the Chief Executive Officer of the Courts Service under section 67(9)(c) Courts of Justice Act 1936, as amended.
- ▶ Ms Mary Cummins, Office of the Chief State Solicitor – appointed to act in place of the Attorney General under section 67(9)(d) Courts of Justice Act 1936, as amended.
- ▶ Mr John Mahon, Registrar of the Supreme Court.

Secretary - Liz Hughes, Strategy and Reform Directorate, Courts Service.

Drafting Services - Mr Sean Barton of McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors.



The Committee met on 6 occasions during 2023. Meetings held were remote and hybrid. The following rules of the Superior Courts were concurred in by the Minister for Justice between 1 January, 2023 and 31 December, 2023:-

S.I. No.	Title	Date signed by Committee	Date effective from
216 of 2023	RSC (Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015) 2023	25 May, 2023	25 May, 2023
456 of 2023	RSC (Order 19) 2023	27 June, 2023	22 September, 2023
481 of 2023	RSC (Order 74) 2023	27 June, 2023	1 October, 2023
482 of 2023	RSC (Bankruptcy) 2023	20 July, 2023	3 October, 2023
483 of 2023	RSC (Subpoena) 2023	20 July, 2023	3 October, 2023
606 of 2023	RSC (Orders 36 and 52) 2023	12 October, 2023	8 December, 2023

At year-end the following rules are awaiting the concurrence of the Minister:

- Rules of the Superior Courts (Garda Síochána (Compensation) Act 2021) 2023
- Rules of the Superior Courts (Companies) 2023

At year-end the following matters were under consideration by the Committee:

- Draft Rules of the Superior Courts (Digital Services Act) 2023
- Draft Rules of the Superior Courts (Digital) 2023
- Draft Rules of the Superior Courts (section 459, Companies Act 2014) 2023
- Orders 11, 11C and 11D – service out of the jurisdiction
- Order 61 – Time for Appeals from the Circuit Court to the High Court

➤ Review of the Administration of Civil Justice

- Draft Rules of the Superior Courts (Particulars) 2023
- Draft Rules of the Superior Courts (Interrogatories) 2023
- Standardising in the rules provisions relating to appearances
- Raising of particulars

Liz Hughes
Secretary



6

Financial Highlights



Financial Highlights

About this Chapter

In this chapter we present our financial statements for 2023 which details the funding provided to meet our statutory obligations and the financial position at year end. We also provide a financial overview for 2023, an analysis of our sources of funding, in addition to providing a detailed analysis of expenditure and income comparing 2023 with 2022. Finally, we outline information on our prompt payment interest and provide an extract from the financial statements relating to Court Funds.

Expenditure & Income	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Current Expenditure		
Pay	70,687	62,952
Non-Pay	43,190	38,861
Total Current	113,877	101,813
Capital expenditure	67,674	61,750
Total Gross Expenditure	181,551	163,563
Total Income	36,800	35,836
Expenditure Net of Income	144,751	127,727

Staff	2023	2022
Full Time Equivalents	1,269	1,224

Court funds	2023	2022
Funds managed on behalf of court, minors and other beneficiaries at 30 September	2.486 billion	2.337 billion

Financial Operations	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Fines collected	11,095	10,454
Family law receipts	13,172	14,071
Bail receipts	3,996	3,243
Court fees collected (and retained)*	14,366	14,750
Poor box receipts	1,518	1,511
Civil court and small claims receipts	300	801
Total	44,447	44,830

*Excludes miscellaneous income and the pension levy

2020

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

2030



Financial Overview

The funding of the Courts Service is from two main sources, direct Exchequer funding and Appropriation-in-Aid (income) primarily generated through court fees. For 2023 total funding net of receipts was €146.811m (2022 €129.333m). This reflects a gross allocation of €183.524m (2022 €163.966m) combined with total receipts of €36.713m (2022 €34.633m). Operating within the funding parameters and the achievement of a balanced budget is a requirement under Government accounting guidelines.

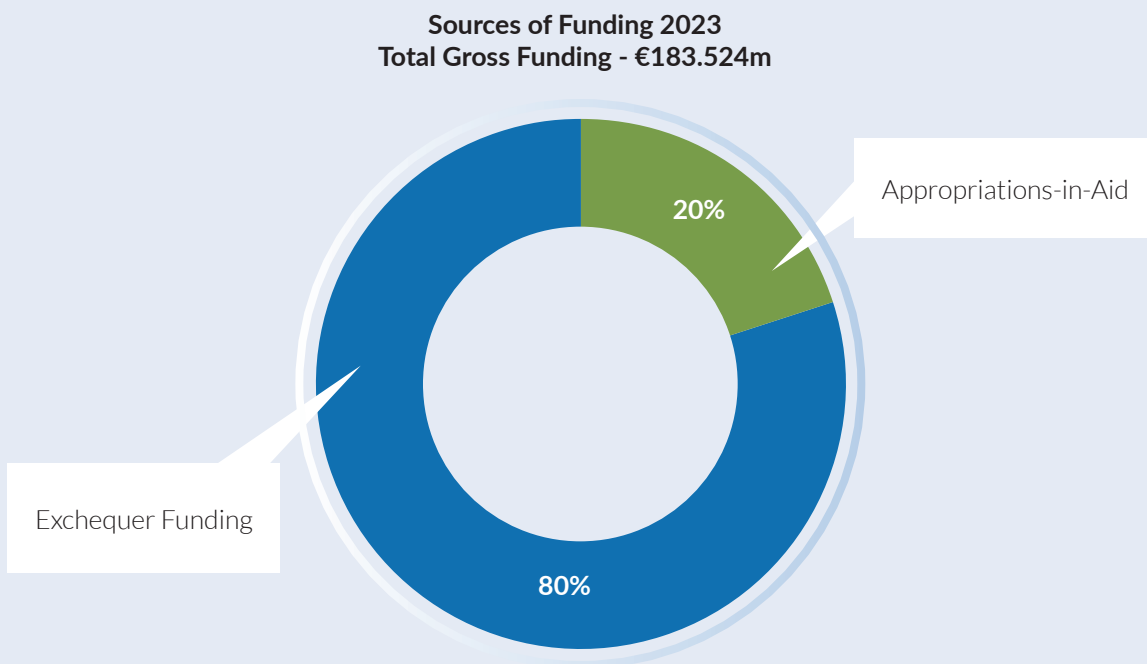
The composition of funding reflects that 38% (2022 39%) is attributable to Pay, with 24% (2022 25%) relating to the day-to-day operation of the Service, 20% (2022 24%) to the Unitary Charges for the CCJ and Regional PPPs and the balance of 18% (2022 12%) for both ICT and Courthouse Capital.

The outturn for 2023 saw the achievement of a balanced budget, with total gross expenditure for the running of the Service of €181.551m. This compares with €163.564m in 2022. Expenditure for 2023 compared with that of 2022 can be broken down between total current expenditure, totalling €113.877m (€101.813m for 2022), and total capital expenditure, including PPP, of €67.674m (€61.750m in 2022).

The funding of the Service is supplemented by Appropriations-in-Aid, of which Court Fee Income represents the main source of receipts. Court Fee Income relates to the administrative charge for the processing of civil cases. In 2023 this amounted to €36.800m (€35.836m in 2022). In addition to Court Fee income, Appropriations-in-Aid include Miscellaneous Income and a Pension Levy.

Appropriations-in-Aid represents 20% (21% in 2022) of the total cost of running the Service in 2023.

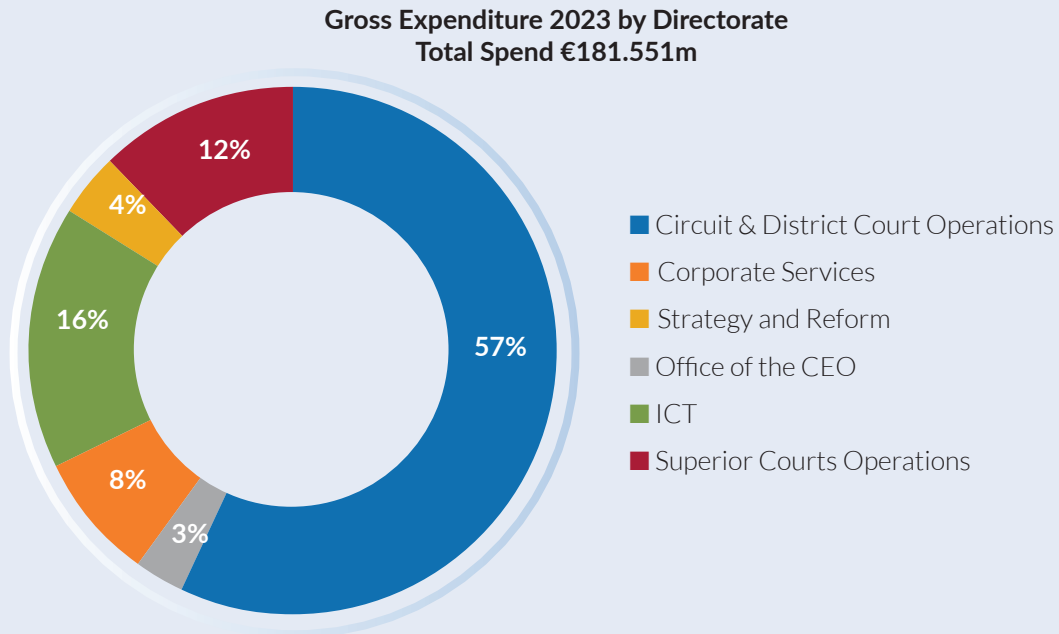
Diagram 1: Sources of Funding





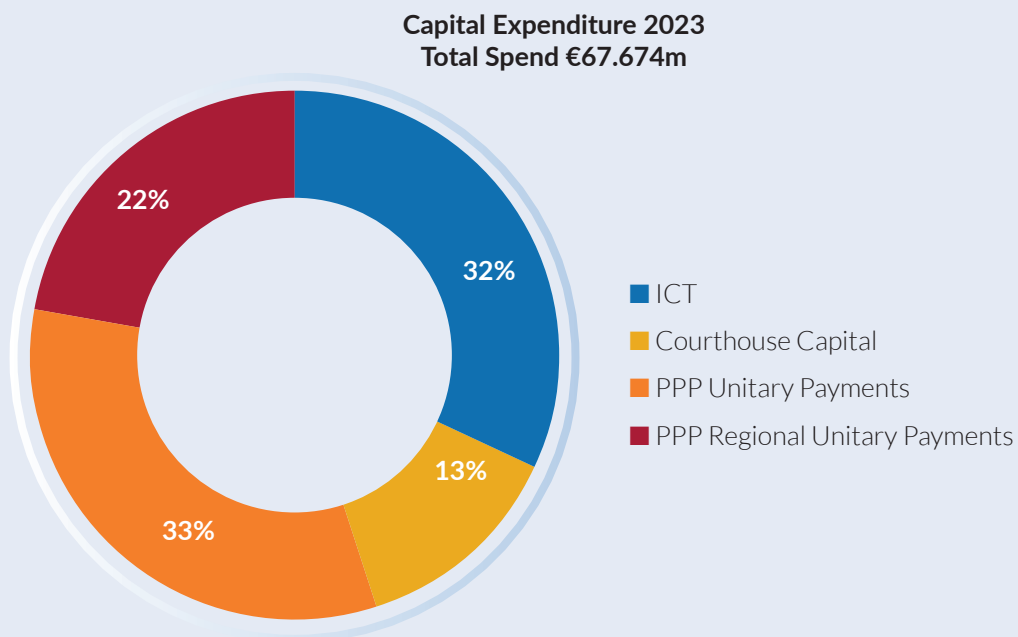
The Courts Service is broken up into 6 Directorates, each with a distinct function. Diagram 2 below represents the spend across each Directorate in the Courts Service.

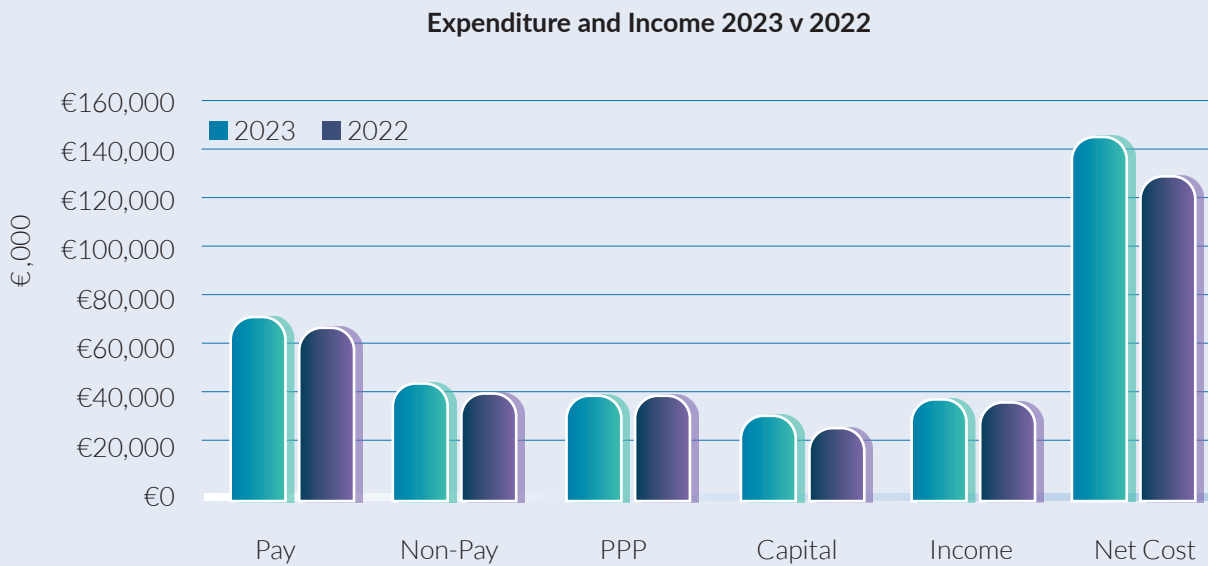
Diagram 2: Gross Expenditure by Directorate



Capital expenditure represents 37% of overall expenditure in the Courts Service. Diagram 3 below sets out how capital expenditure was spent in the Courts Service.

Diagram 3: Capital Expenditure 2023



**Diagram 4:** Expenditure and Income 2023 v 2022

Court Fees

Court fees are charged in respect of legal documents lodged and services provided in court offices.

The Service also collects fees on behalf of the Revenue Commissioners and the Property Registration Authority (now Tailte Éireann). The fees collected on behalf of the Revenue Commissioners include excise duties on certain licensing applications.

Court Fees	2023 €'000	2022 €'000	2021 €'000
Retained by the Courts Service	33,583	33,476	24,770
The Office of the Revenue Commissioners*	2,375	2,380	-
Total	35,958	35,856	24,770

* There was no payment made to the Revenue Commissioners for Excise Duty in 2021 as there were no licensing applications received into the Courts Service due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Expenditure & Income	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Current Expenditure		
Salaries and wages	70,687	62,952
Travel and subsistence	3,545	3,027
Staff and judicial training	1,047	1,052
Incidental/miscellaneous costs	10,018	8,483
Digital audio recording and other fees	4,608	2,943
Legal services	724	1,016
Postal services	1,922	1,990
Telecommunications	1,360	1,461
Photocopying materials & Equipment	191	207
Office equipment and materials	489	745
Courthouse maintenance	7,542	6,555
Heat, light and fuel costs	4,421	3,761
Furniture and fittings	646	321
General Premises	1,958	2,108
Leases	4,515	5,060
Consultancy (non-I.T related)	204	132
Total Current Expenditure	113,877	101,813
Capital Expenditure		
Computer and telecommunications systems	21,409	17,897
Courthouses and other buildings	9,051	6,837
PPP - Unitary payment	22,470	22,277
PPP - Regional Unitary Payments	14,744	14,739
Total Capital Expenditure	67,674	61,750
Total Gross Expenditure	181,551	163,564
Income (Appropriations-in-Aid)		
Fees	33,583	33,476
Miscellaneous	1,441	694
Pension levy	1,777	1,666
Total Income	36,800	35,836
Total Net Expenditure	144,751	127,728

Note: The figures are provisional and subject to the audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.



Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997

Payment practices

Prompt payment interest provides for the payment of interest to suppliers for invoices not paid within 30 days. The Service has procedures in place to ensure that all invoices are paid within the time limits identified on the invoices or, if no time limit is specified, within the statutory time limit. While the procedures have been designed to ensure compliance with the Act, they only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance against material non-compliance with the Act.

Prompt payment interest

Prompt payment interest and compensation is paid to suppliers in respect of invoices not paid within 30 days of receipt. In 2023, the total amount paid out in respect of late payments was €19,934 (€16,786 in 2022).

Late payments			
Year	Interest amount	Compensation amount	Total
2023	€5,884	€14,050	€19,934
2022	€3,706	€13,080	€16,786
2021	€2,130	€11,310	€13,440

15-day payment requirement

The Service makes every effort, consistent with proper financial procedures, to ensure that all suppliers are paid within 15 days.

Prompt Payment Quarterly Returns by Government Departments Agency: Courts Service				
Year	% of overall total value paid within 15 days	Value of payments within 15 days	% No. of payments within 15 days	No. of payments within 15 days
2023	66%	€62,453,655	57%	5,584
2022	72%	€61,898,915	62%	5,734
2021	72%	€57,707,213	68%	5,968



Court Funds Office

The Courts Service, in accordance with the Courts Service Act, 1998, is responsible for the management and administration of the Courts and the provision of support services for judges. It is in this capacity that the Courts Service has a role in the management and investment of Court Funds, which are held in trust by the Courts. These funds are invested in line with the provisions of the Trustee (Authorised Investments) Act, 1958 and subsequent orders.

At 30 September 2023, the Accountants Office managed €2.486 billion in a fiduciary capacity (2022: €2.337 billion) on behalf of 21,779 beneficiaries. Of which 2,943 beneficiaries are persons who have been declared Wards of Court (2022: 2,901) with funds valued at €1.893 billion as at 30 September 2023 (2022: €1.750 billion). A further 17,581 are minors (2022: 18,069) with funds valued at €354 million (2022: €356 million). The remaining balance mostly consist of cases pending further Court Orders, residential redress board cases and lodgements with defence case types. The increase in the total value of funds by €149.9 million is attributable to a net increase from net capital transactions of €92.7 million (i.e., net excess receipts over disbursements) for the year and an increase in investment performance of €57.2 million.

Table 1: Total Net Assets under Management, by Jurisdiction as at 30 September 2023

Jurisdiction	Net Assets € at 30/09/2022	%	Net Assets € at 30/09/2023	%	% Increase / (Decrease) in Net Assets
High Court	2,120,585,883	90.7%	2,271,007,756	91.3%	7.1%
Circuit Court	183,497,691	7.9%	181,567,967	7.3%	-1.1%
District Court	32,913,224	1.4%	34,333,879	1.4%	4.3%
Total	€2,336,996,798	100%	€2,486,909,602	100%	6.4%

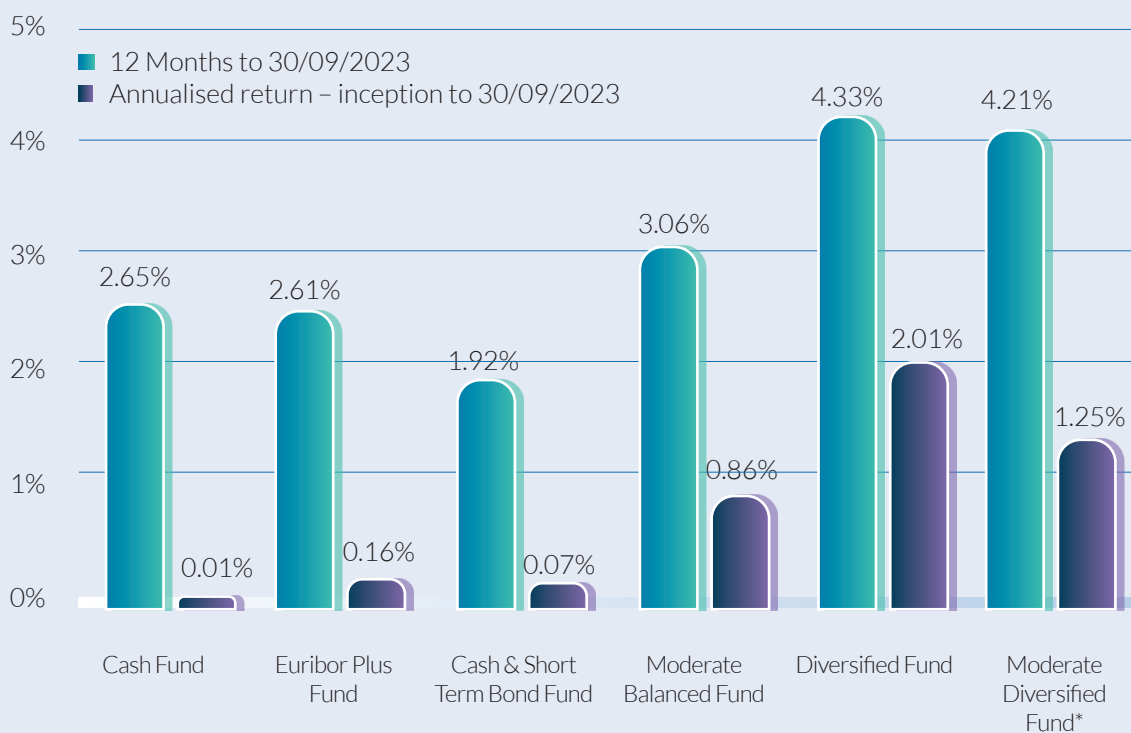




Table 2 below shows the investment performance gross of fees for all strategies for the current financial year, covering the period from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023 and the annualised return since inception. The gross returns, before management, custodian, and administration fees, for the year ending 30 September 2023 were as follows: Cash Fund 2.65%, Euribor Plus Fund 2.61%, Cash and Short Term Bond Fund 1.92%, Moderate Balanced Fund 3.06%, Diversified Fund 4.33%, and Moderate Diversified Fund 4.21%.

Note: Full details are contained in the annual report of the Financial Statements of the Accountant of the Courts of Justice for the year ending 30 September 2023 available on www.courts.ie

Table 2: SSGA Spectrum Funds Investment Performance (Gross of Fees) to 30 September 2023 and Annualised Return: Inception to 30 September 2023



At the end of the financial year and after a prolonged period of negative interest rates, the European Central Bank (ECB) monetary policy abolished negative interest rates in late 2022. This has meant that cash-based funds are not generating positive returns which is a significant change to the previous twelve months. This is particularly welcome given that for the year under review a large proportion of the funds are held in cash-based assets.



Statement of Financial Position At 30 September 2023

	30/09/2023 €	30/09/2022 €
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	2,415,881,180	2,227,493,245
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	52,535,448	50,797,337
Cash and cash equivalents	23,018,067	60,988,106
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	75,553,515	111,785,443
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Creditors	(4,525,093)	(2,281,890)
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	(4,525,093)	(2,281,890)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	71,028,422	109,503,553
TOTAL NET ASSETS	2,486,909,602	2,336,996,798
Represented by:		
Funds held for beneficiaries	2,486,909,602	2,336,996,798

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 September 2023

	30/09/2023 €	30/09/2022 €
NET REALISED AND UNREALISED GAINS / LOSSES		
Net realised gains on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	17,852,730	13,432,052
Net change in unrealised Gains / Losses on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	41,343,732	(49,331,851)
Net Gains / Losses realised on transfers of assets	(83,356)	(620,869)
NET REALISED AND CHANGE IN UNREALISED GAINS / LOSSES	59,113,106	(36,520,668)
Investment income	160,940	68,933
	59,274,046	(36,451,735)
Expenses	(2,051,955)	(1,878,164)
(DECREASE) / INCREASE IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS	57,222,091	(38,329,899)



Statement of Changes in Net Assets for the year ended 30 September 2023

	30/09/2023 €	30/09/2022 €
INCREASE / (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS		
Investment income less expenses	(1,891,015)	(1,809,231)
Net realised gains on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	17,852,730	13,432,052
Net change in unrealised Gains / Losses on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	41,343,732	(49,331,851)
Net (losses) realised on transfers out during year	(83,356)	(620,869)
INCREASE / (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS	57,222,091	(38,329,899)
CAPITAL TRANSACTIONS		
Receipts	304,475,319	410,533,468
Disbursements	(211,784,606)	(254,443,165)
INCREASE IN NET ASSETS FROM CAPITAL TRANSACTIONS	92,690,713	156,090,303
Total increase in net assets for the year	149,912,804	117,760,404
Net assets at beginning of year	2,336,996,798	2,219,236,394
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	2,486,909,602	2,336,996,798

Court Funds Office – Court Accounts Section

The Courts Accounts Section of the Courts Funds Office operates as a shared service centre for the processing of all financial transactions for the Combined Court Offices of the Courts Service. In 2023, the total volume of transactions (both receipts and payments) was 413,488 (2022, 503,395) with a monetary value of €85.8m (2022, €90.7m).

Fines

The Courts Service manages receipts and fines imposed by the Courts. Court Fines received are transferred to the Exchequer and a number of other Government Departments and Agencies. Court fines made a recovery in 2022, following two years where reduced social and economic activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic, contributed to a decline in court fines collected and transferred to the Exchequer. 2023 has dropped from that peak last year but did not fall back to pandemic levels.

Table 3: Court Fines collected and transferred

	2023 €'000	2022 €'000
Exchequer (motor fines)	4,807	5,593
Exchequer (general)	2,824	3,783
The Office of the Revenue Commissioners	528	556
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications	38	29
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	11	1
Total	8,208	9,962

Fines (Payments and Recovery) Act 2014

The Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act 2014 allows for the payment of fines by instalment over a twelve-month period, subject to certain conditions. Where a person defaults in making payment the matter will be brought back to court. This may result in the making of an attachment of earnings order or a community service order. Where the unpaid fine is in excess of €500, the court may appoint a receiver.

Table 4: Number and value of fines imposed and recorded on CCTS* in 2023 and 2022

	2023	2022
Number of fines imposed	62,004	60,024
Value of fines imposed	€21,016,144	€18,767,103

*Criminal Case Tracking System



Family Law

The Courts Service processes Family Law payments for maintenance debtors and creditors.

Table 5: Family Law receipts and payments

	2023		2022	
	€'000	Volume	€'000	Volume
Receipts	€13,474	151,427	€14,444	166,555
Payments	€13,102	176,583	€14,137	196,386

The Courts Service continues to encourage users to avail of electronic funds transfer as the preferred method of payment with 93% of Family Law maintenance creditors paid by EFT in 2023, and 90% of such debtors making payment by standing order up by 6% on prior years.

Poor Box

The court may direct that money be paid into the Court Poor Box in lieu of, or in conjunction with, another penalty. Payments can be made via the Courts Service for onward payment to a charity as directed by the court.

The primary responsibility of the Courts Service in relation to the Poor Box is to ensure that:

- all monies paid into, and payments made from the Poor Box are carried out in accordance with the direction of the judge, and
- there are adequate and effective systems and procedures in place for recording court orders and accounting for Poor Box receipts and payments.

Table 6: Poor Box returns 2023

	Balance At 01/01/2023	Receipts	Payments	Balance At 31/12/2023
District Court	€351,449.51	€1,518,209.44	€1,320,661.17	€548,997.78



Glossary of terms

Appeal – a proceeding, taken by a party to a case who is dissatisfied with a decision made, to a Court having authority to review or set aside that decision.

Barring order – an order preventing the person against whom the order is made ('the respondent') from entering the family home or using or threatening violence against the person who applied for the order ('the applicant') or other family members.

Care order – an order placing a child in the care of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) until he or she reaches the age of eighteen or a shorter period as determined by the Court.

Certified list – a list of cases certified by counsel as being ready for hearing.

Civil Bill – a document used to commence a civil case in the Circuit Court, it gives details of the parties to the case and details of the claim being made.

Claim Notice – a document used to commence a civil case in the District Court, it gives details of the parties to the case and details of the claim being made.

Debt relief notice – one of three debt resolution mechanisms introduced by the Personal Insolvency Act, 2012 to help mortgage-holders and others with unsustainable debt to reach agreements with their creditors. It allows for the write-off of qualifying debt up to €20,000, subject to a three-year supervision period.

Debt settlement arrangement – one of three debt resolution mechanisms introduced by the Personal Insolvency Act, 2012 to help mortgage-holders and others with unsustainable debt to reach agreements with their creditors. It applies to the agreed settlement of unsecured debts, usually over a period of five years.

Defence – a document delivered by the defendant to the plaintiff in response to a civil bill in the Circuit Court or a plenary summons in the High Court.

Defendant – a person against whom an action is brought; a person charged with a criminal offence.

Emergency care order – an order placing a child under the care of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) for a maximum period of eight days if the Court considers that there is a serious risk to the health or welfare of a child.

Indictment – (a) a formal document setting out certain kinds of charges against an accused person or (b) the process by which those charges are presented against the accused.

Indictable offence – an offence which, if committed by an adult, is triable on indictment.

Injunction – an order of the Court directing a party to an action to do, or to refrain from doing, something.

Interim barring order – an immediate order, requiring the person against whom the order is made ('the respondent') to leave the family home, pending the hearing of an application for a barring order.

Interim care order – an order, granted when an application for a care order has been or is about to be made, requiring that the child named in the order be placed in the care of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).

Intestate – dying without making a valid will.

Judicial review – a legal remedy available in situations where a body or tribunal is alleged to have acted in excess of legal authority or contrary to its duty.

Judicial separation – a decree granted by the Court relieving spouses to a marriage of the obligation to cohabit.

Jurisdiction – (a) the power of a Court or judge to hear an action, petition, or other proceeding, or (b) the geographical area within which such power may be exercised.

Liquidated debt – a claim for a specified amount of money.



Mortgage suit – a form of proceeding to recover a debt owed to the holder of security on property – by forcing the sale of the property (usually on foot of a judgment mortgage or an equitable mortgage).

National Development Finance Agency - The NDFA is an integrated finance, procurement and project delivery model established within the National Treasury Management Agency to bring a unified commercial approach to the procurement and project management of new public sector projects, including Public Private Partnerships.

Noelle prosequi – the entering by the prosecution of a stay on criminal proceedings (not to be confused with an acquittal).

Personal insolvency arrangement – one of three debt resolution mechanisms introduced by the Personal Insolvency Act, 2012 to help mortgage-holders and others with unsustainable debt to reach agreements with their creditors. It applies to the agreed settlement and/or restructuring of secured debts up to a total of €3 million (as well as unsecured debts) over a period of six years.

Petition – document used to commence certain civil proceedings in the High Court (e.g., application to wind up a company, have a person adjudicated bankrupt).

Plaintiff – a person who brings a legal action against another.

Plenary summons – document used to commence certain civil proceedings (e.g., claims for non-specific damages, libel, nuisance) in the High Court where pleadings and oral evidence are required.

Protection order – an interim order, granted when an application for a safety/barring order has been made, prohibiting the person against whom the order is made ('the respondent') from committing further acts of violence or threatening violence

Safety order – an order prohibiting the person against whom the order is made ('the respondent') from committing further acts of violence or threatening to do so. It does not prevent the respondent from entering the family home.

Special exemption order – an order allowing a licensee to sell alcohol outside the normal licensing hours subject to certain conditions.

Special summons – document used to begin certain civil proceedings (e.g., equity claims, mortgage enforcement, administration of trusts) in the High Court to be heard on affidavit (i.e., not oral evidence).

Specific performance - an order of a Court which requires a party to perform a specific act, usually what is stated in a contract e.g., contracts for the sale, purchase, or lease of land. It is an alternative to awarding damages and is a discretionary equitable remedy.

Summary judgment – judgment for a claim in respect of a debt or specific monetary demand. The judgment is given to the plaintiff against the defendant in a court office without the need to bring the claim to Court.

Summary summons – document used to commence certain civil proceedings (e.g., claims for a specific amount of money, recovery of possession by a landlord) in the High Court, to be heard on affidavit.

Supervision order – an order allowing the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) to monitor a child considered to be at risk. The child is not removed from his or her home environment. A supervision order is for a fixed period of time not longer than 12 months initially.



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service