



Courts Service News

Nuacht na Seirbhíse Cúirteanna



**Courts Service
Modernisation**

**Presidential
Inauguration**

**Súil siar agus
súil chun cinn**



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An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

If you would like to contribute an article,
a book or a film review, please contact
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Welcome to the December issue of **Courts Service News**

Season's greetings to all as we present our annual printed edition of Courts Service News.

We start as always with festive greetings from our CEO, Angela, and the Chair of our Board, Ms Justice Aileen Donnelly who recently succeeded Ms Justice Elizabeth Dunne in that role.

2025 saw a Courts Service very much focused on user-centricity. Our extensive Modernisation Programme coverage includes features on the Family Law Reform and Civil Reform programmes.

Our Innovation team tell us about a new innovation pathway, a jury support project and a recent hackathon.

We also hear about the progress made on the further rollout of the Unified Case Management System which is starting to transform court operations. You can read about how 72% of courtrooms are now equipped with video technology, reducing costs and supporting sustainability, while improving safety for vulnerable participants. The Courts Service (with the Irish Prison Service) won a Civil Service Excellence Award for this initiative. Read about all our technology updates in our ICT article.

The Inclusion Group provides an update on championing diversity through events like Africa Day, courthouse visits for the Traveller community, and the launch of Pride 4 Courts, the organisation's first LGBTQ+ network.

Rebranded as the Climate Action Unit, the Sustainability team achieved a 37.5%



improvement in energy efficiency and 36.9% reduction in carbon emissions since baseline years. Read on to find out more about their Climate Action Roadmap and initiatives.

We're always keen to hear from and support other agencies across the justice sector. We're delighted to have messages this year from Victim Support at Court – celebrating their 20th anniversary this year - and Accompaniment Support Services for Children.

Since our last edition, in recent weeks we sadly lost 3 serving members of staff who are remembered across these pages. Our thoughts are with their families and friends at this difficult time.

No Christmas edition would be complete without our traditional features including our quiz (One4All voucher up for grabs), seasonal recipe and book review. We also have a reader favourite, the review of the year's judicial appointments and retirements.

Annual Courts Service Mass of Remembrance

Our annual Mass of Remembrance took place on Thursday, 20 November, in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Merchant's Quay, Dublin.

The service brought together current and former staff, members of the judiciary, and family members to remember and honour those who have passed.

You can watch the recording of the mass via the QR code. The recording was kindly facilitated by our ICT Unit working with the Communications and Media Unit.





Christmas greetings from the Chairperson of the Courts Service Board

I was honoured to be asked by the Chief Justice to become Chair of the Board of the Courts Service this year. In doing so I would like to praise and express thanks for the work of my predecessor, Ms Justice Elizabeth Dunne. The Board, under her stewardship, has undertaken huge levels of work, oversight and planning. Improvements as a result of these efforts have been, and will become, more and more apparent with each passing week.

At this time of year, it is commonplace to take a step back from what can be demanding efforts in the workplace, to take stock and to be thankful for those around us; colleagues and friends alike.

In doing so this year I can say I am very grateful to the wider courts, judicial and legal community. The efforts of all involved make the courts system manageable and accessible. I know the Judiciary and the Board are most grateful for everyone's work in 2025 in helping us provide court services.

My thanks go to the Board itself, and to the management and staff of the Courts Service, whose efforts make the experience of court users better each and every year. They build on the work of those who have retired in the recent past, and I would like to remember and say thank you for their efforts too.



With all of this in mind I extend the warmest greetings of the season to all the readers of this magazine, and look forward to a renewed and energetic sense of purpose for us all in the New Year. Happy Christmas to one and all.

Ms Justice Aileen Donnelly

Chair of the Board of the Courts Service



A Christmas message from Angela Denning, Chief Executive

Our Christmas bumper issue of CS News, the printed and digital edition, is a great opportunity to reflect on another busy year in the Courts Service.

For me 2025 will stand out as the year that we really started to experience the positive effect of four foundational years of our Modernisation Programme. So far, we have moved 35 of our 150 legacy systems to a single Unified Case Management System (UCMS). UCMS has had a positive effect on the 500 staff using the new system. It has also allowed us to introduce a Portal for court users to file court documentation online in some case types. As well as allowing us to introduce UCMS judiciary, providing a view of the system for judges to see their sittings and cases for those case types. Although this is only the beginning, we have very positive feedback from the staff, court users and members of the judiciary with whom we're working very closely to continue to develop and improve the system.

2025 also saw the reduction of 37 District Court Family Law forms to 7 new forms for domestic violence, maintenance, and arrangements for children. The new forms, designed in consultation with users, are written in plain language, contain instructions and helper text, and signpost to support services and more information on courts. ie. Based on feedback over a three-week period from 5 District Court offices across different regions, the forms have resulted in a 19% increase in the number of users submitting correctly completed forms to the court office. We have received positive feedback from offices right across the country and from users through our Civic Society Forum members. Making such positive change

wouldn't have been possible without the involvement of the judiciary, the Rules Committee and the President of the District Court, His Honour Judge Paul Kelly.

More details on the Modernisation Programme achievements are captured later in this edition. Personally, I would like to thank everyone for contributing to our modernisation projects – we are keen to continue this work to make positive change with users for users.

This year has brought both challenges and opportunities for our people. The work we do makes a real difference, and I am proud of what we have accomplished as a team. I would like to thank everyone as 2025 ends for their dedication and resilience and for the positive spirit they bring to the Courts Service every day. I would particularly like to thank the 81% of colleagues who completed our Healthy Place to Work survey. 2025 also stands out for me as the year we saw most of the organisation across all grades start to reap the benefits of engaging with Healthy Place to Work. Listening to the feedback, at an organisational level we prioritised training, development and employee conferences. Locally, priority was given to initiatives in offices to improve purpose, relationships, connection and mental resilience right across the country. Again, we're only starting to make real change in terms of better supporting our people in the workplace, but it is something I and the Senior Management Team remain committed to.



I would like to thank the judiciary who we work with every day, for their hard work, engagement with us and their collaboration in 2025. One successful collaboration which comes to mind is the judicial and Courts Service Committee which delivered our second Irish Courts Podcast series this year. Both series have amassed now over 12,000 downloads! I would also like to thank the Courts Service Board for all their support this year. I am particularly grateful for the work of and support from Ms Justice Elizabeth Dunne who stepped down as Chair of the Board in advance of her retirement in 2026 and Ms. Justice Aileen Donnelly who has taken over as Chair in recent months.

In addition, I would like to thank all our partners across the justice sector and Government, without whom we can't continue to improve our services for all.

Before I leave you I would like to thank you, all our readers, for subscribing to CS News. And I would like to wish you all and your families a very happy, healthy, and safe Christmas and New Year. We look forward to working with you all in 2026 after the well-deserved Christmas break!

Angela Denning CEO
The Courts Service





2025 Year at a Glance



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

7

new user-friendly
application forms
for District Court
Family Law
Applications

72%

of courtrooms
now
video-enabled

57%

response rate
on the Digital Jury
system

35

of 150 legacy
systems moved to
a new Unified Case
Management
System

12,000

downloads of The
Irish Courts
Podcast

1st

Place Civil
Service Excellence
Award for the Video
Courtroom Expansion
project

39,000

social media
followers

2,500+

staff course
completions across
22 new crime online
training courses

37.5%

more energy
efficient than
2009



Series 2 of The Irish Courts Podcast released

Following the success of our first series, which marked the centenary of the Courts of Justice Act 1924, we recently released Series 2 of The Irish Courts Podcast. The first series explored landmark cases and historical figures that shaped Ireland's legal system over the past century. It captured the human-interest side of law and celebrated the radical spirit that defined the early years of the State.

Building on that foundation, Series 2 continues the conversation with four compelling episodes that examine how law both influences and reflects Irish society and values. With more than 12,000 downloads to date and a place in Spotify's Top 100 Irish podcasts, the series has become a popular way to explore the courts and their role in shaping modern Ireland.

The Podcast is recorded in-house at the Criminal Courts of Justice, in the Judges' Library on the ninth floor. The podcast is overseen by the Podcast Editorial Committee, which includes Mr Justice Cian Ferriter of the High Court, Judge Gráinne Malone of the District Court, Maura Howe, Head of Communications, Lisa Maybury, who manages the project, and Denis Burke, the content creator, and it is all pulled together by Producer Patricia Baker of Curious Broadcast.

You can listen to both Series now at courts.ie/hubs/the-irish-courts-podcast or by scanning the QR code below. A huge thank you to all our speakers and contributors for sharing their insights and expertise.

SCAN HERE



What's in Series 2?

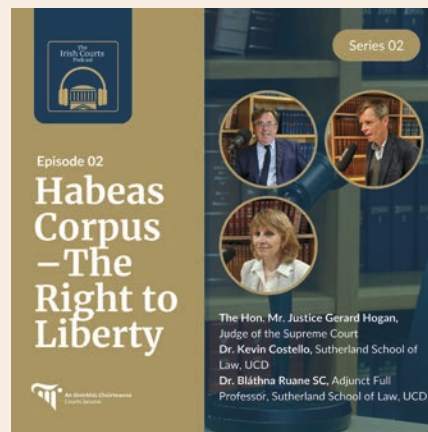


Episode 1



Trial by Jury

Join Professor Niamh Howlin, Patrick Gageby SC, and Ms Justice Caroline Biggs as they trace the evolution of jury trials, from packed juries and exclusionary laws to landmark cases that opened the courtroom to women and broadened public participation.



Episode 2



Habeas Corpus: The Right to Liberty

Hear from Dr Bláthna Ruane SC, Mr Justice Gerard Hogan, and Associate Professor Dr Kevin Costello as they trace the development of Habeas Corpus through Irish legal history.



Episode 3



AI and the Courts

Join Ms Justice Eileen Roberts, Dr Brian Barry, and Karlin Lillington as they explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping the legal landscape; from courtroom transcription and legal research, to sentencing algorithms and deep fakes.



Episode 4



Media and the Courts

This episode features Professor Rachael Walsh, Mary Carolan, Dave O'Connell, and Dr Carol Coulter. Every day, headlines and social media feeds carry stories from our courts. However, court reporting is more than news, it's a constitutional imperative and a cornerstone of transparency in Irish justice.



A Visit to Cloverhill Prison:

Technology, Challenges, and Humanity

Our Communications and Media Unit team recently had an opportunity to visit Cloverhill Remand Prison, Ireland's largest facility for prisoners awaiting trial. It was an eye-opening experience that gave us a real sense of the challenges faced by both prisoners and staff — and how technology is starting to make a difference.

We were hosted by newly appointed assistant governor for videolink support, Ger Sheehan, and the team of staff that co-ordinate the operation of the videolink system. A tour of the prison was arranged to capture the differing requirements of the prison. We were really impressed with the amount of access and how detailed the tour was.

Life Inside Cloverhill

Cloverhill Prison is a closed, medium security prison for adult males, mainly holding prisoners on remand committed from the Leinster area. During 2024, Cloverhill processed over 15,800 warrants and a further 14,400 to date in 2025.

The prison has an operational capacity of roughly 430, but this number is regularly exceeded due to current demand for prison spaces.

We also visited the rooms where prisoners meet family and friends — a reminder of the human connections that matter most in difficult times.

The Challenge of Court Appearances

Traditionally, attending court means a long, disruptive day for prisoners. They can be away from the prison for up to

12 hours, much of it spent in a confined cubicle in a prison van. Often, the actual court appearance lasts only minutes for mention. For every prisoner transported, they must be escorted by a number of prison officers, adding pressure on resources and impacting the prison's ability to maintain full services in the prison.

Cloverhill is embracing technology to ease these challenges:

- **Video Booths for Court Hearings:** Prisoners can now appear before the court via videolink without leaving the prison. This saves time, reduces risk, and allows prisoners to keep some normality— allowing prisoners maintain normal routine such as attending school, workshops, or not missing out on a visit from a family member.
- **Mental Health Support:** Video conferencing facilities closer to cells help prisoners with mental health difficulties attend court appearances support without the stress or risks of transport.
- **Solicitor Consultations:** A pilot project due to commence in January will extend and develop opportunities for solicitor consultation via videolink. One solicitor recently spoke to three

prisoners in three different prisons in a single evening - something that would have been impossible before.

- **Family Video Calls:** Technology is also helping prisoners stay connected with loved ones, boosting morale and improving behaviour. Better-behaved prisoners earn privileges such as extra calls, more visiting time, jobs in the prison, and access to quieter spaces.

Evidence of Impact

The videolink governor shared a powerful example: A Judge recently asked eight prisoners in Blanchardstown District Court how they'd prefer to appear next time. Every one of them chose videolink. That speaks volumes.

Why It Matters

Our visit showed that tech-enabled court appearances aren't just about efficiency—they're about dignity, safety, and better outcomes for everyone. They save resources for the Prison Service and Courts Service, reduce risk in courthouses, have the potential to reduce the stress for victims and witnesses in court, and increase opportunities for prisoners to make good use of their time in prison towards rehabilitation.

You can read about both organisations jointly winning a Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Award for the courtroom video technology initiative, in our ICT article.



Future Legal Eagles Take Flight at the Court of Appeal



St. Catherine's 5th Class brings Fairy-Tale Justice to the Four Courts

A Legal Visit

The children of St. Catherine's Primary School, Dublin 7 visited the Court of Appeal in the Four Courts recently to learn about legal life, discover how a courtroom really works and stage their very own mock trial. Having prepared their case with Street Law Trainer Mary Ann McDermott, the class arrived in full courtroom attire—robes, airs of confidence and a healthy dose of excitement.

Throughout the morning of St. Catherine's visit, the girls were encouraged by the growing number of women across the legal profession, both at the Bar and on the Bench. Their class teacher also highlighted the many other fascinating careers within the courts—judicial researchers, registrars, jury minders and countless roles that keep the system running smoothly.

Fully Briefed

Once briefed, the students took their positions for the trial of Jack and the Beanstalk, where both Jack and his mother stood accused of murder. The investigating Gardaí provided a detailed account of both accused's behaviour after the unfortunate Giant's demise, while the State Pathologist added some persuasive evidence regarding whether the Giant had clung to the beanstalk in his final moments. Meteorological evidence was introduced to establish whether it had rained that day. Navigating a beanstalk is challenging under the best of conditions, let alone when it's wet.

After some spirited legal debate, the charges were reduced to manslaughter—of which the pair were duly convicted. Jack attempted a last-minute defence by claiming to be under the age of criminal responsibility, but the prosecution triumphantly produced a birth certificate, putting that argument promptly to rest.

There was considerable surprise among the class to learn that contrary to the world of Judge Judy, Irish judges do not bang gavels—and, more often than not, don't wear wigs either. The students were also astonished to discover just how many years it takes to become a judge, and enthusiastically suggested that the process be “fast-tracked immediately.”

In true competitive style, the prosecution counsel could be heard shouting “Did we win?!” the moment the verdict was delivered.

Historic Setting

Held in the beautiful and historic setting of the Four Courts, the experience proved unforgettable. Their teacher, Ms. Russell, and their Special Needs Assistant, Amy, reported that the girls haven't stopped talking about it since.

Our outreach programme supports bringing the law to life, inspiring young minds, and showing that even fairy-tale cases can teach real-world lessons about justice.

The Presidential Inauguration



President Catherine Connolly with Chief Justice Donal O'Donnell

Avril Brady from the Office of the CEO gives us a behind the scenes look at a momentous day last month

When I joined the Office of the CEO as Events Manager, I knew this role would bring big moments, but few compared to helping to organise the inauguration of Ireland's newly elected President. This was an occasion steeped in tradition and national significance, and preparations began back in September 2025 with the first of many planning meetings.

From day one, it was a true team effort. I worked closely with colleagues across government, including Áras an Uachtaráin, Dublin Castle, the Defence Forces, and the Office of An Taoiseach. Every detail mattered, and every conversation shaped the day.

One of the most important elements of the day was ensuring the Judiciary's presence was seamless. Months of preparation went into getting this right, from confirming titles and precedence to arranging seating so that protocol was respected. Every detail mattered because this was a moment of national significance.

As the inauguration drew closer, the energy intensified. On Tuesday, 11 November, I joined colleagues Elaine Gorman from the Judicial Support Unit, Sarahrose Murphy, Senior Executive Legal Officer to the Chief Justice, and Lucy Rowan, Senior Executive Legal Officer to the President of the High Court, at Dublin Castle. Together, we made sure the Judiciary arrived on time and felt supported throughout the event.

The work was dynamic and hands-on: coordinating transport, guiding guests, and solving last-minute challenges as they arose. Our role was to bring all the pieces together, ensuring nothing slipped through the cracks on such a busy day.

Looking back, the day was a triumph of teamwork and precision. Seeing months of planning come together so flawlessly was a privilege. It was a proud moment for everyone involved, a day that will be remembered in history, and one we were honoured to help deliver.



Elaine Gorman, Avril Brady, Lucy Rowan



2025 has been another very busy year for our ICT team. Here we capture some of the key highlights. After four modernisation years, building the ICT foundations for the future, in 2025 we have started to see signs of what's possible.

Unified Case Management System (UCMS)

The digital part of our ICT, Digital and Data Strategy centres around our new Unified Case Management System (UCMS). UCMS provides the technology needed for the Courts Service staff case management system, a Portal for practitioners to file court documents online and a judicial view of their sittings and cases. For Courts Service staff, UCMS set out to replace the 150 systems used to administer court work.

With over 500 staff members now using UCMS across 7 areas of work, the system is becoming a core part of our daily work. We can now start to envisage better ways of working and of delivering our service to users.

Most recently the UCMS has rolled out to staff in the Court of Appeal for Civil cases, and the Supreme Court, marking a significant milestone in the implementation of UCMS across the Superior Courts.

In November this year, the District Family Law office in Tullamore went live with UCMS, following the rollout to Dolphin House and Dublin Child Care Office, as part of the incremental nationwide rollout of District Family Law.

We're working very closely with judges on UCMS judiciary across Circuit Court Family and the High Court. The engagement with judges and judicial assistants has been very positive and focused on ensuring the system will work for the judiciary and will provide the benefits they need. We look forward to rolling out UCMS judiciary to more members of the judiciary in 2026.

Practitioners in Circuit Court Family Law have been accessing the Portal to file online in Dublin area for the last few months. Wider rollout across the country is expected before the end of the year and into 2026.

Courts Portal for probate filings online

Following the successful rollout of UCMS to the staff in the Probate office, our focus was to support applications for probate via the Courts Portal. In October, we reached an important milestone when the Courts Portal received its first online probate application. At this pilot stage, we are working very closely with a small number of solicitors in Dublin to register them on the new Courts Portal to support further probate filings online.

Speaking about the Courts Portal receiving its first online probate applications Owen Harrison, our Chief Information Officer (CIO) commented:

"This is a real milestone as receiving probate applications online has been much anticipated by ourselves in the Courts Service, solicitors, our Housing for All colleagues and colleagues right across Government. This is only the beginning as we are taking an incremental approach. It is important that we progress and improve the pilot based on user feedback and the experience in the Probate Office. When we reach satisfaction levels on the pilot, we will then roll out this service nationwide."

In the next few years across Civil and Family Law, the Portal will allow for e-filing, e-serving, making e-payments, and the collection of digital orders across a broad range of case types.

Video Technology

The capability and option to attend hearings remotely offers enhanced options and flexibility for the judiciary and those attending Court. Following an extensive video technology installation project, 72% of courtrooms nationwide are now video tech-enabled. This means we have increased our capacity to enable more remote appearances by prisoners, technical experts and provide a safe environment for vulnerable persons to appear before the court.

Earlier this year, the Courts Service, together with the Irish Prison Service, won a Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Award in the Digital First category for the video technology initiative. The project has resulted



in substantial cost savings arising from fewer staff escorts for IPS, lower transportation expenses, and less downtime for prisoners, creating more opportunities for constructive activities and rehabilitation. Additional savings stem from reduced fleet depreciation, along with lower diesel use and carbon emissions, delivering long-term financial and environmental benefits.

The investment in video courtroom technology also provides access to new technologies to support the presentation of digital evidence. Examples include An Garda Síochána body-worn cameras and witness anonymity in Criminal proceedings.

Coupled with the integration of UCMS, we will continue to collaborate with An Garda Síochána and the Irish Prison Service to enhance the remote court platform.

Data

We have made great improvements in how we collate, manage and organise our data, which has enabled us to improve how we use that data. Our improved data maturity together with our commitment to relentlessly increasing data access and data quality is transforming the Courts Service into a data-driven organisation. We also continue our commitment to transparency, and earlier this year have expanded the datasets available on our Open Data Portal.

Accessibility

Owen Harrison, CIO, explains: *“This is all about the users. It is essential that all individuals who engage with the Irish legal system can understand and navigate content, systems, data, and processes. To that end, our services must be delivered in an equitable and inclusive manner, providing better*

service to those who need assistance, in alignment with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.”

This focus on accessibility has led to a recent major upgrade of courts.ie. Over the past two years, we've been steadily improving sections of courts.ie - redesigning pages, simplifying language, and making key information easier to find and understand. This has been an ongoing, collaborative effort - working closely with different teams and subject matter experts across the organisation.

The ambition for the website upgrade, using a plain language approach, is to significantly lower the reading age, reach over 90 per cent in the National Disability Authority Accessibility Score (top 10 per cent of public body websites) and achieve a Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 level of 'AA'.

The Courts Service recently held a webinar for solicitors. Owen Harrison, Chief Information Officer, and Mark Dunne, Head of Digital, shared the latest update on the Courts Service Modernisation Programme with particular focus on digital filing and the Courts Portal. The webinar

included a **demonstration** of the Courts Portal, introducing solicitors to:

- Digital filing and notifications
- Order collection
- And very importantly, the digital affidavit – the **Statement of Truth**

Recording of the webinar available through the QR code.



Justice sector digitalisation: What tomorrow looks like – Eolas recently facilitated a round table discussion hosted by the Courts Service with Paul Spring, CIO of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Brendan Dillion, Managing Partner, Dillion Solicitors, Louise Jevens, Assistant Secretary and CIO at the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, Joshua Murray, Deputy Editor, Eolas, Owen Harrison, Assistant Secretary, CIO, the Courts Service, Donna Creaven, Director of ICT, Governance and Corporate Services, the Irish Prison Service, and The Hon. Mr Justice Liam Kennedy, Judge of the High Court. The discussion centred around what has been achieved in recent years across the justice sector and what can be achieved in the future through collaboration. Promises to be an interesting read when it is published in the January edition of Eolas!



Reflecting on Inclusion events 2025

A year of Pride, awareness and conversations



The Inclusion Group brings together staff from across the organisation to represent, support and inspire the organisation.

Each member is passionate about celebrating equality, diversity and helps to make the Courts Service a place where everyone feels they belong. Many of our events and initiatives have grown organically and are based on ideas that individual staff have brought to life through teamwork, creativity, and dedication.

Throughout 2025, the Inclusion Group proudly hosted a series of events that celebrated diversity, fostered community, and promoted wellbeing. From cultural celebrations to health awareness and the launch of a new network, here are some of the events that brought our staff together.

Pride 2025: Launch of Pride 4 Courts

As Pride Month approached in 2025, the Courts Service proudly launched its first LGBTQ+ network, Pride 4 Courts. This marked a significant milestone in fostering inclusivity and support within the organisation. The network was created to provide a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space for staff across the country to come together for events, support, socialising, and advocacy.

The official launch took place on June 18 in the Four Courts in Dublin. The event was hosted by staff member, Loraine Maher with strong support from the Inclusion

Group. Over twenty staff members attended in person and over forty joined us online, reflecting the network's commitment to accessibility through hybrid events.

The launch featured heartfelt and inspiring speeches. Tom Ward, the network's sponsor, shared his personal experiences as a proud ally and emphasised the critical importance of allyship and support in the workplace. His talk resonated deeply with attendees, highlighting how allies can help create safer, more inclusive environments. In June, the Courts Service also participated in the Pride parade in Dublin.

Traveller Community courthouse visits: Tours and discussions

Throughout 2025, the Inclusion Group has continued to engage with members of

the traveller community in locations such as Kilkenny and Wexford most recently. Wexford was the second group to visit a courthouse with others arranged in the coming months. It allows us a unique opportunity to engage with a group that ordinarily may not come to our public counters for our help or assistance.

Africa Day: A celebration of culture, community, and justice

Africa Day 2025 reinforced our shared commitment to inclusion and cultural understanding. While hosted by the Courts Service Inclusion Group, the event exemplified cross-organisational collaboration, engaging the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Bar, the Law Society, and the Judiciary.

Africa Day 2025 was a vibrant and inclusive celebration, showcasing the rich diversity of African cultures within the Courts Service and the wider justice community. Building on last year's success, there was a roundtable discussion exploring critical themes, access to justice, Ireland's relationship with African nations, and the lived experiences of colleagues from the African diaspora.

Distinguished speakers, including Ms Justice Mary Rose Gearty of the High Court, Femi Daniyan BL, Sandra Mpanyira (Human Rights solicitor), Bashir Otukoya (Courts Service), Naomi Canniffe (ODPP), and Sean McHale from the Irish Rule of Law who shared insights that sparked thoughtful dialogue and highlighted the value of





Africa Day

cultural awareness in strengthening our justice system. Attendees also enjoyed authentic West African cuisine, adding a distinctive cultural dimension to the event.

Particularly impactful were the personal reflections of Bashir Otukoya and Naomi Canniffe, who spoke candidly about their experiences living and working in Ireland. Their courage in sharing these truths resonated deeply with attendees, many of whom described their contributions as the highlight of the day.

International Women's Day:

In March and October, the Inclusion Group hosted two online webinars in partnership with Breast Cancer Ireland to mark International Women's Day. The session aimed to educate all staff on the importance of breast health and to perform regular self-checks.

Attendees were introduced to the Breast Health app, a helpful tool that guides users through recognising signs and symptoms and sends monthly reminders.

International Men's Day:

On 17 November, the Inclusion Group marked International Men's Day with an event focused on men's health. Lorcan Brennan of the Men's Network delivered an insightful talk which was recorded and is available for staff to review. He also provided information on additional supports and publications available. The event welcomed all staff, recognising that men's health is a topic that concerns everyone, with women and non-binary individuals often playing key roles as supporters.

Celebration of Hope: A moment of peace and reflection

In February, the Inclusion Group held its second 'Celebration of Hope' event in the Criminal Courts of Justice in Dublin. The agenda was thoughtfully designed to encourage moments of calm while also incorporating musical performances and poetry readings. We were joined by staff and invited guests to consider the vital role diverse cultures play in fostering global peace and the meaningful actions each of us can take to prevent conflict.



Celebration of Hope

The OWL Trainee Programme

Since its launch in 2018, the OWL Trainee Programme has made significant progress in promoting inclusive employment across the Civil and Public Service.

Developed through a partnership between the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, KARE, WALK, and supported by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, and the Public Appointments Service, the programme offers adults with intellectual disabilities a structured pathway to meaningful employment.

The ultimate aim of the OWL Trainee Programme is to transition participants into meaningful permanent roles in the Civil Service. In 2024, the Courts Service applied under the scheme and one graduate has since joined us in an office in Dublin, receiving onsite support during the initial weeks and quickly becoming a valued team member. A second graduate is set to join early next year, with similar support arrangements in place.

Looking ahead: Inclusion events in 2026

As we move into 2026, the Inclusion Group looks forward to continuing its commitment to fostering diversity, resilience, and community within the Courts Service. We look forward to 2026 and building on initiatives in 2025, creating more opportunities for connection, learning, and inclusion across the Courts Service.

Brought to you by the Inclusion Group



Celebration of Hope



Irish Language in the Courts Service in 2025

Súil siar agus súil chun cinn



I mí Iúil 2025, sheol an tSeirbhís Chúirteanna a céad **Straitéis Ghaeilge 2025-2028**, céim mhór chun tosaigh a dearadh chun eagraíocht dhátheangach a dhéanamh den eagraíocht. Sonraítear sa straitéis ár dtiomantas chun a chinntiú gur féidir leis an bpobal plé leis an tSeirbhís Chúirteanna i nGaeilge ag an leibhéal céanna agus is féidir i mBéarla agus go n-urramaítear rogha teanga ár n-úsáideoirí seirbhíse.

Fís straitéiseach

Is í príomhaidhm na straitéise cothromaíocht a bhaint amach idir an Béarla agus an Ghaeilge i soláthar seirbhíse. I measc na bpríomhbhearta tá Oifig láraithe Gaeilge a bhunú, baill foirne a bhfuil scileanna Gaeilge acu a earcú go gníomhach agus creat a fhorbairt d'idirghníomhaíochtaí custaiméirí i nGaeilge ar líne, aghaidh ar aghaidh agus ar an nguthán.

Legally Líofa – Sainoiliúint d'fhoireann na Seirbhíse Chúirteanna

Ceann de na céimeanna is praiticiúla faoin straitéis is ea feidhmiú céimneach Legally Líofa, clár oiliúna inmheánach do chlárúitheoirí cúirte, a thosaigh i mí Mheán Fómhair na bliana seo. Díríonn **Legally Líofa** ar théarmaíocht dlí agus ar líofacht nós imeachta, rud a chuireann ar chumas clárúithe eoirí éisteachtaí agus doiciméid a bhainistiú go muiníneach i nGaeilge.

Muinín agus pobal a chothú

Aithnítear go dtagann bláthú ar theanga trí úsáid, beidh ról lárnach ag foghlaim neamhfhoirmiúil mar aon le hoiliúint fhoirmiúil i bhforbairt na teanga sa tSeirbhís Chúirteanna. Cuirtear dhá chiorcal comhrá ar siúl gach mí, ceann aghaidh ar aghaidh agus ceann ar líne, chun baill foirne a spreagadh chun an Ghaeilge a chleachtadh i suíomh suaimhneach, ag cothú muiníne agus braistint phobail. Léiríonn na ciorcail seo gur teanga bheo í an Ghaeilge san ionad oibre, agus nach ní riachtanas reachtúil amháin í.

Rannpháirtíocht chultúrtha – Oireachtas na Gaeilge

Ghlac an tSeirbhís Chúirteanna páirt in Oireachtas na Gaeilge den chéad uair i mBéal Feirste i mbliana. Is ceiliúradh bliantúil é an tOireachtas ar an nGaeilge agus cuireann sé deiseanna den scoth ar fáil chun dea-chleachtais a roinnt, dul i dteagmháil le pobal na teanga, agus dul chun cinn a thaispeáint faoin straitéis nua.

Ag caitheamh súil chun cinn

Ina chroílár, tá fís chlauchtaitheach ag Straitéis na Gaeilge don tSeirbhís Chúirteanna 2025-2028. Trí ghníomhartha struchtúrtha, oiliúint spriocdhíríte, agus tionscnaimh feasachta, tá an tSeirbhís Chúirteanna ag leagan síos an bhunchloch dár n-éabhlóid i dtreo eagraíocht a bhfuil an dátheangachas fite fuaite inti.

In July 2025, the Courts Service launched its first **Irish Language Strategy 2025–2028**, a major step forward designed to transform the organisation into a genuinely bilingual organisation. The strategy details our commitment to ensuring that members of the public can engage with the Courts Service in Irish as easily as in English and our service users' language choice is respected and realised.

Strategic Vision

The core ambition of the strategy is to achieve parity between English and Irish in service delivery. Key actions include establishing a centralised Irish Language Office, actively recruiting staff with Irish language skills and developing a framework for customer interactions in Irish online, in person and by phone.

Legally Líofa – Specialist Training for Courts Service staff

One of the most practical steps under the strategy is the rollout of Legally Líofa, an in-house training programme for court registrars, which commenced in September of this year. **Legally Líofa** focuses on legal terminology and procedural fluency, enabling registrars to confidently manage hearings and documentation in Irish.

Building Confidence and Community

Recognising that language thrives through usage, informal learning alongside formal training will play a key role in the development of the language in the Courts Service. Two monthly conversation circles, one in person and one online, are held to encourage staff to practice Irish in a relaxed setting, fostering confidence and a sense of community. These circles make Irish a living language within the workplace, not just a statutory requirement.

Cultural Engagement – Oireachtas na Gaeilge

The Courts Service participated in Oireachtas na Gaeilge for the first time in Belfast this year. The Oireachtas is an annual celebration of the Irish language and offers excellent opportunities to share best practices, engage with the language community, and showcase progress under the new strategy.

Looking Ahead

At its centre, the Irish Language Strategy for the Courts Service 2025–2028 has a transformative vision. Through structured actions, targeted training, and awareness initiatives, the Courts Service is laying the foundation for our evolution into a genuinely bilingual organisation.



Update on our expansion of Civil Law Reform information projects

Up to 200 new website pages by the end of 2025



The focus this year for the Civil Law Reform team has been the provision of easy-to-understand, plain English, and accessible information for all civil court users.

A look back on 2025

We published our new repossessions website information in Quarter 1, small claims in early Q2 and the much-anticipated new information for civil restraining orders in Q3. In addition, we have launched the new personal injuries and personal insolvency website pages in Q4. We will close out this type of project when we go live with our new licensing website information.

We are happy to share that to date we have produced over **150 new civil law webpages** on courts.ie and will be closer to 200 by end of year!

In collaboration with our colleagues in the Communications and Media Unit we have also developed a series of user-friendly animated videos on our website.

Project outcome and results

The new civil webpages are performing excellently as courts users continue to interact and engage with our information. Analytics from Q3 indicate that users are spending on average 1 minute 16 seconds on small claims pages and 1 minute 43 seconds on civil restraining orders information.

These metrics suggest that users are taking time to read the information on

each page and learning from the website information. We are happy to report feedback from colleagues in frontline offices who have noticed many court users are better informed when coming to the public counter.

Next steps and engagements

The Civil Law Reform team are in the early stages of an end-to-end review of civil restraining order processes, rules and forms to identify opportunities for improvements and efficiencies.

As a key component of our user-centric approach, we have continued to engage

with a wide variety of stakeholders. We have presented on the topic of civil restraining orders at a joint Garda Síochána and Cope Galway Domestic Violence conference and our Civic Society Forum in Dublin.

We recently delivered a second series of webinars to our colleagues across the Courts Service. We continue to work closely with our colleagues in frontline court offices and are currently piloting a poster to raise awareness of critical information about civil restraining orders. This is directed at public users in a busy Dublin office and one Garda Síochána Dublin location. If this is successful, we hope to roll this out nationally.

Help us improve!

We would welcome comments that you have on the new courts.ie pages. The website was designed to be agile and responsive which means that amendments and additions suggested to us can be actioned as appropriate.

If you have experience of civil restraining orders and have some feedback on the process and how these orders have impacted you, we would love to hear from you!

You can contact us civilreform@courts.ie.

The Civil Law Reform team



Caitríona Gleeson from the Civil Law Reform team at the An Garda Síochána and Cope Galway joint conference in Galway recently.



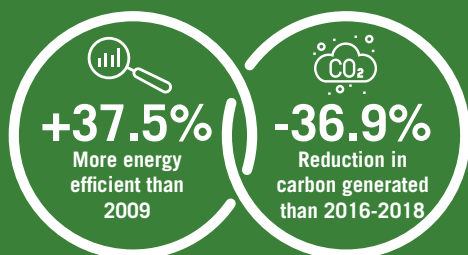
Climate Action Unit 2025 a year in review

It has been another busy year for the Courts Service Climate Action team with new projects, initiatives, and much more!

Our Progress

We were delighted to receive positive news with our annual sustainability results. Early each year we gather information on energy usage across our estates from the previous year and submit our annual returns to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

This is one of our key performance indicators and this year our results validated our efforts. With a target to improve our energy efficiency by 50% by 2030, compared to baseline of 2009, we are continuing to move in the right direction at a **37.5% improvement**. Similarly improving is our total carbon emission generation, with a target set of 51% reduction by 2030 compared to a baseline of 2016-2018 period, we are making great progress with **36.9% less carbon** generation from the energy we use.



Our Name Change

In 2025, we changed our name from the Sustainability Unit to the Climate Action Unit as part of a broader restructuring of all the estate and sustainability function within our Corporate Service Directorate, now known as Estate and Climate Operations.



Our Climate Action Roadmap for 2025

In September we published our fourth **Courts Service Climate Action Roadmap**, aligned with the Climate Action Plan 2025 and building on and expanding the work of our previous Roadmaps. The roadmap is a detailed document setting out the ambitious nationwide project pipeline required to achieve our 2030 energy efficiency and decarbonisation targets.

The roadmap is available in English and Irish at www.courts.ie/publications.

Targeted Action Plans

In 2025 we finalised the Four Courts Energy Efficiency and Decarbonisation Action Plan, following a very detailed review of the campus. The action plan sets out goals and projects to transform the energy performance of the building over the next five years. It joins similar massive pieces of work completed for the CCJ and the BAM PPPs, where we continue to work with our PPP partners to move towards cleaner, greener buildings.

Climate Action Training:

This year the Climate Action Unit, in conjunction with the Learning and Development Unit, developed a dedicated Climate Action at the Courts Service training portal which covers behavioural, technical and Green Public Procurement in alignment with the requirements of the Climate Action Mandate. The modulated training is provided by the SEAI Energy Academy, OneLearning's Climate Action training, and Green Public Procurement training developed by the European Commission.

Greener Travel



NTA presenting The Courts Service with the Smarter Travel Mark certification for Phoenix House in September 2025.

As part of the Climate Action mandate, public bodies are required to support Greener Travel and achieve a Smarter Travel Mark certification from the National Transport Authority (NTA).

In 2025 we made an initial application to the NTA for our Phoenix House headquarters in Dublin. We have



progressed actions on site in response to NTA guidance and were delighted to be awarded 'Bronze Certification' in August 2025. This process will help us identify the key actions needed to extend the certification across our estate.

Staff Engagement Campaign



In 2025, our staff engagement campaign also focused on encouraging Greener Travel. Timed to align with World Car Free Day on September 22, we issued a Greener Travel Kit to all venues nationwide. The packs include umbrellas, bicycle pumps and bicycle repair/maintenance tools stored in a convenient case for staff use as needed.

Biodiversity



As the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) 2021–2025 concludes, the Courts Service proudly reflects on its commitment to pollinator health and biodiversity. Over the past four years, we launched rewilding pilots at courthouses nationwide, expanded the 'No-Mow, Let It Grow' initiative, and created wildflower meadows in partnership with local councils. Engagement efforts, including a 2023 staff and public survey, shaped future plans, while major projects such as rewilding at the Four Courts and pollinator-friendly landscaping in Dublin enhanced urban biodiversity.

Looking ahead to AIPP 2026–2030, we aim to build on these achievements by exploring new initiatives like bird and bat boxes, reaffirming our dedication to Ireland's biodiversity goals.

The Climate Action Unit



Driving Innovation in the Courts Service – 2025

2025 has been a standout year for the Courts Service Innovation Team. We launched new initiatives, worked together across teams, and focused on giving staff the tools to make real change.

We started the year by introducing a revised Innovation Pathway. It gives every staff member a chance to share ideas for improving services. This process ensures frontline challenges are heard and turned into practical solutions. By submitting ideas, staff can help shape projects that meet our strategic goals and deliver real benefits for court users.

Innovation Advocate Programme

A key highlight was the Innovation Advocate Programme. Advocates from different regions worked in teams to solve everyday problems using service design principles. Through online workshops, an in-person design sprint, and presentations to senior leaders, they created prototypes to:

- Improve phone service
- Enhance videolink support
- Provide multi-lingual information

This user-focused approach shows how empowering staff leads to better services. The programme returns in 2026 with smaller groups for deeper collaboration.

Public Service Transformation Week 2025

Hackathon at Green Street Courthouse

During Transformation Week, we held our first Hackathon at Green Street

Courthouse with the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. A hackathon is a fast-paced event where teams solve complex problems in one day. Twenty-four participants worked on:

- Making fines enforcement more efficient
- Simplifying civil restraining orders

Feedback was very positive. Participants valued the energy, structure, and chance to think beyond their usual roles. This marks the start of new ways to tackle cross-departmental issues.

Series of lunchtime webinars

Alongside the Hackathon, Transformation Week featured short lunchtime webinars showcasing how we are improving services and supporting staff. Each 30-minute session focused on practical changes happening across the Courts Service.

Jury Support Project

We also rolled out the Jury Information Video in courthouses after a successful pilot in Dublin and Limerick. This idea came through the Innovation Pathway and became our first “Learn by Doing” project.

Staff and jurors joined workshops to identify needs. Jurors wanted clear, timely information. In response, we created a short video explaining the jury process. It helps jurors feel confident and reduces staff time spent on briefings. Feedback from jurors, staff, and judges has been excellent.



We are also piloting Juror Thank You Cards in Dublin, Limerick, Cork, and Galway. These cards provide post-trial information and mental health supports. After the pilot, we'll decide if this goes nationwide.

This project shows how putting users first improves both experience and efficiency.

Looking Ahead

As 2025 ends, we remain committed to continuous improvement. Through the Innovation Pathway, Advocate Programme, and events like hackathons, we aim to keep staff and users at the heart of service design.

Innovation is a journey, not a one-off. With staff ideas and involvement, we'll keep shaping the future of the Courts Service.

The Innovation Team

Family Law Reform: Making Change Happen

2025 has been a busy year for the Family Law Reform Team.

Our biggest achievement was launching a new, user-friendly set of District Court Family Law application forms in June. We also worked closely with justice partners to deliver key actions under the Family Justice Strategy.

New District Court Family Law Forms

In 2024, the Family Law Reform Team began work on modernising District Court Family Law application forms. Court users told us the old forms were hard to find, confusing, and full of legal jargon. They also said the process varied across locations. We listened.

Working with advocacy groups, legal professionals, judges, and Courts Service staff, we designed a simpler, clearer suite of forms for the most common applications. These forms are:

- Easy to read and use
- Written in plain language
- Consistent across all locations



On **3 June 2025**, we launched new forms for:

- Domestic Violence applications
- Maintenance applications
- Applications about arrangements for children

Since then, approximately **20,000 applications** have been made using the new forms, and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Thank you to everyone who helped make this happen!

Supporting the Implementation of the Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025

The Family Law Reform Team have been working on a wide variety of actions of The Family Justice Strategy throughout 2025.

We have been collaborating with our justice partners, and we are supporting major initiatives, including:

- Child maintenance guidelines and an online calculator
- Child-friendly information resources
- The new National Guardian ad Litem Service
- The Children's Court Advocate Pilot
- The Family Law Reporting Project
- The development of an implementation plan for the Family Courts Act 2024

Thank you

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff, judges, County Registrars, Solicitors, Barristers, family support services staff, and members of the public who helped us throughout the year. Thank you for



attending our civic society meetings, workshops, giving us feedback, and responding to our many requests. We look forward to further collaboration with you in 2026!

The Family Law Reform Team

Outreach – another busy year for CMU!

2025 has been another active year for the Communications and Media Unit (CMU), as demonstrated in our ongoing outreach and engagement programs.

Our day-to-day job includes managing the Courts Service website (which has recently undergone a transformation to make it more accessible and responsive to user needs), and social media accounts - we're active on LinkedIn, X, Facebook and YouTube. We have 39,000 followers on our social media channels and have issued over 1,100 posts across all platforms this year. We get great engagement with campaigns such as those to recruit Judicial Assistants, but that's only a fraction of what we post.

National Ploughing Championships

This year we had a stand in the Department of Justice pavilion alongside other justice sector colleagues. We spoke to members of the public about support available to victims of crime when going through the courts process.

Separately, we had a stand in the Education and Enterprise area where we gave more general information on how the courts work and our role. We encountered an array of queries from probate to jury service to recruitment and much more. We also share space with support agencies, and this collaboration had real impact — One in Four, who support victims of childhood sexual abuse, reported a disclosure that would not have occurred without being able to attend.

In the same week, we also hosted Culture Night in the Four Courts Round Hall. Louise O'Connor from Lasta Dance was the Bean an Tí as we hosted a Céilí Mór.

Tours

This year we partnered with volunteer members of the Judiciary to conduct multiple tours of the Four Courts for both Open House and Heritage Week.

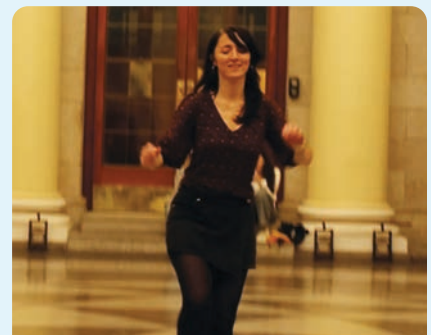
Cultural and educational initiatives added further depth to the year. Highlights included a special programme marking the 222nd anniversary of Robert Emmet's rebellion, featuring a walking tour conducted by historian Fergus Whelan, and a screening of Anne Devlin in the presence of director Pat Murphy.

Our regular tour guides also conducted over 200 school tours in the Criminal Courts of Justice. Alongside our Transition Year work placements, and our support for the National Mock Trials competition, we support the next generation gaining insight into Ireland's justice system.

We also joined events such as The Future of Legal Practice Summit, where we offered attendees a chance to try our Virtual Reality courtroom experience, which is also available online – search for 'Courts Service VR experience' on YouTube, where you can try out the full 360° video.



Fergus Whelan conducts a walking tour as part of our Robert Emmet event.



Louise O'Connor of Lasta Dance on Culture Night in the Four Courts.



Trying out our VR experience at the Ploughing.

Appointments



The Hon. Mr Justice Alexander Owens

Mr Justice Alexander Owens has been elevated from the High Court to the Court of Appeal. He was educated at Trinity College Dublin and The King's Inns. He was called to the bar in 1980 and was appointed as Senior Counsel in 2000.



Mr Sean Gillane, SC

Sean Gillane, SC, has been appointed as a judge of the High Court. He was educated at University College Cork and The King's Inns and was appointed as Senior Counsel in 2009.



Ms Deirdre Browne BL

Deirdre Browne, BL, has been appointed as a judge of the Circuit Court. In her practice as a barrister, she specialised in family law. She was called to the bar in 1997.



Ms Catherine Ryan, Solicitor

Catherine Ryan, Solicitor, has been appointed as a judge of the District Court. She was educated at University College Cork and is a former Managing Solicitor at the Legal Aid Board in Limerick and Tipperary.



Ms Valerie Corcoran, Solicitor

Valerie Corcoran, Solicitor, has been appointed as a judge of the District Court. She was educated at University College Galway and practised as a solicitor in Galway for 25 years.



Ms Karen Dowling, BL

Karen Dowling, BL, has been appointed as a judge of the District Court. She was educated at Trinity College Dublin and the King's Inns and was a practising Barrister for 19 years.



Ms Elizabeth Healy, Solicitor

Elizabeth Healy, Solicitor, has been appointed as a judge of the District Court. She was educated at Flinders University of South Australia and is a former Managing Solicitor at Tralee Law Centre.



Ms Emile Daly, BL

Emile Daly, BL, has been appointed as a judge of the District Court. She was educated at University College Dublin and the King's Inns and was a practising Barrister for over 25 years.



Ms Áine Shannon, BL

Áine Shannon has been appointed as a judge of the District Court. She was educated at University College Galway, University College London and The King's Inns.



Mr Derek Cooney, BL

Derek Cooney has been appointed as a judge of the District Court. He was educated at Dublin Institute of Technology and The King's Inns and was a practising Barrister for 25 years.



V-SAC is 20 years old!



In 2005, a victim who went through a trial without support, brought together a group of volunteers to ensure other victims would have a better experience of the court process. One of those volunteers, Mary O'Sullivan, is still with us, as Victim Support at Court marks its 20th anniversary.

2025 has been another remarkable year for V-SAC, with its volunteers supporting almost 3,000 people through the courts. Stakeholders, colleagues and former members of V-SAC came together to commemorate its 20th anniversary in the Round Hall in the Four Courts in September. A thanks to the Courts Service for allowing V-SAC to host the event in this iconic and historical building. It meant so much to all of us, as that is where it all started.

When the service began two decades ago, the focus was, as it is now, on the victim. The group of volunteers understood how daunting and lonely it can be for someone to enter such an alien environment, and provided the support needed to the victims and their families. They sourced the professional training required to be able to provide emotional and practical support. This included a meeting with Dr. Marie Cassidy, (now V-SAC's patron), the Coroner, the Gardaí and a visit to Wheatfield Prison, among others. And so, the charity began, then known as Court Support Services. The trained volunteers went where they were needed, supporting predominantly Circuit and Central Criminal Court trials in the Four Courts.

V-SAC's office was in Áras Uí Dhálaigh and there was a small room allocated for the victims and their families with 18 stacked chairs, just in case! Not ideal, but at least it



Courts Service CEO Angela Denning and Eamon Harrington at the V-SAC 20th anniversary celebration.

was something. The volunteers also covered some trials outside Dublin, when needed. One of our volunteers and co-founders of our organisation, Noelle Fitzsimons, set up the support service in Tallaght District Court.

We were delighted when the Criminal Courts of Justice opened in 2009. I can only imagine the faces of the staff and volunteers of our charity and the other victim support organisations, when they saw spacious victim support facilities – with four private rooms and a large communal area for victims. With twenty-two courtrooms in one building, the demand for our services grew. Court Support Services needed to plan for the future, so all victims coming to court could have access to support in the CCJ.

In 2011, the charity changed its name

to Victim Support at Court (V-SAC) and in 2012, the then Chief Justice, Susan Denham, launched V-SAC, which came with a new logo, website and posters. The opening of the CCJ and the formal launch of Victim Support at Court put V-SAC in the spotlight. As the referrals came flooding in from our stakeholders and victims, V-SAC was on site every day on the third floor in the CCJ. Thanks to the Courts Service, we moved our office to the nearby Children's Court in Smithfield.

V-SAC started its national rollout in 2018. The expansion was challenging – in some regions it was hard to get volunteers, and the Central Criminal Court was sitting frequently outside Dublin. Since then, V-SAC has grown in size, reach and reputation. It is an award-winning charity – receiving recognition on a local and national level. It's amazing to see how far V-SAC has come and how much it has achieved in the past 20 years. It is now a fully national service, employing 7 paid staff and with over 100 trained volunteers across the country. This means that regardless of location, if a victim is coming to court, they know they can have the support of a V-SAC volunteer if and when they need it.

The people we support are so appreciative of the assistance they receive from our volunteers. V-SAC receives donations from various sources, for which we are so grateful. We were honoured to receive a very generous donation from the Ashling Murphy Memorial Fund in October this year. The Murphy family's words capture the impact V-SAC's support has on victims and their families.



V-SAC received Ashling Murphy Memorial Fund Donation.



Minister Colm Brophy with V-SAC board members, CEO Dymphna Kenny and patron Marie Cassidy.



Mary O'Sullivan, Noelle Fitzsimons and V-SAC patron, Marie Cassidy.



V-SAC volunteers at the 20th anniversary celebration.

“

Our family will be forever grateful for the support and kindness we received from V-SAC during what was undoubtedly one of the most difficult periods of our lives. At a time when we felt incredibly vulnerable, the service offered us privacy, protection and steady guidance throughout the judicial process.

It is heartbreaking that any family would ever find themselves in a position where V-SAC services are needed, yet we truly could not have navigated those gruelling six weeks in 2023 and again in 2025 at the CCJ without their unwavering presence. For this, we are deeply appreciative.

The work carried out each day by this dedicated team is nothing short of a vocation and it is remarkable to think that it is provided entirely on a voluntary basis. Since Ashling's passing, we established the Ashling Murphy Memorial Fund (Irish registered charity number 20206529). As a gesture of our appreciation for the exceptional support we received, we are proud to have made a donation to help further enhance the services and facilities within V-SAC.

We will always remain profoundly grateful for everything they have done for us.

Family of Ashling Murphy

”

Thanks to our staff, board of directors and our 100+ volunteers – the lifeblood of our charity - V-SAC would not have been able to support so many victims, their families and prosecution witnesses. To the thousands of victims who put their trust in V-SAC to support them through such a difficult time – thank you. You are the reason V-SAC exists and will exist well into the future.

V-SAC wishes everyone a warm and wonderful Christmas and best wishes for 2026!

Dympna Kenny

Chief Executive Officer

Accompaniment Support Services for Children (A.S.S.C.)



Accompaniment Support Services for Children (A.S.S.C.) is delighted to welcome Cristín McKenna to her new role, as Court Accompaniment Officer at Dublin's Criminal Courts of Justice.

A.S.S.C. provides vital support to young victims and witnesses of crime, helping them and their families feel supported and informed as they navigate the criminal justice process. Based in the Victim Support Suite, Cristin's appointment will help create a more permanent A.S.S.C. presence within the CCJ.

A.S.S.C.'s court accompaniment service offers practical and emotional support at every stage of the process, from pre-trial meetings and DVD viewings to accompaniment during trials, hearings, sentencings, and appeals. Our service promotes excellent communication with all professionals involved in each case.

Having a dedicated Court Accompaniment Officer and trained volunteers on hand allows the investigation team to focus on the case, knowing that the family is being cared for and kept up to date. The A.S.S.C. team helps families find their way around the courthouse, provides updates from the courtroom, and ensures they understand what's happening.

In addition to in-person support, A.S.S.C. offers emotional and practical support before, during, and after trials, as well as advocacy for families after a crime has been reported or while awaiting a decision from the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

As co-signatories to the Juvenile Protocol,



A.S.S.C. is deeply committed to reducing any risk of re-traumatisation for young people involved in Central Criminal Court cases. A.S.S.C. will be feeding back into the working group, on young people and their families experiences.



Retirements



Judge Mary Fahy

Judge Mary Fahy retired from the District Court on 31 January 2025.



His Honour Judge Michael P. Walsh

His Honour Judge Michael P. Walsh retired from the Circuit Court on 17 March 2025.



Judge Bryan Smyth

Judge Bryan Smyth retired from the District Court on 19 April 2025.



Judge John Lindsay

Judge John Lindsay retired from the District Court on 21 April 2025.



Judge Dermot Dempsey

Judge Dermot Dempsey retired from the District Court on 19 May 2025.



The Hon. Mr. Justice Seamus Noonan

Mr. Justice Seamus Noonan retired from the Court of Appeal on 4 June 2025.



Judge Mary Cashin

Judge Mary Cashin retired from the District Court on 24 July 2025.

Obituaries

In Memory of **Artur Zych**

It is with deep sadness that we remember our dear colleague and friend, **Artur Zych**, whose sudden passing has left an emptiness in Portlaoise Court Office and in the hearts of all who knew him. For the past three years, Artur was not only a valued member of our team, but a gentle, dependable presence whose kindness touched everyone he worked with.

Artur brought with him the warmth of his Polish heritage, the strength of his character, and a quiet dedication that earned the respect and affection of colleagues and court users alike. His work was carried out with integrity, enthusiasm and an unfailing sense

of responsibility. No task was ever too small or too great for him to approach with care and professionalism.

Beyond his work, Artur was a man of sincerity and generosity, always ready with a smile or a helping hand. His deep love for his family, especially his mother in Poland, was something he spoke of often and with great pride.

Artur's sudden loss is felt deeply, and he will be sadly missed. We will remember him not only for his contribution to our Office, but for the genuine and compassionate person he was. May he rest in peace.

Portlaoise Court Office





In Memory of **Philly Ryan**

The people of Tipperary and indeed across the country were united in shock and sorrow at the sudden passing of Philly Ryan.

Known to many as the Tipperary football manager, Philly was also a cherished colleague and friend in the Clonmel Court Office, where he managed probate matters for the entire county!

Philly's Civil Service journey began in 1991 at the Central Statistics Office, where he left a lasting impression on his colleagues. In September 2000, he joined the Courts Service in Clonmel, where he remained a dedicated and valued member of staff until his untimely death.

In heartfelt tributes delivered in court the day before his funeral, Judge Meehan recalled his first sitting in Clonmel with Philly as his Registrar. He spoke of Philly's deep knowledge and the confidence it inspired, but most of all, he remembered the warmth, humour, and camaraderie; "a rock-solid ally who had my back."

Judge O'Leary described Philly as a man of many roles; reliable, fair, and deeply committed to his work in probate. He was a

team player not only on the football field but also in the workplace and in life. "The kind of colleague you could count on, the kind of friend who lifted spirits with a story or a smile, and the kind of leader who inspired by example."

Philly was widely known as the 'go-to man' for probate in the county. Judge O'Leary spoke of his humanity, modesty, professionalism, and deep knowledge.

Colleagues Ciara Smalle and Denise Fitzgerald also shared moving reflections. Ciara remembered Philly's compassion in guiding grieving families through the probate process and noted his recent, well-deserved placement on the HEO panel. "After just a few weeks working with him, it felt like I had known him all my life," she said. "Always good-natured, warm, genuine, a great, great friend."

Denise spoke on behalf of the entire office, saying, "there are no words that can truly capture the gentle soul we worked with. He



Philly Ryan, photo credit Tom Beary (Sportsfile)

was the heart and soul of the office." She recalled his vast knowledge, his sense of fun, and how much of the laughter in the office had Philly at its centre.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Philly's family, friends, and our colleagues in the Clonmel Court Office. His impact both personal and professional was profound and will be long remembered.

A tribute to **Karen Young O'Mahoney** May she rest in peace

It was with deep sadness and heavy hearts that the staff of Kilkenny Courthouse learned of the sudden passing of our dear friend and colleague Karen Young O'Mahoney.

Karen joined the Civil Service six years ago, working as a CO in the District Probate Registry for Kilkenny, Carlow, and Laois. She was a skilled worker, team player, courteous and exhibited great compassion to our customers and provided an efficient service to all users.

Tributes were paid before court by Mairead O'Dwyer, Office Manager, Judge Geraldine Carthy recited a poem in Karen's honour and Judge Mary Morrissey held a minute's silence during the Circuit Court sittings. County Registrar Deirdre Burke shared a moving reflection before her Motion Court with Solicitors also adding their condolences.

Our office has received many thoughtful

messages of condolence from court users and colleagues in court offices around the country whose words of support are much appreciated.

We also sincerely thank Judge Mary Morrissey, CEO Angela Denning, Nina Brennan C and D, Susan Cahill and staff from the Regional Office in Naas, An Garda Síochána and all who travelled from neighbouring counties to join with us in the guard of honour to St Mary's Cathedral for Karen's funeral mass.

Our thoughts are with her family and friends during this difficult time. We are going to miss Karen so much.

Go raibh suaimehnas síoraí dá n-anam
Written by Martina Brennan, Probate Office





Book Review:

You Can't Kill the Boogeyman

Author:	Publisher:	Publishing Date:
Wayne Byrne	Bloomsbury	16 October 2025

If you're looking for that perfect 'seasonal' book, Ronan Power might have the answer!

If you are looking for the perfect Christmas present for the discerning horror movie fan in the house or anyone for that matter interested in the film making process and history of horror movies then you can't go wrong with the brilliant *You Can't Kill the Boogeyman: The ongoing Halloween Saga-13 Movies and Counting* by Wayne Byrne.

Wayne's exploration of the Halloween franchise is a meticulously researched and deeply engaging journey into one of horror cinema's most influential series. Structured across six chapters, the book mirrors the creation of the films themselves, taking readers through each instalment in the chronological order in which they were produced. This approach not only makes the narrative easy to follow but also highlights the evolution of both the franchise and the horror genre over the decades.

One of the book's greatest strengths is the way Wayne breaks down the complexities of filmmaking. Far from offering a simple retelling of production history, the author dives into the multi-layered process that brought each Halloween movie to life. He examines technical challenges, creative decisions, logistical hurdles, and the often-fraught collaboration between teams. By doing so, he gives readers a clearer understanding of how each film was shaped not just by what appeared on screen, but by the unseen struggles and triumphs behind it.

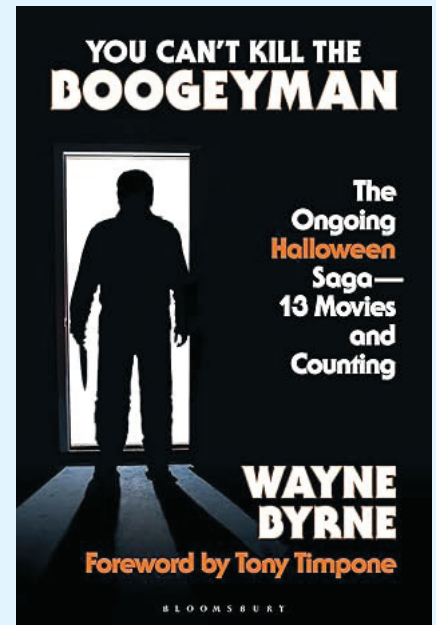
A significant focus of the book is the ongoing development of Michael Myers, the franchise's iconic and chilling central figure. Wayne carefully traces the shifts

in Myers' portrayal and narrative function from one film to the next. He highlights how different directors, writers, and producers interpreted the character, sometimes reinforcing his enigmatic presence and at other times expanding or complicating his lore. Through this, the book offers an insightful look at how a seemingly simple character can take on new dimensions through decades of storytelling.

Perhaps the most compelling material in the book deals with the battles fought off-camera. Wayne documents the tensions between artistic intent and studio demands, revealing how competing visions often clashed during crucial stages of production. From debates about tone and direction to disagreements over budget allocations, Wayne captures the high-stakes negotiations that shaped the franchise's path. These behind-the-scenes conflicts give readers a rare glimpse into the realities of filmmaking, where creativity must constantly contend with commercial expectations.

The book also delves into the practical elements that influenced the series, including financial pressures and decisions surrounding the music. Wayne enriches the reader's appreciation not only for the Halloween franchise but for the intricate balancing act of film production in general.

What makes the book particularly enjoyable is the sheer volume of stories and insights it contains. Wayne uncovers anecdotes, conflicts, inspirations, and production details that even dedicated fans are unlikely to have encountered



before. These revelations bring freshness to a well-studied franchise and often transform the narrative into a genuine page-turner. Whether describing a tense studio dispute or a surprising creative breakthrough, Wayne maintains a lively and compelling tone.

Overall, this book is a treasure for horror enthusiasts, film scholars, and anyone fascinated by the behind-the-scenes world of cinema. Rich in detail, clear in its structure, and filled with engaging revelations, it offers a thorough and captivating look at the making of the Halloween movies and the enduring legacy of Michael Myers.

Wayne Byrne is an author and film historian and local man from where I live in Kildare. His books include *Welcome to Elm Street: Inside the Film and Television Nightmares*, *Walter Hill: The Cinema of a Hollywood Maverick* and many more. Wayne's knowledge on the history of cinema knows no bounds and his willingness to share his knowledge and insight of the silver screen comes through in everything he writes and discusses. This book is many things; it's a history of the Halloween movies; it's a detailed analysis of making horror movies but mostly it's a homage to the Halloween franchise.

Ronan Power

Smoked Salmon, Cream Cheese and Spinach Roulade

Don't be fooled by the fancy sounding name – this is so easy anyone can do it!
Hope you enjoy, the recipe is courtesy of www.ciaraskitchen.ie

Ingredients

350g spinach	1 lemon, washed
3 large eggs, separated yolks	150g smoked salmon
150g cream cheese (own brand fine. Lidl does a great one)	Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Required: 14 x 10 inch Swiss roll tin lined with parchment paper

1. Pre-heat the oven to 200°/180° for fan ovens.
2. Bring a pot of water to the boil and add the spinach. When the water comes back to the boil, turn off the heat and drain the spinach.
3. Then squeeze the spinach dry with your hands and place in a food processor along with the egg yolks and 1 teaspoon of salt and some black pepper. Blend until you have a smooth puree. Transfer to a bowl.
4. Whisk the egg whites until they hold soft peaks and then fold them into the spinach mixture until evenly combined.
5. Spread this mix onto the prepared tray and bake for 10 to 12 minutes.
6. Remove from the oven and flip carefully onto a sheet of parchment paper. Remove the top sheet of parchment carefully and allow to cool.
7. Meanwhile mix the cream cheese with the zest of the lemon and the juice of half a lemon. Season with salt and pepper.
8. Cut the roulade in half widthways and place each half on a piece of clingfilm.
9. Spread the cream cheese filling over both halves to within about 1 cm of the edges.
10. Cover the cream cheese with a layer of smoked salmon.
11. Roll up each half from the long edge. Wrap in clingfilm twisting at the ends to secure.
12. Place in the fridge for one hour. Remove and cut into slices and serve.



2025 Christmas Quiz

Question

1. What famous blues song was inspired by an 1895 Christmas night bar room Clash involving a hat, some Cash and one Bad Seed?
2. Who wrote the novel that inspired the screenplay that became a movie that premiered in LA on Christmas Day in 1962?
3. What clothing brand is synonymous with the band Blink-182?
4. The logo for the label appears superimposed throughout the movie 'Phantom of the Paradise' to cover up the villain's record label. Who played the villainous Swan?
5. That actor later wrote the closing number for 'The Muppet Christmas Carol'. In that scene, what's the easter egg behind the name of the shop in 'Figure 1'?
6. In January 1843 Poe's perfect remedy to too much Christmas cheeriness was first published. Name the poem.
7. Who was crowned King of England on Christmas Day in 1066?
8. While some people roasted chestnuts, what game did Irish kids prefer to play with them?
9. Who released 'Bonkers' in 2009?
10. 'Our Gang's Christmas' released in 1931 featured members of what mischievous gang?



Figure 1



Closing date for entries is 31 January 2026. To win a €75 One for All voucher send your answers by email to courtsserviceneeds@courts.ie or to The Communications and Media Unit, 6th Floor Phoenix House, Smithfield, Dublin 7.

Disclaimer: Since some of you may use AI to get all the correct answers, the winning entries will be placed in an entirely analogue Tombola and rotated an unspecified number of times with the winner drawn at random.



Through the **Lens**

Courts Service staff have been busy decorating the courthouses all over the country in the run-up to Christmas.



Belinda Ní Cionnaith oversaw the Christmas tree and decorations project in Wexford.



In Tralee, Chloe Galvin and Willie O'Connor put the star on their tree.



Eva Shaw put the finishing touches on the Christmas tree in Clonmel Court Office.



Midleton Courthouse at Christmas.



The Round Hall of the Four Courts at Christmas.