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# Strategy Statement

## 2022 - 2024

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This publication is also available in the Irish Language

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*“ Delivering a fair, independent and effective prosecution service on behalf of all the people of Ireland ”*

# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce my Office's Strategy Statement for the next three years, our first since I took up the role of Director of Public Prosecutions in November 2021. There is no doubt that this Strategy comes at a challenging time when there has been an unprecedented growth in the demands on the Irish prosecution service, arising largely from an increase in case files and from the backlogs caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it is also a time of opportunity and this Strategy sets out our ambition to build on the already strong foundations of the Irish prosecution service. We will do this by continuing to develop new and better ways of working, and by contributing to improved outcomes across the criminal justice system.

This Strategy has been informed and shaped through a process of engagement with staff and a range of stakeholders, and it provides a clear and shared framework that sets out our four high level goals for the next three years and how they will be achieved. This is based on a vision of the Office of the DPP leading a trusted and independent prosecution service for all the people of Ireland.

A functioning prosecution system is fundamental to the rule of law in any democracy. Every case that is submitted to our Office involves real people - victims, suspects, witnesses - and our decisions can have life-changing consequences for those involved. The staff of my Office have a very strong awareness of the responsibility that this brings, and of the overriding importance of ensuring that we perform our functions independently and to the highest possible standards. The Strategy therefore places an importance both on what we do and how we do our work. Our shared values will guide our work and support the delivery of our strategic goals and priorities over the next few years.

Our challenge now is to translate our commitments into tangible actions and outcomes. We will chart our progress through our annual business planning process, and progress on delivery will be monitored throughout the life of this Strategy. A plan for significant investment in the prosecution service - including in our digital and ICT capability, as well as investment in our people - will be key to the delivery of some of the actions in this Strategy.

Over the period of the Strategy, we will work closely with our staff and key stakeholders to review and refine our priorities as necessary to meet the needs of the fast-changing world around us. Our experiences during the recent past - and the valuable lessons we have learned from them - makes me confident in our ability and agility to respond to emerging and unforeseen challenges.

I want to thank the staff of my Office, state solicitors, counsel and all those who contributed to the development of this Strategy. The Irish prosecution service is fortunate to have people working within it who have a strong commitment to ensuring the highest possible standards of service, as well as an ambition to inform and contribute to improvements across the criminal justice system.

I look forward to working with all our staff and valued stakeholders to achieve our aim of delivering a fair, independent and effective prosecution service for all the people of Ireland.



**Catherine Pierse**  
Director of Public Prosecutions

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Director of Public Prosecutions



# 1 About the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

## What We Do

The office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) was established by law under the Prosecution of Offences Act, 1974. The Director, Catherine Pierse, is independent in the performance of her functions.

The duties of the Director are to:

- a. enforce the criminal law in the courts on behalf of the people of Ireland;
- a. direct and supervise public prosecutions on indictment in the courts;
- a. give general direction and advice to An Garda Síochána in relation to summary cases; *and*
- a. give specific direction to An Garda Síochána in cases where requested.

The majority of cases dealt with by the Office of the DPP are received from An Garda Síochána. Some cases are also referred to the Office by specialised investigative agencies including the Revenue Commissioners, Government departments, the Health and Safety Authority, the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency and local authorities.

## Structure of the Office

The Office of the DPP has (as of June 2022) 230 staff - 60% legal and 40% corporate / administrative support - working across four divisions of the Office:

- 1. Directing Division** – examines criminal investigation files and decides, based on evidence, whether or not to take a prosecution, or whether a prosecution commenced by An Garda Síochána should be maintained.
- 2. Solicitors Division** – prepares and conducts cases on behalf of the Director in all courts sitting in Dublin including: the Dublin District and Circuit Criminal Courts; the Central and Special Criminal Courts; the Court of Appeal; the High and Supreme Courts.
- 3. Prosecution Support Services Division** – incorporates the Victims Liaison Unit which ensures that the Office meets its obligations in relation to the support and protection

of victims of crime; the International Unit which deals with areas of international co-operation, including extradition, European Arrest Warrants and requests for mutual legal assistance; and the Prosecution Policy and Research Unit which conducts legal research, supports the development of legal policy, engages with external stakeholders on policy matters, and co-ordinates knowledge management for our staff.

- 4. Corporate Services Division** – contributes to the Office's overall strategy through a range of business functions including human resources and organisational development, finance, ICT, facilities management, procurement, communications, governance and other support services to the three legal divisions.

You can read more information on the work of the four divisions in the 'Our Organisation' section of our website, [www.dppireland.ie](http://www.dppireland.ie). Our organisation structure can be found at [Appendix 1](#).

## Who We Work With

The Office of the DPP also works closely with other legal professionals.

The **State Solicitor Service** - 32 solicitors in private practice contracted to act on behalf of the Director before the Circuit Courts and occasionally in the District Courts outside of Dublin. There is generally one State Solicitor per county but in certain counties, State Solicitor areas have been split to take account of factors such as population. For example, County Cork is divided into four areas: Cork City, Cork North East, Cork South East and Cork West.

**Prosecution Counsel Panel** - approximately 170 independent counsel practising at the Bar are engaged to represent the DPP on a case by case basis. Counsel prosecute in accordance with the Director's instructions and in compliance with the [Guidelines for Prosecutors](#). They represent the Director in a number of legal areas including: prosecutions on indictment in Dublin and outside Dublin (Circuit Court); judicial review; habeas corpus; High Court bail; and confiscation of assets.

You can read a more detailed description of the Prosecution System in Ireland in a publication by the same name on our website, [www.dppireland.ie](http://www.dppireland.ie). A graphic description of the criminal prosecution process in Ireland can be found at [Appendix 2](#).



# 2 Our Work in Context: Change, Challenge and Opportunity

The world is constantly changing around us, particularly in the past few years when external events such as Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic presented challenges for the way in which we work. Internally, we have seen a marked increase in the number of files submitted to the Office - 40% increase since 2017 - as well as an increasing complexity of those cases. In such a dynamic operating environment, no organisation can afford to stand still and the Office of the DPP is no exception.

We anticipate ongoing changes and challenges that will impact on what we do, and how we work together and with others to deliver a fair, independent and effective prosecution service. Over the next few years, we will have a continued focus on managing this changing context and operating environment, in particular in the following four key areas.

- a. Increasing number of criminal investigations and complexity of cases
- a. Increasing technology and digitisation
- a. External and criminal justice developments
- a. An increasingly interconnected criminal justice system

Our contextual analysis is reflected in the high level strategic goals and priorities for action detailed later in this Strategy Statement. These goals have been developed to counter our ongoing challenges. They will enable us to proactively adapt and respond to change, and to avail of opportunities to improve the prosecution service.

This Strategy will underpin our Office's annual business planning process and development of key performance indicators, as well as ongoing work, projects and initiatives. Progress on implementing each of our strategic goals will be monitored and reviewed regularly by our Management Board, to ensure that we refresh our performance measures according to changing circumstances, and continue to develop an independent, fair and effective prosecution service.



## 1 Criminal Investigations and Complexity

The significant upsurge in the number of files submitted to the Office in recent years (increase of 40% since 2017) - and the increasing complexity of those cases - continues to represent a challenge. Managing the backlog of cases as a consequence of the pandemic will also remain a challenge during the term of this strategy.

## 2 Increasing Technology and Digitisation

The role of social media and the exponential growth of digital data relevant to criminal investigations has and will continue to impact hugely on the work we do and how we do it. In this sphere, there is a need for strong ICT and governance systems to assist with the analysis and management of data relevant to cases.

## 3 External and Criminal Justice Developments

We continue to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, and to develop new work practices that emerged during the crisis. Likewise, the challenges presented by Brexit continue and the Office now operates within the new Trade and Co operation Agreement with the UK. The increasing role of EU law in domestic criminal prosecutions and an enhanced role for Eurojust are also relevant. The potential impact on our work emanating from the recommendations of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland and other reports will also feature during the term of this Strategy.

## 4 An Increasingly Interconnected Criminal Justice System

Although independent, the Office of the DPP recognises our interconnectedness with others in the criminal justice sector. We are committed to participation in national and international networks and working groups to share expertise and learning. We also recognise how we can share our experience and expertise to inform policy, and will continue to do so to address service challenges together across the wider criminal justice system.

# 3 Our Mission and Core Values

Our Office acts in the public interest to deliver on our mission and is guided by five core values - Independence, Integrity, Excellence, Respect and Collegiality. These values will continue to drive staff and the organisation over the coming years.

## OUR MISSION:

*To deliver a fair, independent and effective prosecution service on behalf of all the people of Ireland*



### Integrity

- a. Acting honestly, fairly, consistently and objectively, in accordance with the Code of Ethics
- a. Making fair and right decisions based on evidence
- a. Providing accurate information



### Independence

- a. Upholding the independence of the Office of the DPP
- a. Acting impartially without fear, favour, bias or prejudice, in line with the Guidelines for Prosecutors and Code of Ethics
- a. Remaining unaffected by individual or sectional interests and public or media pressure, having regard only to the public interest



### Excellence

- a. Delivering fair, independent, professional services to the highest standards
- a. Continuously improving our service, responding proactively to changing needs, challenges, opportunities
- a. Influencing and shaping improvements in the criminal justice system



### Respect

- a. Treating everyone with fairness, respect and dignity
- a. Listening to the perspective of stakeholders



### Collegiality

- a. Valuing the contributions of everyone in the delivery of the prosecution service.
- a. Building strong relationships and working collaboratively with stakeholders, national and international
- a. Sharing our knowledge and expertise with others





# 4 Our Strategic Goals 2022 - 2024

The work and resources of our Office will be focused on the delivery of four strategic goals; Service, Digital, Collaboration and People. There is no hierarchy among the strategic goals below – each is equally important if we are to achieve our mission to deliver a fair, independent and effective prosecution service.



## SERVICE

Deliver an excellent and trusted criminal prosecution service



## DIGITAL

Invest in our digital and ICT capability to drive efficiency, innovation and integration



## PEOPLE

Invest in our people and support them to thrive



## COLLABORATION

Strengthen collaboration and influence change to improve the criminal justice system

**SERVICE:** Delivering a high quality prosecution service is at the core of what we do. Our focus is on ensuring that our service is fit to meet current and future demands. To this end, there is a number of key service development areas, including assessing and addressing our ongoing resourcing needs, and ensuring strong case management and quality assurance processes. We will continue to learn from the experience of service users, and to ensure the appropriate systems are in place to respond to feedback, and reflect on lessons learnt from experience.

**DIGITAL:** Investment is needed to enhance the inter-operability of our ICT systems, and to participate in ICT initiatives with key stakeholders across the criminal justice system. Given the volume of data now involved in criminal investigation files, this investment will be a key enabler of the development of a more integrated, efficient prosecution service that embraces 'digital first', availing of new technologies to streamline and maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of how we do our work.

**COLLABORATION:** We are committed to sharing our knowledge and expertise, and to learning from the perspective of others to improve the criminal justice system. Stakeholder collaboration is an important part of what we do, both nationally and internationally. We will continue to contribute to key cross-sectoral initiatives, including the Criminal Justice Sectoral Strategy aimed at improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system and better meeting the needs of all stakeholders. At an international level, we will intensify our engagement with our counterparts in the EU and elsewhere as criminal activity moves more and more online and becomes more global.

**PEOPLE:** We will continue to recruit and retain highly capable and professional people with a strong commitment to public service. We will build a culture and an environment that supports our people to grow and develop, and continue to attract the people and skills to meet changing needs. We believe in having a positive sustainable working environment, and facilities that are fit for purpose. In light of recent expansion, our accommodation needs are growing more acute, and addressing these needs will be a priority for action.



## Strategic Goal 1: SERVICE

Deliver an excellent and trusted criminal prosecution service



## Strategic Goal 1: SERVICE

**We will deliver an excellent and trusted criminal prosecution service, leading to:**

- ▶ Appropriate resources to meet demands
- ▶ Effective and efficient casework management and prosecution of cases
- ▶ Strong public awareness of our Office and service
- ▶ Good understanding of the experiences of users

### We will achieve this goal by:

**Delivering a high quality and appropriately resourced prosecution service to meet existing and future demands**

#### The actions we will take:

- 1.1 Assess and seek the resources needed by the Office on an ongoing basis to respond to the changing operating environment
- 1.2 Continuously review and enhance our end-to-end case management, prosecution processes and quality assurance measures
- 1.3 Proactively engage with State Solicitors, Counsel and An Garda Síochána to support the delivery of the prosecution service, including quality assurance and standard setting

**Deepening public awareness of our service, and better understanding our service users' needs and experiences**

#### The actions we will take:

- 1.4 Add to our suite of clear, accessible information and resources for service users
- 1.5 Develop and enhance mechanisms for building public awareness and increasing our understanding of service users' experience

**Supporting a culture of continuous learning, service improvement and innovation**

#### The actions we will take:

- 1.6 Proactively engage with State Solicitors, Counsel and An Garda Síochána to support the delivery of training and knowledge management systems
- 1.7 Provide support and training to the investigative agencies who submit files to the Office of the DPP to ensure that any lessons learned can inform investigative practices
- 1.8 Review our governance, accountability and risk management framework on an ongoing basis



## **Strategic Goal 2: DIGITAL**

Invest in our digital and ICT capability to drive efficiency, innovation and integration



## Strategic Goal 2: DIGITAL

**We will invest in our digital and ICT capability to drive efficiency, innovation and integration, leading to:**

- ▶ Integration of systems and data exchange processes
- ▶ Less reliance on paper
- ▶ New and better ways of working and business decision making

### We will achieve this goal by:

#### Investing in and optimising our data, technology and infrastructure

##### The actions we will take:

- 2.1 Develop business case and secure funding to implement the ICT structures to support our continued transition to a digital-first organisation
- 2.2 Enhance the capacity of ICT corporate support services to improve accessibility
- 2.3 Avail of new technologies and technology-supported ways of working
- 2.4 Continue to ensure our data and data infrastructure is fully secure
- 2.5 Incorporate a greater focus on sustainability, digital solutions and reducing our carbon footprint

#### Building our data analytic and information management skills, capacity and capability

##### The actions we will take:

- 2.6 Develop and implement ICT strategy and plan
- 2.7 Enhance ICT and digital awareness, knowledge and learning across the prosecution service

#### Maximising the potential of information to support the business needs and decision-making

##### The actions we will take:

- 2.8 Review extent to which our case management systems are supporting our service needs
- 2.9 Enhance the inter-operability of our internal ICT systems
- 2.10 Extend data sharing, electronic file exchange and other data and ICT initiatives with key stakeholders across the criminal justice system including An Garda Síochána, State Solicitors, Counsel and Courts
- 2.11 Utilise our data and information to anticipate trends, emerging needs and issues, and to shape and improve outcomes across the criminal justice system



### **Strategic Goal 3: COLLABORATION**

Strengthen collaboration and influence change to improve the criminal justice system



## Strategic Goal 3: COLLABORATION

We will strengthen collaboration and influence change to improve the criminal justice system, leading to:

- ▶ Effective and proactive stakeholder engagement
- ▶ Greater visibility and understanding of the role of the ODPP
- ▶ Better exchange of learning and information

### We will achieve this goal by:

#### Strengthening our strategic stakeholder engagement and collaboration approach

##### The actions we will take:

- 3.1 Engage with our key stakeholders and with the other key participants in the delivery of the prosecution service, and embed effective engagement support structures across the organisation
- 3.2 Agree mechanisms with key stakeholders for developing and implementing improvements in the delivery of the criminal justice service, including disclosure and addressing the backlog of cases in the courts

#### Sharing our expertise to inform developments in the criminal justice system

##### The actions we will take:

- 3.3 Share our expertise and use our data to inform national and international criminal justice research, evaluations and policy development
- 3.4 Participate in delivering on key cross-sectoral projects including: O'Malley Implementation Group; Criminal Justice Sectoral Strategy; High-Level Group on the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland; and the Hamilton Report on Economic Crime and Corruption

#### Proactively engaging with key stakeholders across EU and international jurisdictions to promote the rule of law and support exchange of learning and information

##### The actions we will take:

- 3.5 Ensure adequate structures and resources are in place to support Ireland's judicial co-operation with EU and international partners
- 3.6 Build our understanding of developments and initiatives at EU level and be in a position to inform Ireland's contribution to EU criminal justice policy



#### **Strategic Goal 4: PEOPLE**

Invest in our people and support them to thrive





## Strategic Goal 4: PEOPLE

We will invest in our people and support them to thrive, leading to:

- ▶ Motivated, valued and professional staff
- ▶ Strengthened leadership capacity across the organisation
- ▶ Best practice in people and performance management
- ▶ Supportive and collegiate organisation

### We will achieve this goal by:

#### Investing in the development and learning of our people

##### The actions we will take:

- 4.1 Develop and deliver an overarching Human Resource Management/Organisation Development Strategy underpinned by the Civil Service People Strategy and the Senior Public Service Strategy 2022-2025
- 4.2 Continue to implement and extend cross-divisional knowledge management systems and practices
- 4.3 Continue to develop and strengthen our professional and leadership capacity by providing opportunities for continuous professional development and learning

#### Leveraging existing resources and securing additional resources to respond to service demands

##### The actions we will take:

- 4.4 Secure the necessary legal, corporate and digital resourcing, skills and expertise to meet service demands
- 4.5 Embed strategic workforce planning principles and practices, and strengthen induction and succession planning
- 4.6 Support specialism and cross-functional teams to meet legal, policy and corporate service needs
- 4.7 Embed staff engagement processes to encourage staff inputs, ideas and participation at all levels across the Office

#### Supporting a positive and sustainable workplace for all

##### The actions we will take:

- 4.8 Develop clear policies and guidance on future working patterns across the Office in line with the Civil Service Blended Working Framework
- 4.9 Progress the equality and diversity agenda through the employment and development of a diverse and inclusive workforce
- 4.10 Promote staff wellbeing including implementation of the Civil Service Health and Wellbeing Framework
- 4.11 Support a workplace culture that encourages integrity, independence, excellence, respect and collegiality
- 4.12 Develop and deliver responsive workplace plans and accommodation strategies to meet short, medium and longer term needs
- 4.13 Develop and implement our Office's sustainability and green plan

## 5 Our Public Sector Duty



Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 establishes a duty on public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect the human rights of both staff and the people to whom services are provided.

The Office of the DPP will continue to emphasise and promote equality and human rights through our day to day work, delivering the prosecution service in an effective and fair way, with integrity and respect for human dignity. We will also ensure that these duties are emphasised for our staff.

The Guidelines for Prosecutors and Code of Ethics set out the human rights and equality standards which the Director expects all prosecutors to comply with in discharging their functions in relation to victims and those suspected or accused of criminal offences.

Our HR policies give effect to the human rights and equality issues relevant to staff in the Office. We keep these policies under review to ensure that they meet appropriate human rights and equality standards.

We will review progress in relation to addressing equality and human rights issues, and will communicate developments and achievements in this regard in our annual reports.

## 6 Implementation and Review



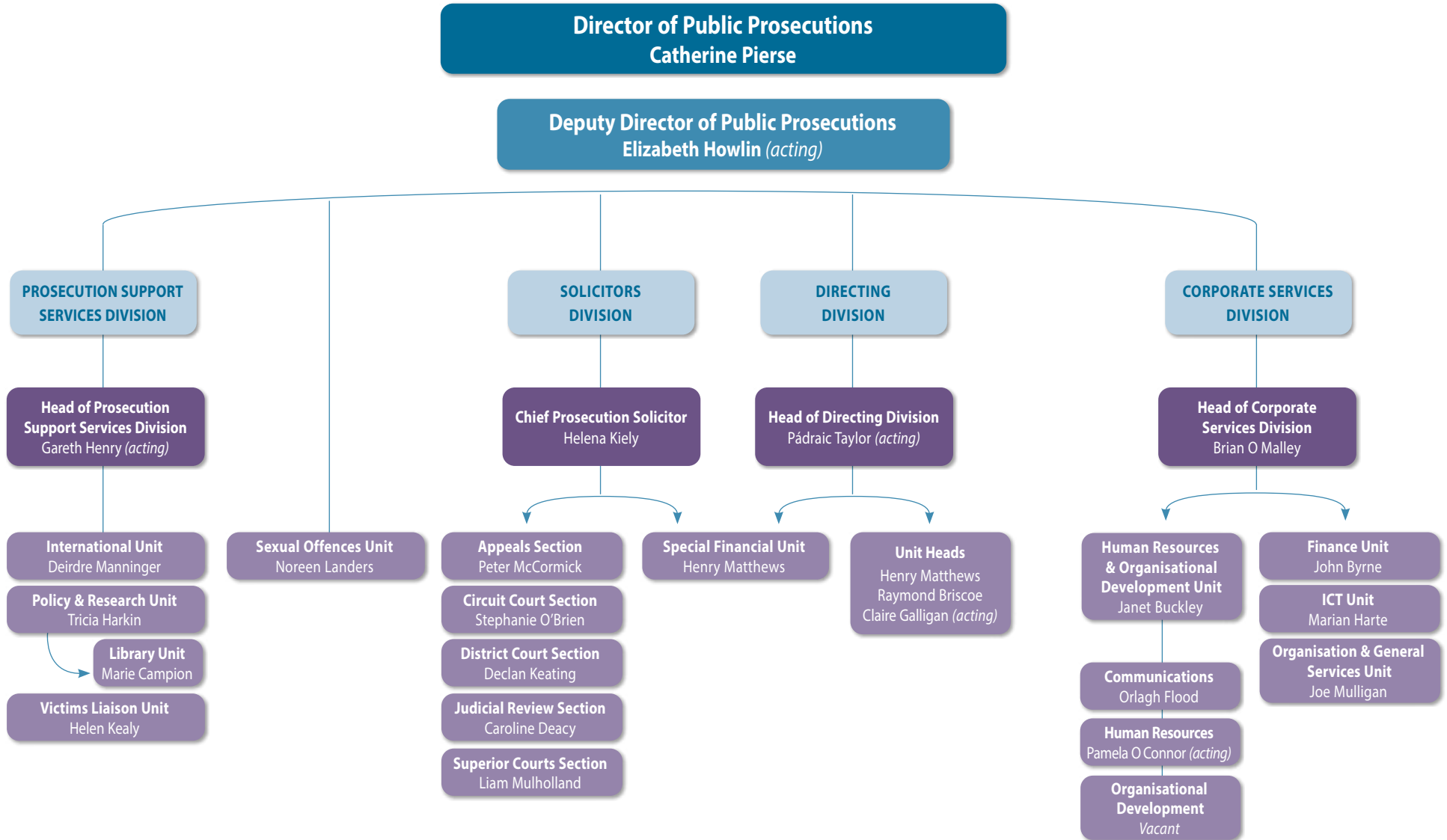
The Office of the DPP's Strategy Statement 2022-2024 sets out overarching goals to be achieved over the next three years. Within this timeframe, the ODPP's underpinning work programmes will be realistic and paced to ensure delivery of this strategic framework within its lifetime.

In developing this Strategy Statement, the Office of the DPP has identified the need to be agile and to keep delivery under continuous review in the context of external developments and available resources. Our strategic goals will be delivered through our annual business planning process, in which each section of the Office identifies key actions and associated key performance indicators, that enable us to deliver on our strategic objectives. This process allows us to review the relevancy of our high level goals and adapt to changing circumstances, availing of new opportunities along the way. Progress on implementation will be monitored and reviewed by the Management Board at monthly meetings.

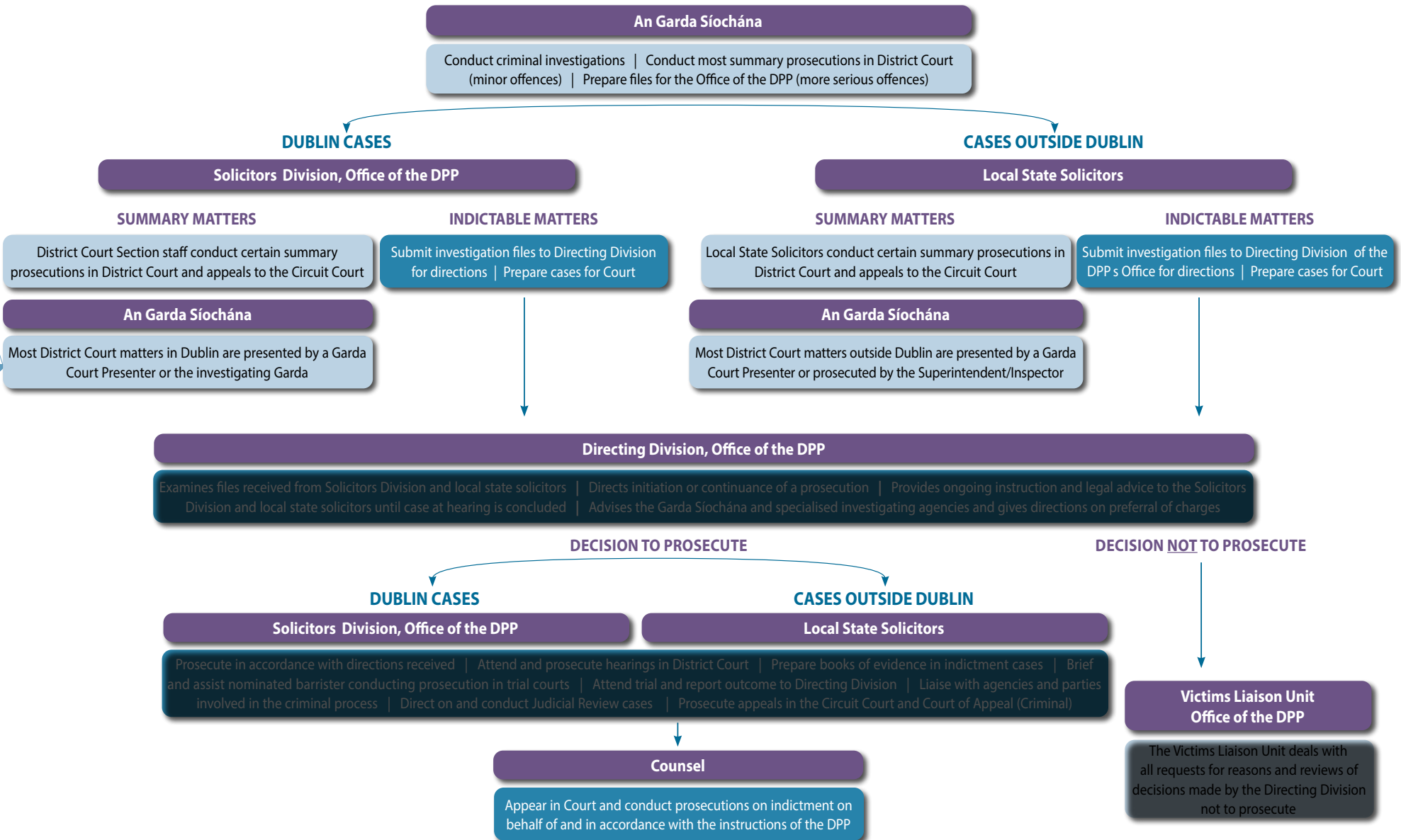
The Office of the DPP will also ensure that progress in relation to achieving our goals over the next three years is aligned with broader public sector strategies, including the Criminal Justice Sectoral Strategy 2022-2024 and the Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy.



# APPENDIX 1: Our Organisation Structure (June 2022)



# APPENDIX 2: Criminal Prosecution Process in Ireland





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