

Strategy Statement 2025–2027

Fair | Independent | Effective

This publication is also available in the Irish Language

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Foreword



Catherine Pierse
Director of Public Prosecutions

I am pleased to introduce my Office's Strategy Statement for the next three years, the second in my term as Director of Public Prosecutions. This Strategy Statement coincides with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions commemorating 50 years since the appointment of the first DPP in 1975.

For 50 years, the mission of the Office of the DPP has been to provide a fair, independent and effective prosecution service on behalf of all the people of Ireland. It has grown from an Office of just four Legal Officers in 1975 to almost 300 staff at the end of 2024, adapting over the decades

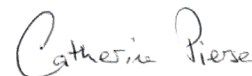
to an ever-changing environment. Our new Strategy Statement seeks to build on that strong legacy, as well as on the progress made to deliver on actions under the Strategy Statement 2022-2024.

It comes at a time when our operating environment continues to evolve at pace. We have experienced significant increased demands on our service with a marked increase in activity levels across all criminal court jurisdictions. This, alongside the growth in the volume of digital data relevant to criminal investigations, continues to impact the work we do and how we do it. Keeping pace with this increased activity has necessitated considerable commitment by my staff, our prosecution counsel and state solicitors, as well as many others across the criminal justice system.

This Strategy recognises that we will need to embrace new technologies, innovations and ways of working in order to bring about necessary improvements, both within the prosecution service and the wider criminal justice system. We will place significant emphasis on investing in our digital and data capabilities to support the effective, efficient, secure and innovative delivery of our service.

The staff in my Office are keenly aware of the role they play in the administration of justice and the importance of ensuring we perform our functions independently and to the highest of standards. I am conscious of the pressures and delays that exist across the criminal justice system in progressing cases from complaint to finalisation and of the impact on all of those involved. It will be necessary for all of us in the criminal justice system to work together to effectively respond to the reform challenges that lie ahead and to improve the experiences of people who interact in the system. In this regard, I welcome the recent commitment in the Programme for Government to prioritise investment across the criminal justice system, including in this Office, as well as the commitments to make wide ranging improvements to the system for service users over the next five years. I look forward to working with all our staff and valued stakeholders to play our part in supporting these reforms.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this Strategy – including staff of my Office, state solicitors, counsel on our panels, investigative agencies, and both governmental and non-governmental agencies. While this strategy focuses on the key actions that we will take over the next three years, the broader feedback provided during the process will serve to inform our thinking about a wider range of initiatives that could be taken into the future.



Catherine Pierse
Director of Public Prosecutions

1 External Environment: Challenges and Opportunities

This Strategy comes at a time when there has been a sharp growth in demand across the criminal justice system. It is also a time of opportunity to build on the already strong foundations of the prosecution service and the efficiencies and innovations that have been implemented in recent years. We anticipate ongoing changes that will impact on what we do and how we work to deliver on our mandate. It will be important that we have the capacity to adapt our priorities to respond to emerging and unforeseen challenges as necessary. Over the next three years, we will focus on:

1. Responding to Increased Demand

The significant upsurge in court activity continues to represent real challenges. Since 2019, there has been a 149% increase in the number of court dates in the Central Criminal Court, with a 24% increase in the number of Circuit Court sitting dates in the Dublin Circuit Criminal

Courts over the same period. Files received by the ODPP involve more complex and specialised case work, increased reliance on international co-operation and greater resourcing input.



2. External and Criminal Justice Developments

We recognise the interdependencies that exist with others in the criminal justice system. We continue to respond to criminal justice developments including our engagement with the Judicial Planning Implementation Steering Group to ensure that the intended benefit of increased judicial resources can be realised. Increased pressures have highlighted the need to ensure there are sufficient numbers of prosecuting solicitors and barristers available to support additional sittings across court levels. The collective effort by everyone involved will continue to be instrumental in ensuring that cases proceed as quickly as possible for all parties involved. We will ensure our continued participation in court user groups to strengthen collaboration and provide a mechanism to ensure the effective use of court time and to improve efficiencies.

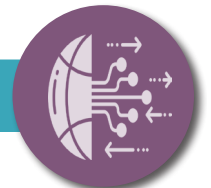
The work emanating from the Summary Prosecution Reform Steering Committee will continue to feature in our programme of work to ensure strong support for the fair and effective prosecution of summary cases in the District Court. The increasing role of EU law in domestic criminal prosecutions, and for example, the forthcoming Transfer of Criminal Proceedings legislation and e-Evidence packages, as well as the enhanced role for Eurojust, will have a significant impact. We will continue to engage and provide expert and practical feedback to government departments on the application and operation of draft legislation and proposals, with a view to identifying, supporting and informing such legislative developments.



3. Increasing Technology and Digitisation

Developments in technology continue at pace and present new challenges and opportunities to the prosecution service. The growth of digital data – from phones, social media apps, CCTV and body worn cameras – gathered at investigative stage and submitted for review, continues to transform the volume and nature of material that must be assessed when deciding whether to prosecute, reviewed for relevance at the disclosure stage, and ultimately presented at trials. Advancements in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, cloud services and data analytics present an opportunity for the Office to explore potential efficiencies, while at the same time addressing the risks that new technologies can bring.

Ensuring compliance with our disclosure responsibilities has become increasingly resource intensive. Given the volumes of digital data involved, it is becoming progressively more difficult to balance the legal obligation to identify and disclose relevant or potentially relevant information with the duty to protect privacy. There continues to be a need for appropriate ICT systems paired with strong governance to assist with the analysis and management of data relevant to cases.



2 Our Mission and Core Values

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



3 Our Strategic Framework 2025–2027

STRATEGIC GOALS

The work and resources of our Office will be focused on the delivery of three strategic goals over the next three years in order to achieve our mission to deliver a fair, independent and effective prosecution service.

1. Driving excellence and high professional standards

We will achieve consistently high-quality professional standards, expertise and efficiency in order to deliver a fair, independent and effective criminal prosecution service that is responsive to an increasingly complex operating environment

2. Maintaining public confidence in the criminal prosecution service

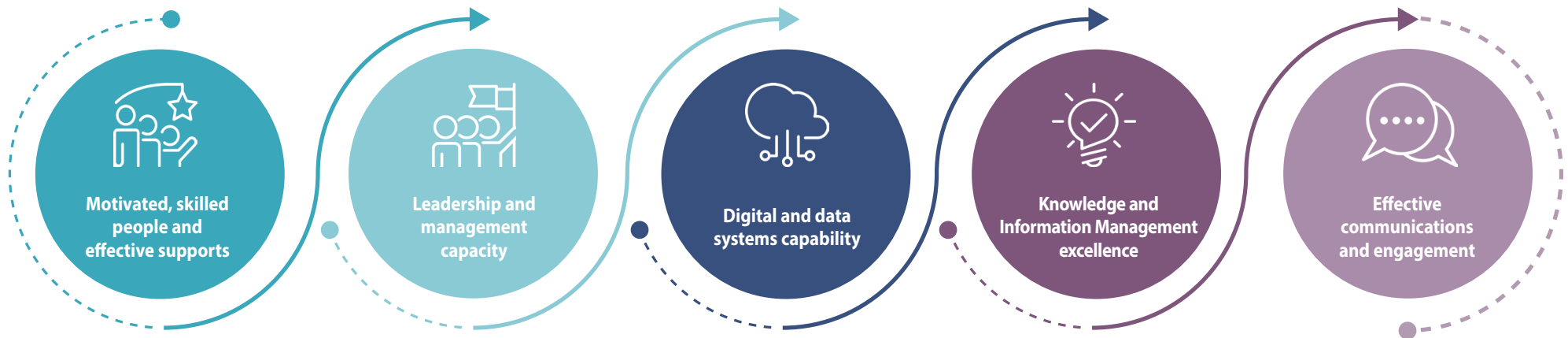
We will maintain public trust and confidence in the fairness, effectiveness and independence of our Office, demonstrated through the delivery of high standards of service

3. Building a culture of innovation and collaboration to support service improvements in the criminal justice system

We will proactively seek to bring about improvements, efficiencies and innovations to the criminal justice system, in collaboration with key stakeholders, nationally and internationally

STRATEGIC ENABLERS

Meeting these high-level priorities is contingent on having a range of strong underpinning supports and resources in place to enable us to excel in the work we do. These are:



STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Driving excellence and high professional standards



We will achieve consistently high-quality professional standards, expertise and efficiency in order to deliver a fair, independent and effective criminal prosecution service that is responsive to an increasingly complex operating environment

Strategic Outcomes

- A professional and agile organisation – responsive to the changing nature and complexity of the criminal prosecution operating environment – that is recognised for its independence, legal expertise, knowledge and research
- Strong, strategic and collaborative leadership at all levels of the Office with expert, skilled and collegiate staff who are supported and equipped to deliver to the highest standards
- Effective and efficient casework management and prosecution of cases with structures and processes consistently applied across the Office
- A data-driven service which supports effective, efficient, innovative, timely and evidence-based decision making and process improvements, including minimisation of avoidable delays
- Increased digitisation and compatibility of systems for secure sharing and timely exchange of relevant information internally and across the criminal justice system



STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Driving excellence and high professional standards



We will achieve this goal by:

Building efficient and integrated systems to support high quality case management across the prosecution service

The actions we will take:

- 1.1 Strengthen our case management systems and processes to support the effective and timely management of cases
- 1.2 Enhance the quality assurance and performance control structures across the prosecution service
- 1.3 Proactively input our expertise to the Summary Prosecution Reform Steering Committee's work to support high standards of prosecution in the District Court

Building on and strengthening disclosure practices

The actions we will take:

- 1.4 Identify further areas to strengthen our disclosure practices, policies and training
- 1.5 Expand our digital systems, technologies and processes to support the secure and timely disclosure of evidence

Strengthening legal expertise and specialist support to effectively respond to the evolving nature and complexity of files and prosecution cases

The actions we will take:

- 1.6 Design and deliver learning and development programmes and resources to build and extend legal expertise, capability and excellence across the prosecution service
- 1.7 Ensure effective processes and reporting systems are in place to support training and knowledge sharing to investigative agencies

Maximising capacity to enable the Office to anticipate, address and respond to the changing internal and external operating environment

The actions we will take

- 1.8 Assess, secure and integrate the necessary resources, diversity of skills and leadership capacity needed to meet the Office's existing and future needs
- 1.9 Utilise our data and information and develop the Office's ICT and data analytics capabilities to anticipate trends, develop insights and inform and support our work
- 1.10 Promote a culture of equality, diversity, inclusion and high performance and embed strategic wellbeing in line with the pillars of positive health
- 1.11 Implement co-ordinated internal communication and engagement strategies using a collaborative and user-centric approach
- 1.12 Establish a regional office in Cork
- 1.13 Continue to modernise and progress the Office's accommodation and facilities plans to meet short, medium and long-term requirements and sustainability obligations

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Maintaining public confidence in the criminal prosecution service



We will maintain public trust and confidence in the fairness, effectiveness and independence of our Office, demonstrated through the delivery of high standards of service

Strategic Outcomes

- High level of public trust, confidence and accountability in what the Office does and the way we work
- Greater visibility and understanding of the role of the ODPP in the criminal justice system
- Service improvements that respond to the diverse and changing needs and experiences of those who engage with the prosecution service



STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Maintaining public confidence in the criminal prosecution service



We will achieve this goal by:

Understanding and responding to the experiences of the people who interact with the system to ensure the provision of a high quality and fair service

The actions we will take:

- 2.1 Develop and enhance our capacity to engage effectively to increase our understanding of service users' needs
- 2.2 Review our interactions with members of the public to support the development and implementation of service improvements

Deepening public awareness of our service and strengthening our strategic stakeholder engagement

The actions we will take:

- 2.3 Develop strategic approaches to our stakeholder engagement to build public awareness and understanding of our role
- 2.4 Expand the Office's range of publicly available information and resources, developed in consultation with stakeholders including agencies who work with victims of crime

Strengthening our governance and accountability systems

The actions we will take:

- 2.5 Continue to participate on cross-sectoral groups and establish knowledge management systems to support engagement
- 2.6 Review and enhance our corporate governance and accountability frameworks to support the organisation to use its resources effectively and efficiently

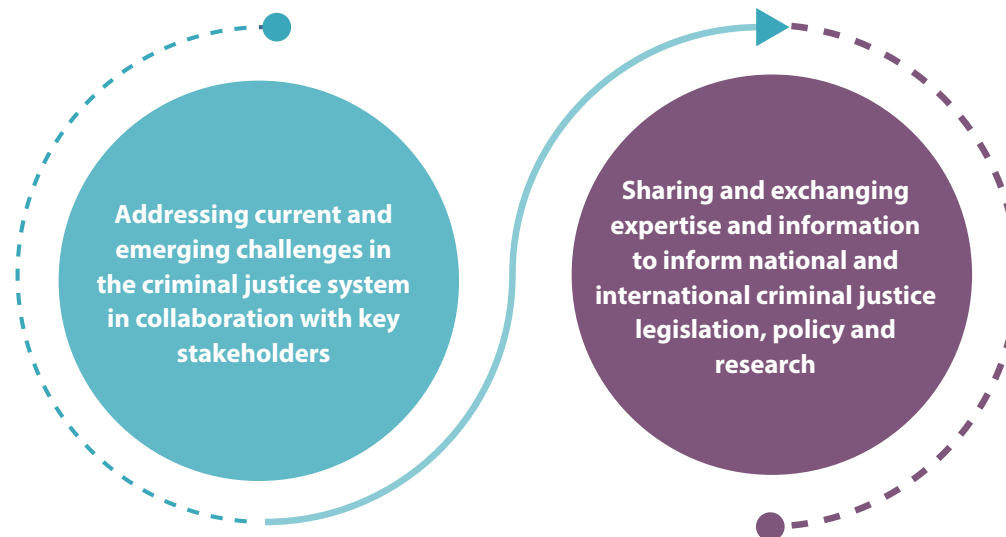
STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Building a culture of innovation and collaboration to support service improvements in the criminal justice system



We will proactively seek to bring about improvements, efficiencies and innovations to the criminal justice system, in collaboration with key stakeholders, nationally and internationally

Strategic Outcomes

- Effective and proactive engagement in cross-criminal justice sector change leading to improved experiences for those people who come into contact with the system
- Effective international cooperation supporting the delivery of justice across borders
- Innovation and openness to new ways of working, contributing to improvements in, and the long-term development of, the criminal prosecution service



STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Building a culture of innovation and collaboration to support service improvements in the criminal justice system



We will achieve this goal by:

Addressing current and emerging challenges in the criminal justice system in collaboration with key stakeholders

The actions we will take:

Utilising opportunities to work with other stakeholders to:

- 3.1 Improve and make the best use of statistical data and information to drive efficiencies and improve outcomes across the criminal justice system
- 3.2 Proactively engage and share our expertise with relevant stakeholders to ensure supports are in place to effectively implement improvements in the delivery of the criminal justice system and to respond to increased judicial resources across the criminal courts
- 3.3 Identify and actively seek solutions to support the recruitment and retention of criminal law practitioners to support the criminal justice system into the future

Sharing and exchanging expertise and information to inform national and international criminal justice legislation, policy and research

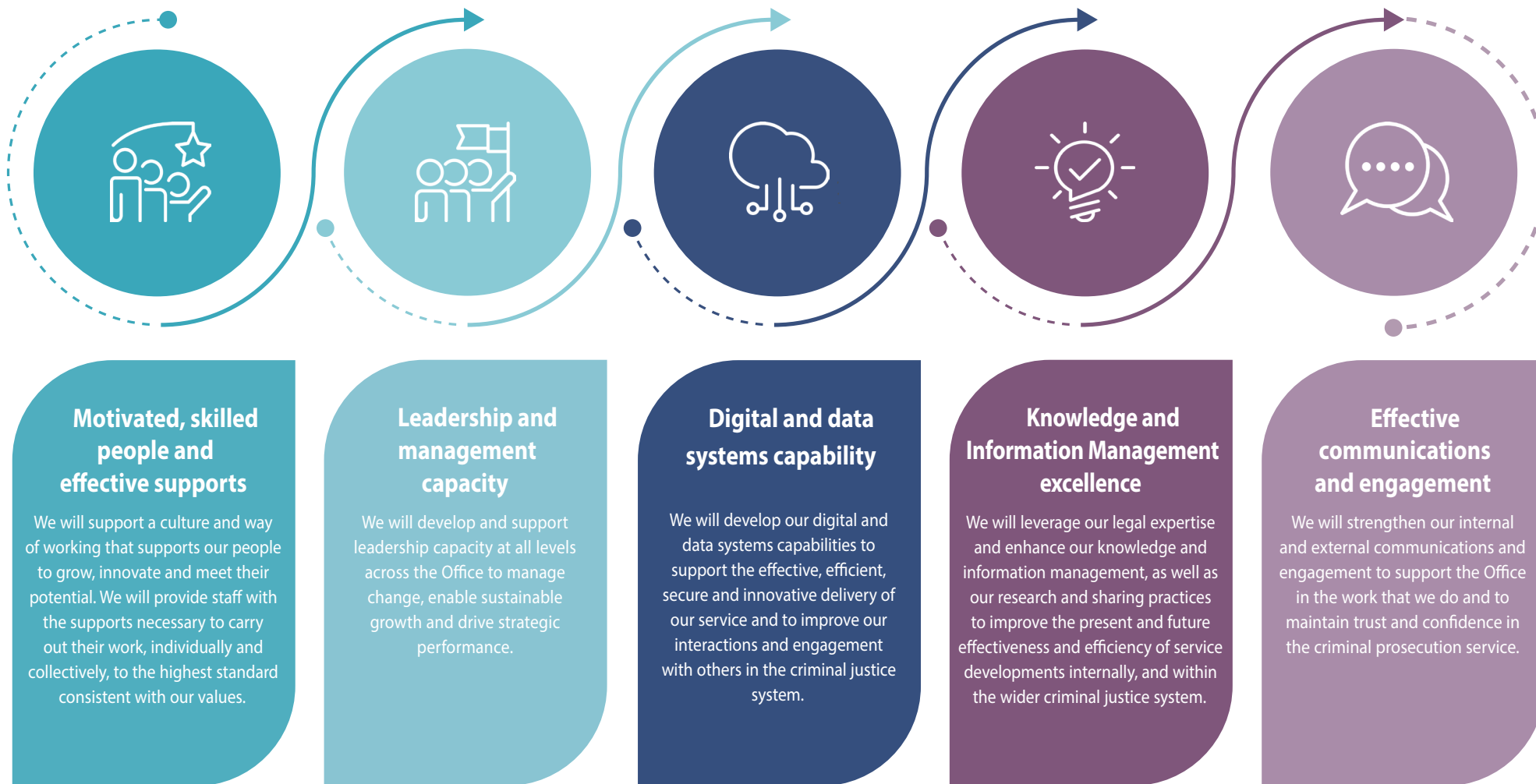
The actions we will take:

- 3.4 Develop the Office's research agenda and promote opportunities to contribute to criminal justice research
- 3.5 Provide expertise, in a consultative capacity, on the operational impact of criminal justice policy and legislation at national and EU level
- 3.6 Work collaboratively with national and international stakeholders to improve systems and structures for international cooperation including the development of communication and feedback systems to share expertise and insights

4 Strategic Enablers

What we need to be successful

It is our belief that meeting the objectives we have set ourselves over the next three years is contingent on having a range of strong underpinning supports and resources in place to enable us to excel in the work we do.



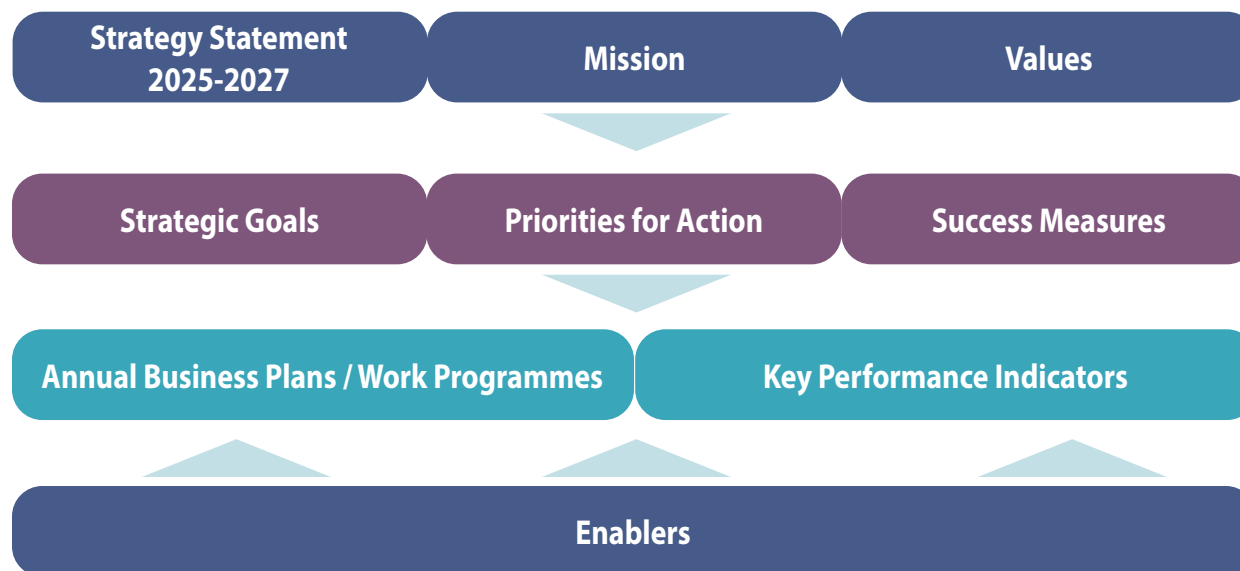
5 Implementation and Review

This Strategy Statement 2025-2027 sets out overarching goals to be achieved over the next three years. Within this timeframe, the Office of the DPP's underpinning business plans and work programmes will seek to be realistic and paced to ensure the delivery of this strategic framework within its lifetime.

In developing this Strategy Statement, the Office of the DPP has identified the need 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 that will enable us to deliver on our strategic objectives. Each section of the Office will assess how their work and resources contribute to the achievement of the Strategy Statement and identify their key actions and associated key performance indicators to enable the Office to chart progress and review. This process allows us to review the relevancy of our high-level goals and adapt to changing circumstances. Progress on implementation will be monitored and reviewed by the Senior Management Team and Management Board on an ongoing basis.

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.



6 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.

