

**An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
agus Comhionannais**
Department of Justice
and Equality



Oifig an Ard-Rúnaí | Office of the Secretary General

Ms Éilis Fallon
Committee Secretariat
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Your Ref.: PAC32-I-1316
Our Ref.: DJE-SG-00045-2019

Re: Criminal Justice Operational Hub (CJOH).

Dear Ms Fallon,

I refer to your correspondence of 12 February, 2019 with regard to the Committee meeting of 7 February, 2019 with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) in which a note on the operation of the criminal justice operational hub including the timetable for its completion was requested from this Department.

Programme Overview

The Department of Justice and Equality is managing a programme of work to deliver a “Criminal Justice Operational Hub” (CJOH). The CJOH responds to the need for improved data interoperability which has been a long standing objective of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and has been recommended in a range of internal and external reviews.

The CJOH will provide a centralised facility to allow for (i) data to be exchanged between the existing ICT systems in the criminal justice agencies and (ii) accessed in an anonymised format for the purposes of research and developing evidence based policy.

The project is led by the Department in collaboration with the following agencies: An Garda Síochána, The Courts Service, Irish Prisons Service, The Probation Service, the Legal Aid Board, Office of the DPP, Forensic Science Ireland, the Policing Authority, and Irish Youth Justice Service. The CSO is already involved with several of these agencies on data projects and the Programme is also engaging with the CSO on data modelling and the anonymization process.

As noted above, there are two key strands to the programme:

1. Data

Data from each agency will be integrated (providing an 'end to end' view of an individual's interaction with the CJS) and stored securely at the center. It will be used to support operational activity and to help shape strategic planning. This will be done firstly by making data available, subject to data protection law, for operational staff across the CJS to help inform the management of offenders and those entering the system. Access to this data will be strictly controlled and only be given to those who have the rights to view it. Clear written policies and access permissions will be in place to regulate this. Secondly, this centralized data will be used in anonymized formats to conduct research and analysis to support the development of criminal justice policy. It should be clearly understood that this data will be anonymized for research purposes.

2. Message Exchange

Automated, secure data transactions will flow between agencies. This will replace existing manual and paper based processes. For example, criminal charge sheets are currently first entered by Gardaí on the PULSE system and are then re-entered by Court Service officials onto their system. Across the nine participating agencies, there are a number of potential types of inter-agency transaction which CJOH could automate. Essentially, the Message Exchange will reduce data entry error, ensure better quality data, and help drive more efficient and effective processes. Along with Charge Sheets, there are three more messages on track to be shared in 2019: court appearances, district court outcomes and higher court outcomes which will have benefits for An Garda Síochána, the Irish Prison Service and the Courts Service.

The planned benefits of CJOH include:

- Automated transactions will generate substantial savings through operational efficiencies.
- The central data repository will provide an anonymised platform to enable Research and Analytics at the centre.
- Improved Data Quality will lead to more reliable measurement of outcomes, better-informed research and evidence-based decision-making and policy development across the Criminal Justice sector.

Programme Plan & Governance

A Programme Board has oversight of this project. The Board has a representative of each of the agencies involved and is chaired by a senior official from the Courts Service. This Board, in turn, reports into the Criminal Justice Strategic Committee that provides overall direction and oversight.

Governance is also provided via the Department's ICT Governance group where business cases are reviewed and signed off and progress and costs are monitored on a regular basis.

While some work carried out in the Department facilitated development of the concept, it commenced as a programme of work in January 2017. The first two years have focused on research and development of the technologies, data modelling and the operational design principles. The total cost as of the end of 2018 is €1.150M. The programme has now moved into a build and delivery phase and expenditure is estimated at €1.2M for 2019.

This first phase of the project will provide for Charge Sheets, Court Outcomes and Court Appearance Dates data being exchanged electronically. During this phase, the potential to prioritise other type of message will also be analysed so as to assist in considering any future phases of the project. Any further phases of the project will be the subject of consideration by the Programme Board, having regard to overall funding available, as well as a business case to the Department's ICT Governance Group prior to any further development or expenditure taking place. Further updates can be provided to the Committee in this regard in due course.

Compliance with Data Protection Legislation

In line with data protection law, the sharing of personal data between the relevant agencies is necessary and proportionate to the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of criminal offences and to execute criminal penalties. A Data Sub Committee, in consultation with Data Protection Officers from DJE and agencies, oversees compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, the Law Enforcement Directive and GDPR as applicable. In accordance with the Act, a Joint Controller and Controller/Processor agreement will be executed prior to data messages being exchanged.

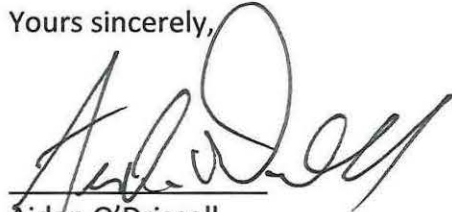
CJOH Data Security

The CJOH infrastructure is hosted in the secure Revenue Data Centre in St. John's Road Dublin 8. The application is managed and maintained by the Department of Justice ICT division.

Agencies participating in the CJOH will be connected via the Private Government Network. This network is managed by the Government Networks team (eGov), based in the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform.

Use of services, data and applications is strictly governed by the Department's user directory, with all activity logged for auditing purposes. The infrastructure supporting the live environment will be configured to an international security standard with external audits to ensure continuing compliance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aidan O'Driscoll', written over a horizontal line.

Aidan O'Driscoll
Secretary General

27 February, 2019