

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Business Plan 2022-23

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the NI Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) Business Plan for 2022-23. This outlines the key actions we plan to take to deliver our aims and strategic objectives, taking into account available funding.

Over the past year, I have been hugely impressed with the commitment, dedication and professionalism of colleagues across NICTS in ensuring our essential public services were delivered. Continuing to support and develop our staff, particularly through the launch of a new People Strategy, will be a priority in 2022-23, together with maximising the benefits offered by new ways of working.

COVID-19 required us to change the way in which many aspects of court and tribunal business are delivered, with an increasing reliance on the use of technology. As we emerge from the pandemic, it will be important that we do not default to a pre-COVID model for court and tribunal business. Therefore, the focus as we move forward will not just be on increasing physical capacity but, in collaboration with the Lady Chief Justice and our justice system partners, on assessing where business is best located and ensuring that we continue to optimise the use of technology and the benefits of working differently.

While business recovery will be our overriding priority in 2022-23, we will also continue to modernise through the delivery of our Vision 2030 Portfolio which will focus on digital modernisation, improved service design, the development of our workforce and the modernisation of our estate.

I look forward to working with colleagues in NICTS, the judiciary and partners across the justice system to deliver this plan in the year ahead.

Glyn Capper

Acting Director NI Courts and Tribunals Service

About the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service

NICTS is an Agency of the Department of Justice (DoJ). The role of NICTS includes:

- **supporting:**
 - an independent Judiciary;
 - Northern Ireland's courts;
 - the majority of Northern Ireland's tribunals;
 - the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland (PCNI);
 - the Planning Appeals and Water Appeals Commission (PACWAC);
 - the Coroners Service of Northern Ireland (CSNI);
 - the Legacy Inquest Unit (LIU); and
 - the Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA) Redress Board
- **enforcing** civil court judgments through the Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO);
- **collecting and enforcing** outstanding financial penalties imposed (or registered) by a criminal court through the Fine Collection and Enforcement Service (FCS);
- **managing** funds held in court on behalf of minors and patients; and
- **advising** the DoJ and Minister of Justice on matters relating to the operation of NICTS.

An organisation chart for NICTS can be found at **Annex A** and an overview of our work is provided below.

NICTS at a Glance

based on the 2021-22 financial year



We have over **900** members of staff.



We support a judicial complement of over **70** salaried and **600** fee paid judicial office holders.



We supported over **72,000** criminal, civil and family court cases.



We supported over **9,700** tribunal cases.



We supported **17** legacy inquest hearings.



Coroners Service dealt with over **3,500** deaths and supported **70** inquests.



We are transforming our services: **13** are now available online.



57 courtrooms have been digitally enabled for remote and hybrid hearings.



Over **810,000** audio or video connections were made for remote and hybrid court and tribunal hearings.



Our total resource expenditure was **£97m**.



We received **£33m** in fees and income.



We operate **24** properties with an asset value of **£200m**.



We managed **£342m** of funds held in court.



We collected **£12m** of fines.



We manage contracts with a combined estimated value of **£178m**.



The Enforcement of Judgments Office enabled the recovery of **£5.3m** of debt and **140** properties.



We made over **1,000** compensation payments totalling **£27m** to victims of historical institutional abuse on behalf of the HIA Redress Board.

Staffing and Resources

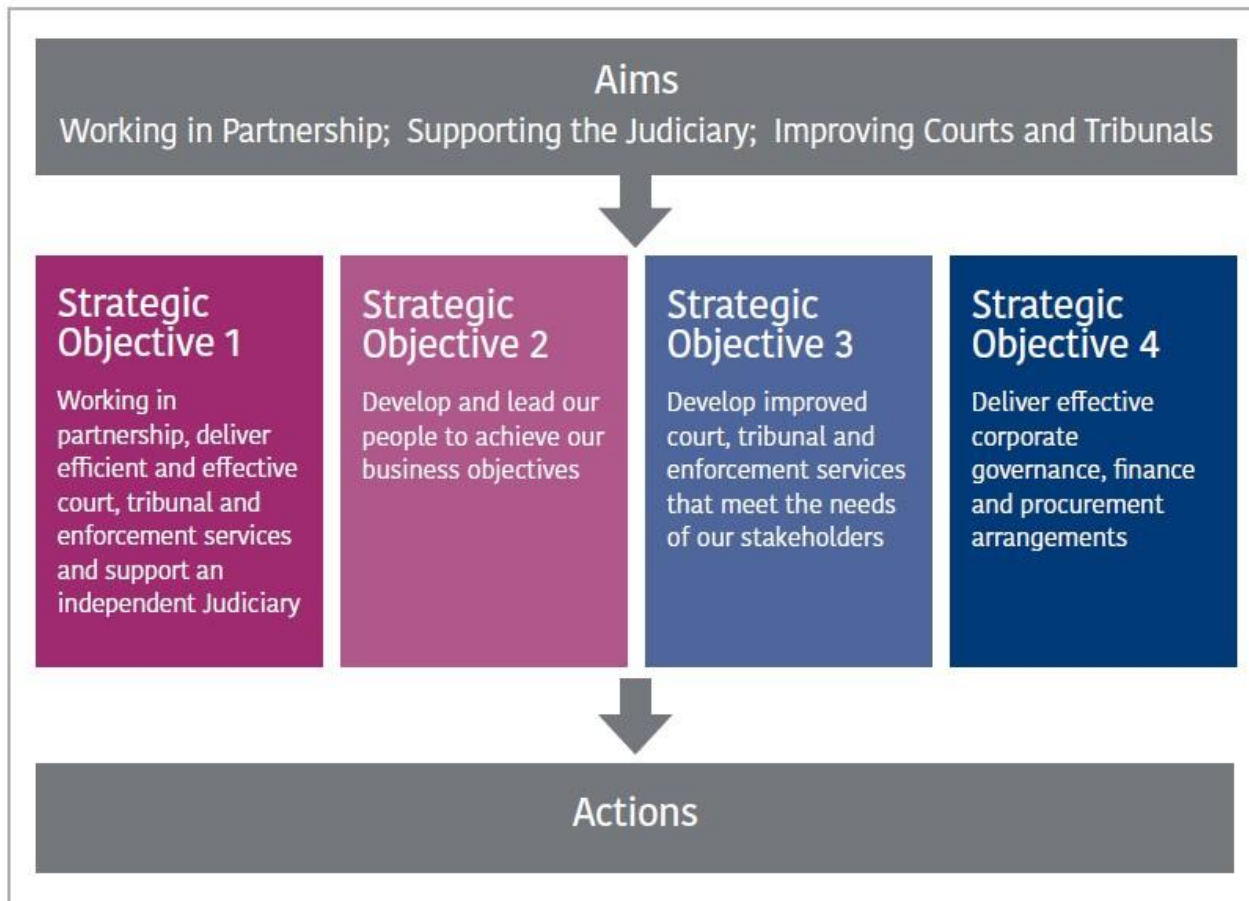
Our people are key to delivering the wide range of court and tribunal services. Throughout the past year, the contribution and commitment of staff has been central in both maintaining services during the pandemic and recovering business. An NICTS People Programme was established in 2021 with initial work focusing on the development of a new corporate induction programme and preparation for the implementation of the NICS New Ways of Working arrangements. A People Strategy and associated delivery plan will be launched in 2022-23 with a key pillar focusing on the wellbeing of staff as we continue to create an environment that actively promotes and supports the health and wellbeing of our people.

In the absence of an Executive, a Budget for 2022-23 cannot be agreed. As a result, the Finance Minister provided each Department with a Contingency Planning Envelope (CPE) for 2022-23 to ensure the continuation of service delivery. NICTS has received a non-ringfenced resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) CPE of £45.7m and a capital DEL CPE of £6.4m.

NICTS faces a range of inescapable pressures in delivering its statutory responsibilities. The risk of overspend will be regularly monitored to inform decisions on the requirement for potential mitigating actions.

Aims, Objectives and Values

In support of the DoJ’s Mission of ‘working in partnership to create a fair, just and safe community where we respect the law and each other’, NICTS has three **Aims** which inform the four **Strategic Objectives** in our Business Plan. Each Strategic Objective has a series of supporting **Actions**. All of our work is underpinned by our **Values**.



Our Values

-  **Integrity** - interact with our customers with the highest degree of integrity, promoting an atmosphere of honesty and trust
-  **Openness** - undertake our work in an open and transparent manner
-  **Professionalism** - conduct our business to the highest standards
-  **Accountability** - be responsible for delivering a high quality service to the public
-  **Fairness** - Treat everyone equally

2022-23 Strategic Objectives and Actions

Strategic Objective 1 – Working in partnership, deliver efficient and effective court, tribunal and enforcement services and support an independent Judiciary.		
Action	Target Date	Owner
1. Continue to work in support of the judiciary and in partnership with stakeholders, to support recovery of the justice system taking account of the prevailing public health guidance and available resources ¹ including: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring the availability of sufficient trained staff; • maximising the number of court/hearing venues available; • increasing the flexibility of court/hearing accommodation; and • securing sufficient additional funding to support COVID recovery. 	March 2023	Chief Operating Officer Chief Modernisation Officer
2. Support the delivery of the scheduled legacy inquest caseload for 2022-23.	March 2023	Head of LIU and CSNI
3. Implement the remaining recommendations in the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) report on the Fine Collection and Enforcement Service.	December 2022	Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Objective 2 – Develop and lead our people to achieve our business objectives.		
Action	Target Date	Owner
1. Launch a new NICTS People Strategy.	October 2022	Chief Modernisation Officer
2. Implement New Ways of Working in line with the NICS policy and timeline.	October 2022	Chief Operating Officer Chief Modernisation Officer

¹ The standards listed in Annex B will continue to be monitored each quarter with performance reported to Agency Board. The established levels of service are retained at this stage to help assess business performance and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

		Head of LIU and CSNI PPS to the Lady Chief Justice
3. Establish a New Ways of Working proof of concept in Laganside House.	December 2022	Chief Modernisation Officer

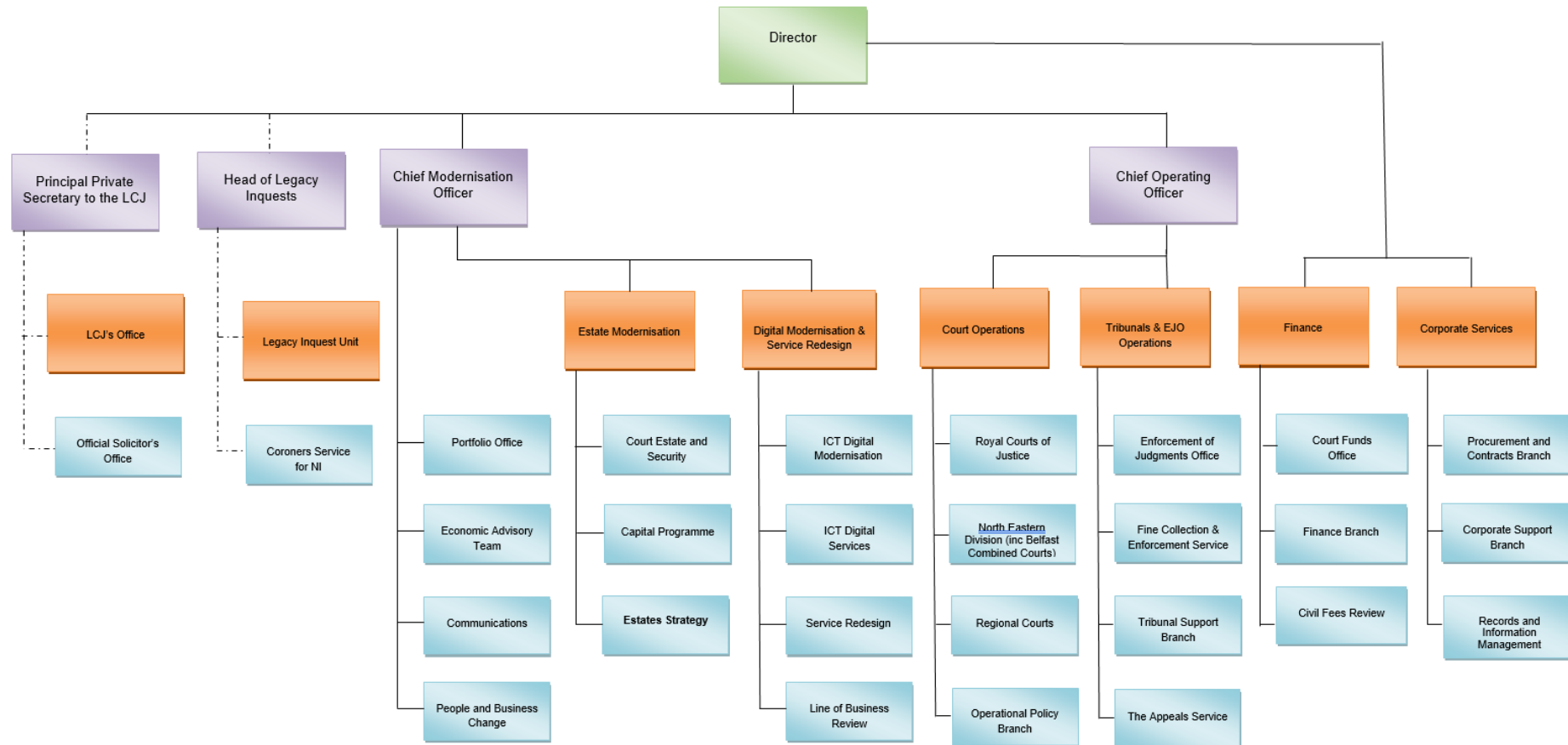
Strategic Objective 3 – Develop improved court, tribunal and enforcement services that meet the needs of our stakeholders.		
Action	Target Date	Owner
1. Develop an Estates Strategy.	March 2023	Chief Modernisation Officer
2. Progress the Royal Courts of Justice (RCJ) refurbishment through the appointment of an Integrated Consultancy Team and commence the development of an Outline Business Case.	October 2022	Chief Modernisation Officer
3. Agree the scope of services for the future utilisation of Old Townhall.	March 2023	Chief Modernisation Officer
4. Commence the revision of the Strategic Outline Case for the North West Accommodation project.	October 2022	Chief Modernisation Officer
5. Continue to monitor estates related greenhouse gas emissions and deliver an agreed programme of energy efficiency projects to reduce energy demand and improve energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.	March 2023	Chief Modernisation Officer
6. Implement a new case management system for The Planning Appeals Commission and Water Appeals Commission (PACWAC).	September 2022	Chief Modernisation Officer
7. Implement a new case management for Official Solicitors and Office of Care and Protection (OSO/OCP).	March 2023	Chief Modernisation Officer
8. Procure a supplier to develop a new case management system for the Parole Commissioners for NI.	October 2022	Chief Modernisation Officer
9. Deliver a new judicial information portal.	March 2023	Chief Modernisation Officer
10. Complete the ongoing programme of Courtroom Technology upgrades.	March 2023	Chief Modernisation Officer
11. Commence the procurement of our Future Core Solution IT system.	October 2022	Chief Modernisation Officer
12. Commence the Discovery Phase for the design of revised jury management	September 2022	Chief Modernisation Officer

processes and Enduring Power of Attorney.		
13. Progress delivery of an action plan in consultation with Prisoner Escorting and Court Custody Service (PECCS) and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to address the CJINI recommendations made in respect of court custody.	March 2023	Chief Modernisation Officer
14. Support delivery of justice reform initiatives including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • committal reform; • implementation of Gillen review recommendations; and • speeding up justice. 	March 2023	Chief Operating Officer
15. Continue to work with Department for Communities to prepare for the statutory transfer of The Appeals Service.	March 2023	Chief Operating Officer

Strategic Objective 4 – Deliver effective corporate governance, finance and procurement arrangements.

Action	Target Date	Owner
1. Ensure the effective use of the Agency's budget to maximise efficiency and utilise resources for maximum effectiveness.	March 2023	Chief Operating Officer Chief Modernisation Officer Head of LIU and CSNI PPS to the Lady Chief Justice
2. Ensure effective and appropriate corporate governance processes are adhered to across the Agency including appraisal and evaluation of expenditure, procurement of goods and services, contract management and statutory compliance.	March 2023	Chief Operating Officer Chief Modernisation Officer Head of LIU and CSNI PPS to the Lady Chief Justice
3. Develop an updated Agency Framework Document.	December 2022	Head of Corporate Services
4. Develop and agree an NICTS Governance Framework.	March 2023	Head of Corporate Services

Organisation Chart



Performance Standards

Although the Agency's focus in 2022-23 will be on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the established levels of service and standards listed below are retained at this stage to help assess business performance and recovery and will continue to be monitored each quarter, with performance reported to Agency Board. A number of the court performance standards are set by the Lady Chief Justice while others are set by NICTS.

Criminal Business

- 90% of appeals against sentence will be listed within four weeks of leave being granted to appeal to the Court of Appeal.
- 80% of Crown Court defendants will be arraigned within six weeks of committal.
- 80% of Crown Court defendants will start their trial within 18 weeks of committal.
- 80% of Crown Court defendants will be sentenced within six weeks of a plea or finding of guilt.
- 80% of Magistrates' Courts adult defendants will have their case disposed of within nine weeks of first listing.
- A finding will be reached within 12 weeks from first listing for 80% of Youth Court defendants.

Civil Business

- 95% of civil bills will be allocated a hearing date within 15 weeks of receipt of a Certificate of Readiness.
- 98% of claims for clinical negligence will be listed for review (before the Master) within 13 months of receipt of writ (applicable to writs lodged since 2011).
- 98% of claims for personal injury will be listed for review within three months of setting down.
- 97% of petitions for bankruptcy (presented by creditors) will be listed for hearing within six weeks.
- 90% of petitions for bankruptcy (presented by debtors) will be listed for hearing within three weeks.
- 85% of applications for Grant of Probate/Letters of Administration will be issued within seven days of receipt of correct information.

Family Business

- 92% of Children Order applications will be listed for first direction within six weeks of receipt of correct information.
- 97% of undefended divorces and dissolution of civil partnerships will be listed for hearing within six weeks of date of receipt and, in the High Court, confirmation of readiness.
- 95% of annual accounts filed by Controllers on behalf of patients, will be reviewed by the Office of Care and Protection within eight weeks of receipt.
- 95% of accounts held in court on behalf of patients will be reviewed by the Office of Care and Protection within 12 weeks of the annual review date.
- 95% of applications for Enduring Power of Attorney (where no objection has been lodged) will be registered within 40 days of receipt of all required information.

Coroners Service Business

- 97% of all deaths investigated that do not require a post mortem examination will have the certificate of registration issued to the Registrar of Deaths within three working days of the relevant documentation being received by the Coroner.
- 95% of all deaths where a post mortem examination reveals a natural cause of death, will have the certificate of registration issued to the Registrar of Deaths within five working days of the Coroner making the decision to close the case following receipt of the post mortem report.
- In 95% of inquests the administrative listing arrangements will be completed within 28 working days of the Coroner's direction to list.

Tribunal Business

- 90% of all Tribunal hearing dates will be offered within the specified number of weeks.
- 80% of Review Tribunal appeals will be disposed of within 8 weeks of receipt.
- 80% of cases regarding Deprivation of Liberty within the provision of the Mental Capacity Act 2016 will be disposed of within 14 weeks.

Parole Commissioners Secretariat

- 95% of cases will be scheduled within five working days of receipt from the Department of Justice.
- 95% of decisions will be issued within five working days of receipt from a Commissioner.

The Enforcement of Judgments Office

- Accept 90% of Enforcement Applications within 10 working days.
- Complete 85% of repossessions within 26 weeks of acceptance.

- For all accepted applications, an instruction will be issued to make arrangement to be interviewed or summons produced in 90% of debt cases within four weeks.

Taxing Office

- Produce 95% of Taxation Assessments within 15 working days.

Court Funds Office

- 95% of payments will be made within five working days of receiving the relevant paperwork in respect of payments made:
 - to minors reaching 18 years old;
 - on foot of a court order or invoice; or
 - on receipt of a Notice of Acceptance.
- 95% of regular payments will be made on or before the due date.
- 98% of investment sale and purchase transactions will be completed within five working days of the relevant trade date.
- 90% of dividend receipts will be posted within seven working days of the Registrar's payment date.
- 95% of direct credits will be posted within two working days of receipt in the bank account.
- 95% of other receipts (cheques, cash or money orders) will be posted on the day of receipt.
- 95% of confirmations that funds have been received by the Court Funds Office will be issued within five working days of receipt of funds in full in respect of minor cases.