

High Level Goal 6

To provide modern and professional corporate and business management services in the Office that delivers the highest quality of service.

Progress Achieved

Merrion Street Office

Recruitment

Following a review of its staffing needs the Office submitted a business case to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for additional legal staff. The Department subsequently sanctioned the recruitment of up to 11 Advisory Counsel Grade III, 5 Assistant Parliamentary Counsel Grade II and 1 Legislative Editor. The recruitment competitions were held in mid 2012 and 11 Advisory Counsel Grade III, 4 Assistant Parliamentary Counsel Grade II and a Legislative Editor joined the Office from September 2012 to April 2013. Nine of the Advisory Counsel were seconded as legal advisors to other Government Departments in late 2012 and early 2013.

The Office offered a wide range of atypical working arrangements during the year.

Employment Control Framework

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform set a target of 151 staff in the AGO (including the Law Reform Commission) by the end of 2013. This represents a reduction of approximately 5.71% when compared to 2008 staffing numbers.

From the start of 2010 to the end of 2014 it is estimated that the reduction will save a total of €3.03 million in staff costs. Other initiatives including the incentivised career break scheme and the public sector pay cut will result in a further €3.44 million in savings during the same period.

Human Resources Management System (HRMS)

During August of 2013 the Office transitioned to PeoplePoint, the HR Shared Service Centre for the Civil Service.

Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

The Office received 99.18% of 2013 role profiles, 99.15% of interim reviews and 99.17% of annual reviews for the year. The Office will adopt any enhancements to the system as agreed centrally. PMDS will be updated through the PeoplePoint system from 2014 onwards.

Sick Leave

The Office undertakes bi-annual reviews of sick leave and the findings are presented to both the internal Management Advisory Committee and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. A number of recommendations were adopted in recent years to address levels of sick leave and this has resulted in an overall reduction in days lost with the lost time rate for 2013 of 4.42%, above the 3% figure sought by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Accommodation

During 2013 the Office reviewed the accommodation needs of the Office and liaised with representatives from the Office of Public Works as necessary to ensure that all facilities were suitable.

Partnership Committee

During 2013, the Partnership Committee in the Merrion Street Office was centrally involved in the implementation of the Public Service Reform Plan and issues relating to the implementation of the Office's Revised Action Plan under the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014 (Croke Park Agreement) and the Office's Revised Reform Delivery Plan.

During the year the Committee met on 11 occasions. The focus for the Committee, which has Office-wide representation, was also to deal with core Office-related issues effecting staff such as sick leave, PMDS and Training and Development.

Gender Representation

A breakdown of the gender balance for permanent staff at end-2013 is as follows:

Grade	Female		Male	
	No.	(%)	No.	(%)

Director General	0	(0)	1	(100)
Chief Parliamentary Counsel	0	(0)	1	(100)
Deputy Director General	0	(0)	1	(100)
Assistant Secretary	5	(62.5)	3*	(37.5)
Principal Officer	11	(46.22)	12.8	(53.78)
Assistant Principal	21	(60)	14	(40)

*1 vacancy at end-2013

Learning and Development

During 2013 nominated Advisory Counsel, Parliamentary Counsel and Administration staff participated in the work of the Learning and Development Committee. The focus for the Committee during the year was on the development of a new Learning and Development Strategy 2014 – 2016, containing 19 specific action points and the Strategy was approved by MAC in late 2013.

During 2013 the Merrion Street Office Training and Development Unit provided a high standard of training and development opportunities and delivered on its responsibility for the planning, organisation and evaluation of training courses offered to all staff. The Unit also participated in the work of the Learning and Development Committee during the year. Throughout the year staff were encouraged and facilitated in undertaking training identified in their Role-Profile Forms for 2013. The Office further embedded the importance of PMDS for continued professional and personal development and endeavoured to deliver on its commitment to developing the skills and potential of all staff. A breakdown of expenditure incurred in 2013 on training and development is as follows:

Item	Expenditure €
Seminars, Conferences & Training Courses	139,019.94
Refund of Fees	0
Cost of consultants & external trainers	13,900

IT Training	2,590
Trainers' salaries & overheads	44,967
Cost of administration	0
Cost of courses attended by trainers	0
Purchase of new training materials	0
Master's in Policy Analysis	0
Other	0
Total	200,476.94
Total Payroll costs A1	10,173,622.84
Expenditure on T & D as % of salary cost	1.97%

- The total cost of training and development for 2013, including the cost of administration, was €200,476.94
- Excluding administration costs the training and development budget was broken into four specific areas, Staff Training and Development, Refund of Fees, Membership Fees and Conferences
- No members of staff received a refund of fees during 2013

Chief State Solicitor's Office

Recruitment

During 2013, 7 staff left the Office, 6 staff members resigned and 1 member of staff transferred back to their original Department. During the year 13 staff joined, 11 were temporary professional staff, 1 permanent professional member of staff and 1 FÁS intern. During 2013 the Office continued the intern program under the FÁS JobBridge scheme .

Performance Management and Development System

The 2013 PMDS cycle operated on the basis of the revised PMDS documentation including the revised form and guidelines. 2013 saw the introduction of calibration of ratings for staff at AP level and higher, training in respect of these revised arrangements and documentation was

rolled out to relevant staff of the Office. New arrangements that were agreed were implemented.

Continued Professional Development

All solicitors employed by the State are required to complete Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training. With effect from 1st January 2008, (S.I. 807 of 2007, as amended by S.I. 452 of 2009 refers), CPD is compulsory. Individual solicitors are required to maintain a record of training received. Under the CPD process, the Law Society may audit compliance with the requirement. The office continues to manage CPD training for solicitor staff of the Office in a proactive manner.

Accommodation

Throughout the year the Office regularly reviewed its accommodation needs based on work requirements and engaged with Office of Public Works as necessary to ensure that all facilities were suitable.

The Office in continuing to place an emphasis on off-site storage of files in order to make corridors and offices compliant with Health and Safety requirements.

Dignity Charter

The Office Dignity Charter, launched in 2008, operated throughout 2013.

Gender Representation

At the end of 2013 the Office exceeded the Government targets in relation to employment of women. The proportion of female staff at or above Assistant Principal Officer level was 59%, while the proportion of female staff at or above Principal Officer level was 50%.

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

The proportion of staff with disabilities employed in the Office at the end of 2013 exceeded the Government target of 3%. The office continues to support staff and is always interested in receiving suggestions from staff.

Partnership Committee

During 2013, the Partnership Committee and related sub groups in the Chief State Solicitor's Office contributed to the ongoing development of the change culture in the Office.

Training and Development 2013 CSSO

The role of the Training and Development Unit (TDU) of the Chief State Solicitor's Office is to provide targeted training for staff throughout the office. Throughout 2013 the TDU undertook a number of areas of training which had been identified by staff in their Personal Training and Development Forms under Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) and areas of training prioritised by the office ranging from health & safety issues, to legal topics to administrative training requirements. During 2013 the focus remained on providing in-house training for staff, taking into account the 2009 CPD regulations requiring Solicitors to complete 14 hours CPD.

The following is a brief overview of the training was provided for staff during 2013:-

IT

- Training for staff on the differences between Microsoft 2003 & Microsoft 2007, in conjunction with the upgrade taking place throughout the Office.
- Excel Training Sessions
- Adobe Training
- Microsoft Office Project Session
- Justis & Justcite Training Sessions Justis.com provides access to Irish and UK case law (including pdf versions of the Irish reports), UK legislation, ECJ case law and EU legislation. The sessions covered the online legal resources Justis & JustCite, both of which can be accessed through the CSSO intranet.
- Introductory sessions on the Library and its print and online resources were provided for new entrants and refresher sessions were provided for returning and transferring staff. External trainers conducted a number of hour-long sessions on the Library's subscription databases and Library staff provided training for individual staff that were unable to attend the group sessions. The Library also conducted one-to-one information skills training for legal staff
- ACME Training Courses

Management

- Time Management Courses
- Minute Taking Course
- Interview Skills Training
- Annual Leave Information Sessions
- Sick Leave Information Sessions
- Induction Training for new staff
- eTenders Presentations
- PSWT & VAT Training

Topics Covered - In House Legal Talks

- Solicitor staff were required to complete 14 hours Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours in 2013.
- TDU contacted and met with the Divisional Managers in early 2013 to look at topics that would be suitable for inviting speakers into the office to talk to staff under an in-house talk's initiative. Topics covered included;
 - European Arrest Warrants
 - Mental Health Law
 - Social Welfare Appeals Office
 - Conciliation
 - LandDirect.ie
 - Discovery Law
 - Statutory Interpretation in Ireland
 - Mediation
 - Garda Vetting
 - Removal Orders
 - Regulatory Matters Modules

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Training

- Employee Assistance Officer Presentation
- Healthy Heart Presentation
- Stress Management Presentation
- Cyberbullying

- Suicide Awareness
 - First Aid
 - Fire Marshal
 - Health Checks made available to all staff, and provided by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer.
- External conferences and seminars relevant to the business undertaken by the Office were attended by staff throughout the year.
 - Based on information provided by staff under PMDS and requests made throughout the year the Training and Development Unit organised a number of general training courses for staff.

The Training Unit was allocated €200,000.00 in order to provide training and development for CSSO staff during 2013. The allocation was broken into three specific areas.

Area	Allocation	Spend	Summary
Delegated Budget	€90,000.00	€63,179.33	This amount was divided between the 6 divisions, with each division responsible for working within the allocated amount.
Refund of Fees	€30,000.00	€11,565.00	During 2013, a refund of fees to staff was made in relation to 6 courses
Holding Fund	€80,000.00	€ 43,953.13.49	This fund was used for expenditure by the TDU on a number of

Merrion Street Office and CSSO

Financial developments

During 2013 the focus for the Offices was on achieving further progress towards the implementation of initiatives at central level, further enhancement of the Office's Financial Management System (FMS), consideration to upgrade the System and the embedding of an interface between the Case and Records Management System (ACME) and FMS.

By the end of 2013 the interface between ACME and FMS was fully rolled-out across all relevant areas of both Offices. This development will assist in the identification of commitments, financial and non-financial and costing management information reporting requirements.

During 2013 further enhancements were developed to Management and Costing Reports and made available to the local Merrion Street Office/CSSO MACs, joint Merrion Street Office/CSSO MAC and to senior management. This information already facilitates greater cost awareness among those responsible for resource allocations.

In relation to the Office's Agresso FMS the Office utilised the System in providing a full range of financial services to the Office including the preparation of the following:

- Appropriation Account 2013;
- Monthly financial reports to local and Main Management Advisory Committees and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform;

In relation to the proposed upgrade of the Office's Agresso FMS much progress had been achieved and a Project Initiation Document was in place at year-end.

In relation to the Financial Management Shared Services Project to develop a shared FMS for the public service both Offices liaised as appropriate with the project team during the year.

Case & Records Management System (ACME)

During 2013 the focus was on further refining and enhancing the ACME to ensure that it served the Office as effectively and efficiently as possible. Ongoing support was provided by Helpdesk staff to all users of the system. The ACME Business Users Group (BUG) reported on its comprehensive review of the system to Main MAC in June 2013. The report identified a number of issues in the use of ACME and the focus for the Group for the remainder of 2013 was the preparation of a plan to address the issues identified in the report.

Integration of the Financial Management System with the Case and Records Management System (ACME)

Counsels' fees are a very significant cost to the State. It is imperative that the Office is able to manage the process to ensure both value for money and an effective financial process to support it. While currently the Office operates a comprehensive and detailed paper-based system, it is labour intensive and not as efficient as it might be for producing real time information for management purposes.

Critical to managing the cost is an ability to monitor and recognise the financial commitment on an accruals basis when the activity takes place rather than just at the point an invoice or fee note is received and subsequently paid.

Both the ACME and FMS systems are efficient and effective in the tasks for which they were designed. However, linking the financial system with the ACME system will ensure that the financial commitments raised by advisory/CSSO legal staff when engaging legal counsel will be automatically captured. This will enable management to be aware with greater accuracy the extent of potential liability for future legal costs and fees as well as ensuring that ultimately when the formal invoice or fee note arrives the payment process will be both accurate and efficient. The visibility and completeness of this information will have significant added value for management decision making.

By the end of 2013 the interface process was operational in all Divisions and Sections of the CSSO with financial commitments captured on ACME.

Report of the Working Group on the Accountability of Secretaries General & Accounting Officers (Mullarkey Report)

During 2013 the Offices kept under review internal financial controls aspects of which were also reviewed in the context of specific internal audits.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee, comprising 3 external personnel and a representative from each Office, met on 4 occasions during 2013.

The Internal Audit Unit's Annual Report for 2012 was agreed by the Director General and the Chief State Solicitor. In relation to audits undertaken in 2013 the Audit Reports listed below were reviewed by the Audit Committee during the year:

1. Examination of Mobile Phone Procedures in the Office of the Attorney General and the Chief State Solicitor's Office.
2. Examination of Expenditure in relation to Taxis in the Office of the Attorney General.
3. Review of Financial Procedures in the Law Reform Commission.
4. Follow-up Recommendations Report in the Chief State Solicitor's Office and the Office of the Attorney General.
5. Examination of the Utilisation of the Electronic Case and Records Management System (ACME) in the Office of the Attorney General (ongoing).

During 2013 the Audit Committee also reviewed developments in relation to the ACME/FMS Interface project and the Offices' risk management strategy.

Interest Payments under Prompt Payment of Accounts legislation

In the Merrion Street Office no penalty interest payments were incurred during 2013.

In the CSSO, a total amount of €4,089.14 was incurred in penalty interest during the year under Prompt Payment of Accounts legislation. See **Annex D** of the Annual Report for 2013 for the Offices' Reports on Payment Practices for 2013.

IT Strategy 2012 - 2016

During 2013 the IT Units in both Offices progressed the implementation of the joint AGO/CSSO IT Strategy to support the Offices in achieving their business objectives. The Strategy will guide the Offices' approach to and investment in information technology over the coming years.

Other IT related developments

During 2013 the IT Units continued to review the technology platforms and systems in use and further refine and develop these where appropriate to ensure the IT systems met the requirements of the Offices.

The Merrion Street IT Unit also played a very significant role in management and enhancement of the electronic Irish Statute Book.

Regulatory Requirements Compliance

During 2013 the Office kept under review compliance in the Merrion Street Office and in the CSSO with the Freedom of Information Acts, Data Protection Acts, National Archives Act and Health and Safety legislation. Arrangements in both Offices were satisfactory during the year.

Website

The IT Units in the Merrion Street Office and the CSSO managed the presentation and design as well as the publication of content on the respective Offices' websites during the year. They continue to exist as an important resource and reference points for customers, clients and members of the public. Access is provided to e.g. the Electronic Irish Statute Book (eISB), the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014 (Croke Park Agreement) Implementation Plans, procedures applying to the engagement of external counsel and the Offices' publications.

Maintenance of efficient filing system and Records Centre

1,213 files were closed in the Office of the Attorney General in 2013. Files are stored in the Office in numerical order in accordance with file numbering conventions within the Office or

catalogued before being sent for secure off-site storage. Sensitive files are either retained in the Office or placed in secure Vault boxes with restricted access.

In the Chief State Solicitor's Office 3360 files were closed in 2012. Files are stored by year of opening and then numerically or catalogued before being sent for secure off-site storage. All files closed, up to those opened in 2012, are stored off-site. Closed sensitive files are kept on-site.

Compliance with obligations under the National Archives Act

The AGO's National Archives Project for 2013 was completed ahead of schedule and 1,774 files were transferred to the National Archives in Bishop Street, including 98.25% of all documented files scheduled for transfer. Certificates for the retention of those files not transferred are held by the Office.

Legal research and know-how services

In 2013 the Merrion Street Office and CSSO Library & Know-how Units focused on the delivery of high quality legal information, research and know-how services to staff in both Offices. The Units also provided services to Advisory Counsel seconded to Government Departments, to state solicitors assigned to the various Tribunals of Inquiry, Criminal Assets Bureau and local State Solicitors.

The Units provided many important services to legal staff including:

- iLink (online library catalogue),
- cataloguing, classification and abstracting of legal material,
- access to a substantial law collection in both hardcopy and electronic formats,
- legal know-how database,
- legal information/research services,
- information skills training,
- current awareness services,
- legislative proof-reading and
- access to external libraries and information services.

Enhanced legal research services

In 2013 legal research services were provided by both Units to all staff. Legal Researchers in the Merrion Street Office provided legal research and know-how support to discrete Groups of Advisory Counsel and Parliamentary Counsel in support of the ongoing legal specialisation within the Office. Legal Researchers attended legal group meetings throughout the year in order to strengthen their knowledge of legal issues of interest to the Office and to enable the Library & Know-how Unit to identify emerging issues that might require additional research support or current awareness services.

The Units provided a range of current awareness services during the year and provided access to a wide range of legal information resources and legal reference guides through the Units intranet pages.

Both Units provided training to legal and administrative staff on library applications and legal information databases during the year. Staff had the opportunity to avail of formal information skills training programmes as well as customised individual training sessions.

Contributing to Knowledge Management

During the year both Units promoted a culture of knowledge sharing within and between the Offices. In the AGO, legal issues meetings are organised by the Library & Know-how Unit and legal staff in both Offices shared knowledge on topical issues of interest through the medium of legal issues meetings

Both Units participated in Knowledge Management initiatives and contributed significantly to the ongoing implementation of the new Knowledge Management Strategy during 2013. A significant project for both Units which was successfully brought to completion and rolled out in 2013 was the new joint know-how database and federated search system for both offices. An intensive programme of training in relation to the new database was also designed and delivered by members of library staff.