

James Lawless
Chairman
Joint Committee on Justice
By email to justice@oireachtas.ie



16 September 2021

Re: Courts and Courthouses

Dear Chairman,

The Law Society was invited to make written submissions on the above issue on Thursday last, 9 September 2021, and informed that the following items are of particular interest to the Committee:

1. Are there sufficient numbers of courthouses/courtrooms throughout the State and are they sufficiently resourced?
2. The need to maintain and modernise courthouses while acknowledging the importance of such buildings from an historical and heritage and economic perspectives.
3. Whether courthouses are currently equipped to provide separate entrances and waiting areas for victims and the accused?
4. Whether courthouses are appropriately equipped with facilities and interview suites particularly for those who may be considered vulnerable or those with visible and invisible disabilities.
5. In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, are courthouses structurally suitable to ensure social distancing and have the facilities to conduct remote participation?
6. Are there sufficient facilities/accommodation in courthouses to allow for engagement between legal advisors and their clients?
7. Are jury rooms adequate to accommodate juries who are providing a valuable service to the State?
8. Noting that justice must be done and must be seen to be done, are there adequate facilities for media coverage, where appropriate?
9. Is there sufficient IT support in courts to provide for the use of technology in courtrooms for children and minors attending court?
10. Are courthouses geographically located in places that are easily accessible for those that need to attend them?
11. Is security adequate in courthouses – is there a case for the presence of a “Court Garda”?

I hope you will appreciate that, given the Law Society's [voluntary committee structure](#), it is simply not possible to gather the level of detail required (from the various of our Committees with expertise in these areas) in order to provide a comprehensive response within the timeframe permitted.

Family & Child Law Committee

In February of this year, the Society provided the Committee with a [submission on the General Scheme of the Family Court Bill](#) which detailed the views of our Family & Child Law Committee on the significant shortcomings in the family court system within the State.

We would ask that the Committee would reopen that submission as a critical element of its overall consideration of the issue of courts and courthouses.

Conclusion

The list of 11 items will be considered by the Society's [Litigation Committee](#) and by our [Criminal Law Committee](#) at meetings next week.

As such, we will be glad to provide the Committee with further information on same if there is an opportunity to do so.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Keane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Keane
Director General