



**An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt**  
Department of Justice



## **Department of Justice**

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### **Office of the State Pathologist**

### **Performance Delivery Agreement 2021**

## **1. Background and context**

### **1.1 Objectives of this Agreement**

The purpose of this Agreement is to define, in the context of the resource inputs provided, the targets by which the performance of the Office of the State Pathologist (OSP) will be measured in 2021. The ongoing supports that the Department of Justice will provide to the OSP in this regard, and the mechanisms for monitoring and appraising performance, form part of the overall governance arrangements between the two parties and as such are set out in the separate but complementary Oversight Agreement 2020-22.

### **1.2 Inputs**

#### *1.2.1 Financial Inputs*

The OSP's budget allocation for 2021 is as follows:

Pay	€779,000
Non-Pay	€209,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>€988,000</b>

#### *1.2.2 Staffing Resources*

The following table sets out the OSP's whole-time equivalent staffing levels as at 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021:

Chief State Pathologist	1
(Deputy) State Pathologist	1
Locum Assistant State Pathologist	1.3*
Executive Officer	1
Clerical Officer	2.8
Senior Scientist	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.1</b>

\* Funded from non-pay budget

## **2. Performance Targets**

The following are the principal targets that will be referenced in 2021 to assess the OSP's efficiency and productivity in using the resources allocated to it.

### **2.1 Quantitative targets**

<b>Output area or initiative</b>	<b>Metric</b>	<b>2021 Target</b>	<b>2020 Target</b>	<b>2020 Outturn</b>	<b>2019 Target</b>	<b>2019 Outturn</b>
Post mortem examinations (PMEs) performed in suspicious or	Percentage of PMEs performed within 1 day of time of death	<b>80%</b>	80%	73%	----	75%
	Percentage of case reports peer reviewed	<b>100%</b>	100%	100%*	----	----

Output area or initiative	Metric	2021 Target	2020 Target	2020 Outturn	2019 Target	2019 Outturn
unusual deaths	Percentage of final reports issued to Coroners and An Garda Síochána within 120 days of PME taking place	60%*	90%	46%	----	56%
	Percentage of homicides reviewed at intervals of 6-8 weeks	100%	100%	97%	----	----

\* Timeframes for finalising PME reports are not fully within OSP's control owing to dependencies on the receipt of ancillary investigation reports (toxicology etc) from external providers. The Covid-19 crisis has exacerbated pre-existing delays in receiving such external reports and has contributed significantly to the decision to lower the relevant target percentage for 2021. The current procedures and processes for production of PME reports will be reviewed by OSP in 2021 to identify possible efficiencies that would support faster turnaround times.

## 2.2 Other targets

Output area or initiative	Target
Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) operational by 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	Testing and search criteria established end January, go live end February
Teaching and elective attachments	Two completed projects by end 2021
Business improvement projects	Two completed projects by end 2021 - Workload audit - Toxicology turnaround times
Audit of paediatric cases published in the Irish Medical Journal	First quarter 2021
EQA results histology lab	Adequate scores achieved (accreditation standard)

## 2.3 Main risks to achievement of targets

The main potential risks to achievement of the targets set out in this Agreement, and the corresponding mitigation measures in place, are as follows:

Key Risk/ Risk Factor	Impact on the OSP	Control/ Mitigation
COVID-19 impact on OSP service delivery	COVID-19 pandemic may impact speed of delivery of ancillary investigation results in cases, which may in turn affect turn-around times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good interaction between An Garda Síochána, State Laboratory, Neuropathologists, Anthropologists and Coroners</li> <li>• All office and pathology staff provided with remote working</li> </ul>

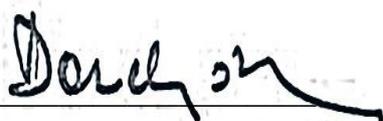
	Remote working of staff may impact peer review, typing and turnaround times	<p>capability including Dictaphone typing software</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate, confidential remote methods for peer review and case review meetings</li> <li>• Adherence of pathologists to pathology autopsy guidelines from RCPI</li> <li>• Regular contact with all OSP employees</li> <li>• Use of equipped facilities in no swab priority cases</li> <li>• Sufficient staffing to cover administrative tasks</li> </ul>
Lack of sufficiently trained professional staff	<p>Overburdening of existing staff members</p> <p>Pathologists over-worked preventing attendance at CPD events, personal study</p> <p>Pathologists unable to fulfil teaching and examination roles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New-competitions run in 2020-and Chief State Pathologist role has been filled substantively as of 18 January 2021</li> <li>• Awaiting outcome of state pathologist competition and there is continued locum support in place until then</li> </ul>
Delays receiving toxicology, neuropathology and other results	Will impede the finalisation of PME reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated office staff member follows up with relevant laboratories</li> <li>• Audit of toxicology transport and receipt following autopsy to identify problems</li> </ul>
Human error leading to errors in reports	Reputational damage, report not meeting legal requirements, legal challenge etc.	100% of cases are peer reviewed to mitigate against this
Surge in demand for OSP services	Would impact on all aspects of OSP's work (timelines in respect of PMEs, reports, admin work etc.)	<p>Engagement with Mass Fatality Expert Group as part of the National Major Emergency Management framework, in order to consolidate draft preparations for any mass fatality event</p> <p>Draft national plan is in place and was used as a basis for the Covid-19 mortality response as well as for other smaller events in the past</p>

## 2.4 Amendment of targets

In exceptional circumstances it may become necessary to amend one or more targets over the course of this Agreement. Where either party believes this may be necessary, they shall consult with the other party with a view to agreeing any appropriate changes as soon as practicable.

## 3. Duration and signatories to the Agreement

Doncha O'Sullivan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Justice, and Dr. Linda Mulligan, Chief State Pathologist, affirm that this Agreement shall be in effect from the date hereunder until 31st December 2021.



*Doncha O'Sullivan*  
*Assistant Secretary*  
*Department of Justice*



*Dr. Linda Mulligan*  
*Chief State Pathologist*  
*Office of the State Pathologist*

**Date: 15 February 2021**