

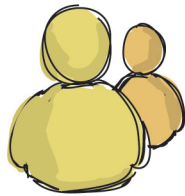
How can ICT enable more joined-up, efficient and citizen-focused public services?



Q&A: The Criminal Justice System



Eleanor Passmore - June 2007



Executive summary

This report summarises the findings from a workshop on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and partnership working in the Criminal Justice System on 23 May 2007, with contributions from Ian Young, Programme Director at Criminal Justice IT (CJIT) and John Tizard, Group Director of Government Relations and Business Engagement at Capita.

This was the first in a series of events organised by The Work Foundation and supported by Adobe to look in detail at how ICT can facilitate closer partnership working to better meet the needs of users within three different sectors: the Criminal Justice System (CJS), the National Health Service (NHS) and local government.

These events bring together senior public sector managers and representatives from the private sector to exchange ideas and share their knowledge of what has worked and how. The workshops focus on specific examples to illustrate how ICT can be used more effectively and how successful ICT projects are managed and delivered.

The report addresses the key issues that participants identified during the discussion:

- Major challenges to modernising the CJS IT system include the number of inter-dependent partners using the system, entrenched organisational cultures and systems within the different criminal justice agencies, and the government's poor track record of managing ICT programmes.
- Holding a central budget for IT projects has given CJIT leverage over the projects that partner organisations implement...
- But rigorous portfolio management and an independent Portfolio Unit is necessary to ensure that investment decisions are sound and that there is a clear line of sight from strategy to execution.

- Questioning assumptions, researching business plans and consulting the people who work on projects are the ingredients for making good decisions about what to invest in.
- CJIT knows which projects are most likely to succeed because it gathers and stores detailed information on each in a performance database. This data informs CJIT's holistic approach to evaluating individual projects, which takes political imperatives into account and makes allowances for the fact that projects are often inter-dependent.
- Demonstrating the benefits to partners and managers is the only way to get buy-in and allows managers to make the case for further funding.
- To be effective, processes have to be on-going and repeatable.
- Produce shorter and less verbose reporting mechanisms.
- Engaging partners early is important.

It is hoped that this report will reflect the useful insights into the workings of the Criminal Justice IT programme that were raised at the event in May 2007, providing examples of good practice that are applicable to all ICT-enabled public services.

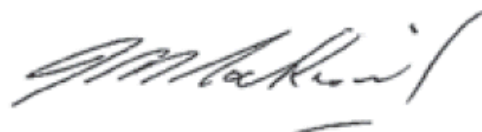
Information Communication Technology (ICT) can enable public services to be easier to use, more efficient, 'joined-up' and ultimately better able to meet the demands of 21st century citizens. Managing government ICT programmes is a challenging and important task because the potential gains are huge, but the risks of failure all too evident.

Over the past two years The Work Foundation's research has looked into the *why, what and how* of ICT and public services. These reports explored the purpose of ICT-enabled public services and addressed the expectations of ICT users – both the public and frontline staff – that must be taken into account at each stage of planning and delivery of projects. Following these reports, a review of the Transformational Government strategy published in 2006 outlines the challenges that the government needs to address to complete the transition from e-government to an approach that puts ICT at the heart of business planning and service delivery.

Building on this evidence base, this third phase of work examines in greater detail how public managers deal with the day-to-day management of ICT programmes in the Criminal Justice System, the National Health Service and local government. Based on three sector-specific workshops, it focuses on how to enable departments, agencies and voluntary or private-sector organisations to work together more effectively.

Adobe is delighted to be supporting these events, which will investigate what the major issues are for public managers, how these differ between sectors, and what cross-departmental learning can be shared. This report draws on the outcomes of the first sector-specific workshop. The event stimulated an interesting discussion on the challenges and opportunities of ICT-enabled public services, and drew out constructive examples from the Criminal Justice System on how to govern and manage ICT programmes.

With this first report we hope to show what can be done to make ICT serve citizens better and to encourage the sharing of ideas between departments and partner organisations. We hope you find the report useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I. Cockerill', with a horizontal line underneath.

Ian Cockerill
Government Practice Manager
Adobe Systems Europe

The transformational government agenda represents a move away from applying IT solutions to business problems and towards making ICT an integral part of public services that are 'joined-up' around the needs of citizens. As participants in the workshop stressed, technology plays an important role in meeting the rising expectations of consumers and citizens to access services when they want, in the way that they want and without having to deal separately with numerous different agencies or departments. Effective use of ICT is the only way that public services can become more user-focused on a significant scale, particularly at a time when budgets are being tightened.

Delivering high quality public services often requires different organisations to work together across boundaries. This is equally true of government ICT programmes, when co-ordination between systems, staff and outcomes is essential. Yet partnership working – across departments, agencies and organisations – remains a big challenge for public sector managers.

As reports from the National Audit Office and others have shown, at the root of the serious and persistent problems associated with government ICT projects lies poor management of contracts, project scopes, budgets, communications and people. Pressure to make technology and management systems work, in a context of different organisational cultures and targets, can mean that the citizen or end user disappears from view.

Research that The Work Foundation has conducted over the past two years has identified several key challenges that need to be addressed before ICT-enabled services realise their 'transformational' potential. These include:

More effective risk management: Managers need to be clear about what ICT projects aim to do and ensure that the scope of projects is not stretched too far.

Learning from pilots: Ensuring that rigorous piloting and evaluation is in place, and that the lessons from these processes are heeded.

Making best use of tried and tested methods: Projects are more likely to succeed if the technologies and business benefits have been proved.

Segmenting customers is key: Different groups use technology and interact with government in different ways. Recognising that ICT is not a one-size-fits-all solution, engaging with people and tailoring services to meet their needs and (refined) preferences is the only way to ensure that the public get the most from ICT-enabled services.

Leadership: High-level recognition of the value of ICT is essential. ICT is a crucial organisational tool and investment needs to be made in the professionalisation of ICT services and solutions.

The importance of engaging stakeholders early on: Engagement is crucial if citizens and staff are to realise the benefits of working with or using ICT-enabled services.

Bridging the chasm between policy and delivery: Ensuring that there is clarity about the feasibility of delivering different ICT-enabled projects and that any changes to policy during a project are informed by an understanding of the impact the changes will have on the chances of delivery.

Learning from the Criminal Justice System

A central part of the government's strategy to improve public services has been to use ICT to facilitate closer working relationships between different agencies and to generate modern and efficient services that put users and communities first. Nowhere has this been a more relevant, and a more challenging task, than in the Criminal Justice System. The government is investing over £2billion to implement a modern, linked IT infrastructure as part of the significant reforms to the system.

The programme has three phases:

- Introducing and modernising basic IT infrastructure across the CJS (completed March 2006).
- Establishing case management systems in the CJS agencies;
- Joining up all systems and allowing information sharing via the CJS Exchange.

The aim of the system is to prevent unnecessary duplication, facilitate information sharing and better case handling between agencies, and keep witnesses, victims and defendants better informed about their case.

The scale of the project (the CJS IT programme ranks alongside the NHS and the Ministry of Defence as one of the largest in the UK), the complexity of instigating change across numerous inter-dependent agencies and organisations, each with their own institutional cultures, and the way that these changes have been managed make the CJS an interesting case study of the challenges and successes of implementing government ICT programmes.

With so many different agencies involved, the CJS has some important lessons in managing the varied working practices and demands of partners. More importantly, Criminal Justice IT, the organisation overseeing the IT programme, has not simply addressed the technological issues but has demonstrated a realistic

approach to business planning, rigorous benefits management, close partnership working and a commitment to managing organisation change that provides relevant learning for other departments.

1. What are the key policy changes that have affected the criminal justice system?

The CJS has undergone a major programme of reform in recent years. Each of the criminal justice agencies has been redesigned and new structures put in place to better co-ordinate the system: the national Criminal Justice Board, 42 local Criminal Justice Boards and the Office for Criminal Justice Reform.

The Office for Criminal Justice reform was established to strengthen relations between the three departments that are responsible for criminal justice. The CJIT unit was established by the 2002 Spending Review within OCJR to develop IT solutions by working across government agencies, with legal professionals and the voluntary sector.

2. Who are the main partners that need to work together?

CJIT operates under a tri-partate agreement between the Ministry of Justice (formerly the Home Office), the Department of Constitutional Affairs and the Attorney General's Office.

CJIT's partners include the Crown Prosecution service, Her Majesty's Court Service, the National Offender Management Service, Youth Offending Teams and the Police (43 individual forces). Each works across organisations and with their own partners.

There are also the 42 local Criminal Justice Boards responsible for co-ordinating the criminal justice system at the local level, and 450,000 criminal justice practitioners across England and Wales.

The real challenge that CJIT faces is the fact that there is not one coherent Criminal Justice System, but a series of organisations that must work together.

3. What have the main challenges been?

Poor track record of government ICT programmes

As one participant put it: *'Success, IT and government are not words that are often linked.'* There has tended to be an underinvestment in change programmes across government and a lack of understanding of the complexity of end-to-end processes. All too often IT projects deal with standards, policies and principles that are not 'owned' by IT.

By 2004 CJIT was experiencing delivery slippage and reduced benefits realisation. The Public Accounts Committee was critical of public sector performance as a whole, stating that only 13% of projects had moved from Gate 4 (Readiness for service) to Gate 5 (Benefits Realisation), which assesses whether the benefits of a project have been fully realised, lessons learned and value for money secured.

Old systems and ways of working

CJIT faced the technical difficulties posed by old systems and even older buildings, and the fact that each service operates its own systems. Investment in IT in the courts was less than an eighth of that of the private sector customer service industries.

Whilst these challenges should not be underestimated, there were also the 'soft' challenges of fostering culture change, and engaging and training staff and system users. 65% of the information flowing through the CJS is initiated by the police, and most was processed manually. Some members of police staff had to re-key information up to 17 times over. This also meant that there was a lack of information sharing even at the local level. Duplicating and communicating information wasted hundreds of hours of police

time. Yet many members of staff were used to local, desk based ways of working and were not persuaded of the case for change.

Partnership working

The coordination of disparate groups of programme stakeholders across multiple government departments has been a major challenge. Within the system there are a range of complex interdependent projects with competing priorities and differing targets. In order to report to governing bodies and government ministers, CJIT needed a way of consolidating targets and information from various sources

4. What is best practice in setting up a project and how do you govern them?

CJIT has been responsible for managing the allocation of funding from the ring-fenced allocation received from HM Treasury (HMT). Once budgets are devolved, individual projects are accountable to their parent organisations. Ownership of projects remains the biggest challenge to CJIT, but the organisation has put mechanisms in place to ensure that the investments made are tested and evaluated right the way through.

Government strategy feeds into the CJS delivery plan, which translates into the CJIT delivery plan and a rigorous portfolio management process, described as 'gates with teeth'. To ensure that there is a clear line of sight from strategy to execution CJIT has established an independent Portfolio Unit that appraises investment decisions. The key has been to set up integrated, active, repeatable processes that evaluate each project from business plan to completion.

In the first instance, the Portfolio Unit challenges the presumptions of the business cases presented to it by evaluating each proposal against available data.

CJIT investment appraisals are based upon rigorous research. They comprise:

1. Economic analysis (utilising treasury rules, a benefits eligibility framework and optimism bias adjustments to costs);
2. Validating benefits claims with recipients (ie consulting the people that will be implementing the project);
3. Assessing the attractiveness and achievability against the 'proving model.'

This information is brought together in a short investment appraisal report and plotted on a portfolio analysis diagram. Brevity is important - if information cannot be conveyed in two pages then the report is not worth reading.

Finally, CJIT's experience has shown that shorter-term projects work best. Five to fifteen years is too long to wait for outcomes to be demonstrated, and CJIT is experimenting with projects that demonstrate value in 90 days.

5. How do you know which projects are most likely to be successful?

CJIT have created a proven services database that provides information against which new projects are tested. Projects that fall below the line on the portfolio analysis summary graph (based on the evaluation of their business plan) have been proven not to deliver.

However, in the CJS many linked projects are reliant upon one another. Projects that are performing well may be dependent on those that are underperforming. CJIT therefore takes a holistic view, rather than operating on a case-by-case basis.

In a political environment where it is imperative that some projects go ahead, particularly in a tripartite arrangement between three departments, it is important to ensure that decision-makers are given full information about the projects that they are accountable for.

6. Why monitor the benefits and how do you ensure that this works across different agencies?

CJIT operates on the principle that you are more likely to get buy-in from leaders and senior managers if you can demonstrate that business planning processes are realistic, that the benefits of ICT programmes are realisable and that targets are integrated across the system. This is the aim of the portfolio management process described above in sections 4 and 5.

Rigorous portfolio management and summary reports allow CJIT to demonstrate that it is working well and providing value for money.

Demonstrating the benefits gives CJIT the licence to:

1. Deliver programmes effectively;
2. Change the process itself by adapting to new political objectives and ways of working.

With a joined up system it is difficult to attribute the benefits generated by organisations accurately. CJIT has had to devise a way of tracking benefits across different departments and agencies that is validated by recipients (ensuring that it is part of their business plan). CJIT is committed to rigorous tracking of benefits so that everyone knows what is expected of them and it is measured on a quarterly basis.

In the development of the Witness Management System the Crown Prosecution Service and police ensured they had the right

capabilities and buy-in so that they could make the case for funding, based upon CJIT principles.

7. What are the best ways to bring together partners and users who don't see the point of an ICT system?

IT is what you make it; systems need to be built around existing IT is what you make it; systems need to be built around existing processes and the needs, expectations and skills of individuals, and not the other way around. Engaging partners and staff is therefore crucial. Before looking for a commercial supplier, the Crown Prosecution Service put together a user assurance group comprising of CPS staff from a cross section of roles and responsibilities, which focused on the requirements of an ideal IT solution. They have succeeded in getting 70% of lawyers using the case management system to its fullest extent, demonstrating that change is possible. They have also fostered close working partnerships, particularly with the police in using the CJS Exchange for the transfer of case data from the police case management systems to the CPS case management system. This project is owned by CJIT and is in the early stages of deployment.

Wider Lessons

At the end of the session, the panel and participants reflected on the wider lessons that could be drawn from the experiences of CJIT and the round-table discussion.

It was argued that Government departments do not do enough to promote their successes. There are some good stories to tell and there is a need to share lessons about what is working – such as CJIT's rigorous portfolio management process – between departments and embed learning from past failures and successes. Key messages and learning points from the CJS are:

- Establish an independent and rigorous portfolio unit to assess investment decisions.
- Make sure these processes are on-going and repeatable.
- Challenge the 'facts' – base decisions on research, and triangulate and validate data.
- Consult partners and the managers who will be implementing change – how do they rate the chances of the project?
- Early engagement and buy-in from key stakeholders is paramount.
- Ensure that projects and processes are applicable to whichever investment decisions are made.
- Ensure that a business case is developed showing clear demonstrable benefits to secure investment.
- Reporting on the progress and outcome of the investment should be short and concise.
- Demonstrate the benefits to partners and managers.
- Ensure that the users of the systems are aware of the change in working practices and are prepared for the change.
- Ensure that efficiency gains are managed effectively.

www.adobe.co.uk/government

Adobe Systems Europe Ltd
3 Roundwood Avenue
Stockley Park
Uxbridge
Middx
UB11 1AY

Tel: 020 8 606 1100
Fax: 020 8 606 4004