OECD

Toolkit for Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems

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Please cite this publication as:
OECD (2025), *Toolkit for Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/aecf7f78-en.

ISBN 978-92-64-33783-1 (print)
ISBN 978-92-64-55154-1 (PDF)
ISBN 978-92-64-92863-3 (HTML)

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Foreword

Access to justice is a cornerstone of democratic resilience and trust in public institutions. The OECD has long supported its Members and Partners in strengthening justice systems so that they better serve people, societies and economies. This Toolkit responds to countries' demand for practical guidance on how to turn the 2023 OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems* into concrete action.

The Toolkit is part of the OECD's broader programme of work on Public Governance, including the Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy Initiative. It complements the OECD's efforts to promote effective, transparent and accountable institutions, including work on trust in government, digital transformation of the public sector and evidence-based policymaking. Developed in consultation with OECD Members, Partners, experts and stakeholders from across the justice chain, the Toolkit provides a structured approach to support reforms that make justice more accessible, affordable and responsive.

By organising guidance around five components – purpose and culture; the design and delivery of services; governance infrastructure; people empowerment; and planning, monitoring and evaluation – the Toolkit offers countries a practical resource for assessing their systems, identifying good practices and implementing reforms. It also highlights innovative approaches from across the world to address persistent justice gaps, promote equality and empower people to manage their legal and justice needs.

This publication underlines the OECD's commitment to advancing access to justice, and to supporting countries in building justice systems that work for everyone.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the OECD Public Governance Directorate (GOV) under the leadership of Elsa Pilichowski, Director; Gillian Dorner, Deputy Director; and Janos Bertok, Deputy Director. The development of this report was led by Tatyana Teplova, Head of Division, OECD Public Governance Directorate.

The report was drafted by Geoff Mulherin, with the support of Mariane Piccinin Barbieri, Maaike de Langen and the Justice Team in the GOV Global Partnerships, Inclusion and Justice Division. Jennifer Allain and Mark Weston edited the report. Ciara Muller provided coordination and editorial support.

This publication builds on many years of research, analysis, peer learning and policy dialogue on public governance, access to justice and people-centred justice undertaken by the OECD and its Member and Partner countries, under the auspices of the Public Governance Committee, in the justice network and beyond. The development of the Toolkit has also been informed by a series of online workshops held in 2024 and 2025 that brought together country representatives and experts to test different components of the Recommendation, identify good practices, and gather the latest experiences and insights. Special appreciation is due to the members of the OECD Advisory Group on Access to Justice, as well as to all those who contributed to the 2024 OECD Global Roundtable on Access to Justice in Canada, for their ongoing engagement and support.

Additional thanks to the following OECD colleagues for their valuable inputs and support: Elizabeth Manning, Andrea Uhrhammer, Valerie Frey, Santiago Gonzalez, Arnault Pretet and Sarah Kups.

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Executive summary

Justice systems face a common challenge: too many people's legal and justice needs remain unmet. Such needs are widespread, interlinked with social and economic issues, and disproportionately affect certain groups. Unaddressed legal and justice needs undermine well-being, reduce trust in institutions and constrain economic opportunity.

The OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems* invites countries to place people and their needs at the heart of justice reform. This Toolkit translates the Recommendation into practical steps. It provides policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders with questions, checklists and good practice examples to support the design, delivery and monitoring of people-centred justice.

The Toolkit is structured around five interrelated pillars:

1. **People-centred purpose and culture**. Establishing a clear mission that places people's legal and justice needs at the core of the justice system, ensuring high-level commitment, co-ordination across institutions, and action to eliminate disparities.
2. **Design and delivery of services**. Ensuring a continuum of accessible, affordable and high-quality legal and justice services designed in plain language and tailored to people's capabilities and circumstances, including those in vulnerable situations.
3. **Governance infrastructure**. Building the institutional foundations for people-centred justice, including sustainable resources, co-ordination mechanisms, digital transformation, innovation and evidence-based management.
4. **People empowerment**. Fostering legal literacy, engagement and participation while strengthening justice professionals' capacities to deliver services that empower individuals and communities.
5. **Participatory and evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation**. Improving justice data collection, governance and use; integrating justice impact assessments into policy and budget processes; and embedding regular evaluation and accountability.

Across these pillars, the Toolkit emphasises the importance of whole-of-state and whole-of-society approaches, robust data and evidence, and sustained investment in people-centred reform. It showcases practical tools and inspiring country examples to guide implementation.

By applying the Toolkit, countries can take concrete steps to respond to people's legal and justice needs, deliver fair outcomes and strengthen public trust in public institutions.

The Toolkit underscores that delivering people-centred justice is a practical necessity for resilient societies. By adopting a whole-of-state and whole-of-society approach, grounded in data and evidence, countries can reduce the justice gap, empower people to address their needs and enhance trust in democratic institutions. Implementing the OECD Recommendation through the actions outlined in this Toolkit will help ensure that justice systems contribute to better lives for all.

1 The OECD Recommendation and Implementation Toolkit on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems

The OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems* (hereafter "the Recommendation") was adopted by the OECD Council on 12 July 2023 and aims to support Adherents in advancing access to justice and implementing core elements of people-centred justice. Its development involved extensive discussions within and outside of the OECD, including direct contributions from government representatives; stakeholders from the public and private sectors; academia; and non-governmental, civil society and international organisations.

The Recommendation builds on the OECD Framework and Good Practice Principles for People-Centred Justice and all other OECD work in the area of access to justice since 2013. It enriches existing initiatives by countries, civil society and other international organisations in designing and delivering people-centred legal and justice services, and strengthening access to justice. It complements these international efforts through a whole-of-state and whole-of-society approach to access to justice that goes beyond the formal justice system and integrates the full range of legal and justice services. The Recommendation supports Adherents in adopting strategic approaches for people-centred justice and governance mechanisms for more responsive justice systems.

The Recommendation focuses on five main components that underpin people-centred justice systems:

1. establishing a people-centred purpose and culture in the justice system
2. designing and delivering people-centred services
3. establishing a governance infrastructure that enables people-centred justice
4. empowering people to make people-centred justice transformation happen
5. commitment to participatory and evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Each component outlines the key relevant concepts and provisions to provide greater detail and support to countries in enhancing access to justice through the adoption of more people-centred approaches. Overall, the Recommendation underscores fundamental values that are common to many countries in relation to the existence of an independent and transparent justice system based on the rule of law, and the importance of achieving broader well-being and growth. It also highlights the potential of investments in access to justice to become a cost-effective driver towards other social goals, such as improved health, housing and employment.

Purpose and rationale for the Toolkit

OECD Recommendations are adopted by the OECD Council and are not legally binding on Member countries. However, they represent a political commitment to the principles they contain and entail an expectation that Adherents will do their best to implement them. To assist countries and justice actors to implement the provisions of the Recommendation, the OECD Public Governance Committee has the responsibility to:

- support the exchange of information and experience on access to justice to facilitate the implementation of the Recommendation, through a multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary dialogue to continue to build the body of global best practices, activities and emerging trends on access to justice for all
- develop further guidance, indicators and an implementation Toolkit to support the implementation of this Recommendation, including through voluntary justice country reviews
- promote increased local, national and global harmonisation of the categories and methodologies for justice data collection to assess the implementation of this Recommendation and enable international exchanges, data sharing and co-operation, as appropriate, while accommodating local needs and avoiding duplication of data collection efforts.

The Toolkit for Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems (hereafter "the Toolkit") is a key part of the OECD strategy to support policymakers, justice actors and practitioners across all parts of the justice system to implement the Recommendation within their areas of operation and responsibility.

The Toolkit was developed over an 18-month period and has benefited from the sharing of information and country experiences – both successes and pitfalls – and the provision of good practice examples underpinning the elements and pillars of the Recommendation. More than 40 countries, non-governmental organisations, international agencies and experts have provided contributions to the Toolkit. Specific online workshops were conducted as part of the development of each of the pillars of the Toolkit, and these complemented insights gained in the annual OECD Roundtables on Access to Justice.

The Toolkit includes:

- a breakdown of each of the elements of the Recommendation into key "enablers" to better operationalise its elements
- accessible "checklists" to support justice systems to take action to implement the enablers (and thus the Recommendation), including:
  - "self-assessment" questions to enable users to check current progress and consider possible gaps and strategies
  - "key actions" that governments and actors across all justice systems might consider taking to implement specific parts of the Recommendation and enhance the people centricity of that part of the justice process
  - key "pitfalls to avoid" that have been identified through experiences of seeking to address access to justice in these domains
- good practice examples for each element from a diversity of countries that demonstrate how they are addressing reforms and transformations towards improving approaches to access to people-centred justice.

As with the Recommendation itself, the approach taken in all parts of the Toolkit – self-assessment questions, suggested key actions, and, where possible, good practice examples – is people centred.

How to use the Toolkit

The Toolkit is intended to be used “hand-in-hand” with the Recommendation and closely follows the structure of the Recommendation to facilitate its use. Governments and justice system actors seeking to implement the various elements of the Recommendation can consult the corresponding section of the Toolkit to find the respective components and elements of interest expanded further into the key enablers necessary to implement those elements. They can then:

- ask themselves the self-assessment questions to assess their current status or progress towards implementation
- consider the list of suggested key actions in relation to their jurisdiction’s situation and adapt the suggested actions accordingly to their own context
- take note of the pitfalls to avoid to inform their subsequent initiatives and actions
- study the good practice examples.

2 People-centred purpose and culture in the justice system

Transforming the justice system to one that places people and their legal and justice needs at the centre involves a whole-of-state and whole-of-society approach, high-level commitment, co-ordinated planning and aligned mandates across institutions. Additionally, data-driven service design, cross-sector collaboration and integrated justice policies contribute to making justice more accessible and effective for all. This chapter presents a set of self-assessment questions, proposed actions and examples to facilitate the establishment of a people-centred purpose and culture in the justice system, in support of the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems*.

Key provisions of the OECD Recommendation

Establish a people-centred purpose and culture in the justice system by:

- Securing commitment at the highest levels of government to promote people-centred justice, based on empirical data and evidence, through whole-of-state and whole-of-society approaches that are, where appropriate, co-ordinated with regional and local governments, justice stakeholders, civil society and service organisations, including those which provide legal aid, advocacy and human or social services contributing to legal empowerment.
- Publicly embracing the goal of ensuring equal access to justice for all, by defining shared goals for collaboration between different justice stakeholders and regularly monitoring progress towards these goals.
- Recognising and ensuring clear roles and prerogatives, and independence of justice system stakeholders in the context of mutual co-operation and co-ordination.
- Identifying, analysing and working to eradicate any possible explicit or implicit bias and discrimination within the justice system and in the outcomes it produces.
- Ensuring that public institutions implement approaches grounded in equity by removing barriers to access to justice, including target groups in vulnerable situations[1].

Securing commitment at the highest levels of government to promote people-centred justice

Why is it important?

If justice systems are to better meet people's legal and justice needs, they must be transformed to put people at the centre of their reforms and services. This means that every part of the justice system – from justice ministries and courts to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and police, prisons, consumer services, and the wide range of non-governmental justice organisations – should be guided by a clear goal of being people-centred. Achieving this requires justice planning, budgeting and service design that prioritise what matters most to the people they serve, in close co-ordination with ministries of finance and other central government bodies responsible for budget planning.

To bring about such a transformation across different justice stakeholders, an articulated and endorsed purpose or mission that places people at the centre of justice systems is essential. This purpose should begin at the highest levels of government – the orchestrators of systemic change. People-centred justice demands a whole-of-state approach, bringing in national, regional and local bodies as well as other sectors such as housing and health. It also demands that access to justice and people-centred approaches to justice be central to a country's policy and budget frameworks. This is only possible when the highest levels of government commit to a people-centred transformation of the justice system.

To be effective, a people-centred approach to justice must go beyond high-level political support. It also needs to be put into practice at every level of the justice system, guided by reliable data and evidence to help target services effectively and make the best use of resources.

Every part of the justice system, from courts to support services, should have its own clear and consistent mandate that aligns with the overall goal of putting people at the centre. These mandates should also be in line with those of other justice institutions to avoid fragmentation. Justice institutions should also co-ordinate their operations, including by sharing data wherever possible, to strengthen collaboration and improve outcomes for individuals.

Historically, justice systems have often been split between different areas of law and levels of government, and the need to protect judicial independence has sometimes made procedures and data collection inconsistent. Effective, people-centred services can only be possible with strong co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms that help harmonise planning, processes and data use across the entire justice system.

Priority checklist

A. Establish and endorse a people-centred purpose within the justice system, ensuring that it underpins all policies, strategies and frameworks.
B. Link the people-centred purpose to a rigorous and evidence-based understanding of people's legal and justice needs.
C. Conduct ongoing analysis using other data sources to complement the Legal Needs Survey (LNS), as well as data on what works to address legal needs.
D. Implement people-centred purpose consistently across all levels and institutions of the justice system.
E. Establish and maintain co-ordination systems and mechanisms among all government portfolios, levels of government and organisations in the justice chain, as well as with non-governmental justice stakeholders.

A. Establish and endorse a people-centred purpose within the justice system, ensuring that it underpins all policies, strategies and frameworks

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a clearly defined purpose for the justice system that prioritises a people-centred approach and is understood across justice institutions?
- Are there co-ordination mechanisms (e.g. inter-ministerial committees, national justice councils) that enable a whole-of-state approach to embedding people-centred justice into daily justice operations?
- Do justice system job descriptions, performance requirements, accountability and education frameworks include people-centred principles and key performance indicators?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop and implement clear and agreed-upon statements of a people-centred purpose that provide the necessary direction for the justice sector as a whole and are reflected in the whole-of-state policy, budgeting, training and performance systems.
- Review and align institutional mandates, job descriptions, performance requirements and accountability frameworks to be people-centred.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Treating the people-centred vision as symbolic rather than operational and implementing fragmented approaches by failing to co-ordinate across state institutions can undermine the effectiveness of efforts.
- Neglecting to align high-level statutory, institutional and operational mandates with a people-centred purpose can result in a missed opportunity to embed people-centred justice into daily operations.

Box 2.1. Good practice examples of people-centred purpose within the justice system

Canada: Securing commitment at the highest levels of government to promote people-centred justice

Canada's high-level commitment to people-centred justice is being fulfilled through several strategies, including:

1. Clear articulation at the highest level that access to justice is a fundamental value of the Canadian justice system.

The Department of Justice Canada has stated that access to justice is a "fundamental value" of the Canadian justice system. Justice Canada is working "to advance a people-centred approach to justice that puts consideration of the individual at the heart of justice responses by providing access to information, programs and policies".

2. "People-centred" access to justice-related commitment in the Government of Canada's submission to the 2021 Summit for Democracy.

Canada's submission to the 2021 Summit for Democracy emphasised its commitment to "support a people-centred approach to justice to advance equality, legal empowerment, and a better understanding of the legal needs of all the people of Canada, including indigenous peoples, racialized communities, and other traditionally underserved populations".

3. Establishment of the Access to Justice Secretariat.

In 2019, the Department of Justice Canada established an Access to Justice Secretariat, with a view to creating a focal point and advocating for efforts to provide equal access to justice for all individuals and communities. This dedicated unit reflects senior management's commitment to support and enhance the department's access to justice work and its role as lead department at the federal level to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). The Access to Justice Secretariat pursues its mandate through broad outreach and engagement within government and with external partners and stakeholders, as well as through leadership and support on substantive access to justice policy and research initiatives. This includes amplifying quantitative and qualitative access to justice research, such as the Canadian Legal Problems Survey and the National Justice Survey, to increase understanding of people's justice needs and experiences; promoting broad collaborative approaches within the justice system and across other disciplines and sectors; and contributing to the sharing of promising practices and lessons learnt among local, regional and international partners.

Justice Action Coalition Ministerial Statement 2023: Pivoting to people-centred justice

A joint commitment was made at the meeting of Justice Action Coalition country justice ministers in 2023, which was chaired by the Netherlands, for countries to "pivot" to people-centred justice, making 2023 a "turning point". This would involve putting people at the centre of justice systems and delivering fair, relevant and timely solutions to their justice problems that lead to fair outcomes and the respect human rights. This commitment also focused on the achievement of SDG 16's promise to provide access to justice for all.

Justice ministers agreed that the pivot to people-centred justice can include:

- gathering data on the justice people want and need and how they experience their justice journey
- co-creating strategies to become much better at resolving and preventing people's most common justice problems, ensuring gender equality in all responses

- setting shared goals for a range of justice actors and starting to implement strategies to achieve these goals
- investing at scale to transform justice as it is delivered to and experienced by people, reducing the number of unresolved justice problems, and creating fair outcomes.

Sources: Government of Canada (2021[1]; 2021[2]); Justice Action Coalition (2023[3]).

B. Link the people-centred purpose to a rigorous and evidence-based understanding of people's legal and justice needs

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a robust ongoing programme for assessing and monitoring people's legal needs?
- Are there mechanisms to regularly update and refine the understanding of legal and justice needs and link the updated information to the purpose of justice systems and individual institutions?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish an ongoing approach for determining people's legal and justice needs.
- Ensure that the ongoing development of a justice data ecosystem is guided by the data requirements to support a people-centred system) and is accompanied by infrastructure development and the establishment of data standards and protocols (see chapter on Design and delivery of people-centred legal and justice services and chapter on Participatory and evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation).

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to establish a systematic and ongoing approach to assess and monitor people's legal needs can result in outdated or incomplete information that fails to capture the full range of people's needs.
- Overlooking the importance of an integrated data ecosystem can lead to fragmented data collection and analysis and undermine the ability to plan and deliver services that are responsive to actual legal needs.
- Focusing solely on initial data collection without establishing mechanisms for regular updates puts the justice system at risk of being unresponsive to emerging and evolving legal and justice needs.

Box 2.2. Good practice examples of understanding people's legal and justice needs

Colombia: Developing a people-centred justice data ecosystem to support people-centred purpose and achievements

Colombia continues to build upon progress made in developing a data ecosystem to support the implementation of people-centred justice approaches, beginning with the assessment of legal needs through a Legal Needs Survey (LNS). Following the 2016 LNS, Colombia has continued its programme of legal needs assessment through a legal needs component in a broader regular national survey that focuses primarily on crime victimisation. These modules have focused on the incidence of justice problems over individuals' lives, the paths individuals took to resolve their problems, the results from these paths and the access to legal assistance. This modular approach has helped to better understand legal needs and their interlinkages with victimisation.

In addition to its ongoing programme of legal needs assessment, Colombia is implementing an active strategy to improve the collection, analysis and use of administrative data to support people-centred justice. The National Administrative Department of Statistics, working with the national statistics office, is using a range of methodologies to enhance current and develop new administrative data to contribute to the data ecosystem to support people-centred justice.

United Kingdom: Development and use of data to enable the rule of law to be upheld and provide access to justice for all

HM Courts & Tribunals Service released a Data Strategy in December 2021 as part of its work to improve data across the justice system and to support both the government-wide national Data Strategy and reform across the Ministry of Justice. It is based on the understanding that "the Data Strategy will deliver significant benefits, from improving our decisions because we better understand our users and have a stronger evidence base, to improving our operational effectiveness because we can optimise processes through performance analytics, identify and resolve blockers and automate low value processes." Through the Data Strategy, HM Courts & Tribunals Service is seeking to:

- improve its data collection processes and develop a more proactive culture of engaging with data across the whole business
- understand the pathways people take through the courts and tribunals service and provide insight on how it can continue to improve and drive performance.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service's plan is that by improving the data and evidence base it can:

- use user insight to improve operational efficiency
- use data and evaluation to drive better user engagement
- use data to ensure "reasonable adjustments" for individual users
- provide timely evaluations of reform projects
- support the Ministry of Justice to make informed policy changes
- link data across government departments.

Sources: Byrom, Piccinin-Barbieri and Well (2024[4]); DANE (2023[5]); OECD/Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (2023[6]); HM Courts & Tribunals Service (2021[7]); Government of Colombia (2025[8]).

C. Conduct ongoing analysis using other data sources to complement the Legal Needs Survey

Self-assessment questions

- Are there specifically targeted assessment strategies and analyses undertaken to reach those who might be missed by the LNS, such as indigenous populations, prisoners and older people in care facilities?
- Are available data sources, including official census data, service delivery data, court data, police data, legal aid data and other relevant public service data sets, used to complement and deepen the understanding of legal and justice needs?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop and implement strategies to complement the results from the LNS by integrating data from other sources.
- Design analysis strategies to engage with and improve understanding of particular target groups' legal and justice needs.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to integrate diverse data sources – such as court records, demographic and criminal justice data, and service delivery information – into justice planning can lead to overlooking key insights and missing important population groups.
- Failing to conduct in-depth qualitative analysis can lead to the exclusion of marginalised, disadvantaged, hard-to-reach or other target groups that the LNS alone may not adequately capture.

Box 2.3. Good practice examples of in-depth analysis of legal and justice needs of target groups

Canada: Complementing the Canadian Legal Problem Survey

To complement the Canadian Legal Problem Survey, a series of qualitative studies were also undertaken to explore and report on the experiences of specific populations in different parts of Canada who have experienced a serious legal problem. These projects, which aim to capture the voices and perceptions of individuals in contact with the justice system, have contributed to the overall understanding of the access to justice gap in Canada. The groups targeted for focused qualitative research concerning serious legal problems have included:

- older adults in Ontario
- trans, two-spirit and non-binary people in Canada
- LGBTQ people in selected regions
- immigrants in British Columbia and Ontario
- the Metis community in the North-West Territories
- people with disabilities in selected regions of Canada
- urban African people in Quebec
- 16-30-year-old members of the Black community.

Sweden: Mapping of justice needs for vulnerable communities – Women and gender equality (GBV), LGBTQI, and children and youth

In Sweden, it is common practice for the government to assign specific mandates to various authorities to investigate and analyse legal and justice-related issues. These assignments often focus on particular groups or themes and complement legal needs surveys by identifying gaps, challenges and areas for policy development. Some recent examples include:

- the government's strategic work on children's rights
- the Swedish Gender Equality Agency on men's violence against women, other domestic violence, and honour-related violence and oppression against children and adults belonging to national minorities
- an assignment to the Swedish Defence Research Agency on how criminal networks affect children and young people in digital environments
- a mission to contribute to the development of crime prevention
- an assignment to map the vulnerability of LGBTQI people to intimate partner violence and analyse the need for interventions.

Sources: (Government of Canada, 2024[9]); (Government Offices of Sweden, 2025[10]); (Eriksson, E. and A. Blessing, 2018[11]); (Sweden Herald, 2025[12]); (Government of Sweden, 2024[13]); (Government Offices of Sweden, 2024[14]); (Government of Sweden, 2025[15]).

D. Implement people-centred purpose consistently across all levels and institutions of the justice system

Self-assessment questions

- Does each justice institution have a clear mission or mandate that prioritises a people-centred approach?
- Are people-centred principles and requirements included as mandatory elements within education and training programmes, including professional legal training requirements and the ongoing institutional staff training within each justice institution?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Review justice institutions' and services' roles, mandates and missions to ensure they are people-centred.
- Consider developing standard forms of mandates for various institutions and services to ensure both consistency and the effective and timely implementation of the mandates.
- Ensure mandates require and empower the collection and/or analysis of people-centred justice data and the implementation of people-centred planning processes for services.
- Develop a process to monitor the effectiveness and consistency of the implementation of the people-centred justice vision at all levels of the justice system.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to secure buy-in across all levels and actors of the justice system can undermine the consistency and effectiveness of people-centred transformation efforts.
- Failing to appropriately staff and support people-centred role/mandate transformations could undermine the implementation of people-centred justice systems.

Box 2.4. Good practice examples of implementing people-centred purpose

Canada: Implementing commitment at all levels of the justice system

In seeking to implement its commitment to access to justice and a people-centred approach, Canada is employing a number of strategies to ensure that the commitment is adhered to at all levels, including the:

- creation and operation of the Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters, with both high-profile leadership and broad stakeholder involvement to implement concrete actions, including sharing practices supporting people-centred justice, supporting and promoting research, and seeking concrete actions to implement people-centred justice
- training of lawyers and judges in relation to people-centred justice
- training of legislative drafters on people-centred justice, and in particular drafting of legislation incorporating the principles of people-centred justice.

United Kingdom: Implementing people-centred approaches across courts and tribunals at all levels

In 2016, the United Kingdom's HM Courts & Tribunals Service began modernising courts and tribunals to ensure greater accessibility, availability and efficiency of justice services for citizens, particularly those from vulnerable communities. In line with the *OECD Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems*, the programme was informed by citizens' insights and specifies that the perspectives and needs of communities, particularly marginalised and underserved communities, should be placed at the core of design, delivery, implementation and evaluation of services both within and beyond the justice system.

The reform programme is made up of over 50 projects, generally bringing modern technology and new ways of working to courts and tribunals in the United Kingdom. While user satisfaction with modernised services remains high, HM Courts & Tribunals Service is committed to further improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of justice services.

Sources: OECD (2023[16]); HM Courts & Tribunals Service (2025[17]); Government of Canada (2024[18]).

E. Establish and maintain co-ordination systems and mechanisms (also see below on co-ordination while ensuring clear roles and prerogatives and the independence of justice stakeholders)

Self-assessment questions

- Do the roles and mandates of justice system organisations both preserve the essential levels of independence where required and facilitate sufficient consistency and collaboration to support a whole-of-state approach to the delivery of people-centred justice?
- Have mechanisms and institutions with sufficient authority and capacity been established to effectively co-ordinate planning and service delivery across justice institutions?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish and mandate appropriate collaborative planning processes to ensure justice institutions can plan and co-ordinate services efficiently to ensure people's diverse and often multiple needs are met.

- Establish appropriate protocols, agreements and other mechanisms to facilitate both justice system-wide, whole-of-state and whole-of-society collaborative planning.
- Establish appropriate policies and processes to allow for the sharing of data to inform planning and service delivery processes while protecting privacy and maintaining necessary independence where appropriate.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to establish shared goals and robust co-ordination mechanisms across the justice stakeholders can result in fragmented efforts, inefficiencies and unsustainable outcomes for people seeking justice.
- Neglecting to implement clear policies, processes and secure data-sharing protocols can undermine integrated planning and service delivery, thus potentially failing to respond to people's actual needs.

Box 2.5. Good practice examples of co-ordination mechanisms

Australia: Co-ordinating government and non-governmental justice and legal services

There are four main types of legal assistance services that receive public funding in Australia:

1. Legal aid commissions are independent statutory authorities established in each state and territory and are funded by both national and state/territory governments.
2. Community legal centres are small, independent, community-based, not-for-profit organisations that assist disadvantaged people in need of legal assistance. Community legal centres generally receive funding from national and/or state/territory governments and other sources. Most of the approximately 200 community legal centres are "generalist" centres while many target specific vulnerable groups.
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services provide culturally competent legal services for indigenous Australians. They are independent, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and receive predominantly national government funding (with some state/territory government and other funding).
4. Family Violence Prevention Legal Services provide legal and other support to indigenous victim survivors of family violence. Sixteen such organisations provide services in 31 rural and remote locations across Australia. Funding is predominately from the national government.

Improving the cohesion and co-ordination of Australia's legal assistance landscape continues to be a priority for federal and state governments. The system is co-ordinated through a range of strategies and mechanisms, including:

- A National Strategic Framework for Legal Assistance which encourages a unified and co-ordinated approach by governments and the legal assistance sector to keep the justice system within reach and help focus finite resources towards areas with the greatest legal need. It also sets out a shared aspirational objective for all Commonwealth, state and territory government-funded legal assistance.
- The National Access to Justice Partnership (2025-2030) is the latest evolution of the agreement, representing improved cohesion and co-ordination between legal assistance sectors and governments across all jurisdictions.
- Mandatory Collaborative Service Planning has been in operation since 2015 to ensure information is shared and progress towards common goals is achieved.

- A National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual was first published in 2014 and continually evolves to increase coherence and commonality across the justice data ecosystem within the legal assistance sector.

Canada: Co-ordination with justice stakeholders

Canada is a federal country with legal jurisdiction responsibilities distributed between national and province/territory governments. It has a range of legal service providers, governmental and non-governmental, and faces similar co-ordination challenges among different justice stakeholders.

Canada's Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters (hereafter the "Action Committee") was established in 2007 by the former Chief Justice of Canada to work towards improved access to justice for people in Canada. This broad-based national network includes representation from provincial and territorial access to justice committees, justice institutions, government, and equity-seeking groups.

In 2013, the Action Committee released its foundational report, *A Roadmap for Change*, which established guiding principles and a set of nine Justice Development Goals as a framework for action. Since the report's publication, the Action Committee has served as a leader and convening voice to promote these principles and goals across the justice system. The Action Committee's mission is to promote multi-systemic research and innovation that will help people better understand and solve their problems and to act as a catalyst for a people-centred, and broadly shared vision of access to civil and family justice in Canada and internationally.

Colombia: Co-ordination across jurisdictions

Colombia is introducing a new law that aims to establish co-ordination mechanisms between the national judicial system and the indigenous special jurisdiction. It is a declaration for reaffirming indigenous rights and autonomy in administering their own justice, addressing a long-standing constitutional mandate and historical debt. It seeks to resolve legal uncertainty and prevent issues like double jeopardy for individuals. The law is built on a number of guiding principles, defined competences, support mechanisms and goals to facilitate the effective operation of the two different justice systems in a way that is appropriate for individuals.

Sources: Australian Attorney-General's Department (2019[19]; 2021[20]; 2024[21]); Australian Federal Relations Secretariat (2025[22]); Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters (2025[23]); (OECD, 2023[24]).

Publicly embracing the goal of ensuring equal access to justice for all

Why is it important

Over the past decades, analysis has shown that legal and justice needsare widespread and rarely occur in isolation. These issues often span multiple legal domains, such as civil, criminal and family law, and are frequently entangled with non-legal problems like health, housing and disability. As such, delivering effective and equitable access to justice requires holistic, joined-up services that can respond to the full complexity of individuals' needs, rather than siloed or narrowly defined interventions.

To meet people's legal and justice needs effectively, justice services must be co-ordinated, with agencies working collaboratively toward shared, people-centred goals. These goals should be clearly defined, publicly available, and embedded within justice organisations' strategic and operational plans. Achieving this level of alignment requires a sector-wide shift from institution-focused thinking to approaches that prioritise service users' real-life circumstances and capabilities.

Historically, justice systems have been fragmented, with limited collaboration beyond upholding the general principle of the rule of law. While independence, confidentiality and data protection remain essential, it is often administrative and structural traditions that hinder co-ordination, and not the principles themselves. A cultural shift is needed to encourage collaborative planning, information sharing and the development of transparent monitoring mechanisms. This will support a more unified, people-centred justice system that delivers better outcomes and greater public trust.

Priority checklist

A. Appropriate shared, public goals developed and published in relevant strategic/operational plans and documents.
B. Establish mechanisms and processes to regularly monitor progress towards shared goals for collaboration.

A. Appropriate shared, public goals developed and published in relevant strategic/ operational plans and documents

Self-assessment questions

- Do key strategic and operational justice plans include clearly defined shared goals and objectives for collaboration across institutions and services? Do these plans adopt people-centred approaches?
- Are these system-level shared goals reflected clearly in justice institutions' plans and services?
- Are there effective mechanisms in place to implement collaborative planning and information sharing consistent with achieving the shared goals?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish common, overarching, measurable, system-wide goals and objectives that apply to and actively engage all justice institutions, linking to the outcomes and responding to legal needs.
- Make the goals and objectives publicly available.
- Support and empower institutions and services to effectively implement the system-wide shared goals.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to establish common, people-centred goals across the justice system risks fragmentation and inconsistent service delivery that does not reflect legal and justice needs or desired outcomes.
- Failing to ensure that goals are measurable, transparent and widely communicated reduces accountability, public trust and opportunities for meaningful engagement and evaluation.
- Failing to resource, support and guide institutions in aligning with system-wide goals limits implementation, weakens co-ordination, and undermines long-term impact and sustainability.

Box 2.6. Good practice examples of developing and publishing access to justice goals

Australia: National Strategic Framework for Legal Assistance

Australia maintains a flexible, yet complex system of government-funded legal assistance services. Improving cohesion and co-ordination of Australia's legal assistance landscape continues to be a priority for federal and state governments. The system is co-ordinated through a range of strategies and mechanisms, under the guidance of the National Strategic Framework.

The National Strategic Framework encourages a unified and co-ordinated approach by state, territory and national governments and the legal assistance sector to keep the justice system within reach in Australia and help focus finite resources towards areas with the greatest legal need.

It sets out a shared aspirational objective for all Commonwealth, state and territory government-funded legal assistance. This is to further a national, integrated system of legal assistance that is focused on keeping the justice system within reach, maintaining the rule of law and maximising service delivery within the available resources. Within this system, legal assistance services should be delivered in a high-quality and culturally appropriate manner.

Specific targeted outcomes require collaboration and information sharing to deliver people-centred outcomes, including:

- Legal assistance services deliver complementary services, joined up where appropriate, that are focused on meeting people's legal needs.
- Where appropriate and practical, legal assistance services collaborate with other legal and other services to assist them in identifying legal problems, making appropriate legal referrals, and identifying and addressing the systemic causes of legal problems.
- Legal assistance services focus on identified areas of legal need, including through collaborative service planning.
- Sector planning and service delivery are evidence-based and informed by accurate, reliable and consistent data from relevant sources, including legal need, service delivery and demographic data.
- Governments and legal assistance providers share, where appropriate, information and data relevant to the delivery of services and legal need.

Canada: Nine Justice Development Goals

The Canadian Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters adopted Canada's Justice Development Goals to align the work of organisations across the country. These nine goals identify the challenges facing the system, showcase the work being done to address them and offer a way for everyone to join the conversation. The goals are:

1. address everyday legal problems
2. meet legal needs
3. make courts work better
4. improve family justice
5. work together
6. build capability
7. innovate
8. analyse and learn
9. improve funding strategies.

Sweden: Strategic Plan for Co-ordination within the Digitalisation of the Justice System

Sweden's Strategic Plan for Co-ordination within the Digitalisation of the Justice System (2023-2027) sets the goal of strengthening efficiency and innovation through deeper co-operation among justice authorities. Efficiency is to be achieved by co-ordinating processes with shared needs, while innovation will be promoted through joint development efforts and systematic environmental scanning. The plan outlines three sub-goals:

1. Explore expanding co-operation beyond the criminal justice process where there is clear need and demand, allowing flexible participation by relevant authorities.
2. Develop strategies that align co-operation and system architecture with national and EU digital initiatives, including Sweden's common administrative digital infrastructure (led by the Agency for Digital Government) and EU projects such as e-CODEX.
3. Establish structures for environmental scanning and knowledge sharing on new technologies and innovations, ensuring that insights and solutions developed by one authority can benefit others. The Swedish Courts Administration also plays a key role in fostering innovation to improve efficiency and strengthen public trust in the justice system.

Sources: Australian Attorney-General's Department (2019[19]; 2024[21]); Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters (2024[25]); (Council of Attorneys-General, 2019[26]).

B. Mechanisms and processes established to regularly monitor progress towards shared goals for collaboration

Self-assessment questions

- Are there systems and procedures in place across the justice system to monitor progress towards the achievement of the system's shared goals?
- Are the monitoring systems and mechanisms centrally governed or is the information centrally collected to understand the extent to which current services meet legal needs?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish mechanism(s) for centralised monitoring of progress towards the achievement of the goals while also allowing for institutions to self-assess.
- Identify key indicators to facilitate both the measurement of progress towards achieving shared goals and self-assessment by institutions and services.
- Ensure institutions and staff have the necessary skills to undertake monitoring.
- Encourage the dissemination of the data on effective implementation that results from the monitoring process.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to develop a centralised system for monitoring progress towards goals for collaboration can reduce incentives, especially in resource-constrained justice system environments.

Ensuring clear roles and prerogatives and the independence of justice stakeholders in the context of mutual co-operation and co-ordination

Why is it important?

The independence of the judiciary is fundamental for an effective justice system. While other justice actors may not be vested with the same degree of independence, it remains essential that they have clearly defined roles and prerogatives which safeguard their professional integrity and ability to act without undue influence. At the same time, independence should not detract from the need for collaboration and co-operation. For example, sharing appropriately anonymised and disaggregated service-user data can highlight gaps in service delivery and facilitate the planning and allocation of resources to meet the needs of different groups of people. Client satisfaction and outcome data can allow justice planners to increase their knowledge of strategies and services that work best for certain legal and justice needsin particular contexts, and plan and fund services thanks to this knowledge. A balance must be found between retaining the independence of actors for whom it is critical and encouraging collaboration to achieve better people-centred outcomes where this does not impinge on that independence.

Priority checklist

A. Balance between essential independence of selected justice system institutions and the needed system-wide harmonisation achieved through mutual co-operation and co-ordination (also see above on broader co-ordination systems and mechanisms)

Self-assessment questions

- Are the key roles and functions that require independence clearly defined so that independence is protected where needed? Are there safeguards in place to ensure the independence of justice stakeholders, such as the judiciary?
- Have effective co-ordination and collaboration processes been established to optimise people-centred justice delivery while respecting essential judicial independence?
- Are appropriate data protection and anonymisation protocols and systems in place to facilitate both collaboration/co-ordination and necessary independence?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Ensure that appropriate safeguards are implemented to protect the independence of the judiciary and other key justice institutions – depending on the context.
- Consider establishing system-wide mechanisms to facilitate collaboration, harmonisation and information sharing while maintaining confidence in the preservation of essential independence.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to involve all justice stakeholders in people-centred reforms due to concerns about independence overlooks valuable opportunities to improve user experiences and address legal needs.
- Failing to promote collaboration within appropriate boundaries limits the justice system's ability to co-ordinate services and improve the user journey across institutions.
- Failing to establish safeguards that uphold judicial and institutional independence while enabling collaboration risks either compromising core principles or missing critical reform opportunities.

Identifying, analysing and working to eradicate unwarranted disparities

Why is it important?

Legal needs, service delivery and criminal prosecution data consistently reveal that some target groups (such as victims of domestic violence, people with disabilities, indigenous people and others) are particularly vulnerable to legal and justice needs and are often less capable of resolving them. This also includes children, who require special safeguards and care to meet their basic and specific needs.

Persistent exposure to legal and justice needs may stem from unequal outcomes produced by long-standing procedures that were not built around ensuring access to justice for all. To tackle this and similar challenges, it is important to establish mechanisms to identify and rectify areas of potential concern.

Given the common justice systemic inertia, deliberate and planned strategies to address identified disparities will be essential, and these initiatives should be accompanied by monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the intended outcomes are being achieved.

Priority checklist

A. Define an ongoing process for identifying disparities in justice system institutions.
B. Implement specific actions to eradicate disparities in justice system institutions.

A. Define an ongoing process for identifying disparities in justice system institutions

Self-assessment questions

- Are there effective mechanisms in place to ensure engagement with groups of people who have been historically excluded from justice policymaking processes and other target groups?
- Are there mechanisms that incorporate people's views, satisfaction levels and outcomes to assess disparities within the justice system?
- Are there mechanisms to show levels of service use (and non-use) among groups of people and thus may suggest potential disparities? Are there other mechanisms in place to assess disparities within the system?
- Are legal regulations, institutional policies and practices regularly reviewed to ensure that professional rules and regulations do not inadvertently contribute to disparities?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish self-assessment processes and independent mechanisms for identifying disparities at both the institutional and the system-wide level.
- Regularly collect data to compare service use among different demographic groups to ensure it is commensurate with the relative size and legal and justice needs of each group.
- Ensure justice institutions and services engage with target groups, including those historically excluded from justice policymaking.
- Regularly review legal professional regulations and institutional practices to ensure such regulations do not inadvertently contribute to disparities and reduce access to justice.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to move beyond internal self-assessment to identify disparities risks missed opportunities for reform.

- Failing to systematically listen to justice service users – particularly from target groups – may allow inequities to persist unchallenged.
- Failing to secure the support of legal institutions for reviewing and reforming regulations and practices can undermine efforts to address systemic barriers and ensure access to justice.

Box 2.7. Good practice example of using data to eliminate disparities in the justice system

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland: Leveraging data to better meet the needs of clients and inform strategic resource allocation decisions in the United States

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland uses internal client and case data and external regional socio-economic data to better serve its clients and allocate its limited resources in a way that maximises the benefit provided to its client community. Its use of data includes:

- tracking progress toward achieving strategic goals
- measuring intake and case volume and associated legal problems to better understand the links between challenges faced by low-income people and the legal problems they face
- tracking the levels of legal services it provides to better understand the levels of service required by specific legal problems
- identifying trends in the cases and clients it cannot serve
- analysing client demographic trends in comparison to regional demographic trends for low-income people to ensure that its client population is representative of its regional poverty population and that it is not missing any particular groups
- tracking client survey feedback regarding the accessibility and effectiveness of its services and communications
- forming partnerships with organisations that have their own robust data regarding low-income people, with a long-term plan to share data with these organisations to enable causal and predictive analyses to inform decisions about legal services.

Importantly, this use of data analysis allows comparing service data with expected legal need data, revealing potential biases, barriers or discrimination impeding service engagement and delivery. For example, from 2008 to 2010, despite a proportional demographic growth of Hispanic and Spanish-speaking people in the region, and a 50% increase in intakes overall, there was a substantial drop (around 10%) in the number of Hispanic and Spanish-speaking people receiving services. In response, through hiring additional bilingual staff, translating material into Spanish, engaging translators and conducting targeted outreach efforts, the decrease was more than reversed.

Source: Legal Aid Society of Cleveland (2011[27]).

B. Implement specific actions to eradicate disparities in justice system institutions

Self-assessment questions

- Are there system-wide and institutional strategies to implement initiatives to reduce or eliminate disparities?
- Are there strategies to ensure that target groups have knowledge of and make use of relevant legal and justice services?
- Are there monitoring and evaluation efforts to assess the effectiveness of these strategies?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Ensure that the justice system workforce is demographically representative of the population it serves.
- Actively engage target groups to ensure that they are aware of and can access fair justice processes and services.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives, including through indicators such as service access, etc.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to complement reforms with targeted outreach and awareness-raising risks low uptake of improved services by people, and in particular target groups.

Box 2.8. Good practice examples of child-friendly approaches in the justice system

Australia: Child-friendly approaches in New South Wales

Dedicated Children's Court. When children confront the criminal justice system in New South Wales, they do so through the specialist Children's Court (generally with a specialist children's court magistrate with expertise and experience in dealing with children and children's matters) rather than the more general magistrate's court.

The allocation of an independent children's solicitor. In care and protection proceedings in New South Wales, which concern the potential removal of a child from the family environment, the children concerned are provided with an independent, specialist children's solicitor to represent their interests (separate from their parents'/carers' and government's interests) during the proceedings.

Norway: Barnahus model

Developed in the Nordic countries, the Barnahus (Children's Houses) model represents an example of an integrated child-centred, multidisciplinary and inter-institutional response for children who are victims of sexual, physical and/or domestic abuse. With the aim to avoid secondary victimisation of children, it brings together relevant authorities and services in one place to provide the child with a co-ordinated response of the justice and child protection authorities.

The Norwegian Barnahus model primarily focuses on police-reported cases of violence and sexual abuse involving children under the age of 16 and other vulnerable victims or witnesses.

The Barnahus staff co-ordinate and facilitate police interviews with children, assess their need for psycho-social support and provide short-term treatment where necessary. In 2015, amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act ("Straffeprosessloven") introduced new regulations requiring facilitated interviews at Children's Houses for children under 16 and other particularly vulnerable victims and witnesses in cases involving sexual abuse, physical violence, homicide or female genital mutilation. The Barnahus also provide information to victims, especially those with disabilities, regarding their rights and eligibility for compensation.

There are now 11 Barnahus spaces across Norway, which provide facilities for the hearings (police interviews) and other services to support child witnesses.

Poland: Child-friendly approaches

Child-friendly interrogation rooms. In Poland the interrogation of child victims or juvenile witnesses of crime in certain types of cases takes place in a special procedure in "friendly interrogation rooms", which

are rooms intended and specially adapted for conducting interrogations of children. These rooms allow the hearing to be conducted in conditions friendly to the person being questioned (a child or another victim acting as a witness), ensuring the greatest possible comfort and a sense of security. By 2024, there were 347 friendly hearing rooms in common courts.

In matters where it is not possible or appropriate for a parent to represent a child under his/her parental authority, the court appoints a child representative (Article 98 of the Family and Guardianship Code). The child representative may be an advocate or legal advisor with special knowledge of cases similar to those for which the child's representation is required, or who has completed training on the principles of child representation, the rights or needs of the child.

Specialised juvenile justice and child-focused court procedures. Pursuant to the Civil Procedure Code, family and juvenile divisions have been established in district courts for dealing with juvenile justice and child matters. For juvenile justice matters, the focus is the support and rehabilitation of child offenders. In accordance with the legal provisions, the juvenile judiciary is obliged to thoroughly investigate the reasons for each juvenile's entry into the criminal justice system. In relation to civil and family matters, emphasis is placed on learning and taking into account the child's perspectives and following procedures consistent with the requirements of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), such as limiting the hearings faced by children, using closed sessions and appropriate child-friendly premises.

Türkiye: The judicial interview room

The judicial interview room is a designated space within a courthouse that enables children and other groups in vulnerable circumstances to feel safe and thus more willing to provide the information the courts need to conduct fair trials. The room also helps prevent secondary victimisation (threats, abuse, stigmatisation), safeguards the right of children and other users to be heard, and ensures that their best interests are protected.

United Kingdom: Toolkit to assist judges to engage with children

Writing to children is one important way of ensuring that children have the opportunity to participate in family court proceedings. A child's right to participate in proceedings and to have the final decision communicated to them in a way they can understand is enshrined in international and domestic legislation and guidance – as a way of both informing welfare-based decisions and upholding children's rights and access to justice see (OECD, 2023[28]). To support the judiciary, the United Kingdom has co-developed a toolkit that serves as a reference point for engaging with children in an effective manner. The toolkit has been co-developed with input from children and young people, judges, researchers and academics, social workers, clinical psychologists, communication experts, and others who work with children and the courts.

The toolkit includes:

- a summary of the evidence on children's experiences of court proceedings and how judges writing to children can influence these experiences
- a discussion of the different purposes served by writing to children in different circumstances
- a summary of key things to consider when writing to children.

Examples of language, tone and format drawn from previous letters judges have written to children and a list of published judgments serve as examples.

Sources: Justice for Children in Turkey (2014[29]); Mulherin (2016[30]); Legal Aid NSW (2025[31]); CEPEJ (2024[32]); (Government of Poland, 2022[33]); (OECD, 2023[28]).

Ensuring that public institutions remove barriers to access to justice for all

Why is it important?

Justice institutions operating as part of a people-centred justice system should ensure their services are genuinely accessible to all, including those people and groups that do not currently use the service.

They should systematically work to identify and remove barriers facing existing and potential users from all sections of society. Barriers to accessing legal and justice services can include distance, cost, societal norms, inconvenient hours, difficulty making an appointment, inadequate disability access or a lack of interpretation services. More significantly, barriers to accessing services are often linked to the individual's legal capacity (including their knowledge of what to do, their awareness of the available services and their preparedness to take action), which is, in turn, impacted by the complexity of the lives of many disadvantaged people and other target groups (also see Chapter Empowering people).

Priority checklist

A. Establish mechanisms to identify target client groups, measure their access to and use of services, and identify key barriers to access.
B. Develop and implement strategies to remove identified barriers and provide equitable access.

A. Establish mechanisms to identify target client groups, measure their access to and use of services, and identify key barriers to access

Self-assessment questions

- Do individual institutions have effective processes to determine whether their target groups are represented in their user base in representative numbers?
- Are there mechanisms to understand levels of service use (and non-use) and possible barriers preventing some groups to access services – both at the system-wide and institutional level?
- Do institutions use engagement strategies with existing clients and target groups to identify obstacles and barriers to effective access to services and outcomes?
- Are laws and regulations regularly reviewed to ensure they do not inadvertently create barriers to accessing justice?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Compare actual service use by demographic and legal subject matter type with expected use based on the composition of the population and legal-needs data to identify under-represented groups and issues.
- Monitor client satisfaction and outcomes that includes identifying barriers and obstacles faced by clients when using the particular service or problem resolution pathway.
- Establish processes to engage with under-represented groups to identify the barriers they may be facing.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to conduct systematic analysis of access barriers can limit understanding of who is being excluded and why, thus weakening the foundation for people-centred justice strategies.

- Failing to engage with both justice service users and the broader population can overlook critical perspectives from those with unmet legal needs.

Box 2.9. Good practice examples of measuring access of target groups

Australia: Measuring legal need and legal capability

Legal needs surveys (LNS) have proven themselves to be an essential research tool for providing insight into the legal needs of the whole population, the different vulnerabilities to legal problems of different demographic groups, the action people take (or do not take) when confronting legal problems, how their problems are resolved (if they are in fact resolved) and other issues. The particular challenges and barriers different people face in accessing justice services are not just linked to cost, geography and remoteness, disability and other factors limiting access but also to individual legal capability, which relates to their knowledge, skills and attributes required to decide whether and how to use the law and legal processes.

Colombia: Local justice committees and identifying barriers to justice

As part of a broader programme for "Humanising and Restorative Justice for Victims", support is provided for local justice committees as spaces for inter-institutional co-ordination and community participation to identify and overcome barriers to justice, strengthening restorative, community-based and formal justice. The overall programme also involved components such as commissioning studies focused on people-centred justice for victims of the armed conflict, especially those experiencing gender-based or sexual violence, from a difference-based and restorative perspective, including for women and LGBTIQ+ individuals from ethnic groups.

Denmark: Using longitudinal data to identify vulnerable groups

Danish researchers used nationwide registry data on individuals born between 1980 and 1991 and then followed up between 1998 and 2021. Longitudinal data on more than 500 000 individuals from birth to age 40 allowed identifying early childhood adversity and then the subsequent use of health, social security and justice system services. In brief, the data revealed that individuals who experienced high childhood adversity were far more likely to require hospitalisation, social security or be convicted of a crime. Apart from identifying a particularly vulnerable group with high levels of use of justice services and thus higher legal need, it demonstrates the linkages between vulnerability to legal and justice problems and vulnerability to health, employment and other problems. In other words, quality data from other public services such as health can provide valuable insight into those likely to be vulnerable to legal and justice problems.

United Kingdom: Using enhanced data collection to understand vulnerable court users and the barriers they face

HM Courts & Tribunal Service recognises that needing to use court or tribunal services is daunting for anyone, but that it can be an even greater challenge for the most vulnerable in society. Its ongoing Action Plan is focused on how HM Courts & Tribunal Service supports vulnerable users and how courts and tribunals can be made accessible to everyone.

HM Courts & Tribunal Service is "committed to making sure we're listening to people using our services who are more vulnerable, and our partners who support vulnerable groups. We're working to adapt and improve our services to meet their needs. We're working with our Ministry of Justice colleagues and other government departments to make sure we provide the right level of support."

An important aspect of the Action Plan is the use of enhanced data collection to identify the impacts of changes on vulnerable users, as well as to learn more about the needs of its users and identify the key barriers to access they face. For example, strategies include:

- To help gain a better understanding of the people who use HM Courts & Tribunal Service's services, it is collecting protected characteristics data (that is, individual characteristic/ demographic and case data) from multiple departments of the justice system.
- Access to justice assessments across services including Online Civil Money Claims, Social Security and Child Support, Divorce, and Probate. These assessments help identify common barriers to accessing justice, what causes these barriers and what might help break them down.

Sources: HM Courts & Tribunals Service (2023[34]; 2024[35]); Victoria Law Foundation (2024[36]); WJP (2019[37]); IJRS, PBHI, LBH APIK Association and YLBHI (2023[38]).

B. Develop and implement strategies to break down identified barriers and provide equitable access

Self-assessment questions

- Are there strategies to break down identified barriers operating at the both system-wide and institutional levels?
- Is there a process for "learning" and retaining knowledge of key barriers and what strategies "work" most effectively in overcoming them?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish system-wide and institutional strategies to identify and implement targeted and effective approaches and initiatives to reduce or eliminate barriers.
- Through ongoing community education, communication and other programmes, ensure that disadvantaged people and other target groups are aware of the relevant services to address their specific issues (also see Chapter on Empowering people).

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to develop strategies to break down barriers can result in fragmented efforts and leave many access barriers unaddressed.
- Failing to adopt a comprehensive and targeted approach to breaking down access barriers can limit the effectiveness of reforms and undermine access to justice.

Box 2.10. Good practice example of breaking down barriers to access to justice

Colombia: The Strategic Plan to Overcome Barriers to Access to Justice (PESBAJ)

The Strategic Plan to Overcome Barriers to Access to Justice (PESBAJ) was developed in accordance with relevant 2024 legislation which established an obligation to design an instrument aimed at identifying and overcoming the barriers that limit access to justice, particularly for rural populations, groups in situations of vulnerability and persons with disabilities. The Superior Council of the Judiciary, through the Research Division of the Unit for Development and Statistical Analysis, formulated the PESBAJ as a strategic instrument that articulates institutional, technological and organizational actions, in order to move towards a more inclusive and accessible justice.

The PESBAJ has a long-term horizon (2025-2038), aligning it with the key planning instruments of the Judicial Branch. The plan is organized into five strategic axes: Analysis and research; Organizational culture; Physical and technological infrastructure; Institutional optimisation and judicial management; and Legal empowerment. Each axis incorporates strategies aimed at reducing institutional and contextual barriers, strengthening institutional capacities, improving judicial management and incorporating differential, intersectional and territorial approaches in serving users of the justice system.

While not yet formally adopted by the Superior Council of the Judiciary, its final development and refinement is based on research, statistical analysis and planning, and will represent an intentional strategy to overcome barriers to justice.

United Kingdom: Proving a range of strategies to support vulnerable people and those experiencing barriers to overcome identified obstacles and improve access

The HM Courts & Tribunals Service Vulnerability Action Plan applies to courts and tribunals in the United Kingdom. It is based on the understanding that using courts and tribunals can be a difficult and daunting task for anyone in society, but especially for the most vulnerable, who need extra support.

The Vulnerability Action Plan focuses on three priority areas:

1. Providing vulnerable users with support to access and participate in court and tribunal services and signposting to other sources of information and support.
2. Gathering evidence and using it to identify the impacts of reforms on vulnerable users.
3. Making services accessible for vulnerable users.

The plan includes actions to overcome and break down barriers for vulnerable people, including:

- The national digital support service, which supports users who are unable to or are struggling to get online.
- Making it possible for vulnerable victims and witnesses to have their evidence pre-recorded at a location away from the court or official remote link sites, allowing the recording of evidence and cross-examination prior to trial.
- Providing “reasonable adjustment” to help users with disabilities. Examples of reasonable adjustments include providing information in an alternative format (e.g. in audio or easy read), helping someone complete a form or providing a chair to meet a user’s specific need.
- Providing intermediary services if users need communication support at a court or tribunal hearing.
- Using remote hearing links and providing users with information about video hearings.
- Providing support during in-person and remote hearings. This could be providing interpreters or offering sessions to help people complete their online applications.

Sources: HM Courts & Tribunals Service (2023[34]; 2024[35]) ; (Government of Colombia, 2022[39]).

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Note

[1] Target groups are referred to specific communities, including marginalised, underserved and groups in vulnerable situations (e.g. women, children, indigenous groups, elderly and people with disabilities), in line with the OECD 2023 Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-centred Justice Systems.

3 Design and delivery of people-centred legal and justice services

Delivering people-centred legal and justice services requires a continuum of accessible, high-quality support that responds to the needs, rights and capabilities of all individuals. This includes designing services with people at the centre; using clear and inclusive language; and promoting timely, affordable and effective solutions. Services should address recurring legal and justice needs systemically and ensure fair processes and outcomes. Reaching underserved populations, including those in rural and remote areas, is essential to ensure that justice is within everyone's reach. This chapter provides self-assessment questions, actions and examples to support the design and delivery of people-centred justice and legal services, in support of the implementation of the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems*.

Key provision of the OECD Recommendation

Design and deliver people-centred legal and justice services by:

- ensuring the availability, accessibility and quality of a continuum of legal and justice-related services
- ensuring that legal, justice and related services are:
  - designed with people at the centre, taking into account their rights and possible vulnerabilities, and based on empirical understanding of their legal and justice needs, preferences and capabilities
  - provided in clear, plain and inclusive language and manner, avoiding complexity
  - appropriate, proportionate, affordable, effective and responsive to legal and justice needs, emphasising the prevention and timely resolution of conflicts
  - addressing recurring legal and justice needs on a systemic basis, with attention to underlying causes and considering different population subgroups
  - supported by safeguards and procedures to ensure fair processes and fair outcomes, and ensuring quality of legal procedures
  - developed through an appropriate mix of policy, regulatory and other measures and all continuously improved on the basis of feedback from people and businesses about their experiences with these services
- ensuring that justice is within reach for everyone regardless of their geographical location, including rural and remote areas, promoting mobility to bring justice and legal services directly to the people.

Planning and designing legal, justice-related, and related services with people at the centre

Why is it important?

Addressing people's legal and justice needs delivers tangible benefits for people and businesses and prevents legal and justice needs from escalating over time.

Adopting people-centred approaches in planning, designing and delivering services to address legal and justice needs involves a transformation built on evidence and data that considers the capabilities and circumstances of people experiencing legal and justice needs, and what services and delivery modes are the most appropriate to meet their needs. Sound evidence about which strategies are the most effective to address different needs in different circumstances will also be an important input into the process, as will other factors.

Legal needs surveys (LNS) offer a representative view of people's everyday legal issues, how they respond to them, the pathways they take when confronting legal and justice needs, the services they use, and the outcomes they achieve. Other data sources, such as court data, census and demographic data, and service delivery data – as well as targeted qualitative studies focusing on particular target groups – can add to the knowledge base and provide a more comprehensive picture of needs, and of the gaps in the services available or received.

Priority checklist

A. Ensure that service planning, design and delivery are informed by sound representative data and co-created with target groups where possible

Self-assessment questions

- Is there sufficient data (e.g. from LNS, census data, official court data, service delivery data, etc.) to provide needed insights about target groups and geographic structures relevant for service planning?
- Are there mechanisms to incorporate data and evidence, including from LNS, into service planning, funding, design and delivery?
- Are there mechanisms to facilitate collaborative planning and information sharing between legal and justice services, to ensure that through co-ordination and knowledge-sharing, there are no gaps in service delivery?
- Does the justice system have appropriate service delivery flexibility to make adjustments to the planning and delivery of services to address gaps in the service continuum?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Identify the most common and the most impactful legal and justice needs experienced by people and use them (see Pillar 5) as the basis for service design and delivery, as well as for planning and resource allocation.
- Develop and implement a process for identifying legal needs across the country, using different sources of data (e.g. LNS, social assistance data, economic data, criminal prosecution data).
- Ensure that services are distributed across the territory and proactively reach the entire population, especially people in vulnerable conditions, and incorporate service monitoring and evaluation.
- Establish mechanisms for collaborative planning and information sharing among legal and justice services to avoid gaps in service delivery, establish realistic and effective pathways between services, and promote cost-effective service delivery.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to engage target groups, including in vulnerable situations, in co-creating services at an early stage can lead to poorly tailored solutions that do not respond to people's real needs and capabilities, diminishing the effectiveness and reach of the services.
- Neglecting to apply a "common sense check" through stakeholder consultation risks relying on potentially wrong estimates, reducing the effectiveness of planning and resource allocation.
- Failing to adopt people-centred planning and to conduct ongoing monitoring, and neglecting to ensure a strategic allocation of resources can undermine the ability to assess and improve service effectiveness and accessibility.

Box 3.1. Good practice examples of using evidence for service planning

Australia: Need for Legal Assistance Indicators

In 2015, New South Wales (NSW; Australia) developed the Need for Legal Assistance Services (NLAS) indicators. These provide a census-based measure of the geographic distribution of potential demand for legal assistance services from organisations such as legal aid commissions and community legal centres. Following the release by the NSW South Wales revised, updated and expanded the NLAS indicators. The NLAS indicators were further updated after the release of the 2021 Census data.

NLAS indicators have been developed to anticipate the need for legal assistance services based on general legal capability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and culturally and linguistically diverse people.

They use criminal finalisation data to anticipate the need for legal representation services and to support service delivery planning. The indicators show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people in Australia are among the most disadvantaged on most measures. Making up approximately 3% of the total population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are heavily overrepresented in the criminal justice system, in the (child) care and protection system, and as victims of domestic and family violence.

The availability of quality criminal court prosecution and finalisation data (from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research) – including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of the accused – allowed the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW and the New South Wales Aboriginal Legal Service to develop proxy indicators to predict likely need for legal assistance in criminal matters for Aboriginal people in NSW, and thus provide important input into the planning of service delivery by the New South Wales Aboriginal legal service.

Colombia: Justice in remote regions

In Colombia, over the last 15 years, the local justice systems strategy has been evolving, seeking to be more people centred by making use of local justice actors and processes in collaboration and partnership with subnational and national levels of government to deliver comprehensive, relevant and timely responses to legal and justice needs in an increasing number of municipalities.

Local justice systems function as interconnected networks in which public institutions, private actors and community authorities work together to respond to the justice needs of a municipality. Their core purpose is to offer co-ordinated solutions that protect rights and help manage conflicts. Through defined referral pathways, each actor plays a role in delivering responses that are comprehensive, appropriate and timely within the local context. This model depends not only on the involvement of state bodies but also on the active contribution of non-state actors, especially community leaders. The Colombian Ministry of Justice advocates for the implementation of the local justice systems across all of the more than 1 100 municipalities nationwide.

Sources: Ardila and Ospina (2024[1]); Mirrlees-Black and Randall (2017[2]); Mirrlees-Black and Bellerose (2024[3]); World Bank (2015[4]); HiiL (2024[5]).

Establishing and maintaining a continuum of available, accessible, quality and targeted legal and justice services

Why is it important?

Reaching all groups with people-centred services requires a continuum of assistance and dispute resolution options – formal and informal – tailored to the needs of diverse groups of people and delivered in responsive formats and locations. Ensuring services are available across the national territory means mapping where needs and likely demand arise to allocate resources efficiently.

It is critical to make the continuum operate as one system and use no wrong door entry, common intake, interoperable referrals and warm handoffs, so users move logically from information to advice to resolution without retelling their story. A shared case view and feedback loops between providers can help close gaps and prevent drop-offs.

To the extent possible, target groups should be prioritised for legal assistance service delivery. Mobile and outreach services can help to reach such groups, especially in remote areas, although "outreach" strategies can be important in reaching target groups regardless of remoteness.

Ensuring services are accessible includes ensuring people are aware of them and, importantly, can quickly reach most of the appropriate services to address their legal and justice needs. Easily identifiable access points, triage and effective referral to the most appropriate services are important features to improve the accessibility of the continuum of services.

Services should be of high quality, timely, consistent, knowledgeable, responsive, affordable and fair. Justice systems should define common quality standards for the continuum and ensure their implementation and monitoring across providers.

Priority checklist

A. Guide people to the right and accessible service along the continuum: Awareness, triage and referral.
B. Define and deliver "quality" legal and justice-related services and procedures.
C. Target support, connect with other needed services, and make it timely and appropriate to the person's legal capability and needs.

A. Guide people to the right service along the continuum: Awareness, triage and referral

Self-assessment questions

- Are legal and justice services within reach of all people, including those in remote and rural areas, and delivered in ways that are accessible and suited to the needs of the target groups?
- Are national and local authorities ensuring a clearly defined, integrated continuum of legal and justice services – with standardised entry, triage, referral and escalation pathways – across providers and regions?
- Can institutions trace end-to-end user journeys across that continuum – via a shared case view and data-sharing protocols – to monitor handoffs, time-to-resolution, outcomes and drop-off points?
- Are there simple entry points for people to access services to obtain appropriate information, triage and referral to more targeted services? Are there mechanisms for "seamless" transfers of disputes across services?

- Do justice institutions and services have trained staff and appropriate processes to "triage" properly and appropriately refer clients to the most relevant services across the continuum of services? Are referral systems (such as service databases) in place to support this?
- Are there mechanisms in place to co-ordinate between justice and legal services to ensure that people are referred to the most appropriate service?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Map and publicise the national service continuum: inventory providers and coverage; define standard pathways and escalation rules; implement interoperable referrals via common intake and a shared directory; set governance to monitor handoffs, time-to-resolution, outcomes and drop-offs; run quarterly end-to-end user-journey tests.
- Establish appropriate (including culturally appropriate and with respect to people's circumstances) and readily accessible "entry points" (such as telephone, online and face-to face services) for people to seek initial information, triage, advice and referral to appropriate services and pathways.
- Conduct targeted, ongoing awareness and communications strategies to ensure people are aware of, or can readily become aware of, the appropriate services when they confront a legal problem. Consider measuring people's and target groups' awareness of legal services (see Chapter 5).
- Establish co-ordination mechanisms between services to help clients reach the most appropriate service, including sharing data where appropriate; co-ordinate legal information and other justice services to ensure gaps in service are minimised yet duplication and waste are avoided; provide seamless transfer of disputes across services, as needed.
- Develop the capability across the justice sector to "triage" and refer people to the appropriate justice services. In client satisfaction and outcomes assessments, include feedback on triage and referral processes, as well as on pathways and service co-ordination.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to accurately assess public awareness of legal and justice services can lead to an overestimation of service reach and impact, hence potentially resulting in a wide range of unmet legal and justice needs.
- Neglecting to provide clear, accessible guidance on navigating the available services and pathways can either prevent users from accessing them due to the complexity of the system or overwhelm them with too many choices, causing many to disengage.

Box 3.2. Good practice examples of accessible points of entry, triage and referral

Many countries provide telephone and online access to legal and justice services, providing a mix of triage, referral and information services, such as:

- Citizen's Advice (United Kingdom) for online and telephone options.
- Civil Legal Advice (United Kingdom) is operated by legal aid and provides information, some referral to legal advice, or referral to other services where appropriate.
- LawAccess NSW (Australia) provides a centralised legal information and referral service, and is the effective point of entry for Legal Aid NSW services.
- Legal Aid Ontario (Canada) provides access to legal help by telephone (in English and French, and supporting callers with disabilities), as well as through online chat and a "Service Finder" tool to assist people to find the right services.

Many also provide face-to-face options for access in addition to online and telephone access, such as the United Kingdom's Citizen's Advice centres and the "Het Juridisch Loket" in the Netherlands, which provides online access to plain language legal information as well as online, written and face-to-face (at one of the offices) opportunities to approach the legal aid system and obtain information and advice, and perhaps representation or mediation.

In the United States, the National Centre for State Courts has developed a guide to assist in the adoption of triage to transform family justice, using triage in a pathways model to improve case management, prioritise urgent issues and better support families. Since commencing in 2020, courts in Connecticut, Kansas and Massachusetts have also adopted triage-based pathways and demonstrated clear gains in efficiency and case outcomes. Connecticut's model led to a dramatic increase in cases resolved within 90 days of filing.

In New South Wales (NSW; Australia), Legal Aid NSW has implemented an intentional strategy to use triage to then link clients to the most appropriate service at Legal Aid NSW. In terms of broader referral strategies, LawAccess NSW (now a programme within Legal Aid NSW) provides – in addition to plain language legal information – a telephone triage service and referral to a full range of legal assistance services (governmental and non-governmental) and other related public services.

France has made important efforts in recent years to bring justice closer to citizens across the country. The key part of this strategy has been the implementation of the Access to Law Network (Conseil Départemental de l'accès à droit, CDAD) – an information, advice and referral network – although this is complemented by the Jurisdictional aid offices network (essentially legal aid funding) and a Victims Support Network.

Key elements of the CDAD network include 2 981 "justice points", 150 "justice and law houses", a national telephone number, enabling connection to a legal advice centre and a CDAD office in each of the 101 departments across metropolitan France. While the role of the justice points is to provide information, referral and some triage associated with that, importantly, at present, 97% of the French population is within a 30-minute drive of a justice point. Justice points are distributed across the country and while most may be generalist in nature, some have a specialised focus; some justice points in regional areas might specialise in legal matters of particular relevance to that particular region.

While the CDAD network is not intended to replace the engagement of lawyers, some referral is possible from one justice point to another specialist justice point, where appointments with lawyers can be scheduled. Referrals may also be made to private lawyers, or to the Access to Financial Assistance for Justice Network to seek financial assistance by way of legal aid for a particular client.

The French Ministry of Justice is working on communications strategies to improve awareness of these services across the country/region.

Sources: Coumarelos and McDonald (2019[6]); Civil Legal Advice (n.d.[7]); NCSC (n.d.[8]); (Citizens Advice, 2025[9]); (Legal Aid Ontario, 2025[10]); (Juridisch Loket, 2025[11]); (Legalaid New South Wales, 2025[12]); (Government of France, 2024[13]).

B. Define and deliver "quality" legal and justice-related services

Self-assessment questions

- Have quality standards been developed for different types of legal and justice services, also from the perspective of the consumer/person experiencing the legal need?
- Are there measures to assess and monitor the quality of services, including outcomes, timeliness, responsiveness, affordability, appropriateness and proportionality?

- Are questions concerning service and procedural quality incorporated into client satisfaction and outcomes assessments?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Define and embed quality standards to be used in the design and delivery of legal and justice services.
- Maintain a programme of monitoring and assessment of services against defined quality standards.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Neglecting to clearly define and apply quality standards for services across the justice system such as timeliness, affordability, responsiveness and fairness can lead to inconsistent service delivery.

Box 3.3. Good practice examples of defining justice service quality

Malta: Quality standards for community-based and outreach services

While not exclusively focused on legal and justice services, this resource establishes the level of service service providers should deliver and, in relation to community-based and outreach services, the standards should guide service providers in relation to:

- the sufficiency of community-based and outreach services
- the choice of workers, who should be adequate and competent to carry out the work entrusted to them
- the manner in which these services should be managed.

These guidelines break down a number of standards into specific quality indicators and performance indicators. Many of the standards are directly relevant to justice services, including people-centred support interventions, data handling and information dissemination, interagency collaboration and external relations, and service quality management. These guidelines provide a model for which quality standards for legal and justice services can be developed and applied.

The Netherlands: Assuring quality in legal aid service delivery

The Netherlands' Legal Aid Board uses a number of strategies to monitor and assure quality and services delivered:

- The number of legal aid certificates that can be granted to a lawyer or mediator per year is limited to 250, and the maximum number of paid working hours for each lawyer is limited to 2 000 per year. These limits are imposed to ensure that lawyers and mediators have enough time to spend on each case.
- It conducts regular satisfaction surveys with Legal Aid clients. The LAB also surveys other legal professionals (judges, prosecutors) to assess the standard of lawyers' work. The Knowledge Center of the Legal Aid Board is working on designing and implementing a more structural feedback loop, of which the experiences of citizens (also with their lawyer) are a key component.
- In the area of asylum law (where clients are particularly vulnerable), the Netherlands has established peer reviews of lawyers' performance when delivering legal services. Peers review a lawyer's files regularly, attend court sessions and monitor new asylum lawyers.

Sources: Malta Social Care Standards Authority (2020[14]); van der Lans, Peters and Verdonschot (2023[15]).

C. *Target support, connect with other needed services, and make it timely and appropriate to the person's legal capability and needs*

Self-assessment questions

- Are services designed and delivered in the most appropriate way to be accessible to and useful for all users, including target groups?
- Are relevant services "joined up" with other legal and non-legal services to reach target groups where they are located, and to ensure they can be provided holistically to meet the interconnected needs of clients?
- Are services targeted and tailored for target groups depending on their legal capability and legal and justice needs, and based on the knowledge of what works (see Chapter 5)?
- Are service options designed to take into account that people will seek assistance at different stages when confronting legal and justice needs, and the timeliness will vary between groups?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Target and tailor services for target groups, and connect and collaborate with other legal and other non-legal public service providers (recognising that those experiencing complex legal and justice needs will also often experience health, housing and other problems).
- Design a suite of services in a tailored manner, format and delivery location that are the most appropriate in all the circumstances based on the characteristics, legal capability and needs of the target groups.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to shift to a people-centred approach and prioritise high-need target groups can result in inefficient services that are misaligned with people's real legal and justice needs.

Box 3.4. Good practice examples of appropriate and targeted services

Australia: Targeted and appropriate services for indigenous people: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

Across all states and territories in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) provide professional and culturally competent legal services appropriate for indigenous Australians. While funded largely by government, each ATSILS is an Aboriginal community-controlled non-governmental organisation and delivers services to indigenous people, often in regional and remote areas, through regional offices, outreach services, and representation services at regional and "bush" courts. Established in 1972, each ATSILS delivers a broad range of civil, family and criminal law services, as well as a range of prevention, intervention and community legal education programmes; coronial and public sector monitoring; and Throughcare services. ATSILS employ indigenous "field officers" to facilitate effective and culturally appropriate engagement with local indigenous communities and the in-house lawyers who provide much of the ATSILS services.

Colombia: Targeting people-centred and restorative justice for victims

Implementation of the Delivering Justice in the Territory for Peace ("Justicia en Territorio para la Paz Total") Program targets services to meet the needs of victims by focusing on access to justice, strengthening the search for missing persons, articulating transitional justice mechanisms, and

disseminating recommendations for peace and restorative justice. This transitional justice approach also includes:

- Supporting local justice committees to facilitate co-ordination and community participation to identify and overcome barriers to justice, strengthening restorative, community-based and formal justice.
- Commissioning studies focused on people-centred justice for victims of the armed conflict, especially those experiencing gender-based violence and sexual violence, from a difference-based and restorative perspective, including for women and LGBTIQ+ individuals from ethnic groups.
- Promoting dialogue spaces to advance a specialised jurisdiction with a gender perspective to address the profound lack of justice, high impunity and "judicial violence" against women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people. This includes proposals for a plural, participatory and territorial design with trained judges and psychosocial teams and mechanisms for dialogue between formal, indigenous and Afro-Colombian justice systems.
- Creation of a co-ordination body between the national government and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to facilitate compliance with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace sanctions with a gender, territorial, participatory and restorative approach.

Connecting services to provide a "one-stop shop" for people needing access to justice

In 1995, the Colombian Ministry of Justice launched the Justice Houses ("Casas de Justicia") programme, with the aim to address the unmet justice needs of people in Colombia. The initiative began with two centres located in the low-income neighbourhoods of Bogota and Cali. According to the latest information, the programme has expanded and now includes 114 houses in 92 municipalities.

The "*casas*" function as one-stop shops, bringing together a range of 17 different local and national, formal and non-formal justice institutions. This ranges from social workers and community development officers to legal aid clinics.

The integration of multiple services under one roof reduces both the physical and cultural barriers, making justice more accessible for everyone. For example, no appointment is needed and services are free of charge and easy to arrange. Moreover, legal representation is not required, and conflicts are frequently resolved in a matter of days.

Ireland: Children and the Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025

In developing its first Family Justice Strategy, Ireland established Goal 1 as to place children's needs at the heart of the family justice system, ensure their views are heard and taken into account, and provide support for their individual journeys through the system.

Further, the strategy sought to "… ensure that children are at the centre of the family justice system. As of 2015 the voice of the child in childcare, adoption, guardianship, custody and access proceedings has been enshrined in the Constitution and as such it is the responsibility of all those working within the family justice system to ensure that the voice of the child is heard and considered. It was regarded as the single most important focus for the family justice system by the majority of consultees in the public consultation."

Implementing the strategy meant tailoring justice systems, processes and services to be most appropriate for children and their participation in the range of legal issues associated with family justice, including:

- reviewing and reforming arrangements to ensure that hearing the voice of the child is effective and consistent across all proceedings

- developing and delivering child-friendly information to explain family justice processes to children
- considering the role of child liaison officers to help guide children through the family justice system
- identifying and delivering common and standardised child-focused training to all professionals working within the family justice system
- developing protocols and guidance to assist judges when speaking to or interviewing children in family law cases.

Poland: Obligation to listen to the child, including the provision of child-friendly conditions for hearings

In civil proceedings concerning the person or property of a child, the court is obliged to hear the child if his/her mental development, state of health and degree of maturity allow, and to take into account his/her reasonable wishes as far as possible. The place where the child is to be heard is determined according to the child's needs. Children with mental or developmental disorders and children under the age of 13 are heard in suitably adapted rooms on the premises of the court or at a suitable place outside. Children who are over 13 years of age, in addition to the above-mentioned rooms, may be questioned in a suitably adapted judge's office or in another room. The rooms must have constant access to daylight, be equipped with a table and an armchair for the child, be large enough to allow the child to move around, and suitable to enable the child to concentrate and express themselves freely.

Portugal: Non-governmental organisation providing "bridge" joining-up justice services and broader holistic services

In Portugal, non-governmental organisations provide an important bridge between people in need of legal and related services and the justice system components that can facilitate the resolution of their problems. The Portuguese Consumer Defence Association and the Portuguese Victim Support Association sustain high awareness levels across the community and see as part of their mandates the role of guiding people along appropriate pathways – especially justice pathways – to resolve their problems. The Portuguese Victim Support Association, for example, supports the police and the courts in a number of locations as a means of helping their clients engage in justice processes. It helps them to apply for and access legal aid and to access other support services as they deal with the problems associated with the violence they have experienced. The Portuguese Consumer Defence Association, with a consumer focus, has strong links and engagement with relevant alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services and assists consumers with legal problems to navigate these pathways.

Importantly, these non-governmental organisations provide accessible entry points and services at a time, place and manner that is appropriate to their clients and the legal and justice needs they are experiencing.

The Netherlands: Reintegration by design: Data-driven, human-centred, collaborative strategy for reintegration after detention

The Netherlands has been reforming its prison system to be more humane and to focus on the reintegration of prisoners into society. Apart from particular efforts to enhance the education, qualifications and thus employability of inmates after their release, the reintegration strategy also includes the development of individual reintegration plans for each prisoner. These plans focus on five basic needs for reintegration: income, housing, debt resolution, care and having a valid identification. The development and implementation of these plans involve collaboration between relevant prison and government agencies.

Importantly, the prison system uses a range of data sources to monitor and track progress on reintegration and rehabilitation. The reintegration information collected by the prison service is shared

with partner organisations which form part of the broader reintegration chain, including municipal governments and probation services, among others. The co-ordinated exchange of data between agencies is important and allows the various agencies in the reintegration chain to offer help sooner, more effectively improving the chance of successful return to society and lowering the risk of recidivism.

Sources: UNDP and UNODC (2016[16]); OECD (2024[17]; 2023[18]); (APAV, 2025[19]); (DECO, 2025[20]); Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler (2012[21]); (Mulherin, G., 2023[22]); (NATSILS, 2025[23]); (Piconne T., 2019[24]); (Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho, 2024[25]); (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez C., 2025[26]); (Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho, 2025[27]); (Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 2024[28]); (CEACL, 2024[29]); (Michalak M., 2021[30]); (Justice Trends, 2025[31]).

Ensuring that legal and justice-related services are provided in clear and plain language and manner

Why is it important?

The complexity of legal processes and institutions has long been recognised as a challenge for most people in accessing justice.

Efforts have been made in recent years to simplify public legal information to assist people in bringing their legal matters to formal justice institutions. Yet often these efforts are not matched by simplified language and processes when the litigant enters into the dispute resolution process.

A people-centred justice system would aim to deliver the right service to the right person at the right time in the right place. It would also seek to continuously simplify and make the processes and language of the entire justice system more accessible.

To bring about change in justice system language and simplify its processes, justice workers and the legal profession at all levels require comprehensive guidance and training. Appropriate guidelines and artificial intelligence and technological tools can be incorporated to support the transition.

Priority checklist

A. Support a culture of a justice sector providing services with reduced complexity and clear, plain and inclusive language
B. Develop institutional and personnel capacity to implement accessible and understandable communications.

A. Support a culture of a justice sector providing services with reduced complexity and clear, plain and inclusive language

Self-assessment questions

- Are requirements for plain language and reduced complexity of legal processes identified, agreed upon, made publicly available and regularly updated?
- Does the justice system's regulatory environment promote and support the use of clear and understandable language?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop requirements for legal information and services to be provided in clear and plain language and manner, reducing complexity.
- Regularly review justice communications, procedures and policies to reduce complexity and improve clarity. Ensure that the language is tested with actual and potential users.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to mandate, use and monitor clearer language and simplified procedures across the justice and legal system can limit the ability to improve the accessibility of the system.

Box 3.5. Good practice examples of using plain language

Australia: Plain language policy for legislative drafting

The Parliamentary Counsel's Office in New South Wales is responsible for legislative drafting. The plain language policy sets out the office's policy for the use of plain language in legislative drafting. It begins by defining "plain language" as adopted by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office then outlines the "principles" of plain language drafting to be applied in all legislation.

Colombia: Simplification through greater standardisation

Following the guidelines of the Integrated System of Management and Control of Quality and the Environment (SIGCMA) and legal provisions (Article 55 of Law 270 of 1996, as amended by Article 22 of Law 2430 of 2023), the Judicial Branch has begun an initiative to strengthen transparency, communication efficiency and citizen trust in judicial decisions through a process of standardising rulings and strengthening plain language in the Judicial Branch. It aims to do this by unifying the structure, style and drafting of judicial decisions, ensuring their clarity, coherence and comprehensibility for users of the administration of justice.

Among the main advances achieved are the development of spaces for dialogue and collaborative analysis among judicial servants to review models of judgments, orders and decisions, with the purpose of defining a uniform structure that facilitates the understanding of rulings both for judicial operators and for citizens. Likewise, in some regions of the country, judicial officials have begun the preparation and validation of ruling formats that incorporate plain, concise and accessible language, aimed at strengthening the relationship between the administration of justice and its users.

Through this initiative the Judicial Branch reaffirms its commitment to consolidating an institutional culture based on plain language and effective communication. To this end:

- coordinated progress is being made among the different jurisdictions and specialties in the standardisation of judicial rulings, in order to ensure decisions that are understandable, coherent and citizen-oriented.
- work is underway to standardise the processes and procedures that comprise the different procedural stages, complementing this effort.

While the first initiative defines a uniform model for drafting rulings, the second seeks to harmonise how judicial proceedings are conducted; both contribute to a more efficient, transparent and standardised administration of justice.

Ireland: National Digital Strategy

Ireland's National Digital Strategy is seeing the introduction of modern desktop and mobile services across all courts and staff, courtrooms, and members of the judiciary, which will result in more efficient and simplified processes. To support the training and capacity development of court personnel, improved adoption support models have been introduced for:

- members of the judiciary, with proactive and regular check-ins, targeted and specific one-on-one training sessions, and the commencement of rolling training webinar sessions
- staff of a dedicated adoption team with frequent and scheduled in-person site visits to listen, learn and inform on all aspects of the technology services catalogue.

Other process simplification features of Ireland's National Digital Strategy include the:

- Introduction of a single digital case management system to create a consistent user-centred experience throughout case management and rationalise courts service processes and procedures.
- Introduction of a portal to allow practitioners and litigants to create and track case applications online, helping to manage scheduling and deadlines, and communication between practitioners and litigants.
- Development of virtual tours of court buildings, allowing people to navigate and understand the environment before coming to court. In addition, virtual reality headsets are beginning to be used to help witnesses and vulnerable users prepare for the court experience in advance.

Poland: Use of experts in assistive and alternative communication for people with an intellectual disability

An amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure (Article 185e) came into force on 15 February 2024 which creates the requirement for courts to appoint an additional expert competent in the field of supportive and alternative communication in each case where a person with an intellectual disability has difficulty communicating orally that prevents or hinders communication. This provision regulates the "friendly mode of interrogation" of a witness who has a mental or developmental disorder, disturbances in the ability to perceive or reproduce perceptions, and there is a justified fear that questioning them in conditions other than those specified in this provision could have a negative impact on their mental state or would be significantly hindered.

Sweden: Range of measures to simplify language and process

Sweden has been progressively working for a number of years to simplify justice language and processes, including through:

- As part of its ongoing programme of assessing court parties' capabilities and accessibility, many Swedish courts systematically gather feedback from parties, witnesses and professionals through such mechanisms as surveys and interviews, which includes feedback in relation to the clarity of information, of judicial and court decisions and communications, and of structures and styles.
- The Swedish Language Act not only widens the scope of "accessible language" to include national minority languages, it also assigns to the Institute for Language and Folklore the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the use of plain language in the public administration, including in the justice sector.
- Digitisation reforms, including the "E-service", are being used to simplify administrative processes (though digital submission, access and other tools).

United States: Mandating the use of plain language: US Plain Writing Act 2010

The purpose of this act is "to improve the effectiveness and accountability of federal agencies to the public by promoting clear government communication that the public can understand and use." The act requires that – after a lead in period – "… each agency shall use plain writing in every covered document of the agency that the agency issues or substantially revises."

To support the implementation of this policy, the act requires that the Director of the Office of Management and Budget develop and issue guidance on implementing the requirements of "the act, but that before such guidance is issued, as interim guidance, agencies may follow the guidance of the (A) Plain Language Action and Information Network or (B) guidance provided by the head of the agency that is consistent with the guidelines referred to in subparagraph (A)(above)."

Sources: Government of the United States (2010[32]); New South Wales Parliamentary Counsel's Office (2017[33]); Polish Code of Criminal Procedure (2023[34]); (Government of Colombia, 2025[35]); (Department of the Taoiseach, 2025[36]); (Government Offices of Sweden, 2009[37]).

B. Develop institutional and personnel capacity to implement accessible and understandable communications

Self-assessment questions

- Are there requirements for public sector justice employees, across the justice chain, to undergo regular training in plain language communication?
- Are there guidelines to support language simplification in the justice system?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop comprehensive and mandatory training, including on plain language communication and the use of simplified processes for all justice employees.
- Incorporate principles of plain language communications and simplified procedures into all technological and artificial intelligence capability enhancements in the justice system.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to conduct regular training on clear language and procedures can undermine efforts to improve the ease of use of justice systems.

Ensuring that legal and justice-related services are proportionate and affordable

Why is it important?

Justice services – particularly those financed by the public purse – should deliver demonstrable value for money by achieving intended outcomes efficiently, effectively and in a timely manner. Service users require swift, affordable and fair resolution; providers seek to resolve matters reliably and cost-effectively; and the state aims to contain costs while using justice to underpin trust, well-being and the proper functioning of public institutions. Within constrained fiscal contexts, resources should be prioritised and allocated based on evidence of need and impact; with processes that are accessible, navigable and proportionate; and with performance monitored against clear indicators of fair outcomes, timeliness and user experience.

Priority checklist

A. Ensure that legal and justice-related services are proportionate and affordable to individuals, service providers and the justice system.
B. Obtain feedback from legal and justice-related service users.

A. Ensure that legal and justice-related services are proportionate and affordable to individuals, service providers and the justice system

Self-assessment questions

- Are budget allocations to service providers based on an estimation of legal and justice needs and the services needed to respond to them?
- Does the justice system ensure proportionality – aligning the intensity and cost of procedures with case complexity, risk and expected outcomes?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Design and institutionalise proportionate "value-for-money" assessments across legal and justice processes to detect and correct disproportionality.
- Define affordability metrics for users, providers and the state, including user cost-to-income ratios, provider unit costs and public cost per outcome.
- Create tiered pathways with clear thresholds (e.g. triage, ADR/ODR, simplified track, full proceedings) and time limits to keep procedures affordable and proportionate.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Ignoring spending concentration – where a small share of complex cases absorbs a large share of resources – can leave common legal and justice needs unmet and reduce system performance. At the same time, protect adequate funding for constitutionally significant, rights-sensitive and criminal matters.
- Treating "affordability" as price-cutting only without diversified service models, proportionate procedures and sustained provider viability risks making the system ineffective for most users.
- Over-simplifying low-value tracks without safeguards can erode fairness; maintain equity checks and periodic reviews to recalibrate thresholds and caps.

Box 3.6. Good practice example of proportional services

Poland: Ombudsman for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

The Ombudsman for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises was established in 2018 in the Polish legal system to be an independent, accessible and sustainable service to help small business to protect their rights. Its overall goals include the simplification of administrative and legislative processes for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as well as supporting the digital transformation of SMEs. The ombudsman's key roles include defending the interests of SMEs in their dealings with the state administration and other public bodies; reviewing and providing opinions and draft laws and regulations that affect the economic environment, including those concerning entrepreneurs; assisting in the organisation of mediation between SMEs and public administrative bodies conducting educational activities.

Poland: Free legal aid across the jurisdiction

Among a range of free aid services (including citizens' advice, mediation, aid to people with disabilities, etc.), Poland provides a system of free legal aid for individuals struggling with legal and justice needs and who would not otherwise be able to afford a lawyer. It is also available to people with disabilities and those with special needs.

Legal aid facilities are provided directly by lawyers or non-governmental organisations and is managed at the "county" level. Access is generally through "citizens advice" offered at around 1 500 facilities across Poland. People can apply for legal aid in any county and can thus apply where it is the most convenient for them, and not necessarily their county of residence.

Lawyer-run services are managed by district bar councils which ensure quality control of lawyers participating in the legal aid. For facilities operated non-governmental organisations, the organisations are selected through competitions following existing legal guidelines.

Spain: Establishing justice offices in the municipality

As part of its digital transformation process, through its "Offices of Justice in the Municipality" project, the Spanish Ministry of Justice will provide all municipalities in Spain with a municipal office of justice that will transform the current Justice of the Peace Courts, extending their services to all citizens, including older people, people with disabilities, people with limited resources and victims. Services of the judicial bodies, the civil registry and other justice services will thus be provided in each municipality.

In particular, the project will establish at least 7 700 offices of justice across Spain, offering the population a simplified and increased range of services while minimising their need to travel to access these services. Specific support will be provided for people who have difficulty with digitalisation and for victims, including victims of gender-based violence. Offices will be equipped, and staff trained, to support this initiative.

Sources: Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Katowice (2024[38]); Polish Journal of Laws of 2023 (2018[39]); (Government of Spain, 2023[40]); (Government of Poland, 2025[41]).

B. Obtain feedback from legal and justice-related service users

Self-assessment questions

- Is robust service client satisfaction/outcomes assessment conducted from clients of all legal, dispute resolution and other related services?
- Do legal and justice services make use of "user groups" to obtain necessary feedback?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Seek information from clients about their satisfaction with processes, outcomes, and the perception of affordability and responsiveness to their needs.
- Establish requirements and protocols to ensure that all justice services conduct consultations with users and user groups.
- Develop mechanisms to ensure that the outcomes of client satisfaction analysis and of user group engagement inform planning, resourcing and service delivery.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to assess client satisfaction and outcomes based on robust response rates and sound methodologies risks producing unreliable data and weak foundations for evidence-based reform and limits the justice system's ability to reform services in line with people's real experiences and expectations.
- Failing to include the perspectives of broader user groups – such as community workers, legal practitioners and support services – can miss valuable insights into the effectiveness and accessibility of justice services.

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4 Governance infrastructure for people-centred justice

People-centred justice systems aim to meet the needs of all individuals, including those who are more vulnerable to legal and justice needs and often lack resources to effectively resolve them. This requires systematic engagement; co-ordination across government, non-governmental and private actors; and the responsible use of digital technologies to ensure accessible, trustworthy and inclusive justice services. At the same time, fostering innovation and experimentation can support efforts to make legal and justice services more effective, simple and scalable. This chapter offers self-assessment questions, actions and examples to support the establishment of governance infrastructure for people-centred justice to facilitate the implementation of the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems.*

Key provision of the OECD Recommendation

Establish a governance infrastructure that enables people-centred justice by developing and implementing legal and policy frameworks necessary to enable seamless, efficient, integrated, sustainable, resilient and user-centred justice pathways, in line with data privacy and protection laws and principles and respecting the independence and autonomy of the bodies involved, by:

- meaningfully and consistently engaging with target groups in their own languages, including those in vulnerable situations (See Chapter 5)
- strengthening co-ordination and co-operation across public service sectors and across the justice system, including non-governmental and private sector providers
- considering resource reallocation to ensure capacity and appropriate management across the justice system
- ensuring organisational capacity across the justice system
- increasing the transparency of justice system budgeting (see Ensuring organisational capacity across the justice system)
- enabling effective enforcement of and respect for outcomes across dispute resolution mechanisms in both the formal and informal parts of the justice system
- promoting responsible digital transformation across the justice system
- fostering innovation and experimentation to identify and enhance the simplicity, effectiveness, efficiency and scalability of people-centred justice pathways.

Strengthening co-ordination and co-operation across the public service and the justice system

Why is it important?

Ensuring a coherent approach to advancing people-centred justice requires clear institutional responsibilities across the public sector at the relevant levels (organisational, subnational and national) for designing, leading and implementing the elements of a people-centred justice system. This must be supported by strong co-ordination and collaboration mechanisms not only at the service level, but across the entire justice chain and government stakeholders.

The starting point lies in fostering inter-institutional co-ordination across public services (e.g. health, social services, services for businesses), recognising that legal and justice needs often intersect with broader social and economic issues. In this regard, infrastructure needs to enable integrated, cross-sectoral solutions while also ensuring whole-of-state and whole-of-justice chain ownership of these solutions. In addition, the effectiveness of co-ordination and accountability mechanisms at the national and subnational levels helps prevent needs from falling through gaps. Finally, non-governmental and private providers are integral. Many countries work with non-governmental and private actors for public supports and legal services (e.g. pro bono, legal assistance).

Priority checklist

A. Establish and strengthen co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms across public institutions, including the justice chain.
B. Implement co-ordination processes and strategies with non-governmental and private service providers.

A. Establish and strengthen co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms across public institutions, including the justice chain

Self-assessment questions

- Are there policies and frameworks that define roles, responsibilities and processes for inter-institutional co-ordination?
- Have inter-institutional co-ordinating teams been established, including those focusing on addressing particular legal needs or target groups?
- Are key terminologies and procedures standardised across justice institutions?
- Are effective mechanisms in place to facilitate joint planning and co-ordination between services, including across sectors and non-governmental providers? Have appropriate information-sharing mechanisms been established to ensure needs assessment, triage, referral and service provision can be facilitated efficiently?
- Do existing policies and regulations enable and support the development of integrated services and are such services currently in operation?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Implement clear policies and frameworks that define clear roles and responsibilities for inter-institutional co-ordination and set goals and targets for collaboration and collaborative outcomes across the justice system.
- Establish inter-institutional co-ordinating teams focusing on priority legal and justice needs or target groups, seeking closer co-ordination with other sectors; try to engage treasury and other central government departments to put in place the appropriate financial, budgeting and resource-sharing mechanisms.
- Standardise terminology, data definitions and procedures across justice institutions; ensure technological, IT and data-sharing mechanisms support whole-of-state approaches; and create mechanisms to facilitate the seamless sharing of information and the transfer of disputes between resolution pathways.
- Establish integrated and co-ordinated services (e.g. health-justice; social housing-justice partnerships; small and medium-sized enterprise-justice partnerships), and put in place effective referral systems, so that any entry point enables triage and referral to the most appropriate service.
- Provide training and capacity-building programmes for staff involved in inter-institutional co-ordination, including skills in communication, negotiation and data governance.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to address silos within the justice system may lead to fragmented systems with inconsistent processes, terminology and limited collaboration and isolate legal and justice services from cross-sectoral solutions.
- Failing to promote a pro-collaboration mindset across the system can undermine efforts to build shared data systems, joint planning and integrated service delivery, ultimately limiting progress toward people-centred justice.

Box 4.1. Good practice examples of whole-of-state co-ordination mechanisms

Spain: Establishing co-governance mechanisms and processes for the 2030 Justice Plan

The digital transformation of the administration of justice in Spain is being implemented through the Justice 2030 plan. Justice 2030 is a common ten-year work plan developed in co-governance which promotes the rule of law and access to justice as tools for the country's transformation. The plan's objectives include making justice more accessible and improving citizens' access to public justice services.

Co-governance is central to the internal governance of the plan, including, for example:

- In terms of plan development and implementation, Ministry of Justice teams comprising staff from different areas of the ministry have been created, supported by liaison officers.
- Co-governance with the autonomous communities broadens the existing structures, expanding the spaces for dialogue and information, and the Sectorial Conference of the Administration of Justice is the body responsible for co-operation between the general state administration and the autonomous communities
- The National Technical Committee on Electronic Judicial Administration is responsible for the management of the digital ecosystem, and is composed of representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Prosecutor General's Office, the General Council of the Judiciary, and the Advisory Commission on Contentious Administrative and Tax Matters. The Presidency of the State Technical Committee for Electronic Judicial Administration is shared and rotates every two years between the Ministry of Justice and the General Council of the Judiciary.
- The Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces is creating a Justice Commission, which will be the venue for co-governance of the Justice 2030 projects that have a direct impact on the municipal territory.

Importantly, the Justice 2030 plan includes annual justice digital transformation forums that bring together government, citizens, and non-governmental and private sector actors to promote the role of justice in Spain's digital transformation within the framework of the Justice 2030 strategic plan.

United States: Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable

Since 2012, the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable has brought together federal agencies to streamline and improve co-ordination among federal programmes; increase the availability of meaningful access to justice for individuals and families, regardless of wealth and status; and promote the efficiency of the federal government. Through interagency collaboration and stakeholder engagement, the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable develops policy recommendations that improve access to justice in federal, state, local, tribal and international jurisdictions; advances relevant evidence-based research, data collection and analysis of civil legal and indigent defence; and promulgates best practices.

Sources: US Department of Justice (2012[1]); Spanish Ministry of the Presidency, Justice and Relations with the Courts (2023[2]; 2025[3]); Government of Spain (2025[4]).

B. Implement co-ordination processes and strategies with non-governmental and private service providers

Self-assessment questions

- Are non-governmental and private providers integrated within the legal and justice services through clear co-ordination and regulatory frameworks (also see Chapters 3 and 5)?
- What mechanisms exist to facilitate the integration of these services with those provided by the public sector in a coherent way?
- Have the issues of pricing, quality and access been considered in relation to the incorporation of non-governmental and private sector service providers into broader justice service delivery?
- Do justice institutions, including legal aid, map and engage in partnerships with key non-governmental and private actors?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Consult with target groups, non-governmental and private entities to design integrated services.
- Draw lessons from established public-private and public-non-governmental models (e.g. health) and adapt good practices for justice.
- Ensure common data-collection protocols and processes across public, non-governmental and private providers to support system-wide monitoring.
- Ensure that regulatory frameworks established to facilitate integration of non-governmental and private sector actors) are based on sound information concerning characteristics, capacities, and costs.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to recognise the essential role of non-governmental and private sectors in legal assistance delivery and to establish effective co-ordination, regulation and integration mechanisms risk underutilising key service providers therefore weakening overall system capacity, which leads to fragmented service delivery.

Box 4.2. Good practice examples of service delivery partnerships

Australia: Cooperative Legal Service Delivery Program

The Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) has a complex system of legal assistance services involving public, non-governmental and private sector elements. In 2004, the Cooperative Legal Services Delivery (CLSD) Program was established to improve access to justice and service delivery to the community through better co-ordination and collaboration within regions – not just among legal services but also incorporating other human and social services that work with and provide services to the same clients as the legal services, as well as pro bono supporting law firms.

Initially operating in two regions, the programme has expanded to 12 partnerships (as at 2025). The CLSD programme is funded internally by Legal Aid NSW, and each partnership is supported at a regional level by a regional co-ordinator from the CLSD unit within Legal Aid NSW. Legal Aid NSW also provides training and support for the regional co-ordinators, disseminates information about the work of partnerships and trends and emerging issues, and acts as a point of contact for all of the regional partnerships. CLSD partners work together through quarterly meetings and place-based projects to

leverage their different skills and resources to collectively address emerging and unmet legal and related needs in their regions.

Each CLSD region is also supported by a range of data resources to assist in the collaborative planning of service delivery within their region, including "Need for Legal Assistance" indicators (see Box 3.1) and other demographic indicators for each geographic area in the region.

Sources: Legal Aid NSW (n.d.[5]; 2024[6]).

Considering resource optimisation and/or reallocation to meet legal and justice needs

Why is it important?

In a people-centred system, appropriate services should be available for all groups when, where and how they need them. Within constrained fiscal contexts, governments should prioritise and devote the necessary and proportionate other resources to ensure that services are available to meet people's legal needs, recognising the positive spill-over effects that accessible justice can have in other sectors such as health and housing.

Given that only a small fraction of people's everyday legal and justice needs are resolved through formal institutions, there is a need for careful reflection on how government funding is distributed across the justice system. Striking the right balance between investment in lower intensity, front-end services – such as legal information, advice and early resolution mechanisms – and support for formal institutions is essential. Achieving this shift in funding priorities requires that justice stakeholders map needs, costs and outcomes, and place a high value on addressing them effectively, equitably and efficiently.

Priority checklist

A. Determine the resourcing for justice institutions and services based on a planning and budgeting process that prioritises legal and justice needs, measurable outcomes, and value for money

Self-assessment questions

- Is meeting priority legal and justice needs a stated and measured objective in planning and budgeting at all levels?
- Does the justice budget and workforce plan reflect a distribution of resources that broadly relates to need, case complexity and expected outcomes?
- Does the justice system have a sound understanding of which services, strategies and pathways are the most effective, affordable, proportionate and context-appropriate, including digital options?
- Does the justice system have a sound understanding of unit costs and cost per outcome of delivering these services and pathways across regions and channels (see also Chapter 3)?
- Are target groups and service providers systematically engaged during the justice budgeting process through transparent mechanisms (see also Chapter 5)?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Ensure that addressing priority legal and justice needs and improving outcomes per euro spent is a core objective of justice planning and budgeting processes.
- Ensure a data-driven culture for budget decisions; incorporate representative legal needs surveys, administrative data and performance metrics at the start of planning.
- Using appropriate methodologies, identify the full economic costs and capacity requirements of delivering different services by geography and channel, considering likely demand.
- Within fiscal constraints, review justice institutions' resources and capabilities to consider periodic reallocation, as necessary, taking into account priority needs, location, service mix, delivery costs and projected volumes.
- Use digital queue management, e-filing and automation to reduce disposition times and associated costs of services.
- Actively involve public service providers and non-governmental stakeholders in people-centred justice budgeting, including surveys, public forums and advisory committees, to co-define priorities and trade-offs.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to align budgeting processes with people-centred justice goals and to involve communities and public, non-governmental and private sector service providers in planning and budgeting can result in underfunded priorities, weak implementation and missed unmet needs, regardless of policy intent.
- Equating progress solely with higher spending without rebalancing early resolution, proportionate procedures, efficiency gains and digital delivery where appropriate can reduce impact and sustainability.

Box 4.3. Good practice examples of evidence-based resource allocation

Australia: National-level funding priorities informed by legal needs assessments

The Australian National Strategic Framework for Legal Assistance was informed by legal needs analysis, especially the Law Survey and Reshaping Legal Assistance Services. The funding of legal assistance services in Australia is governed by the new National Access to Justice Partnership 2025-2030 – an agreement between the Commonwealth government and the state and territory governments concerning the funding of legal assistance services.

The National Access to Justice Partnership is designed to facilitate the "achievement of the outcomes outlined within the National Strategic Framework:

- legal assistance services are focused on, and are accessible to, people experiencing disadvantage
- legal assistance services are delivered in a client-centric manner in order to better consider people's legal needs and capabilities
- legal assistance and other service providers and governments collaborate to provide integrated, client-centric services to address people's legal and other problems
- legal assistance services are provided at an appropriate time, which best addresses people's legal needs, including preventative action when appropriate

- legal assistance services empower people and communities to understand and assert their legal rights and responsibilities and to address, or prevent, legal problems
- legal assistance providers are supported to build the capacity of their organisations and staff, to ensure they can effectively respond to evolving service demand."

Canada: Integrating quality of life into policy and resource allocation

Canada's Quality of Life Framework is a high-level national framework that monitors key determinants of well-being for people living in Canada. It provides decision makers with a planning tool to inform priorities and to develop policies, programmes and budgets that lay out a path toward better outcomes.

The framework consists of 91 indicators organised into 5 domains: prosperity, health, society, environment and good governance (which includes indicators on justice and human rights). It also incorporates two cross-cutting lenses applied across all domains: 1) fairness and inclusion; and 2) sustainability and resilience. Its development reflects recognition that social and environmental factors, alongside economic growth, contribute to improved quality of life.

In March 2022, Statistics Canada launched Canada's Quality of Life Hub, bringing together key economic, social and environmental datasets to support the measurement of quality of life. The hub provides indicators with definitions, data information, and relevant releases and products, helping to inform policy and equip decision makers with evidence in areas that matter the most for people's well-being.

In May 2025, a Quality of Life and Well-Being Cabinet Committee was established to consider ways to improve community safety and health, advance reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and enhance the overall quality of life and well-being of Canadians. The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada sits on this committee, ensuring that justice contributes directly to broader quality of life objectives.

Colombia: Statistical input for the strategic allocation of justice resources

The Judicial Branch Statistical Information System (SIERJU) provided strategic input for optimising and expanding the supply of justice. The statistical analysis generated from the forms and data reported by officials nationwide are fundamental for decision-making by the Superior Council of the Judiciary. They make it possible to objectively identify where demand for services is higher, where the creation of new positions or offices is required, how to redistribute workloads to balance supply, and where to focus resources for plans to decongest and remove service bottlenecks.

Sources: Australian Attorney-General's Department (2019[7]); Coumarelos (2012[8]); Government of Australia (2025[9]); (Government of Canada, 2024[10]); (Government of Colombia, 2025[11]).

Ensuring organisational capacity across the justice system

Why is it important?

People-centred justice systems require a continuum of legal and justice services, designed to address the range of legal and justice needs. To be effective, this continuum must be implemented at both the service and system levels, ensuring coherence, co-ordination and sustainability.

In addition to services being available and accessible, they must also have the operational, managerial, data and co-ordination capacity to meet the needs of the panoply of users. This thus also means that service providers need to:

- operate as part of the overall justice system, fulfilling their place in the continuum of legal and justice services, providing services to specific segments of the population and meeting specific needs
- have the management capacity and institutional capabilities to effectively plan, co-ordinate and deliver appropriate and timely services, with clear mandates, performance objectives and risk management arrangements.

Thus, in addition to the professional skills and capacities required across the services of the continuum, service providers need to have the strategic and operational capacity to function as part of an integrated and co-ordinated justice system. This includes planning operations and service delivery collaboratively; maintaining effective referral programmes and capabilities; and delivering services in a timely, responsive and people-centred manner.

As such, it is essential that both individual legal and justice services and the justice system as a whole are resourced and equipped – including with workforce capability, digital infrastructure, data and evaluation functions, and institutional support – to efficiently deliver a coherent and co-ordinated response to the legal and justice needs within the fiscal constraints and with transparent reporting on performance and outcomes.

Finally, justice budgets need to be communicated in a timely and appropriately disaggregated manner. Transparency and clarity in budget allocations are also necessary for all stakeholders to enable scrutiny throughout the budgetary process.

Priority checklist

A. Ensure system-wide operational, managerial and co-ordination capacity with a focus on efficiency, interoperability and performance – within countries' fiscal contexts.
B. Employ good practices in budget communications, stakeholder scrutiny and transparency.

A. Ensure system-wide operational, managerial and co-ordination capacity with a focus on efficiency, interoperability and performance – within countries' fiscal contexts

Self-assessment questions

- Are financial resources strategically allocated to support the co-ordinated operation of the justice system overall, and to support the provision of key justice functions and services?
- Is performance tracked with cost per outcome, timeliness, user experience and equity indicators to guide investment and efficiency gains?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Conduct regular review of the capabilities of the justice system and institutions to ensure the provision of key functions and services to meet legal and justice needs.
- Ensure justice institutions' core capabilities are well-aligned with their strategic objectives and mandates, particularly in relation to responding to people's diverse legal and justice needs.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Underinvesting in people-centred skills and the system's capabilities can lead to weak access and delivery, lost efficiency gains, poor digital uptake, and fragmented co-ordination.

Box 4.4. Good practice examples of building capabilities for people-centred justice

Latvia: Bridging the digital skills gap in justice institutions

To promote the use of its court information system ("Tiesu informatīvā sistēma", TIS), the Court Administration in Latvia provides regular training sessions for judges and administrative staff to support their understanding and application of the latest tools offered by the TIS. In 2021, justice civil servants reported training workshops on TIS functionalities as being among the most beneficial to their work.

In 2023, Latvia announced its commitment to establish the Justice Academy by 2025, a unified training centre for further education and continuous skills development for civil servants in the justice system. The academy is supported by the Ministry of Justice. It develops training for members of the judiciary, a regulatory framework and capacity building. It also conducts an overall training needs assessment and develops and pilots the training programmes.

United Kingdom: Developing staff capacity with needed skills and competencies

As part of the enhancement of HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) following the pandemic, a new Data Strategy was developed and implemented in December 2021. The strategy began with recognition that HMCTS' data had "yet to reach the level of consistency and simplicity necessary to allow us to exploit it to the extent we would like. Data is a key part of both our HMCTS objectives, and the wider priorities of the Ministry of Justice." The HMCTS reform programme and response to the pandemic "have enabled HMCTS to gradually become a more data-driven organisation and highlighted the opportunity and need for further change."

Essential to the success of the Data Strategy was the building of the necessary analytical skills and culture to be able to implement this vision. This was reflected in one of its core data strategic pillars:

- "We have the right analytical skills and culture, so we can enjoy a culture where everyone is able to find, use, and protect the data they need:
- we have a clear vision and plan for analytical capability and capacity
- we have a credible vision and plan for analytical skills expected in different roles
- we have clarity over roles, responsibilities and accountability for data in HMCTS".

Sources: Government of Latvia (2021[12]; 2022[13]; 2023[14]); HM Courts & Tribunals Service (2021[15]).

B. Employ good practices in budget communications, stakeholder scrutiny and transparency

Self-assessment questions

- Do the justice budget documents communicate adequate disaggregation, enabling readers to see and understand the linkages between budget allocations and:
  - people's priority legal needs
  - the most effective and affordable strategies and services to address those needs
  - the unit and collective costs associated with delivering such effective services?
- Are justice system and broader stakeholders actively engaged throughout the budget process? Do they have opportunities and capacity to scrutinise, comment and provide input?
- Are justice budgets regularly reviewed, audited and evaluated to ensure budget allocations are in accordance with priorities and allocated to effective services?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Seek to implement justice budget processes, documentation, communications and stakeholder engagement in accordance with international standards and best practices.
- Disaggregate justice budgets to show how allocations align with priority legal and justice needs, effective services, and associated unit costs.
- Involve stakeholders, including the public, in the budgeting process through public consultations, surveys and forums to gather input and feedback.
- Leverage technology to make budget information accessible and available to stakeholders in a timely fashion. Online platforms, interactive dashboards and other technological platforms can be used to publish budget reports, updates and other relevant information in real time.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to involve justice service users in budget development and oversight, as well as to align budgets with the lived realities of those needing justice services, risks overlooking critical needs, leading to unbalanced targeted resource allocation.

Enabling effective enforcement of and respect for outcomes across dispute resolution mechanisms

Why is it important?

An important part of effective justice systems are the implementation and enforcement of dispute resolution outcomes. However, it is often the case that once decisions to resolve disputes are taken, parties to the dispute are left to comply with the orders without systematic assistance or compulsion.

While effective enforcement provisions and mechanisms are most often found within formal justice processes, even court-resolved disputes rarely automatically lead to enforcement actions. For example, enforcing a civil debt may require a separate application to the court or to another (sometimes private) agency, increasing costs, delays and barriers for many people. At the more informal end of the dispute-resolution continuum, enforcement options are even less available.

A people-centred justice system develops and applies a range of mechanisms to help individuals implement agreements and enforce decisions, regardless of whether these arise from formal or informal processes. To move toward this goal, it is first necessary to assess the scope of existing gaps or inefficiencies in enforcement mechanisms and to prioritise those the most in need of attention. The next step is to design effective and affordable enforcement solutions to close these gaps.

Priority checklist

A. Regularly assess the scope and effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms in both the formal and informal parts of the justice system.
B. Establish or enhance affordable, effective and accountable enforcement mechanisms to ensure that enforcement is effective across both the formal and informal parts of the justice system.

A. Regularly assess the scope and effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms in both the formal and informal parts of the justice system

Self-assessment questions

- Does the justice system engage with service users, stakeholders and broader groups of people to assess the effectiveness, affordability and accountability of justice system enforcement mechanisms?
- Are existing enforcement mechanisms timely, affordable and accessible to target groups and the broader population without creating additional administrative burdens or obligations (such as the need to engage in separate court proceedings)?
- Are there dispute resolution processes that lack effective accompanying enforcement mechanisms?
- What enforcement mechanisms are available for negotiated and mediated resolutions and for resolutions through informal justice system processes?
- What is the success rate of existing enforcement mechanisms?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Assess the scope and effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms across the justice system using a range of complementary methodologies. These can include:
- the preferred objectives and nature of enforcement mechanisms (that is, the form and characteristics of the most suitable enforcement mechanisms for people confronting a range of legal and justice needs in a range of circumstances)
- the extent to which their needs in terms of enforcement mechanisms is presently being met, and in what circumstances/parts of the justice system they are being met the least
- the extent to which existing mechanisms operate ethically, fairly, transparently and accountably.
- Based on this assessment, identify a set of priorities for action to broaden the range and operation of enforcement mechanisms.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to address the barriers to enforcing legal resolutions, also from a user perspective, creates additional obstacles and erodes trust in the justice system.

B. Establish or enhance affordable, effective and accountable enforcement mechanisms

Self-assessment questions

- Are there any insights into the number/proportion of “resolved” legal and justice issues that are not fully enforced?
- Is there an understanding of barriers that limit effective enforcement at all levels of the justice system?
- Have independent oversight bodies been established to monitor enforcement agencies and policies?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Make the needs and capabilities of those experiencing legal and justice needs the starting point for the design and reform of enforcement processes and mechanisms. These should drive priorities

for enhancing existing mechanisms and creating new ones across formal and informal justice processes.

- Streamline enforcement procedures to minimise delays and reduce costs and educate the public about enforcement processes and their rights.
- Leverage technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of enforcement, for example via electronic databases, online payment systems and digital communication tools.
- Incorporate strategies to ensure transparency in all enforcement mechanisms and processes, both existing and new.
- Consider strategies to encourage and support collaboration on enforcement between different stakeholders, including courts, law enforcement agencies and civil society organisations.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to shift focus beyond formal justice system processes and to design enforcement mechanisms around the needs and capabilities of users overlooks the vast majority of legal and justice needs, particularly those addressed through informal or community-based mechanisms, which also require accessible and effective enforcement pathways.
- Neglecting to ensure transparency and accountability in enforcement increases the risk of misuse and public mistrust, especially in cases involving low-value decisions or vulnerable individuals.

Box 4.5. Good practice examples of enforcement mechanisms

International Union of Judicial Officers: The Global Code of Enforcement

Officially launched by the International Union of Judicial Officers in 2015, the Global Code of Enforcement aims to help improve good governance through enforcement by highlighting good practice that countries should consider in their debates about fostering better enforcement systems. Providing a unified set of standards and principles that countries can follow, the code states, among others:

- A fundamental principle about the need to have judgements that are immediately enforceable, with beneficiaries not being required to have recourse to other legal procedures to obtain enforcement (Art. 4).
- The need for countries to co-ordinate among different state institutions and private actors to ensure access to information about debtors' assets. This means disclosing to the enforcement professionals all information leading to these assets and prohibiting withholding information (Art. 9).
- Transparency, meaning that countries ensure that the people are informed about enforcement measures (Art. 14).
- Specialisation, ensuring that only officers authorised by the state are able to conduct enforcement procedures (Art. 16).
- Flexibility of enforcement measures. Countries should organise their enforcement systems so that they are compatible with creditors' interests and with the economic and social situation of debtors. In line with this, countries should be able to diversify enforcement measures depending on the circumstances.

European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice: *Good Practice Guide on Enforcement of Judicial Decisions*

Launched in 2015, the *Good Practice Guide on Enforcement of Judicial Decisions* sought to inspire harmonisation across the enforcement systems of the Council of Europe's member states, highlighting good practices applied in the member states, including:

- Partial removal of enforcement processes from the control of the courts. As a general rule, dividing tasks can help to ease court congestion, speeding up enforcement. Together with centralising enforcement in only one agency, this can make processes easier to follow by litigants, whether they are involved as debtors, creditors or third parties.
- Ensuring that the parties fully understand the enforcement process. The guide recommends disseminating fact sheets about national legislation, with concise and practical information – in plain language – about enforcement procedures and agents. This also involves providing written and oral information for recipients of documents, advice for creditors, standardisation of procedural documents and a clear statement of the costs of enforcement procedures, all of which should be disseminated as widely as possible.
- Promoting e-enforcement as a way to help accelerate enforcement and save time in implementing certain protective or enforcement measures.
- Protecting the privacy of debtors and their families, ensuring their involvement in enforcement procedures (so that traumatic experiences, such as being suddenly forced out of the property, can be properly avoided), and adequate protection of the rights of third parties.
- Promoting the use of a common legal terminology on enforcement across countries.

Sources: UIHJ (2015[16]); CEPEJ (2015[17]).

Promoting responsible digital transformation across the justice system

Why is it important?

Digital transformation offers profound opportunities to modernise justice systems, increase operational efficiency and – most critically – expand equitable access to justice. When responsibly implemented, digital technologies can streamline complex legal processes, reduce costs, enhance transparency, and offer more timely and user-friendly pathways to address legal and justice needs. Through innovations such as online dispute resolution, digital legal information platforms, virtual legal aid and artificial intelligence-driven triage tools, governments can make justice more accessible, especially for those traditionally excluded from the system.

Digital transformation also allows for a more data-informed justice system, where real-time insights can inform service planning, resource allocation and systemic reform. When integrated with robust data privacy and protection frameworks, these technologies can strengthen public trust and accountability.

However, to be genuinely transformative, digital innovation must be people-centred. This means designing systems that accommodate diverse user capabilities, including those with limited legal knowledge, lower literacy, disabilities and digital exclusion. Vulnerable and marginalised populations – such as older adults, rural communities, low-income individuals and those with limited Internet access – may face significant barriers in navigating digital platforms. A "digital by default" strategy, if applied rigidly, risks exacerbating inequality by sidelining those least able to engage with technology.

A responsible digital justice strategy must therefore balance innovation with inclusion. It must provide a range of access points – both digital and non-digital – and build in flexibility to respond to users' needs,

preferences and capacities. Digital transformation should enhance choice, not restrict it. Moreover, meaningful public engagement, continuous evaluation and cross-sector co-ordination are critical to ensure technologies remain responsive, ethical and aligned with the principles of fairness and accessibility.

In essence, digital transformation is not just about modernising tools, it is about rethinking the way justice is delivered to ensure it works for everyone.

Priority checklist

A. Maximise the use of digital transformation to increase accessibility and efficiency through new and enhanced pathways to resolving legal and justice needs.
B. Ensure a people-centred approach to digital transformation, ensuring that the digital and other capabilities of those with legal and justice needs drive the design and delivery of services.

A. Maximise the use of digital transformation to increase accessibility and efficiency through new pathways to resolving legal and justice needs

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a national digital strategy that includes the justice system, with clear leadership to co-ordinate transformation, set priorities and engage users?
- Does the strategy encourage innovation and transformation of existing legal and justice processes?
- Is there digital infrastructure in the justice system to facilitate effective innovation and harmonise with broader national digital infrastructure?
- Are there clear policies and evaluation frameworks to ensure data privacy, protection and the ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of digitalisation efforts?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop an overarching digital governance structure that includes a common, justice system-wide terminology, data protocols and processes, and digital standards.
- Implement the OECD Digital Governance Policy Framework across the justice system, in co-ordination with the whole of state. This includes, among others:
  - applying a “digital by design” approach by embedding digital technologies and data from the outset of any reforms or innovations to transform justice policies, services and processes
  - implementing a “government as a platform” approach by encouraging the use of common digital infrastructure and tools across the justice system, including databases for legal precedents and legislation, digital identity, and document authentication systems
  - implementing an “open by default” approach to ensure transparency and openness where possible across the justice system.
- Track median time-to-disposition, user time-on-task and cost per case across institutions for digital vs. non-digital channels; reallocate to channels with proven gains.
- Scale online dispute resolution, guided triage, e-enforcement and interoperable data where pilots show backlog cuts and effective meeting of legal and justice needs.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to establish an overarching digital governance structure across justice institutions can undermine interoperability and lead to fragmented and duplicative systems with inconsistent data standards and processes.

- Failing to streamline processes through unified digital frameworks can lead to confusion for users, forcing them to navigate multiple systems or submit the same information repeatedly.

Box 4.6. Good practice examples of digital transformation

Portugal: Action Plan for Digital Transition

The Action Plan for Digital Transition is a strategic document adopted by the Portuguese government to guide the country through a comprehensive digital transformation. This initiative aims to leverage digital technologies to drive economic growth, improve public services and enhance quality of life for all citizens.

Many of the Action Plan for Digital Transition's priority areas apply to the modernisation of justice, in particular to the design and delivery of services. Priority measures with a direct impact on the justice system include:

- digitalisation of the 25 most used public services, with the aim of simplifying and enhancing online access
- increased provision of digital services in different languages, with the aim of ensuring that the services available on the ePortugal.gov portal are multilingual, and that content and electronic forms are translated into languages other than Portuguese
- the creation of a strategic framework for the adoption of cloud tools by the public administration
- simplification of public procurement of information and digital technology services by the public administration.

Spain: Digital Efficiency Law

The digital transformation of public justice services in Spain is empowered and mandated through the Digital Efficiency Royal Decree Law. Its aim is to regulate the use of information technologies by citizens and professionals in their dealings with justice services and ensure a data-driven approach to the administration of justice. In particular, it mandates how IT will be employed to ensure "…digital legal security, access, authenticity, confidentiality, integrity, availability, traceability, conservation, portability and interoperability of the data, information and services…" as part of the administration of justice.

The law, among other things:

- defines the rights and responsibilities of citizens and justice officials in relation to access to relevant justice data
- mandates specific requirements in relation to the provision of digital access as part of the administration of justice, including, in particular, the "Justice Folder" designed for efficient and effective access to the necessary information for citizens
- provides the institutional framework to support co-operation and judicial interoperability to ensure that information and communication systems used in the administration of justice are interoperable.

Uganda: Virtual legal advice

Lawyers 4 Farmers is a legal initiative that aims to spread awareness of basic legal knowledge and entrepreneurial skills to the farming population. Its main objective is to enable farmers to navigate the complexities with legislation and support how they start, structure and manage their farm businesses for increased productivity and profitability. The SMS-based platform provides educative, basic legal

advice to farmers in their local language and offers instant guidance on legal problems. Everything is translated and interactions are conducted in the local language.

United States: Guided information pathways in California

I-CAN! Legal helps people prepare their court forms using an easy online questionnaire. I-CAN! provides step-by-step instructions for how to file the forms and proceed with the court case. In Orange County, California, I-CAN! also provides e-filing of certain forms. This low-cost software includes online court form preparation in multiple areas of law in many states.

Spring ACT: Chatbot Sophia

Sophia is a confidential, artificial intelligence-powered chatbot designed to support individuals affected by or seeking information on domestic violence and unhealthy relationships. Available 24/7, anonymously, and currently accessed in 172 countries, Sophia provides expert-reviewed information, guidance and connections to essential resources, all while ensuring privacy and security.

How Sophia can help:

- Recognise abuse – Learn the signs of unhealthy relationships.
- Find options – Get guidance on legal rights, safety planning and next steps.
- Access support – Connect with local shelters, helplines and emergency services.
- Secure documentation – Store messages, photos and recordings privately in the Digital Safe.

Sources: HiiL (2017[18]); Stanford Legal Design Lab (2016[19]); Spring ACT (n.d.[20]); SG Courts (n.d.[21]); Portugeuse Presidency of the Council of Ministers (2020[22]); Spanish Ministry of the Presidency, Justice and Relations with the Courts (2023[23]).

B. Ensure a people-centred approach to digital justice transformation

Self-assessment questions

- Are there mechanisms to support and encourage people to use digital justice services?
- Is there monitoring of the accessibility of digital legal and justice services?
- What mechanisms are used to ensure digital transformations of the justice system are focused on people's legal and justice needs?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Collect data that show which groups may or may not be using digital services to address their legal and justice needs.
- Continue to use easily accessible and people-centred alternatives to ensure no one is left behind.
- Assist groups of people who are less digitally capable by providing advice and assistance.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to consider the needs of digitally excluded groups – such as older people, people with disabilities or those without Internet access – and to provide accessible non-digital alternatives risks deepening existing justice gaps and undermining the goal of people-centred justice.

Box 4.7. Good practice examples of people-centred approaches to digital transformation

France: Promoting access to online public services through digital advisers

An initiative launched by the Secretary of State for Digital Transition and Electronic Communication created 4 000 digital advisor positions (*conseillers numériques*) who are trained to support access to online services for people and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The initiative aims to encourage stakeholders to embrace digital transformation by helping people and businesses to access and learn how to use online services in their day-to-day lives. The digital advisors are placed in areas that involve close interaction with the local population (e.g. city halls, libraries, associations). This allows for increased partnership between stakeholders, including central government and local authorities, associations, and solidarity-based or social enterprises. Workshops to train and help people and SMEs to use digital services and tools also form part of this initiative and are often organised by digital advisors.

Beyond contributing to bridging the digital gap in France, digital advisors are also an important source of help for users to find the right service channels or local facilities for tailored information or support (e.g. by providing contact details for different justice institutions, such as legal aid providers).

Sweden: Digitalisation Strategy

The Swedish government is working to improve and develop the use of modern technology in the judicial system. By moving from paper-based to digital exchanges of information between authorities, the system aims to reduce errors, shorten processing times and free up resources for core judicial tasks. Digitalisation also aims to strengthen analysis and follow-up by making cases traceable across the judicial chain, enabling better capacity planning, crime statistics and evaluation of legislative changes.

Importantly, Swedish authorities continue to offer services through non-digital channels. One can contact Swedish authorities in person, by telephone, postal mail, email or via their official websites. The Swedish National Courts Administration actively works on improving the accessibility of the digital platforms and e-services of Swedish national courts. The aim is to provide easily understandable information as well as a clear design and interface that cater to the needs of all citizens, including persons with disabilities. In 2021, the Swedish National Audit Office reviewed the work of public authorities to ensure accessible, high-quality services for individuals who are unable or unwilling to use digital channels in their contact with authorities. While the report does not focus exclusively on the justice system, it indicates that digitalisation has not led to a decline in access or service quality within Swedish public authorities.

Sources: World Justice Project (2025[24]); Government of France (2025[25]); (European Commission, 2025[26])

Fostering innovation and experimentation to enhance justice pathways

Why is it important?

Legal systems and institutions have evolved over centuries, generally with a system-centric focus rather than a people-centred focus. To bring about the necessary changes to make justice systems and institutions more people-centred, a conscious, intentional effort on evidence-based innovation seeking more people-centredness and system-wide application will be required.

Justice innovation is needed across a wide range of areas – such as in relation to regulatory reform, seeking innovative funding models for services to meet every day legal and justice needs, new models of integrated service delivery (such as health-justice partnerships), and ways to reach target groups. Innovation efforts bringing all parties together to develop targeted approaches can produce some of the most effective results.

To contribute to a people-centred justice transformation, the justice innovations must themselves seek people-centred goals; that is, putting the needs and capabilities of people at the centre, rather than being driven simply by the latest technological developments.

Importantly, justice institutions can stimulate innovation and the availability and accessibility of such services through appropriate engagement, financing, investment, and the enabling infrastructure and environment for non-governmental providers.

Priority checklist

A. Establish a clear set of priorities for innovation and investment across the justice system to ensure innovations are developed in a coherent way.
B. Enable and support stakeholder-driven innovation in justice processes through collaboration and co-design processes.

A. Establish a clear set of priorities for innovation and investment across the justice system

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a process for determining the priorities for investing in and working on innovation at the system level?
- Are these priorities driven by the target populations' priority legal needs and capabilities?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Use legal needs and user satisfaction data to identify priority areas for potential investment in innovation.
- Explore the allocation of resources to the development and evaluation of innovations in accordance with agreed-upon priorities.
- Ensure that the legal capability and needs of target groups are at the heart of the development of any innovation in service delivery or policy.
- Encourage innovation in non-governmental and private sector service delivery models through the provision of appropriate investment, regulatory and enabling infrastructure.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to adopt a system-wide approach to innovation and to align innovation priorities with people's actual needs and capabilities risks investing in technologies and other innovations that are poorly suited to delivering people-centred justice outcomes.
- Failing to promote a co-ordinated approach to innovations across institutions can undermine consistency; limit interoperability; and reduce the potential for a scalable, system-wide transformation.

B. Enable and support stakeholder-driven innovation in justice processes through collaboration and co-design processes

Self-assessment questions

- How are the perspectives of target groups, including those in vulnerable conditions, incorporated into the justice system innovation process?
- Are there mechanisms that bring target groups together with service providers, policymakers and other stakeholders to develop innovation initiatives?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish processes through which input from target groups can be regularly gathered in relation to possible innovations and reforms to justice policy and service delivery.
- Identify the priority issues affecting target groups for which access to justice may be improved through the development of collaborative solutions.
- Consider facilitating "innovation labs", "innovation hubs", legal or regulatory "sandboxes", and other mechanisms to identify, encourage and promote user-driven collaborative reform and innovation.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to empower and support target groups, as well as to provide tailored support mechanisms – such as for children, people with disabilities and indigenous communities – to participate meaningfully risks tokenistic engagement and undermines the credibility and impact of collaborative processes.

Box 4.8. Good practice examples of justice innovations

Canada: Regulatory innovation for legal services

Canadian provinces are actively exploring innovative ways to regulate the delivery of legal services to enhance access to justice.

The Law Society of Alberta's Innovation Sandbox creates a controlled environment in which regulatory constraints on legal service delivery are relaxed to encourage innovation. It allows both lawyers and non-lawyers to pilot new models aimed at improving efficiency, accessibility and affordability while maintaining oversight and compliance with ethical standards.

HiiL: Innovation Lab Process in Nigeria and Tunisia

HiiL worked with the governments to convene stakeholders from across the justice system, spanning different branches and levels of government, as well as civil society actors and representatives of justice users. Together, they co-designed new justice services aimed at responding more effectively to people's needs. Through the Justice Innovation Lab, HiiL encouraged innovation and experimentation to make services simpler, more effective and more efficient. The process also guided participants to approach service design from the viewpoint of users, ensuring that their needs and expectations shaped the resulting solutions.

The Justice Innovation Lab in Tunisia developed a plan for an online employment justice platform, the Lab in Ogun State, Nigeria developed a one-stop shop "place of refuge" in Yoruba, which will provide tailored support and referrals for survivors of domestic violence, and the Justice Innovation Lab in Imo State, Nigeria developed a Community Justice Centre model.

United States: Utah Regulatory Sandbox

Regulatory sandbox programmes aim to provide a safe regulatory environment for lawyers and other professionals to deliver non-traditional legal services in a controlled environment, such as in Utah under the supervision of the state supreme court. This space can, for example, allow the application of new technology – like natural language processing and machine learning – to legal services. They can also provide spaces where, in certain circumstances, non-lawyers (such as paralegals) and non-law businesses can provide services which in traditional spaces they could not provide.

As examples, in 2020, the Utah Supreme Court established a regulatory sandbox that eliminated a rule that prevented non-lawyers from co-owning legal firms. In Utah, a number of community organisations have made use of the Utah Sandbox to enable community justice workers to offer forms of legal advice and representation that would ordinarily not be permitted. For example, the Timpanogos Legal Centre, a non-profit supporting survivors of domestic violence, created a Certified Advocate Partner Programme, through which trained community justice workers can provide guidance on matters relating to protective orders. A particularly innovative aspect of this program is that it embeds community justice workers within municipal and county law enforcement and government agencies – 77% of clients served through the programme lived in rural areas of Utah.

Notes: Similarly, the Law Society of Saskatchewan's Future of Legal Services Initiative, including a Limited Licensing Pilot, is testing the provision of specified legal services by non-lawyers who are not otherwise authorised to practise. This approach aims to increase access to regulated legal services for underserved populations, balancing innovation with public protection.
Sources: HiiL (2023[27]; 2023[28]); State Justice Institute (n.d.[29]); Nabil (2021[30]); Burnett and Sandefur (2024[31]).

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5 Empowering people

This chapter addresses the fourth pillar of the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems*: Empowering people. It begins by summarising the three provisions of the Recommendation under this pillar: providing equal and faire opportunities to all stakeholders to be informed, consulted and engaged in the design and delivery of justice services; fostering empowerment and legal literacy so that people can manage their own legal matters; and strengthening the capabilities of those working in the justice system. For each provision, the chapter provides a priority checklist, followed by a list of self-assessment questions, key actions to undertake, pitfalls to avoid and good practice examples from other countries.

Key provisions of the OECD Recommendation

Empower people to make a people-centred justice transformation happen by:

- Providing equal and fair opportunities to all stakeholders inside and outside the justice system, including marginalised, underserved and groups in vulnerable situations and individuals with lived experiences to be informed, consulted and engaged in the design and delivery of justice services while avoiding undue influence and policy capture.
- Fostering empowerment and legal literacy of people, including the capacity to manage their own legal matters and disputes, where appropriate, through legal education, effective communication strategies, and multi-sectoral collaboration and outreach.
- Promoting competence, professionalism, empowerment, engagement and diversity of the justice workforce in a transparent manner.

Providing equal and fair opportunities to all stakeholders to be informed, consulted and engaged in the design and delivery of justice services

Why is it important?

Services designed without sufficient understanding of the needs, circumstances, obstacles faced and other factors impacting all people, including different target groups will rarely be as effective and efficient as those designed through their engagement.

Laypeople may face challenges accessing, affording or navigating the justice system and formal legal institutions and may thus view them as distant and complex. Reforms initiated solely by the justice system may, therefore, not fully reflect citizen's needs and experiences, and only have a limited impact. Ongoing engagement, communication, and the consultation with people– from defining legal and justice needs and how they are identified and measured to the planning, design and delivery of policies and services – are essential for effective outcomes.

Such engagement must be meaningful, consistent and people-centred: conducted in the language, format, location and through the channels that are the most accessible to the intended audiences. In practice, this may require linking justice services with other public services such as health, housing and employment, which are often the key points of contact for target groups. One-off or ad hoc efforts are often insufficient; there is a need for long-term, co-designed engagement with regular feedback. It also calls for close collaboration with non-governmental organisations that support target groups, to help deliver information and services where they are needed the most.

Priority checklist

A. Establish governance policies and frameworks that require the target groups to be informed, consulted and engaged.
B. Implement effective and appropriate engagement and consultation processes with target groups.
C. Support people, especially target groups, to be informed, consulted and engaged.
D. Establish partnerships with non-governmental stakeholders serving target groups to support their participation in justice processes.

A. Establish governance policies and frameworks that require the target groups to be informed, consulted and engaged

Self-assessment questions

- Are target groups identified and prioritised?
- Do existing laws and policies mandate justice institutions to regularly, effectively and meaningfully consult all people, especially target groups, on their legal and justice needs and on the design and delivery of justice services?
- Are there governance structures (e.g. advisory councils, participatory mechanisms) with an appropriate budget that includes representation of people with lived experience, community-based organisations and other non-governmental stakeholders?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Use Legal Needs Surveys (LNS) and official data (e.g., census, health, housing, social services) to identify target groups (e.g., groups at higher risk of legal and justice needs), in partnership with other state and non-governmental stakeholders.
- Establish clear policies for the justice system mandating appropriate levels of stakeholder engagement and consultation (particularly for the planning, design and delivery of services), including the defined minimum standards for engagement.
- Monitor and evaluate engagement with clear indicators, targets, and public reporting.
- Establish safeguards (such as clear criteria for participant selection, independent oversight bodies, and rotating membership and term limits) to prevent tokenism, policy capture or undue influence in participatory processes.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to adopt a whole-of-society approach to identifying target groups, including those outside formal justice channels, can lead to poorly targeted services.
- Failing to embed consultation processes in policies or institutional mandates and to set clear expectations for stakeholder engagement risks inconsistent practices, uneven quality, weak accountability and reduced legitimacy of participatory efforts.
- Failing to ensure transparency and clear selection criteria for participation can limit the depth, reach and effectiveness of consultations, particularly in target groups, and increases the risk of policy capture.

Box 5.1. Good practice examples of frameworks to engage citizens in the design and delivery of legal and justice services

Ireland: Participation of children and young people in decision making

In 2015, Ireland introduced the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making. This whole-of-government strategy, developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (since 2020 referred to as the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth), aimed at promoting the active participation of children and young people in decision-making processes, including in community, education, health, well-being and legal settings.

The present strategy includes:

- The Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan 2024-2028, which builds on the ambition and achievements of the first National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015-2020, which set out and delivered on the Irish government's commitment to realise the right of children and young people to be heard when decisions that affect their lives are being taken.
- The National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making provides tools and guidance to government departments, state agencies and non-governmental organisations to improve their practice in listening to children and young people and in giving them a voice in decision making.

New Zealand: Cabinet Community Engagement Guidelines

As part of its Open Government Partnership commitments and in response to the 2020 terrorist attack and the subsequent Royal Commission report, the New Zealand government aimed to strengthen community engagement in the design, development and implementation of policies. The government has developed the Policy Community Engagement Tool, which provides policymakers and their agencies with detailed guidance and key steps for inclusive, respectful and meaningful engagement.

Sources: Government of New Zealand (2025[1]); OECD (2024[2]).

B. Implement effective and appropriate engagement and consultation processes with target groups

Self-assessment questions

- Are engagement and consultation strategies co-designed with target groups and used to inform justice system policies and actions?
- Does the justice system maintain relationships with the representatives of target groups to enable effective and ongoing engagement, including target groups?
- Are there collaboration mechanisms with other public services, such as health, housing, homelessness, and domestic-violence, to create pathways into justice for people with complex needs and other target groups?
- Do justice institutions and services have a knowledge of and maintain partnerships with key non-governmental stakeholders serving the target same groups?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Ensure that justice institutions have the mandate, capacity and budgets to engage proactively with all relevant stakeholders, including target groups, to inform all key policy, reform and service delivery actions.
- Ensure that strategies for engaging target groups are informed by system-wide and society-wide approach and strategies developed in other public service areas (such as health and social services).
- Where possible, co-design engagement strategies and activities with the target groups, including lived-experience individuals.
- Implement regular monitoring and reporting processes to assess the effectiveness of engagement and the impact of participatory practices in justice policy and service delivery.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to monitor or evaluate engagement mechanisms and to involve non-governmental stakeholders can prevent learning, limit accountability, allow for ineffective practices, and reduce effectiveness of justice transformation efforts. It can also lead to missed trusted access points and existing infrastructure that can strengthen stakeholder engagement and reach target groups.

Box 5.2. Good practice examples of engagement and consultation processes with target groups

Brazil: Access to justice for indigenous communities

Brazil is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse countries in the world. With 305 indigenous ethnic groups and 274 indigenous languages, the challenges of access to government services are sizeable and often remain unsolved. In response, the Court of Justice of Minas Gerais, together with the Electoral Court, launched a project with the Maxakalí – a small indigenous community that faces barriers to accessing government services, including justice – to co-create solutions that help improve access to justice and other services. Targeting the communities in the rural Aguas Formosas region where more than 2 000 Maxakalí people and 190 families live, the initiative has taken a non-invasive approach. Courts aims to be perceived as guests and observers of the community rather than as external institutional bodies in their territories. Moreover, the project applied a methodology based on anthropological evidence collected from the Maxakalís to pilot an approach that is culturally sensitive and based on active listening. The initiative consisted of hearings and regular meetings to understand the community's specific challenges and legal needs to make the delivery of justice services more inclusive. Altogether, more than 50 public hearings have been held in the Maxakalí native language. The project seemed to have a positive impact as, by the end of the project, the members of the Maxakalí community had filed a total of 105 lawsuits to protect their rights to social security and to gain legal recognition of their marriages.

Canada: Effective engagement and co-design in the development of the 2025 Indigenous Justice Strategy

In January 2021, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada was mandated, in consultation and co-operation with indigenous partners, provinces and territories, to develop an Indigenous Justice Strategy to address systemic discrimination and the overrepresentation of indigenous people in the justice system. Aligned with this mandate, from 2021 to 2024, Canada worked with First Nations, Inuit and Métis community members, representative organisations, and provincial and territorial governments to develop a federal Indigenous Justice Strategy that would provide a basis for continued collaborative action. Based on this stakeholder engagement and on reports submitted by First Nations,

Inuit and Métis governments and organisations, the final Indigenous Justice Strategy includes 26 priority action items and 3 distinction-based chapters, co-developed with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and interested modern treaty and self-government partners. The strategy aims to provide a vision and priority areas of action to urgently address the systemic discrimination and overrepresentation of indigenous people in the criminal justice system; support the revitalisation and enforcement of indigenous laws in the spirit of co-operative federalism; and improve community safety. The Indigenous Justice Strategy was publicly released on 10 March 2025.

Sources: Department of Justice Canada (2025[3]); Brazil, Federal Regional Court of the 6th Region (2023[4]); Regional Electoral Court of Minas Gerais (2023[5]); OECD (2020[6]; 2023[7]).

C. Support people, especially target groups, to be informed, consulted and engaged

Self-assessment questions

- Is there an adequate range and quantity of support services (including legal aid, advice and minor assistance services, counselling, and victim support) to enable people to participate in the design and delivery of justice services?
- Do engagement strategies involve staff that are representative of the people they are intended to serve?
- Does the justice system provide information and services in multiple languages and formats to accommodate the diverse needs of people?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Identify the target groups that will most likely need support to effectively engage with the justice system, and the most-needed type of support.
- Provide information and services in multiple languages and formats to accommodate diverse needs.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to support the meaningful participation of target groups and those with lived experience, as well as to provide tailored engagement support – such as accessible formats, capacity-building or trusted intermediaries – risks designing services that do not reflect the needs or realities of these groups.

Box 5.3. Good practice examples of supporting people to participate in the design and delivery of justice services

Canada: Development of Canada's Black Justice Strategy

In 2023, Canada commenced work on its Black Justice Strategy to address the overrepresentation of Black people in the criminal justice system, including as victims and survivors of crime, and to reform the criminal justice system to ensure that all people have access to equal treatment before and under the law. A key element of this process was facilitating comprehensive consultations with Black communities. Department of Justice Canada contracted 12 Black-led community-based organisations to lead targeted consultation and engagement activities across Canada. Comprehensive engagement with Black communities was achieved through these supported consultations and the availability of an online survey to enable Black people of all ages in Canada to contribute even if they could not participate in community engagement activities. Learnings from this engagement underpinned the design and development of the Black Justice Strategy.

Sources: Government of Canada (2025[8]); Reginal et al. (2023[9]).

D. Establish partnerships with non-governmental stakeholders serving target groups to support their participation in justice processes

Self-assessment questions

- Do justice institutions provide non-governmental stakeholders with information, training and guidance to support their roles as "problem noticers" (see below), intermediaries and referrers for people experiencing legal and justice needs?
- Are there formal mechanisms to co-develop materials with non-governmental stakeholders that help translate legal information into accessible formats for people and target groups?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Consider establishing collaborative frameworks between justice institutions and non-governmental stakeholders to support joint planning, service delivery and feedback mechanisms across sectors.
- Consider providing non-governmental stakeholders with targeted training, legal information and tools to enable them to identify legal and justice needs early ("problem noticers") and refer individuals to the appropriate justice services and pathways.
- Consider co-delivering assistance services with trusted non-governmental stakeholders, particularly those with established relationships in hard-to-reach or low-trust groups.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to identify and engage relevant non-governmental stakeholders can result in missed opportunities to reach underserved and other target groups and fragmented service delivery.
- Developing legal materials without co-creation or user testing may result in resources that are inaccessible, culturally irrelevant or poorly adapted to the needs of the groups served.
- Excluding non-governmental stakeholders from justice policy planning and evaluation processes may result in policies that are disconnected from on-the-ground realities and people's legal and justice needs.

Box 5.4. Good practice examples of providing support to civil society organisations

Australia: Webinars for community workers

The Legal Aid Commission in New South Wales runs regular free community legal education webinars designed especially for community workers, such as support workers, teachers, social workers, youth workers and health workers.

The webinars regularly cover a wide range of continuing legal education topics, including "So you got subpoenaed – what now", which helps civil society organisation workers learn about subpoenas, what they are and how to respond to them, as well as what to expect when going to court, so they can support their clients.

Citizens Advice: Supporting independent charities under the national framework in the United Kingdom

Citizens Advice is a network of independent charities that provide free, confidential and impartial advice to help people with their problems. The network is co-ordinated by a central body known as the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which operates under the name Citizens Advice.

Citizens Advice is supported by a range of funding sources, including some government departments, donations, volunteers and other public services. Importantly, they receive specialist support for the approximately nine separate public service areas, including benefits, consumer, debt and money, family, health, and "law and courts".

Métis Nation of Ontario: Financial support to non-governmental stakeholders on access to justice in Canada

In 1993, the Métis Nation of Ontario was established through the will of Métis people and Métis communities coming together throughout Ontario to create a Métis-specific governance structure. Presently, the province-wide governance structure includes a registry of over 28 000 Métis citizens, approximately 30 chartered community councils, a provincial governing body, an annual general assembly, charitable foundations and an economic development arm. It has also built a delivery structure to meet the socio-economic needs of its citizens and communities.

The Law Foundation of Ontario has provided the Métis Nation of Ontario with substantial funding and support to enable its advocacy programme to increase the understanding of individual rights, responsibilities, and the legal system, encompassing knowledge and awareness of laws, regulations and legal processes that affect the lives of Métis people.

Sources: Legal Aid NSW (n.d.[10]); Citizens Advice (n.d.[11]); Métis Nation of Ontario (n.d.[12]); Law Foundation of Ontario (2024[13]).

Fostering empowerment and legal literacy so that people can manage their own legal matters

Why is it important?

Promoting equal access to justice will require efforts to improve the legal capabilities of those who have traditionally faced barriers. Legal capability ranges from legal literacy – the ability to understand spoken and written legal information, complete forms, and communicate effectively in a legal setting – to the ability to manage their own legal matters by taking decisions about how to proceed to solve a justice problem and navigating the necessary procedures. If people increase their legal capability, they might be less

vulnerable to legal and justice needs and more able to access justice services to resolve needs that do arise.

While the justice system is not responsible for improving broad literacy and numeracy, it is within its ambit to design public information, referral systems, forms, processes, advice services and expert legal assistance that meet the needs of people at all capability levels. This may mean providing targeted legal information and support when legal and needs arise.

As with reaching target groups in vulnerable situations, non-governmental stakeholders can play a vital role in helping to improve legal capability. This includes stakeholders working in other sectors with which people who have legal and justice needs often engage before reaching out to legal services. Such collaboration can help tailor legal capability initiatives to the people they aim to reach, ensuring broader and better access to justice.

Priority checklist

A. Understand the legal capability of the different groups of people, including target groups in vulnerable situations.
B. Implement a strategy to provide timely, targeted and appropriate legal education and information to enhance people's capability.
C. Provide meaningful and accessible information concerning dispute resolution options, costs (including time) and options to support the individual's decision making.

A. Understand and support the legal capability of the different groups of people

Self-assessment questions

- Does the justice system regularly assess levels of legal capability across the jurisdiction including levels of legal knowledge, confidence and skills and take these into account in developing policy and designing services?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Identify the key elements of legal capability and understand how they impact the experience of legal and justice needs and the responses people make to them.
- Provide a range of information, advice and support services that are readily accessible to help people of all levels of legal capability address the most important and common needs they experience.
- Develop relationships with other sectors and with appropriate non-governmental stakeholders to enlist their support in strengthening legal capability and providing referral pathways.
- Encourage and support the inclusion of basic practical knowledge of the legal and justice services within citizenship education or civics classes, or similar programmes that teach people about their rights, responsibilities and the relevant institutions.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to assess people's legal capability levels regularly may result in policies and services that do not address real-world needs or capacity gaps.

Box 5.5. Good practice examples of understanding the legal capability of different target groups

The Netherlands: Frontline information, advice and referral

In the Netherlands, the Legal Services Counters (LSC) act as front offices and provide primary legal aid (information and advice). There are 30 offices and 24 service points across the country, which share a website and a call centre. Due to the even geographical spread, Dutch citizens can find an LSC within a reasonable distance (within a one-hour radius by public transport). The offices have the same layout and appearance and have been designed to look inviting and accessible.

The initial contact at the LSCs is aimed at clarifying the nature of the problem. The legal advisors work with clients to find out:

- whether the problem is actually a legal problem
- whether the problem is within the scope of the legal services provided by the LSCs (LSCs do not deal with all legal problems – e.g. those between businesses)
- what kind of help is most suitable for the client.

Potential clients can apply to the LSC for help through several different channels: website, telephone, counter or referral for a consultation (by appointment).

New Zealand: Building capability and Community Law

Community Law New Zealand incorporates the national leadership body and represents all community law centres around New Zealand. In addition to representing clients for specific legal matters, Community Law provides a range of online resources and community workshops to improve the capability and awareness of all New Zealanders. Online resources include the Community Law Manual, a range of easy-to-read guides and a series of letter templates addressing common legal matters (such as tenancy, privacy, consumer and employment matters) that assist New Zealanders to take steps to manage their problems themselves more easily.

Sources: van der Lans, Peters and Verdonschot (2023[14]); Community Law (2025[15]).

B. Implement a strategy to provide timely, targeted and appropriate legal education and information

Self-assessment questions

- Is there an overall public legal education/justice information strategy for society?
- Does the justice system provide legal education tools and opportunities that address most common and important legal and justice needs?
- Is there a high level of awareness among citizens of public legal education/information resources and learning opportunities?
- Are public legal education/information resources regularly evaluated, including through targeted feedback, to assess and improve their effectiveness?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop and implement a co-ordinated, targeted justice system-wide public legal education/information strategy that:

  - is sufficiently centralised to ensure appropriate information and education resources are available for all groups of people and issues
  - takes a targeted approach focusing on specific topics of legal information for people in particular circumstances
  - ensures information is provided where and when it is needed the most and in formats people prefer to use
  - is developed with target groups in mind and with their involvement.
- Implement an ongoing communications strategy to ensure high awareness of public legal education/information resources and learning opportunities among all groups of society.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to raise awareness of the available resources may result in low uptake and a limited impact on people's legal capability.

Box 5.6. Good practice examples of providing legal education and information

Spain: Providing targeted information for individuals with legal and justice needs

The digital transformation conducted through the 2030 Justice Plan includes the development of Justice Folders. The Justice Folder initiative aims to offer individuals, companies and professionals not only unified and homogeneous points of contact with the justice administration, as well as a personalised service for each contact. The Justice Folder initiative aims to unify and facilitate access to services. For each citizen, the Justice Folder will include a range of information such as the list of services that can be obtained, citizens' rights and obligations using those services, judicial files in which the citizen was an interested party, access to personalised information in relation to legal matters that concern them, and avenues to make suggestions and file complaints.

The Netherlands: Online self-help, information and support

The Rechtwijzer website (Rechtwijzer translates into Roadmap to Justice; see www.rechtwijzer.nl) and the Legal Services Counter website offer online self-help, information and support. Rechtwijzer helps people find solutions to their legal problems in an interactive manner, focusing on a range of everyday areas of law and legal needs, including family, consumer, government, housing, employment and debt. Citizens can thereby navigate easy-to-use processes to solve their problems in their own time, at their own pace, at low or no cost, and with assistance when needed. Rechtwijzer combines publicly run guided pathways for common legal and justice needs with online products and services from private service providers. In 2022, Rechtwijzer registered more than 712 000 unique visitors.

United Kingdom: Public legal education

The Law Society is one source of public legal education. It aims to improve the public's understanding of the importance of the rule of law, access to justice and constitutional rights. In practical terms, the Law Society provides plain-language information covering a range of common legal issues, such as buying a home, getting a divorce and making a will, as well as finding and using a solicitor and how to pay the legal services. In addition to information resources, the Law Society's public legal education activities include sessions or workshops in places such as schools, youth groups and prisons; awareness-raising campaigns; and community events. Importantly, the Law Society provides a guide that assists law firms and legal professionals to develop a public legal education strategy or programme.

Sources: Law Society (2025[16]); Government of Spain (2023[17]); van der Lans, Peters and Verdonschot (2023[14]).

C. Provide meaningful and accessible information concerning dispute resolution options, costs (including time) and options to support individuals' decision making

Self-assessment questions

- Is there simple, up-to-date and accessible (e.g. written, online, visual, audio) guidance about the range of dispute resolution options available, including their comparisons?
- For each dispute resolution option, is there clear, plain-language guidance on:
  - The likely costs involved for individuals or small businesses, including any fee waivers or subsidies?
  - The time frames typically required to resolve matters through each option?
  - The likelihood of success or resolution rates, supported by aggregate data or case studies?
- Do justice institutions provide information on the availability of support services (e.g. legal advice, caseworkers, navigators) to assist individuals in selecting and pursuing the most appropriate dispute resolution option?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop and publish simple guidance accessible in multiple formats that outlines the full range of dispute resolution options available, tailored to the most common legal issues faced by individuals and small businesses.
- Provide clear, plain-language information on the likely costs and expected time frames.
- Design and disseminate comparative tools and resources such as decision trees, checklists or interactive guides that help individuals evaluate and choose the most appropriate dispute resolution option for their situation.
- Inform the public about the availability of support services, including legal aid, caseworkers and navigators, that can assist with selecting and navigating dispute resolution pathways.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to provide comprehensive guidance on the range of dispute resolution options can leave individuals unaware of all the pathways available to address their legal and justice needs.
- Neglecting to provide information on key decision-making factors, such as likely costs, time frames and success rates, can prevent individuals from making informed choices.
- Assuming that a "one-size-fits-all" approach is sufficient rather than tailoring information and support to the specific needs of different target groups and types of legal and justice needs.

Box 5.7. Good practice examples of information on dispute resolution options

European Union: Publishing cost and cost calculations for taking legal action

The European Union promotes transparency in legal processes by ensuring that citizens can access information on the costs associated with court proceedings. In particular, the European Union mandates that individuals considering litigation or seeking to enforce a judgement be informed about the relevant procedural costs in each member state. This commitment is operationalised through the European Union's e-Justice Portal, which serves as a central access point for cost-related information. Given that litigation costs in civil and commercial matters are governed by national laws rather than harmonised EU regulations, the e-Justice Portal provides direct links to each member state's resources. This approach facilitates access to detailed cost information, enabling individuals and legal professionals to take informed decisions based on the legal and financial implications of initiating a court proceeding.

France: Online guide to alternative dispute resolution

Since alternative dispute resolution is mandatory in certain cases, France has published an online guide outlining the conditions where the use of such a mechanism is required. The website further provides information regarding the process, costs, benefits and other cases when the alternative dispute resolution might be sought. The guide further introduces potential third-party facilitators to the process. This includes the *conciliateur de justice* – a volunteer legal officer who assists in the resolution free of charge. To assist citizens in finding a *conciliateur*, the guide links to an external platform that helps users locate the nearest *conciliateur* based on their geographic location. If users are not able to find the information they are looking for, the website offers a list of relevant contacts, including a free public information line operated by the Ministry of Justice, along with references to relevant legislation, organisations and additional informational materials.

Sources: European Union (2021[18]); Government of France (2023[19]; 2023[20]).

Strengthening the capabilities of those working in the justice sector

Why is it important?

People working in justice institutions play a critical role in facilitating access to justice through people-centred justice. At the very core of justice institutions and services are the individuals who work to deliver justice, including judges, court clerks, lawyers, administrators, community workers, and those working on people-centred information and communications technology. Equally important, administrative, public engagement and social support staff often play an important role as the first points of contact for people engaging with the justice system. All in all, it is the quality of the engagement between the justice workers and person seeking assistance that may determine whether the service is accessible and centred on peoples' needs.

Enabling justice staff to participate in people-centred justice transformation and to create a culture of reform, service improvement and innovation is essential for sustainable progress in the justice system. Careful planning is needed to ensure that appropriate staff are recruited, capacities and capabilities are developed, and human and other resources are allocated where and when they are needed to deliver people-centred justice.

Priority checklist

A. Plan for the recruitment, development, maintenance and training of a justice workforce that facilitates access to justice

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a justice system-wide staffing strategy, including with skills and capability requirements, that complements and supports the broader system-wide planning process for delivering people-centred justice?
- Are there strategies to recruit, retain and promote staff from diverse backgrounds, particularly those representative of the people served?
- Does the justice system have a system-wide ongoing workforce training and development plan? Does the plan include key people-centred justice competencies for roles and training?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Based on the broader justice system strategy, map the key human resource requirements and existing gaps in terms of personnel, skills and capabilities as well as anticipated ongoing training and development requirements.
- Develop targeted recruitment, retention, and promotion strategies to ensure the justice workforce reflects the diversity of the target groups it serves.
- Develop and implement a system -wide ongoing workforce training and development plan as part of the justice system staffing plan, also based on client satisfaction and feedback results and regular review of effectiveness.
- Develop a comprehensive range of tools, guides and other resources to assist justice system staff on a day-to-day basis in their role of facilitating access to people-centred justice.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to develop a co-ordinated, justice system-wide staffing strategy results in fragmented workforce planning that is not aligned with people-centred justice goals.
- Failing to define core skills, integrate diversity and inclusion, and anticipate the impact of digital transformation undermines the system's ability to build a workforce that is equipped, representative and future-ready.
- Failing to regularly monitor, evaluate and adapt workforce strategies risks stagnation and limits opportunities to improve responsiveness, innovation and service effectiveness in a changing justice environment.

Box 5.8. Good practice examples of developing a workforce to deliver people-centred justice services

Italy: Initiatives strengthening the capacity of courts to deliver people-centred justice services

Italy has undertaken a series of initiatives to strengthen capacities in the delivery of justice services. First, it has integrated a diversity of profiles (e.g. psychologists, economists, political scientists, statisticians, organisational sociologists) to support judicial activity. The Trial Office, introduced by Legislative Decree 179/2012, has also contributed to strengthening human capacity in courts. The reform included the extraordinary recruitment of personnel with diverse profiles, aimed at supporting judicial activities and addressing the needs of both the courts and justice users. This measure aimed to improve access to justice by supporting judges in their normal activities of study, legal research, and drafting and organising documents. It also included training to support digital transition in the justice system. The Cartabia Reform, on the other hand, has contributed to strengthening capacities by introducing a national register for court-appointed experts and enabling the mobility for these professionals. This register has favoured cases benefiting from the most suitable technical expertise.

Portugal: Advancing a people-centred justice system

Portugal's Centre de Estudos Judiciáros (CEJ) designed its 2024-2025 Continuous Training Plan following a structured assessment process involving the Superior Councils of the Judiciary, Administrative and Tax Courts, and the Public Prosecutor's Office. The objective is to update and develop the professional and personal competences necessary throughout the career of a magistrate. The plan delineates competency frameworks segmented by functional area, specialisation and thematic discipline. It covers technical-legal updates – via seminars and workshops on legislative changes and jurisprudence – as well as transversal skills such as stress management, decision making, communication and ethical-deontological training. This system-wide, competency-based training strategy ensures that legal professionals receive tailored, ongoing development aligned with both institutional priorities and evolving justice needs.

Sweden: Svarta Listan (blacklist) guide for simplifying legal language

The guide lists complex or outdated legal terms and suggests clearer alternatives. This initiative helps simplify legal language in legislation and judicial processes. It is a targeted simplification tool that has been published since 1988 by the legal chief in the Prime Minister's Office, vetted by legal linguists and ministry staff.

United Kingdom: A toolkit for judges in family law cases

Writing to children is one important way of ensuring that they have the opportunity to participate in family court proceedings. A child's right to participate in proceedings and to have the final decision communicated to them in a way they can understand is enshrined in international and domestic legislation and guidance – as a way of both informing welfare-based decisions and upholding children's rights and access to justice. This toolkit has been co-developed with input from children and young people, judges, researchers and academics, social workers, clinical psychologists, communication experts, and others who work with children and the courts. It gathers together evidence and good practice, and is a helpful reference point for judges when they are trying to decide if and how to write to the child or children involved in their cases.

United States: The Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable Toolkit

The Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable Toolkit, developed by the US Department of Justice's Office for Access to Justice, offers a structured guide for integrating civil legal aid into broader government

services. Designed in collaboration with 17 federal agencies, it aims to support justice system actors in improving outcomes across policy areas such as housing, employment, healthcare and preventing domestic violence. The toolkit responds to the recognition that legal problems are often barriers to achieving broader social and economic objectives, particularly for vulnerable populations.

The toolkit includes practical guidance and real-world case studies on how legal aid can enhance public service delivery. It outlines key principles for civil legal aid, offers strategies for collaboration across sectors, and maps federal funding sources that justice institutions and legal service providers can access. Notably, it presents detailed examples of how legal aid has supported veterans, safeguarded families, prevented homelessness and improved access to healthcare, highlighting its relevance to frontline public service goals.

This toolkit exemplifies a comprehensive, government-endorsed resource to guide justice system professionals in embedding people-centred justice approaches within national policy frameworks. It also illustrates how legal empowerment can be operationalised through interagency collaboration and targeted resource planning.

Zambia: Recruiting and developing staff for different levels and modes of service delivery

As part of its strategy to improve access to legal aid services for vulnerable Zambians, a system of paralegals has been implemented to fill the gap of limited legal aid service provision. The paralegals offer affordable or free legal assistance to the population across the country. The system of paralegals has been established with three levels of service each with a different level of qualification and training:

- Level 1 paralegals provide legal education, legal information, legal advice, legal assistance, mediation and negotiation, as well as orientation and referrals.
- Level 2 paralegals provide legal advice, mediation and negotiation, and orientation and referrals.
- Level 3 paralegals provide basic legal education, legal information, mediation, orientation and referrals.

Importantly, the recruitment and training of people to fill the different roles of paralegals at each level and in different locations or contexts (for example, some work in courts, some in correctional facilities and police stations, and some in civil society organisations), is based on the capabilities and knowledge needed for each of the roles.

Sources: Government of Italy (n.d.[21]); Government of Germany (2020[22]); CEJ (2024[23]; 2024[24]); Legal Aid NSW (n.d.[25]; n.d.[10]); US Department of Justice (2014[26]); OECD (2023[27]); Family Justice Young People's Board (2025[28]).

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6 Participatory and evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation

Moving toward people-centred justice requires accessible, disaggregated data – including on marginalised and underserved groups – to guide planning, reform and investment. These data should be accompanied by strong data governance, privacy safeguards, interoperable systems and improved institutional capacity to collect, generate and disseminate data. This chapter presents a set of self-assessment questions, proposed actions and good practice examples to support participatory, evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation to support the implementation of the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems*.

Key provisions of the OECD Recommendation

Commit to participatory and evidence-based planning, monitoring and evaluation by:

- Enhancing the role of evidence for operational, policy and decision-making purposes, in line with data protection standards, by:
  - Improving data availability and quality, including from a people-centred perspective, to inform decision making, planning, investment and reforms in the justice system, including disaggregated data related to marginalised, underserved groups and those in vulnerable situations, using a comprehensive range of data sources that can be easily accessed, used and made publicly available.
  - Developing sound and coherent governance arrangements for justice data and evidence, supported by appropriate data security, sovereignty and privacy safeguards, interoperable systems, and tools and protocols to facilitate data access and sharing across the data value cycle while also ensuring equity and non-discrimination in data collection, analysis, exchange and use.
- Developing and implementing monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms for people-centred justice strategies and initiatives, among others to determine whether access to justice is experienced by all people equitably; eliminate any systemic barriers to opportunities and benefits for groups in vulnerable situations; and identify any needed reforms to laws, policies or processes to advance equity and accessibility for all people by:
- Regularly conducting robust review, evaluation and assessment of the performance of justice systems and services, including based on people-centred justice data, and at the institutional and the systemic level.
- Building the skills and capacity of relevant institutional actors to generate, collect and disseminate up-to-date inclusive, representative and reliable information, evidence and data, including people-centred justice and anonymised aggregated open data.

Improving data availability and quality

Why is it important?

Establishing a shared, system-wide understanding of people-centred data lays the groundwork for more responsive justice services that reflect real-world legal and justice needs and experiences, including among underserved and marginalised populations. This can only be achieved by transforming traditional data practices into dynamic systems that prioritise people's lived experiences and access to justice. This transformation must be built upon a robust justice data ecosystem, allowing data from diverse institutions to be meaningfully integrated, shared and analysed to guide policy and service delivery.

The data collection needs to go beyond institutional variables and focus on the individual legal and justice needs, desired outcomes, obstacles faced, and pathways of users and the larger number of people that do not become users of justice services. Only these data can inform a people-centred process of reform, justice policy formulation and service delivery.

It should also be understood that different stakeholders need reliable people-centred justice data for different reasons. Justice service providers need it to better plan and monitor their services. Justice policymakers need ready and timely access to comprehensive, high-quality data from across the justice system presented in useful formats to easily use during the policymaking process. Individuals, families, small and medium-sized enterprises, and all those experiencing legal and justice needs require access to

sufficient information in a useful format to inform their decision making, including whether or not to take action, which justice pathway to follow, and what other reasonable outcomes and costs could be expected.

The responsibility and capacity for developing the different data sources are distributed across a range of state and non-government actors. Data contributing to the justice data ecosystem would need to be provided by courts; government legal aid agencies; community legal centres; non-governmental public service providers; and other community agencies, private practitioners and others. Ensuring sufficient commonality and interoperability will remain a key challenge but one that can be met if government takes a key leadership role.

Priority checklist

A. Establish a system-wide shared understanding of people-centred data and transform approaches to collecting and using such data.
B. Develop a justice data ecosystem to support people-centred justice.
C. Establish data quality standards and data collection protocols (possibly working with national statistics authorities) to ensure the quality of justice data.

A. Establish a system-wide shared understanding of people-centred data and transform approaches to collecting and using such data

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a set of prioritised people-centred justice variables to be collected, focusing on people and their legal and justice needs, pathways and outcomes?
- Are courts, tribunals and other justice institutions and services authorised and responsible under their mandates to collect people-centred data on the demographics, needs, capabilities, etc. of service users?
- Do justice institutions have strategies to ensure consistent, high-quality data collection and use, given the growing diversity of users and online data entry?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Ensure that the mandates of all justice institutions and service providers require and empower them to collect people-centred data as part of the ongoing administrative data collection process.
- Determine at a system-wide level the appropriate variables to be collected as part of people-centred justice data collection and prioritise these variables so that:
  - A minimum “core” set of people-centred variables is defined and collected by the maximum range of service providers for the maximum appropriate range of services.
  - Additional variables providing greater insight can be collected to meet the specific needs of services and when circumstances allow.
- Work with broader national government and statistics agencies to ensure that justice data variables are consistent (as far as practicable) with broader national variables and standards.
- Develop a unified data collection system and tools (including software) with standardised definitions and criteria for system-wide application.
- Implement strategies to maintain the quality and consistency of data entry to accompany the increasingly diverse range of people entering data as more and more processes become digital.
- Plan for the progressive introduction of enhanced people-centred data collection processes to parallel ordinary IT and digital technology upgrades over a five- to ten-year period.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to agree on common people-centred data variables, implement system-wide standards and provide a clear mandate can lead to inconsistent, fragmented data that undermine evidence-based decision making and limit the ability to design effective, inclusive justice services.
- Failing to involve key actors such as national statistics authorities and all levels of the justice system and other sectors can hinder the development of a coherent data ecosystem.

Box 6.1. Good practice examples of approaches for data collection and analysis

Australia: Identifying everyday justice and people-centred variables, definitions, standards and collection

Improving the cohesion and co-ordination of Australia's legal assistance landscape continues to be a priority for federal and state governments. Establishing common data standards and protocols in that environment is challenging, and in 2011 the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department commenced a collaborative data standards project with representatives of the legal assistance sector to provide guidance to all parts of the sector on defining terms and best practice principles for data collection. The project culminated in the publication of a (first edition) *Data Standards Manual* in 2014, which has been updated regularly as lessons are learnt from the practical collection and use of data.

Sources: Australian Attorney General's Department (2021[1]; 2024[2]).

B. Develop a justice data ecosystem to support people-centred justice

Self-assessment questions

- Does the justice system have a comprehensive plan for establishing or enhancing the justice data ecosystem to support the implementation of people-centred justice?
- Has the justice system identified the types of data and data sources that could potentially be part of the ecosystem (administrative data, LNS, user satisfaction surveys, official data, targeted studies, etc.)?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop a model for a justice data ecosystem that identifies existing, potential and needed data, covering topics such as legal and justice needs, legal capability, and the effectiveness of services and programmes, among others.
- Identify justice institutions and broader society responsible for data sources and develop appropriate support and co-ordination mechanisms to progressively move towards a coherent and consistent system of data collection and use.
- Support the development of system-wide and institutional digital infrastructure for collecting, managing and reporting their data as required.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to shift to people-centred data and to collect data on and monitor what works for whom and under what circumstances hinders the development of responsive justice services.

Box 6.2. Good practice examples of developing a justice data ecosystem

Colombia: Developing people-centred justice data ecosystem to support people-centred purpose and achievements

Colombia continues to build upon progress made in developing a data ecosystem to support implementation of people-centred justice approaches, beginning with the assessment of legal needs through LNS. Following the conduct of 2016 LNS, Colombia has continued its programme of legal need assessment through the implementation of a legal needs component on a broader regular national survey that focuses primarily on crime victimisation.

The Colombian Ministry of Justice and Law has combined with the Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) to include LNS modules within the broader survey in 2019, 2021, 2023 and are planning a further iteration in 2025. This modular approach has helped to better understand legal needs and their interlink with victimisation.

In addition to its ongoing programme of legal need assessment, Colombia is implementing an active strategy to improve the collection, analysis and use of administrative data to support people centred justice.

United Kingdom: Developing components of the data ecosystem – Court data

HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) released a Data Strategy in December 2021 as part of its work to improve data across the sector and to support both the government-wide national Data Strategy and reform across the Ministry of Justice. It is based on the understanding that "the data strategy will deliver significant benefits, from improving our decisions because we better understand our users and have a stronger evidence base, to improving our operational effectiveness because we can optimise processes through performance analytics, identify and resolve blockers and automate low value processes." Through the Data Strategy the HMCTS is seeking to:

- improve its data collection processes and develop a more proactive culture of engaging with data across the whole system
- understand the pathways people take through the courts and tribunals service and provide insight on how it can continue to improve and drive performance.

Source: HM Courts & Tribunals Service (2021[3]); (Government of Colombia, 2025[4]); (DANE, 2023[5]).

C. Establish data quality standards and data collection protocols to ensure the quality of justice data

Self-assessment questions

- Has the justice system established and clearly articulated system-wide data collection protocols and data quality standards – aligned with national standards – that apply to the whole justice system (with accommodations for essential variations)?
- Do the data collection protocols define standardised procedures for data collection, protect privacy and confidentiality in relation to individuals' data? Are all personnel adequately trained to implement these?
- Do data validation and verification processes adequately ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected?
- Are there standardised data collection methods across all justice institutions and service providers?

- Are there mechanisms in place to regularly monitor, evaluate and improve data quality standards and collection protocols?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Establish legislative, regulatory, funding and policy frameworks to enable ministry of justice or equivalent's oversight and system-wide compliance with data collection protocols and quality standards.
- Establish, with other data contributors, common standards and minimum data sets for greater consistency, as well as co-ordination and collaboration protocols and processes to facilitate the management, security and sharing of appropriate data.
- Develop justice data standards and protocols (including storage procedures, privacy and confidentiality issues, and issues of technological integration) in consultation with national statistical authorities to align them with national data quality standards and protocols and communicate them broadly.
- Where possible, support justice institutions with appropriate common tools for data collection tools (including software) and with guidance to support individual organisations to collect, use and report data consistently.
- Put mechanisms in place to regularly monitor, evaluate and improve justice data quality standards and collection protocols.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to bring all justice institutions on board with data standards and to centrally co-ordinate and support data protocols can lead to inconsistent, unreliable data that undermine evidence-based policymaking and risk confusion, poor implementation and limited uptake across institutions.

Box 6.3. Good practice example of data quality standards and data collection protocols

Canada: Accessible presentation of criminal justice system data

Justice Canada's State of the Criminal Justice System Framework was built through extensive research in consultation and collaboration with criminal justice system partners, stakeholders, experts and other Canadians. The framework's online Dashboard presents information from the framework in one easily accessible location. It shows information and data collected for over 40 performance indicators grouped by 9 outcomes. This information is presented for the total population and by population-based theme. The population-based themes currently available are: indigenous peoples, women and youth. These themes present pre-filtered views of the data by sub-population, such as by indigenous identity or sex/gender (where data are available). Under each theme, data users can also find contextual information on how different populations interact with the criminal justice system as victims, survivors, accused and offenders.

Portugal: The justice statistical information system

For the last 20 years Portugal has been developing its justice data system and the online communications portal to provide access to those data. The justice statistical information system covers justice areas including courts, registries and notaries, police and other investigating bodies, alternative dispute resolution bodies and others. Developed and maintained by the Director General for Justice Policy, it fulfils part of the important functions of data collection and communication delegated to it by the National Statistical Institute. The platform provides access through a range of tools including maps,

graphs and data sets. The portal provides a good example of increasing the accessibility of the collected justice data.

United States: Maintaining data quality and data protection

The United States' Bureau of Justice Statistics' (BJS) Data Protection Guidelines are intended to provide a summary of the many federal statutes, regulations and other authorities that govern the BJS. The guidelines require the BJS to adhere to strict confidentiality requirements regarding data collected at the BJS's direction; ensure that the collected data be used only for statistical purposes; commit to wide dissemination of BJS data for public benefit; and strive to maximise the utility, objectivity and integrity of the information the BJS disseminates and archives for public use.

Sources: US Bureau of Justice Statistics (2021[6]); Government of Canada (2024[7]); Portuguese Directorate-General for Justice Policy (n.d.[8]).

Developing sound and coherent governance arrangements for justice data and evidence

Why is it important?

Sound data governance for justice data is essential to creating an environment where data can be safely and effectively accessed and shared across the justice system, and across broader policy areas. It can contribute to prevention, anticipation and effective responses to the legal issues people and businesses face. It can also benefit justice institutions that share common goals and that mandate, produce, access, share or reuse common data sets. In the justice context, this calls for coordination and cooperation within government and across the full justice chain in processing people-centred data, whether in the public or private sectors. This coordination and cooperation, for example, can take place by encouraging common data elements and formats, quality assurance, and data interoperability standards; and by encouraging common policies and procedures that minimise barriers to sharing data for justice system management, statistics, research and other related purposes that serve the public interest while protecting privacy, personal data and data security. Without such co-ordination there is a risk of a lack of interoperability of data across different parts of the justice system as well as duplicated efforts on the part of institutions and people, who would be required to provide the same data to different parts of the system.

Sound data governance is also important to ensure that data are used in a way that respects and protects people's privacy and personal data. A data strategy, for the purposes of this Toolkit, can be defined as a comprehensive plan that outlines how an organisation will collect, manage, use and protect its data. It will generally include details of data governance arrangements, but will also likely involve defining the technology, processes, people and rules required to handle data effectively. Establishing an appropriate justice data strategy will therefore be important to serve as the overarching guidance for data management, quality, storage, analysis and use.

Priority checklist

A. Improve justice data governance

Self-assessment questions

- Does the justice system have appropriate cooperation and coordination mechanisms to facilitate consistency in data management and processes between justice institutions and service providers?
- Does the justice system have an effective and comprehensive data governance framework that governs the collection, storage, use and security of justice data, and in particular protects the privacy and security of personal data?
- Are there robust processes to store justice data and, where necessary, the analysis of justice data to protect individual privacy?
- Are there regular efforts to evaluate and monitor strategies for communicating data and analysis, and to adapt and adjust these processes based on that feedback?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop an overall justice data governance framework that governs all justice data and includes at least the following protocols and processes:
  - to ensure that data are used in a respectful way and that the protection of people's privacy and personal data is formalised, across the public, private and non-government organisations sectors
  - to deal with different institutional capacities across the justice system; policies for sharing information; evaluation and monitoring mechanisms; and appropriate safeguards
  - to store and share digital information and the possible linkage of different data sets across the justice system, while protecting privacy and personal data
  - to engage with individuals in relation to the governance of their data and to providing access to the data.
- Gain a sound understanding of the various factors to be considered and balanced in the development of the data governance framework, including:
  - enhancing data access and sharing while protecting individuals' and organisations' rights
  - managing overlapping interests and legislative, regulatory and policy requirements
  - managing the roles of public/civil society organisation/private sector contributors in the data ecosystem, whether as service providers, data collectors, data initiators, data subjects, data users, data managers or data analysers
  - incentivising greater commitment to and investment in data
  - maintaining the trust of individuals, justice institutions and data providers.
- Consider the development of a comprehensive, overarching justice data strategy that consolidates, in a single accessible strategy, the principal elements of the data governance framework.
- Provide data and the analysis of that data in a range of formats and media to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of users.
- Maintain an appropriate balance between providing valuable justice data for decision making and upholding ethical and legal privacy protections. This should include:
- Ensuring that, where necessary, data are appropriately anonymised to protect individual identities prior to publication.

- Implementing robust data security and storage measures to protect against unauthorised access to data.
- Communicating clearly and transparently about how data will be used, what access there will be to it and how users may have some control over their personal information.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to balance data privacy with accessibility can reinforce perceptions of elitism, erode public trust and limit the usefulness of data for service planning and accountability.
- Failing to support justice staff in adopting open data practices can lead to missed opportunities to improve transparency, engagement and service quality through a range of communication tools.
- Failing to ensure consistent data management and to produce comparable, high-quality data across the justice system can undermine both public trust and professionals' confidence in the data and limits its value for system-wide analysis, collaboration and reform.

Box 6.4. Good practice examples of data use in the justice sector

Spain: The Manifesto for Public Data Space in the Field of Justice

The Data Manifesto was jointly agreed upon by the General Council of the Judiciary; the Public Prosecutor's Office; the autonomous communities; and the Ministry of the Presidency, Justice and Parliamentary Relations. Its role is to provide the overarching direction and governance to support Spain's transition from a digital justice model to a data-driven justice model.

The Data Manifesto:

- Clearly states the objectives of justice system data, recognising the justice system data as a public good that should aim to promote innovation and improvement in justice services and, importantly, that data efforts should be directed towards the interests that affect the majority of citizens.
- Provides direction in relation to data access, sharing and innovation in the prevention of non-discrimination.
- Provides guidance in relation to data interconnectivity between public sector organisations, levels of government and with the private sector.
- Articulates guidance on training and capacity building in relation to data production, use and interpretation.

Importantly, the manifesto includes details of relevant legislation, regulations, royal decrees and other authorities behind each aspect of the Manifesto's provisions. This includes, in particular, the Digital Efficiency Law.

Source: Spain (2022[9]); (Government of Spain, 2022[10]).

Integrating justice impact assessments into the early stages of the policy, budget and service delivery process

Why is it important?

Justice impact assessments (JIAs) are evaluations conducted to understand the potential effects of government policies or legislative proposals on the justice system. By assessing these impacts early – before decisions are finalised – JIAs help to ensure that the justice system is not unintentionally overwhelmed or destabilised by policy changes originating in other sectors.

Integrating JIAs into the earliest stages of policy development and budgeting enables a proactive, preventative approach rather than reactive crisis management. This allows policymakers to identify and mitigate potential strain on justice institutions – such as increased court caseloads, pressures on legal aid or rising demand for correctional facilities – before such burdens materialise. Early-stage application also supports more accurate budget planning and resource allocation, reducing the risk of delays, backlogs or service breakdowns.

Importantly, JIAs contribute to better policy design by enabling adjustments that can minimise negative, unintended consequences, such as exacerbating social inequality or justice system bottlenecks. They support more joined-up government by linking justice with other areas like housing, health, education and policing. When applied systematically, JIAs promote transparency, accountability and evidence-based decision-making, enhancing public trust and ensuring that justice remains accessible, fair and resilient in the face of change.

Priority checklist

A. Encourage a whole-of government approach to conducting JIAs.

Self-assessment questions

- Are JIAs established as a mechanism to assess policy and related decisions on the justice system, other sectors and capacities to meet legal and justice needs?
- Are JIAs integrated into the early stages of policy and budget development processes across all relevant institutions?
- How are the results of JIAs used to inform policy decisions and budget allocations?
- Are there formal mechanisms in place to ensure collaboration between public institutions and with non-government agencies, during the JIA process? Are all relevant government and non-government stakeholders included in the JIA process?
- Are the findings of JIAs publicly accessible and transparent?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Develop and implement a standardised framework, guidelines and collaboration mechanisms for conducting JIAs across government to ensure all government agencies, public institutions and portfolios follow a consistent approach.
- Develop and provide training opportunities and materials and appropriate user guides to build the capacity of agencies across government to understand, implement and ensure consistency of JIAs.
- Ensure the public, the justice system and other stakeholders are engaged appropriately as part of the JIA process.

- Make the findings of JIAs publicly accessible and understandable to promote transparency and build trust.
- Continuously review and evaluate the JIA processes to ensure continuous improvements and lessons learnt.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to implement JIAs and to secure whole-of-government buy-in and standardised frameworks for their implementation limits the justice system's ability to anticipate, adapt to and manage cross-sector policy impacts effectively.

Box 6.5. Good practice examples of JIAs

Canada: Child Rights Impact Assessment Tool

In 2023, Justice Canada launched the Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) tool to help public officials across government consider the impacts of new laws, policies and programmes on children. This tool is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and supports evidence-based decision making. The CRIA tool is designed to be used by federal officials, but it is also available to provincial, territorial and municipal governments, as well as non-governmental organisations.

United Kingdom: Justice Impact Test Guidance

New policies, especially those which involve a change in the law, can have a very significant impact on the justice system. The UK Ministry of Justice is responsible to ensure that such impacts are considered, anticipated and planned for at an early stage to make the best use of public funds and ensure that service provision within the justice system is not jeopardised. The UK Ministry of Justice Impact Test Guidance sets out the requirements for other government departments that are considering policy proposals that may have an impact on the justice system.

Sources: UK Ministry of Justice (2018[11]); Government of Canada (2023[12]).

Regularly conducting robust review, evaluation and assessment of the performance of justice systems and services

Why is it important?

A people-centred justice system is one that seeks to provide effective services to address the citizens' legal and justice needs as they experience them. To do this it also must monitor and evaluate its services and systems to ensure their effectiveness from a people-centred perspective. All aspects of legal and justice service delivery, therefore, should be accompanied by regular monitoring processes. This calls for developing and implementing evaluation, measurement and accountability mechanisms to collect data and regularly assess and report on progress. Such an approach will require review, monitoring and evaluation not just at the service delivery level, but also at the system level, to ensure systems, processes and the pathways people follow are part of the monitoring and assessment regime.

Priority checklist

A. Conduct targeted evaluations of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of services and initiatives.

Self-assessment questions

- Is there a mandate in place for a strategic, ongoing programme of evaluations of legal and justice services?
- Are evaluation priorities aligned with the most pressing knowledge gaps in delivering people-centred justice and improving access to justice?
- Are cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses regularly conducted and used to guide strategic investment and decision making within the justice system?
- Are there curated repositories of the results of the evaluations and monitoring programmes?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Consider developing a strategic evaluation plan that outlines priority areas for evaluation. Establish clear objectives for the programme and for individual evaluations within it.
- Conduct cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses to ensure that justice strategies and initiatives are assessed not just against broader budget priorities but against other alternative strategies and initiatives.
- Ensure that the findings and outcomes of the evaluations are communicated widely across the justice system and beyond and are (where appropriate), incorporated into a “what works” database.
- Regularly review the evaluation programme to ensure it provides insights and recommendations to improve the delivery of people-centred justice services. Consider establishing systems to track the implementation of these insights and their subsequent outcomes.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to co-ordinate evaluation and monitoring efforts risks duplication, inefficient use of limited resources and missed opportunities to focus on priority areas where insights are the most needed.
- Failing to build a strong, evidence-based foundation for justice reform, including an evaluation of the costs and benefits of interventions, can slow progress toward people-centred justice and risk basing decisions on assumptions rather than data.
- Failing to disseminate evidence on successful initiatives can limit their uptake and reduce the potential for system-wide improvement.

Box 6.6. Good practice example of justice service outcome monitoring

Portugal: Monitoring satisfaction and outcomes of alternative dispute resolution services

Portugal has been advancing efforts to understand and improve satisfaction with and trustworthiness of its alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services by implementing user outcome and satisfaction surveys distributed to all users of ADR services. Since 2013, surveys such as the Barometer of the Quality of Arbitration Centres, Barometer of the Quality of Justice of the Peace Courts and Barometer of the Quality of Mediation, are applied annually to users of ADR on an online platform to assess the satisfaction of users and improve knowledge about how citizens perceive this aspect of the justice system. This is an important step in assessing the effectiveness and people-centredness of services, and as such should be employed for all justice services.

These user surveys are designed to be completed by users following their particular ADR process. They provide the ministry with a range of information about users, their characteristics, the problems they have experienced, the process they have undertaken, the outcomes of that process and their satisfaction with it.

Sources: OECD (2024[13]); Portuguese Directorate General for Justice Policy (2024[14]).

Building the skills and capacity of relevant institutions to generate, collect and disseminate information, evidence and data

Why is it important?

Generating robust, actionable people-centred justice data will require justice system staff with the skills to collect, analyse and disseminate the data. At all levels and across the sector in both state and non-government roles, staff will need to be trained to develop these skills. Furthermore, a feature of increasing digitisation of processes is that there is a similarly increasing number and range of people (clients, lawyers, etc.) who enter data into justice data systems. Data entry processes will need to be tailored to “guide” commonality and staff capable of managing consistency despite greater diversity.

Given the diversity of justice institutions and staff and the need to produce data that are comparable across institutions, consistent data gathering will be greatly aided by the use of common data collection tools, software and protocols. These will improve commonality in systems and facilitate knowledge transfer within the system and make it easier for both justice system users and staff to access, understand and use the data effectively and consistently.

Priority checklist

A. Develop data and evidence capacity by training staff and developing appropriate user guides for staff and others.

Self-assessment questions

- Has the system determined what competencies different justice institutions and staff need to develop capacity in data and evidence collection, analysis and dissemination?
- Are there targeted training programmes for justice system staff on data collection, analysis and dissemination based on the determined competencies?

- Are there user manuals, guides and "prompts" to support the daily tasks associated with data entry, analysis and reporting?

What are the key actions to consider?

- Foster a culture of data-driven decision making across justice institutions to contribute to raising data literacy levels across the system.
- Identify the competencies different justice institutions and staff need to develop capacity in data and evidence collection, analysis and dissemination.
- Develop and implement targeted training programmes for justice system staff on data collection, analysis and dissemination. These programmes should:
  - focus on standardised tools, software and protocols
  - be targeted with specific information for particular levels and justice actors
  - be conducted in multiple formats (face-to-face workshops and seminars etc) in order to be accessible across the entire justice system.
- Develop and make readily available an appropriate range of supporting user guides, including comprehensive manuals as well as quick reference guides and prompts.

What are the pitfalls to avoid?

- Failing to establish common terminology, definitions, processes and consistent, system-wide standards and technology across the justice data ecosystem leads to confusion, errors and data that cannot be reliably compared or aggregated.
- Failing to provide targeted training and capacity building for justice system staff can undermine the effective use of data.

Box 6.7. Good practice examples of building data capacity in the justice sector

Australia: National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual: Identifying everyday justice and people-centred variables, definitions, standards and collection

Australia maintains a flexible, yet complex system of government-funded legal assistance services. Establishing common data standards and protocols in that environment is challenging, and in 2011 the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department commenced a collaborative data standards project with representatives of the legal assistance sector to provide guidance to all parts of the sector on defining terms and best practice principles for data collection. This project culminated in the publication of a (first edition) *Data Standards Manual* in 2014, which has been updated regularly as lessons are learnt from the practical collection and use of data. Importantly, the manual includes useful tools to guide justice sector staff and all users of the data. Terms are defined and each is accompanied by "counting rules" and illustrative "case studies" which assist with understanding the variable.

Sources: Byrom, Piccinin-Barbieri and Wells (2024[15]); OECD/Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (2023[16]); Australian Attorney-General's Department (2024[2]; 2021[1]).

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Toolkit for Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems

Ensuring equal access to justice is a cornerstone of democracy, trust in institutions and sustainable development. Around the world, millions of people experience legal needs and justice problems every day, yet, too often, justice systems remain complex, fragmented, or out of reach. The Toolkit for the OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems provides governments, justice institutions and practitioners with practical guidance to make justice more responsive to people's needs. Drawing on global evidence, case studies and good practice, the Toolkit translates the OECD Recommendation into concrete steps to help countries put people at the centre of justice, policy services and reform. Structured around five pillars – purpose and culture, service design and delivery, governance infrastructure, people's empowerment, and evidence-based planning – the Toolkit offers self-assessment questions, checklists and examples from various countries. It highlights how data, innovation and collaboration across sectors can improve legal empowerment, reduce barriers to access, and ensure justice services are fair, inclusive, effective and affordable. This resource is intended for policymakers, judges, lawyers, legal aid providers, civil society and all those working to make justice systems more people-centred.

PRINT ISBN 978-92-64-33783-1
PDF ISBN 978-92-64-55154-1