

First ever use of videoconferencing link to the courts at Oberstown

During July 2017, Oberstown for the first time facilitated the use videoconferencing for remand proceedings relating to a young person before the courts. Use of this technology means that hearings such as bail or remand hearings can be conducted by video link with the courts.

Courts worldwide are utilising videoconferencing as a tool for “enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of their court systems while at the same time maintaining a fair and equitable system of justice.”¹ A report in 2005 by the Department of Justice on the potential use of videoconferencing technology in regard to pre-trial hearings, such as bail and remand hearings concluded that: “videoconferencing represents a major technological development which has the potential to extend significantly the courts and the efficiency and effectiveness of criminal and civil trials in the Irish Courts in the 21st Century. It is a rapidly advancing technology which may be used in a variety of judicial proceedings and which may also replace travel for conferences, consultations, meetings and many other activities related to the legal process.”²

In Oberstown, the use of video link in appropriate circumstances means that young people do not have to be transported long distances to rural courts, upsetting their daily routine. The stress of a court appearance is also mitigated. It also means that Garda resources are not tied up transporting the young person. Given that Oberstown has the facilities to assist with the modernisation of the justice system, it looks forward to – in collaboration with the courts – utilising this technology further in the future.

¹ Videoconferencing is used in many types of court proceedings in other jurisdictions. Examples of the types of hearings where videoconferencing is in use in other jurisdictions include bail and remand hearings, civil cases where a prisoner has an involvement, plea and direction hearings, and short applications. See: Department of Justice, The Committee on Videoconferencing Report, available at :<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/VIDEOen.pdf/Files/VIDEOen.pdf>

² *ibid.*