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OUR MISSION TO PROVIDE A **PROFESSIONAL,** **EFFICIENT, COST-EFFECTIVE** AND **ACCESSIBLE** LEGAL AID AND ADVICE SERVICE.

OUR GOALS

- To provide a professional, accessible quality service.
- To ensure the Board is innovative and responsive in its approach to effective service delivery.
- To provide services in an environment which is appropriate to the business being conducted by the Board.
- To put in place an effective public information, education and communication process.
- To develop the capacity of the Board to deliver a quality professional service.
- To develop the capacity of the organisation to respond positively to a changing work environment.
- To achieve the best use of the financial and operational resources allocated to the Board and to ensure value for money.

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1. FUNCTION AND PURPOSE

The Legal Aid Board is the statutory, independent body responsible for the provision of civil legal aid and advice to persons of modest means, in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995.

Legal advice is any oral or written advice given by a solicitor or barrister, including writing letters and negotiations.

Legal aid is representation by a solicitor or barrister in court proceedings. A person must first obtain a legal aid certificate, which specifies the legal services being granted, and must pay the legal aid contribution specified on the certificate. Legal services are provided across a wide range of civil law matters with few exclusions.

2. SERVICE PROVISION

Legal aid and advice are provided primarily through a network of law centres by solicitors employed by the Board. A complementary service is provided by solicitors in private practice who are engaged by the Board on a case-by-case basis.

The service is provided on a nationwide basis through 33 full-time and 12 part-time law centres, and includes 3 full-time law centres comprising the Refugee Legal Service (RLS).

The Board also operates a specialised Refugee Documentation Centre, which provides an independent and professional research and library service for all of the main bodies involved in the asylum process.

3. OBTAINING LEGAL SERVICES

A person seeking legal services must apply to any of the law centres set out at Appendix 2 and must complete an application form, stating the subject matter on which legal advice and/or aid is sought and giving details of income and any capital resources.

The Board seeks to ensure that a person who qualifies for legal services will be offered an appointment with a solicitor within a maximum period of 4 months from the time the application is completed. In certain cases, a priority service is provided.

4. PAYMENT FOR LEGAL SERVICES

All persons who are granted legal advice and/or legal aid must pay a contribution to the Board. The legal advice contribution is assessed on the applicant's disposable income, i.e. income after certain deductions.

The legal aid contribution is assessed on the applicant's disposable income and disposable capital. The minimum contribution is €10 for legal advice and €50 for legal aid. The law centre advises a person of the actual contribution in each individual case. In the event that a person recovers money or property arising from the case, the Board may seek to recover the cost to the Board of providing legal services to the client.

5. HEAD OFFICE

The Board's head office is located in Cahirciveen, County Kerry where some 50 staff are located. Some of the headquarter functions are also located in Dublin.

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6. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The statutory Board is appointed by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and has responsibility for:

- the strategic direction of the organisation
- determining policy and monitoring its implementation
- overseeing the proper and effective management of the organisation
- monitoring the implementation of effective financial procedures and providing accountability
- approving and monitoring budgets, and
- making certain reserved decisions.

The Board normally consists of a chairperson and 12 ordinary members. The current Board was appointed in December 2006.

The Board continues to maintain the standards of corporate governance set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This involves:

- at Board level, the use of six committees to assist it in achieving its objectives and in the effective discharge of its responsibilities (see below)
- a defined division of roles between the Board, the Chairperson and the Chief Executive
- submission to the Minister of an annual report that meets the requirements of the Code
- an internal audit function that operates effectively and as required, and
- a code of conduct, which incorporates procedures to deal with any conflict of interest issues.

In 2007, the Board held 11 meetings – 7 of which were in Cahirciveen and 4 in Dublin. The committees of the Board met as follows:

Committee	No. of meetings held
Appeal Committee	13
Finance Committee	7
Audit Committee	6
Lawyers Committee	9
Human Resources Committee	3
Performance Committee	1

A Corporate Governance Manual was developed in 2006 to provide a clear and comprehensive summary of the principal aspects of corporate governance as it affects the Board and senior management.

It is also intended to ensure that Board members are fully informed of their legal responsibilities and that they are familiar with statutory provisions relevant to their position and the key organisational issues, policies and strategies that inform their role.

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The Legal Aid Board was originally set up as far back as 1979 and was established on a statutory basis in 1995. With the passage of such time, I believe it is instructive to set out the context in which the Board operates and to briefly outline its impact.

At a fundamental level, we are engaged in providing access to justice for those in our society whose means would otherwise preclude them from receiving legal advice and assistance. Access to justice can be seen as being more than simply having a right to take or defend a claim in the courts; it is also about a legal system that is equally accessible to all and one that leads to results that are individually and socially just. Having a right to something is of little practical benefit if that right cannot be exercised.

In general, the provision of legal services is seen as necessary in order to provide such access to justice. The provision of a civil legal aid system has tended to be the almost universal response to problems of access to justice amongst the more financially disadvantaged members of society. The Board is acutely aware of the importance of legal aid in Ireland as a social and egalitarian provision and that, without it, a great number of people would not be able to get the legal assistance they need and are entitled to.

Legal aid and advice is now provided through a network of 33 law centres covering the entire country. Since its establishment, the Board has provided legal services in over 180,000 cases. While the bulk of these cases were family law matters, the demand for services in other civil law areas has increased over time.

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In 2007, the Board again increased its level of service provision on the civil legal aid side and provided legal services to some 18,000 persons. There was a drop in the number of asylum seekers seeking services from the Board but this was in line with the trend of lower numbers applying for asylum in this jurisdiction. As an organisation, we strive to continue delivering on our mandate whilst also developing and seeking better ways of achieving our objectives.

Looking to the future, I anticipate that we will need to look more closely at delivering our services in a more integrated manner, in tandem with other associated public services such as family mediation, money and debt advice, information provision and welfare services. This approach is one which is being increasingly adopted internationally and is seen to have considerable benefits for individuals, families and society in general.

The statutory Board, appointed in late 2006, enjoyed a busy first full year in situ. There were 11 Board meetings in 2007 and a substantial programme of committee meetings, including 13 meetings of the Appeal Committee. During the year, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform nominated Ms Niamh Moran to serve on the Board, to replace Mr. John Lindsay following his appointment as a District Court Judge.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of my colleagues on the Board for their commitment and dedication to their role in ensuring that the organisation continued in 2007 to be effective in what is a particularly important function. Considerable thanks is due also to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Secretary General and staff of that Department for the support provided during the year. I am confident that we have delivered effectively on our mandate.

I would also like to express my appreciation of both the Chief Executive and staff of the Board who worked in a committed and professional manner in 2007 to help ensure that the Board continued to provide essential legal services to those most at need in our society.

Unfortunately, I must conclude on a sad note by expressing my sincere regret and that of my fellow Board members at the passing of Nóirín Slattery, in March 2008. Nóirín was a valued and dedicated member of the current – and indeed previous – Board. She will be sadly missed.

Anne Colley
Chairperson
June 2008

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Anne Colley
Chairperson



David Barniville
Senior Counsel



Bob Browne
Assistant Secretary, Department
of Justice
Equality and Law Reform



Dr Michael Buckley
Retired Consultant Physician



Dara Foynes
Barrister at law



Kate Hayes
Business Person



Breege Leonard
Regional Manager, Department
of Social and Family Affairs



Niamh Moran
Solicitor



Jerry O'Connor
Solicitor



Jim O'Farrell
Principal Officer, Department
of Finance



Eamonn Purcell
Staff Representative



Fergal Rooney
Staff Representative
– Solicitor

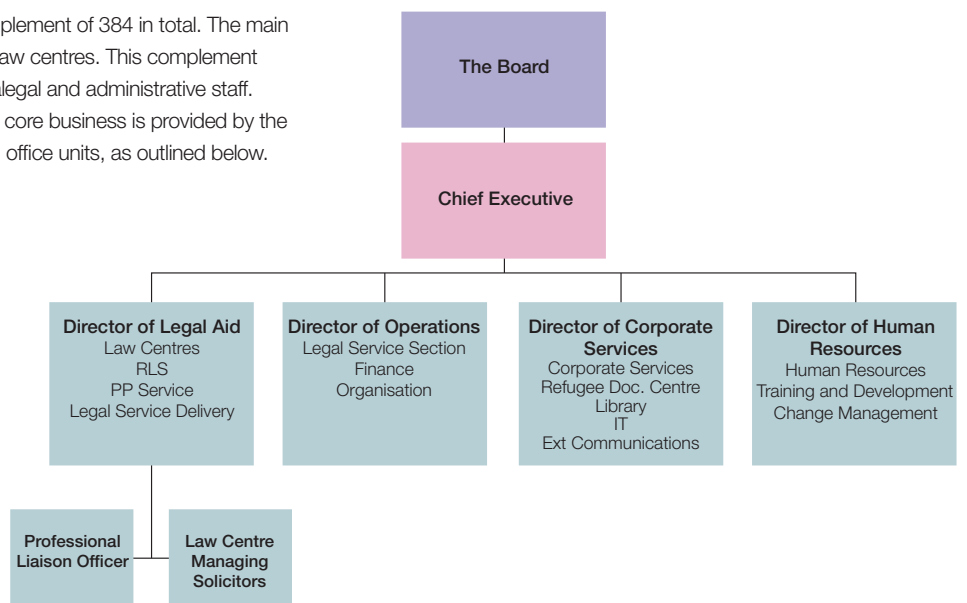
BOARD STAFF AND STRUCTURE

HEAD OFFICE EXECUTIVE STAFF

Chief Executive Officer:	Moling Ryan	HEAD OFFICE:	Quay St. Cahirciveen Co. Kerry
Director of Legal Aid:	Frank Brady	Phone:	066 947100
Director of Human Resources:	Pat Fitzsimons	LoCall:	1890 615200
Director of Operations:	Eileen Bowden	Fax:	066 9471035
Director of Corporate Services:	Feargal Ó Brolcháin	DUBLIN OFFICE:	47 Upper Mount St. Dublin 2
Professional Liaison Officer:	John McDaid	Phone:	01 6441900
Financial Controller:	Joan Enright	Fax:	01 6623661
Secretary to the Board:	Clare Kelly	Website:	www.legalaidboard.ie
Auditors:	Comptroller and Auditor General		
Solicitors:	Mason Hayes and Curran		

STRUCTURE

The Board has an approved staff complement of 384 in total. The main service delivery is provided by staff in law centres. This complement includes 109 solicitors along with paralegal and administrative staff. Support for the delivery of the Board's core business is provided by the administrative staff in the various head office units, as outlined below.



INTRODUCTION FROM THE CEO

I am very pleased to introduce the Annual Report on the activities and performance of the Legal Aid Board in 2007. The year was a busy and demanding one reflecting increased demand for our legal services, and one which saw further development and change both in the environment in which we operate and in the manner in which we deliver our services.

In 2007, the Legal Aid Board provided legal services to approximately 18,000 individuals, up by some 500 on 2006. Overall, there was increased demand for legal services across our law centre network, though with the lower numbers seeking asylum in this jurisdiction there was a drop in numbers receiving assistance from the Refugee Legal Service.

The Board's main mechanism for providing civil legal aid services to the public is its nationwide network of law centres. In 2007, the number of legal aid and advice cases handled by the law centres increased to 13,905. One of the reasons for this increase was undoubtedly the improvement in the financial eligibility limits and related allowances sanctioned by the Ministers for Finance and Justice, Equality and Law Reform in September 2006.

There remains the concern, however, that a considerable number of people who may have a need for our services and are eligible may not access them due to reasons such as an absence of information. In view of this, the Board developed a new External Communications Strategy in 2007, which aims, *inter alia*, to improve the level and quality of the Board's communication with the public.

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CEO



How quickly and accurately we deal with applications for legal services is of significant importance to applicants. In 2007, the Board ensured that, in the vast majority of cases, applicants had a maximum waiting time of no more than four months for an initial appointment with a solicitor. In addition, the Board continued to provide a priority service in cases such as domestic violence, child abduction and child care where applicants need an immediate service. Some 16% of applicants in law centres received a priority service in 2007. Increasing demand for our services will inevitably create pressure on our capacity to maintain this level of service within existing resources.

The Board has been particularly conscious in recent years of the nature of the cases, particularly in the area of family law, being dealt with by our solicitor staff. We are aware of the potential impacts of such cases proceeding to determination in the adversarial environment of the courts, though recognising that courts have a meaningful role in many cases. Inevitably, family law cases which proceed in a traditional way through the courts have the potential to further inflame differences and have long-term impacts not just on the parties involved but also on children and the wider families and, ultimately, on society. The Board has been very much to the forefront, in association with the Law Society and other bodies, in encouraging and facilitating an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) approach to family cases. One of these approaches is through the use of Collaborative Law and our training programme for our own solicitors and a great number in private practice continued apace in 2007.

On the asylum side, 2,650 new clients registered with the Refugee Legal Service (RLS). This was down from 2,980 a year previously and the decrease is indicative of the continued fall-off in the number of asylum seekers coming to this country. A review of the RLS which was carried out in 2007 will help to ensure that it continues to carry out its functions effectively and efficiently as the asylum situation evolves.

We are conscious in the Board that it is important not just to have an efficient handling of cases within our offices. It is at least equally important to ensure that the quality of the service offered is of an appropriately professional standard and that we are in a position to verify that across the organisation. An important development in this respect was the introduction of agreed file review systems in 2007, for both in-house solicitors and private solicitors engaged by the Board.

Last year also saw the first full year of operation of the specialist Medical Negligence Unit, which was originally set up in 2006 to deal in the most professional way possible with a particularly difficult area of law.

The Board and its staff are fully committed to delivering on what is a hugely important social and professional mandate whilst consistently seeking better ways of doing so. It is against this backdrop that I would like to express my sincere appreciation of the excellent work and wonderful commitment of the staff in the Board and trust that we can rely on this continuing in 2008 and beyond. I would also like to join the Chairperson in thanking the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, his Secretary General and the staff of the Department for their interest in and support of the Board during 2007.

Molling Ryan
Chief Executive
June 2008

ACHIEVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS 2007

2007 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

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The level of **FUNDING** increased on the law centre side from €21.913m in 2006 to €24.288m in 2007 which represented an increase of 11%. For the Refugee Legal Service, funding increased by just over 11% to €8.617m.

Legal aid and advice was provided by the Board's law centres in **13,905 CASES** during 2007 as compared with 13,154 cases in 2006, an increase of over 5%.

In respect of the **REFUGEE LEGAL SERVICE** (RLS), 2,650 new clients registered for legal services, compared to 2,980 the previous year.

A high level objective of the Board is to provide legal services to all applicants within a **MAXIMUM PERIOD OF FOUR MONTHS**. This objective was mainly achieved in 2007 with a six-month waiting time in just one law centre at the end of 2007. Those seeking services in relation to urgent matters received an immediate or near immediate service.

During 2007, the Board reaffirmed its commitment to **ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF RESOLVING CONFLICT AND DISPUTES**, other than the courts process, by consistently seeking to promote to clients, potential clients and the general public the benefits of engaging in negotiation to resolve family problems. Training was provided on collaborative law for both Board solicitors and private practitioners.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS 2007

An evaluation of the **LEGAL ADVICE ONLY SERVICE**, which was introduced in five law centres on a pilot basis in 2006, was completed in 2007 to enable the Board to consider the effectiveness of the provision of a timely advice service, for both the Board and clients, and make arrangements for the future of such a service. The evaluation is currently under consideration.

In 2007, the Board commenced an agreed systematic **FILE REVIEW PROCEDURE** with in-house solicitors to ensure clients were receiving a quality service. A file review system in respect of cases referred to private solicitors under the Circuit Court Private Practitioner Scheme was also established.

The revised Board **WEBSITE** was launched in 2007 for the purpose of providing comprehensive and improved information on the Board's services in an accessible and user-friendly format.

The Board developed a comprehensive **EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY** in 2007 for the purpose of improving the level and quality of the Board's communications with the public, clients and all stakeholders.

A comprehensive review of the operations and arrangements for **DELIVERY OF LEGAL SERVICES IN THE REFUGEE LEGAL SERVICE** was undertaken by the Board in 2007. Recommendations were made on foot of the review and an implementation plan has been drawn up to monitor progress on the achievement of the recommendations.

SERVICE PROVIDED IN 2007

The mission of the Legal Aid Board is to “provide a professional, efficient, cost-effective and accessible legal aid and advice service”. Services are provided to clients primarily through a network of law centres and cases extend to most areas of civil law. Whilst a wide variety of cases are handled, the majority tend to be in the area of family law. The law centre network also incorporates the Refugee Legal Service, which provides legal services to asylum seekers. As noted above, the Board also provides a complementary service using solicitors in private practice when it is deemed necessary and appropriate.

The total number of cases in which legal services were provided by the Board in 2007 was in the region of 18,000. The number of cases dealt with in the law centres and the number of family law cases referred to private solicitors on the Board’s panels both increased while there was a decrease in the number of asylum seekers registering as clients of the RLS. The latter was reflective of the drop in numbers applying for asylum.

LAW CENTRES

Legal aid and advice was provided through the Board’s law centres in 13,905 cases in 2007. Comparative information for 2006 and 2005 and a breakdown between aid and advice cases are set out below.

Table 1

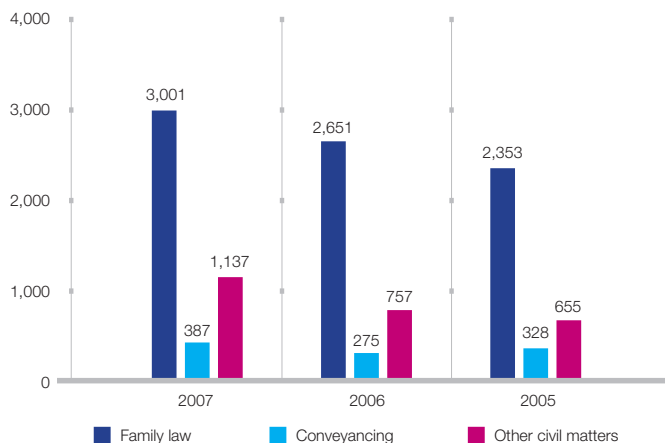
Year	2007	2006	2005
Advice only	4,525	3,683	3,336
Court proceedings	9,380	9,471	8,896
Total	13,905	13,154	12,232

As can be seen, the total number of cases dealt with increased by over 5% in 2007 compared to the previous year, and by over 13% compared to 2005. Part of this increase can be attributed to the increased demand arising from the revision of financial eligibility criteria that came into force on 1 September 2006. In addition, the Board introduced new arrangements for the collection of statistical information, thus providing greater accuracy of information.

LEGAL ADVICE CASES

Chart 1 below highlights that family law continues to constitute the predominant area where the Board provides legal advice, although 2007 saw a significant increase in advice provided on other civil matters. Just over two-thirds of advice cases in 2007 were in the family law area. Legal advice is where advice has been provided to the client but legal aid, i.e. representation in court, has not. The number of cases recorded here represents those cases in which persons were provided with legal advice during 2007, some of whom may go on to be granted legal aid at a later stage.

Chart 1: Legal Advice Cases 2005-2007

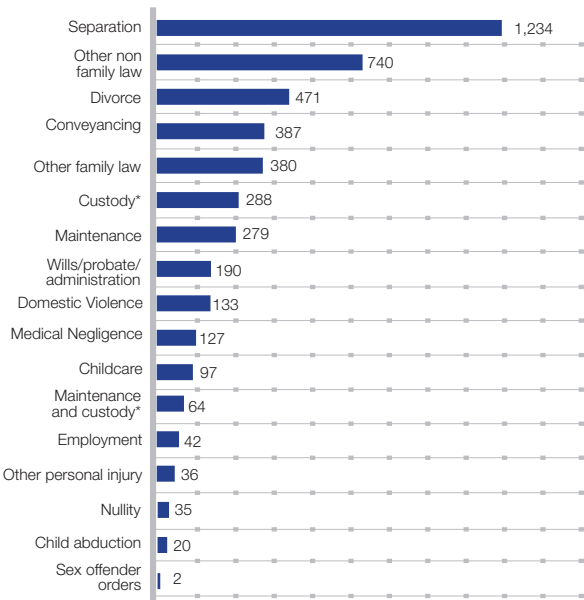


Overall, advice cases were up by 23% on 2006. The number of family law advice cases increased by almost 13% in 2007 to 3,001 while there was a significant increase in cases where advice was provided on other civil matters (50%). The latter category includes matters such as wills/probate/administration, medical negligence, personal injury. The number of cases where conveyancing services were provided also increased significantly in 2007.

A more comprehensive breakdown of the main issues in respect of which advice was given in 2007 is provided below. In relation to some of the cases listed below, advice was provided on more than one matter. For example, a person receiving advice in respect of separation or divorce may also have received advice about matters such as maintenance or domestic violence; these advices are not recorded separately.

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Chart 1a: Advice Proceedings by Subject Matter 2007

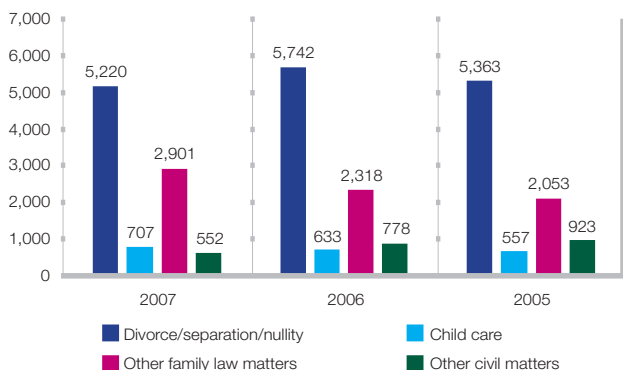


*Custody incorporates custody, access and guardianship matters.

LEGAL AID CASES

The issues in relation to which the Board’s law centre solicitors provided representation in 2007 and the comparative information for 2006 and 2005 are set out in chart 2 below.

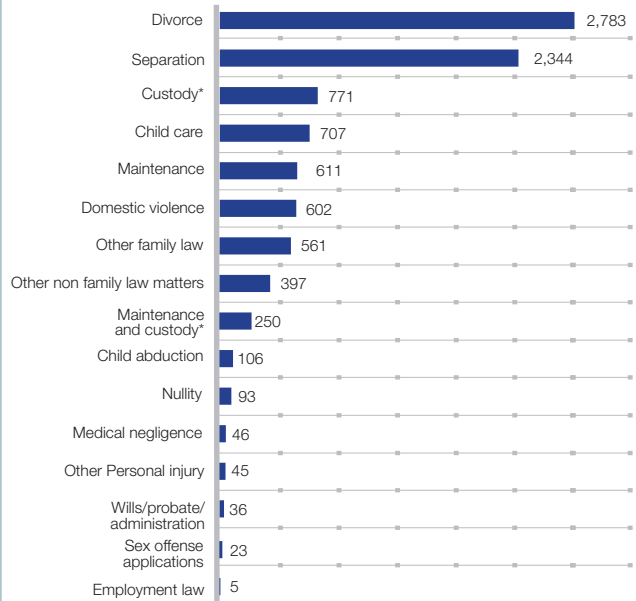
Chart 2: Legal Advice Cases 2005-2007



Legal aid cases were down about 1% on the preceding year. Within this, as can be seen from the chart, there was a 9% decrease in the number of divorce, separation and nullity cases handled. Such cases are processed in the Circuit Court with a small number of appeals going to the High Court. There was a significant increase, of 25%, in the number of other family law cases processed in 2007. These are typically District Court cases, for example custody/access/guardianship, domestic violence and maintenance. There are other types of cases, such as child abduction cases, which are heard in the High Court. Child care cases are processed in the District Court and these also increased in 2007. The number of cases processed covering other civil matters recorded a decrease in 2007.

A more comprehensive breakdown of the issues in respect of which legal aid was given in 2007 is provided below. Again, in relation to some of the cases listed, legal aid may have been provided in respect of more than one matter, for example divorce, maintenance and custody/access/guardianship; these matters are not recorded separately.

Chart 2a: Court Proceedings by Subject Matter 2007



*Custody incorporates custody, access and guardianship matters.

SERVICE PROVIDED IN 2007 *continued*

In respect of divorce, 2007 saw the tenth anniversary of the effective introduction of divorce in Ireland. As can be seen above, the Board was directly engaged in 2,783 divorce cases in 2007 and, of these, 868 were concluded during the year. The Courts Service reported that 3,684 divorce cases were the subject of court orders in 2007. Whilst the two figures are not strictly comparable, they do give a good indication of the level of involvement that the Board has in divorce proceedings in this country.

DURATION OF CASES

Table 2 provides an age profile of cases in which legal aid was provided in 2007, by court. The year is indicative of when the file was opened.

Table 2

Year	2007	2006	2005	Pre-2005	Total
District	1,502	898	259	140	2,799
Circuit	1,590	1,578	1,202	1,652	6,022
High/ Central Criminal	234	133	48	135	550
Supreme	4	1	1	3	9
Total	3,330	2,610	1,510	1,930	9,380

As has been evident in previous years, case progression in the Circuit Court (where divorce and separation cases are heard) tends to be significantly slower than in the District Court. These delays can be ascribed to various factors, such as the more substantial nature of the cases, often involving property and pensions. Delays in getting Court dates can also be a factor. Over 27% of the Circuit Court cases dealt with by the Board in 2007 had been carried forward from before 2005.

Of the 9,380 legal aid cases handled in the law centres in 2007, 37% were completed by the end of the year, with the remainder, 5,949, still active on December 31st.

Table 3 gives an age profile of the cases involving court proceedings completed in 2007 by subject matter.

Table 3

Year	2007	2006	2005	Pre-2005	Total
Divorce/separation/ nullity	126	366	401	595	1,488
Child care	74	117	38	28	257
Other family law matters	636	606	171	87	1,500
Other civil matters	58	65	25	38	186
Total	894	1,154	635	748	3,431

Of the 3,431 legal aid cases completed in 2007, 22% of them dated back to 2004 or earlier. For divorce, separation and nullity cases, the corresponding proportion was 40%, which is indicative of the fact that these cases generally take longer to process than cases heard in the District Court (where other family law matters tend to be heard).

CASES ON HAND

Table 4 below gives the status of all of the Board's legal aid cases in 2007 as of the 31st December 2007. The information from which this table is taken assists the Board in monitoring the progress of cases through the court process.

Table 4

At court	1,875
Court order made	1,426
Proceedings issued	1,253
Counsel briefed	683
Legal aid certificate granted	607
Re-entry	54
Under appeal	51
Total	5,949

PRIVATE PRACTITIONERS INVOLVEMENT IN FAMILY LAW CASES

The Board operates Private Practitioner Schemes to complement the service provided by law centres. This assists the Board in seeking to achieve its objective of providing legal services to all applicants within a maximum waiting time of 4 months. The service operates for certain family law matters in the District Court (such as domestic violence, maintenance, guardianship and custody/access cases) as well as for divorce and judicial separation cases in the Circuit Court. To this end, the Board maintains panels of solicitors who are required to comply with quality standards and best practice guidelines to be considered for the provision of services. Separate panels are maintained for District and Circuit Court cases.

A breakdown is given in Table 5 of the number of legal aid certificates granted in 2007 to enable representation to be provided in the District and Circuit Courts by solicitors in private practice who are on the Board's panels. Comparable information for the previous 2 years is also included.

Table 5

Year	2007	2006	2005
District Court	1,977	1,557	1,590
Circuit Court	329	162	330
Total	2,306	1,719	1,920

While the number of certificates issued on foot of the Circuit Court scheme dropped significantly in 2006, the figures increased again in 2007. The number of certificates issued for District Court matters also increased significantly in 2007. These figures reflect the efforts by the Board to ensure that all clients receive an initial appointment within 4 months.

MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE UNIT

Having been established in 2006, the Medical Negligence Unit saw its first full year of operation in 2007. The Unit has had one solicitor assigned to it since its inception. When the Unit was set up medical negligence files were referred to it from the Board's law centres on a phased basis. A number of files that were close to completion remained in the law centres. Arrangements were also put in place for the referral of new applications to the Unit. Clients are generally seen at the Unit's offices in Dublin although they can also be seen in other locations in the country, often in one of the Board's law centres.

The Unit dealt with 105 cases during the course of 2007. Of these, 64 cases were concluded. In the majority of these cases it was necessary, after careful consideration, to advise the client that they did not have an actionable case against the medical practitioner or the hospital against whom they wished to seek relief. There were 41 active cases brought forward into 2008. Proceedings were ongoing in approximately 13 cases and investigations were ongoing in relation to the remaining 28 matters.

APPEAL COMMITTEE

Legal services are provided in individual cases in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Legal Aid Act and the Regulations made under the Act. Initial decisions on the grant and refusal of legal services are taken by head office staff at designated grade levels. A right of appeal exists where an applicant is refused legal services.

An appeal against a refusal of legal services goes to an appeal committee, which comprises five members of the statutory Board. In 2007, the appeal committee met on 13 occasions. In all, there were 83 appeals considered. Of these, the original decision was upheld in 63 cases, with 17 decisions being overturned. The following table sets out the details of the appeals considered by the Board in 2007, together with comparative information for the previous two years.

Table 6

Year	2007	2006	2005
Number of decisions upheld	63	44	84
- Financial criteria	18	7	11
- Merits criteria	45	37	73
Number of decisions overturned	17	35	44
Number of appeals on hands	2	1	9
Withdrawn/resolved	1	13	0
Number of appeals	83	93	137

TIMELINESS OF THE SERVICE

The significantly shorter waiting periods for first appointments with a solicitor achieved in 2005 and 2006 were largely maintained in 2007. The following table sets out the number of persons waiting for an appointment as of the 31st December 2007 and similar figures for the corresponding date in 2006 and 2005.

Table 7

Year	2007	2006	2005
Number waiting	1,163	984	999

On the 31st December 2007 waiting times for a first appointment with a solicitor were at two months or less in 16 of the Board's law centres. The waiting time exceeded four months in one centre owing to a confluence of issues which the Board is addressing.

The maximum waiting time as at 31st December 2007, in months, is set out for the various law centres in table 8 below.

Table 8

Law centre	Waiting time	Law centre	Waiting time
Athlone	2	Longford	1
Blanchardstown	4	Monaghan	4
Castlebar	1	Navan	3
Cavan	2	Nenagh	3
Clondalkin	2	Newbridge	2
Cork – Popes Quay	4	Nth. Brunswick St.	3
Cork – South Mall	3	Portlaoise	4
Dundalk	0	Sligo	3
Ennis	1	Tallaght	4
Finglas	1	Tralee	2
Galway	3	Tullamore	2
Gardiner St.	3	Waterford	1
Kilkenny	1	Wexford	6
Letterkenny	2	Wicklow	2
Limerick	1		

DEMAND FOR THE SERVICE

The following table gives the number of persons who applied for services to the Board in 2007. Comparable information for 2006 and 2005 is also provided.

Table 9

Number of applicants	2007	2006	2005
Law centres	9,248	8,859	8,300
PP centre	916	830	853
RLS	2,650	2,980	3,330
Total	12,814	12,669	12,438

SERVICE PROVIDED IN 2007 *continued*

There was an increase of about 5% in the number of applications at law centres and the PP Centre in 2007. This is attributable in part to the significant increase in the financial eligibility limits that was introduced in September 2006. The demand continued to be primarily in the area of family law, notwithstanding the Board's wide ranging remit.

As will be outlined below, there was a drop of about 11% in new clients registering with the RLS.

PRIORITY CASES

In 2007, the Board continued to provide a priority service where it considered that an immediate or near immediate service was needed. A priority service was given in 16% of law centre cases. These included cases of domestic violence, child abduction, child care or those with statutory time limits close to expiry.

ASYLUM

The Refugee Legal Service (RLS) provides service at all stages of the asylum process and in appropriate cases on immigration and deportation matters. In 2007 it continued to provide services through 3 full-time law centres; in Dublin, Cork and Galway. As well as this, the 3 RLS offices also provided services through an outreach service, where general information on the service is offered to new and existing clients, in their own reception centres. In Dublin, this included Baleskin Reception Centre, Kilmacud Reception Centre, Georgian Court and Hatch Hall. The outreach service also incorporated clinics in Sligo, Limerick, Athlone and Waterford. Additionally, the outreach service to the Mosney accommodation centre was reinstated during the year, following a review of requirements for this centre.

Chart 3: Asylum Applications and RLS New Clients 2001-2007



RLS: NEW CLIENT REGISTRATIONS

The number of new clients registering with the RLS was 2,650 in 2007, a reduction of 11% compared to the previous year. Around two-thirds of applicants for refugee status availed of RLS services during the course of the year, a slight reduction on the corresponding proportion of 70% in 2006. These figures are consistent both with the decreasing number of asylum seekers presenting in this country and also the increasing participation in this area of law by solicitors in private practice.

The Board granted almost 1,800 legal aid certificates in 2007 to enable representation before the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, representing just over 60% of all appeals brought before the tribunal in the year. The following table shows the comparative figures for 2007 and the breakdown between the number of certificates in which representation was provided by RLS solicitors and by private solicitors/barristers.

Table 10

Number of certificates	2007	2006	2005
RLS solicitors	726	795	974
Barristers instructed by the RLS	634	1,353	1,502
Private solicitors on RLS panels	432	436	660
Total	1,792	2,584	3,136

The use of private solicitors in asylum matters is confined to appeals to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. All other legal aid services in relation to asylum are provided by the Board's legal staff in the RLS offices with the assistance of barristers in judicial review cases.

CLOSED FILES

Overall, in 2007, the RLS closed 3,200 client files. More than half of these were closed because the client no longer required services from the RLS or was not contactable. Over 15% were granted asylum, while another 2% were given temporary leave to remain. In 17% of cases, the applicant was deported. Another 13% withdrew their applications for asylum as a result of an application for residency (10%) or voluntary repatriation (3%).

JUDICIAL REVIEW

The Board instituted judicial review proceedings in 68 asylum cases in 2007. As can be seen in Chart 4 below, these proceedings were mostly in relation to decisions of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. The following table gives comparative figures for 2006 and 2005 and also the outcomes of the cases. It should be noted that, of over 2,700 judicial reviews in the immigration area over the last 3 years, the board only accounted for 218, or 8%.

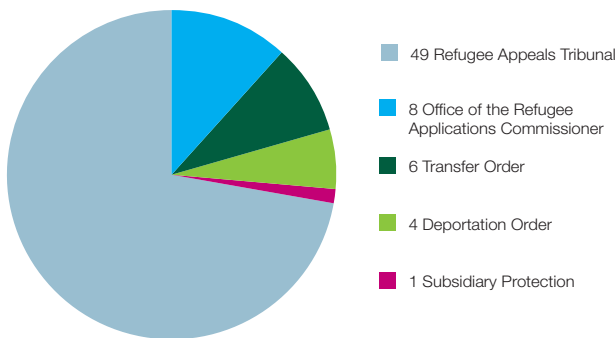
Table 11

Judicial Review	2007	2006	2005
Proceedings instituted	68	66	84
Cases settled	8	33	61
Cases successfully litigated	0	0	3
Cases struck out	3	4	3
Unsuccessful cases	0	1	7
Voluntary repatriation			
Changed Representation	0	0	2
to Private solicitor	1	0	0
Judgement Reserved	1	2	1
Cases still active	55	26	7

The most notable feature of the outcomes for cases instituted in 2007 is that most of the cases remained active at end year. Of the 11 cases that were completed, 8 were settled. Cases that are settled are generally settled on terms that are no less advantageous to the asylum seeker than if they were successfully litigated in court.

Chart 4 gives a breakdown of the source of the decision/Order that was the subject of the judicial review in 2007.

Chart 4: Judicial Reviews in 2007



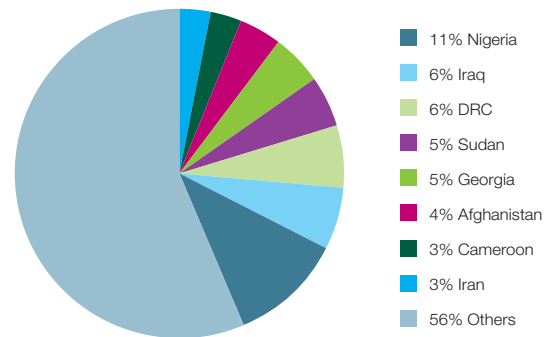
The fact that most of these proceedings were instituted against the Refugee Appeals Tribunal is largely attributable to the fact that there is no appeal from its decisions. Accordingly, defects can be dealt with generally only by way of judicial review.

REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

The Board's Refugee Documentation Centre (RDC) provides an independent research and query service on Country of Origin Information (COI) for all organisations involved in the asylum process. Country of Origin Information is used in procedures that assess claims of individuals to refugee status or other forms of international protection. It should help in answering questions by decision-makers and legal advisers about the political, social, cultural, economic and human rights situation as well as the humanitarian situation in countries of origin.

The RDC is recognised as one of the most developed information centres in its specialist area in the world. The number of queries received in 2007, at 2,200, was some 5% below the level in 2006. As in previous years, the major proportion of queries raised (over 90%) related to information sought about an asylum seeker's Country of Origin (COI), with the remainder divided between legal and quasi-legal queries and library requests (for books, reports etc). The subject country of these COI queries can be seen in Chart 5 below.

Chart 5: RDC Query Statistics 2006



A key feature of the RDC's work during the year was the completion of its new COI Document and Library Management System. This was developed under the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform's Asylum and Immigration Strategic Integration Project (AISIP). The system was launched in September 2007 – the first element of AISIP to go live. The system allows users to view and search the RDC library catalogue, COI documents and published 'anonymised' queries from their desktop via a single user interface.

The RDC also remained heavily involved in publishing material in respect of COI and related matters in 2007, including 4 editions of *The Researcher*. In addition, the RDC continued its training activities in 2007. This included provision of training in the use and searching of COI to staff in the RLS and the asylum determination agencies. In addition, staff provided training in a number of international locations. It also provided trainers for the COI e-training system which was jointly developed by the RDC with Accord of Austria and other partners in the COI Network.

The Decision Search Unit of the RDC continued to provide a search service of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal decisions database for the legal representatives of clients of the Refugee Legal Service. This service is available to all users of the RDC. Since it was established in November 2006 the DSU has responded to over 1,000 requests. Of these, 50% were conducted on behalf of barristers, 40% per cent for RLS solicitors and 10% for private practitioners.

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DIVORCE

A client had been separated from her husband for a number of years. She had not been in the work-force for a long time as she had stayed at home to rear the children of the marriage. The children were no longer dependent and did not live in the home. The home was registered in the parties' joint names. The husband had worked in the public service all of his adult life and he was close to retirement age. He had significant pension entitlements. He also had some savings and a number of investments. He had been paying maintenance since the marriage broke up. He was now seeking a divorce.

The client's concern was that she would not be put out of the family home. A valuation of the house was obtained and calculations were also done in relation to the value of the husband's pension and his other assets. Negotiations were initiated by the solicitors for both parties. It was eventually accepted by both parties that the value of the husband's lump sum pension entitlement added to the value of his savings and investments, was roughly equal to the value of the home.

On this basis it was agreed that the family home be transferred to the client on the basis that the client would waive any claim against the husband's pension rights and his savings and investments. Maintenance arrangements were also agreed. Divorce proceedings were then instituted and the court granted a divorce and ancillary Orders on consent.

ACCESS

A client contacted a law centre on account of difficulties he was experiencing having contact with his young child. He also wished to be appointed a legal guardian of the child. He had been in a relationship with the child's mother, to whom he was not married, but the relationship had broken down and there was some animosity between them.

The solicitor wrote to the ex-partner explaining that the client wanted contact with the child and to be appointed its guardian, and that the client's strong preference was to try and negotiate a solution rather than engage in a contested court case. The solicitor also recommended to the ex-partner that she seek her own legal advice and gave her details of how she could access legal advice or aid if she was unable to afford a private solicitor.

Shortly afterwards the solicitor was contacted by a solicitor acting on behalf of the ex-partner and negotiations took place. It was clear that, when it was explained to the ex-partner that the client wasn't seeking to have the child come and live with him (i.e. custody), the ex-partner no longer had an objection to him being appointed a legal guardian of the child.

An Order was subsequently made on consent in the District Court appointing the client as guardian. It was also possible to negotiate suitable contact arrangements that had regard to the child's social and educational activities. Facilities were also put in place to ensure that the client would be kept fully informed of the child's progress in school. All parties considered the arrangements to be in the child's best interests.

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

A law centre was contacted late on a Friday evening on behalf of a seriously ill patient who wished to seek legal advice. On the following Monday, a formal application was made by the man in question to have a foreign divorce recognised and to marry his long term partner.

A difficulty had arisen for the applicant in that the Registrar of Marriages had a difficulty in relation to the recognition of his foreign divorce. The applicant was granted an emergency legal aid certificate. Court proceedings were drafted on the Monday and issued that day. The client's solicitor travelled to a neighbouring town to serve his former spouse. She was advised fully of her rights to obtain independent legal advice. She had always considered that she was divorced and had no difficulty with the foreign divorce being recognised or, if that was not possible, a "fresh" divorce being granted. She swore an affidavit confirming her instructions.

The client was not in a position to travel to a Court sitting. Through the Courts Service, arrangements were made for a Circuit Court Judge to travel to the client's home and a court hearing was held there. The Judge granted the divorce on foot of the hearing and made an Order in respect of pensions.

After the divorce had been granted, an application was made on behalf of the client and his partner to dispense with the requirement to give three months notice to the Registrar of Marriages. The Order was drawn up the following morning and issued by the Circuit Court Office and delivered to the Registrar of Marriages. A special licence was granted and on the Thursday afternoon the Registrar attended at the client's home so that the couple could be married. The client

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died a short time later having put all his affairs in order. The full co-operation of the law centre, medical facility, Courts Service staff, Circuit Court Judge and the ex-wife achieved what seemed an impossible task of obtaining a divorce and remarriage within three days.

NON-MARITAL FAMILY PROCEEDINGS

A client was experiencing unhappy differences with her partner, to whom she was not married. There were issues in relation to property and in relation to the financial upkeep of the children of the relationship. As it did not prove possible to resolve matters amicably, court proceedings were initiated under the Partition Act 1868 to 1876 in relation to the property. Proceedings were also issued under the Family Law Act 1995 and the Family Law Maintenance of Spouses and Children Act 1976. An application was then made to amalgamate the cases and to have all matters heard privately in the family courts (partition proceedings normally being heard in open court).

The court acceded to this application. The court then determined that her contributions were such that she was entitled to a 15% share of the property which was in her partner's sole name. The client, who was the primary carer of the children of the relationship, was awarded significant maintenance for the welfare of the children of the relationship.

ASYLUM – UNACCOMPANIED MINOR

The Health Service Executive lodged an asylum application on behalf of an unaccompanied minor girl and registered her with the Refugee Legal Service. The girl, from an African country, had been sold by her parents at the age of 9 and was brought to a European country where she was forced to work for 4 years as a domestic servant and childminder for a couple of the same nationality. She was then brought to Ireland and worked for another year before she found the courage to escape. The people involved were already known to the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) and the girl's evidence was crucial to the GNIB investigation into their alleged trafficking activities.

The girl attended her asylum interview with the Refugee Applications Commissioner and was accompanied by her social worker and her solicitor from the Refugee Legal Service. The solicitor made submissions that the girl was a victim of trafficking and that victims or potential victims of trafficking can fall within the definition of a refugee. It was submitted that there was a reasonable likelihood

that the girl may face reprisals and/or possible re-trafficking should she be returned to her country of origin and that country of origin information showed that her own country is unable to offer sufficient protection to young girls who have been trafficked. The Refugee Applications Commissioner issued a positive recommendation and the girl was subsequently granted refugee status.

ASYLUM – LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

An asylum applicant from an African country had her asylum application refused by the Refugee Applications Commissioner. An appeal was lodged with the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Subsequent to the appeal hearing, the Tribunal Member directed the Refugee Applications Commissioner to conduct a language analysis in order to establish whether the applicant spoke the language and dialect of her declared tribe and place of origin. The language analysis was conducted at the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner by way of a telephone conversation between the applicant and an analyst from a European language analysis company.

The language analysis report was not in favour of the applicant. However, the RLS representative determined that the language analysis was seriously flawed. The profile of the language analyst revealed that he did not actually speak the particular dialect of the applicant. The applicant had even complained about this fact during the language analysis to the attending official of the Refugee Applications Commissioner. Furthermore, the findings of several language analysis companies, including the company engaged by the Refugee Applications Commissioner, had already been seriously discredited in other countries.

The RLS representative made submissions to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal setting out the flaws of the language analysis and objecting to the use of the language analysis report. Despite these submissions the Tribunal Member relied on the language analysis and issued a negative recommendation.

The RLS wrote to the Tribunal and asked for the decision to be revoked informally as it did not take into account the submissions made by the RLS. The Refugee Appeals Tribunal agreed to do so and the matter was remitted for a fresh determination before a different Tribunal Member.

There are currently several Judicial Review cases pending challenging the use of language analysis reports.

DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE

In 2007, the Board continued its efforts to develop the quality and nature of the service it offers to clients. Developments took place across a number of areas. These developments were in line with objectives set out in the Board's 2006-2008 Corporate Plan. Some of the main developments are outlined below with reference to the relevant high-level goal in the Plan.

HIGH-LEVEL GOAL: TO PROVIDE A PROFESSIONAL, ACCESSIBLE, QUALITY SERVICE

An agreed systematic file review procedure was put into action in 2007 and all of the Board's employed solicitors had a number of their files reviewed by a manager for the purpose of ensuring that the Board's clients were being provided with an appropriate professional service. A file review process was also established for the purpose of reviewing the files of private solicitors, operating on behalf of the Board, and a significant number of such reviews took place during the course of 2007. The reviews primarily focused on the private solicitors who had been assigned the greatest number of cases.

A continued focus was placed on identifying those cases that were considered to be long running, on identifying the barriers that were preventing these cases being brought to a conclusion and on taking steps to remove those barriers in order to progress the case.

The Board continued to seek to ensure that legal aid applicants waited no longer than a period of four months for a first appointment with a solicitor. This was largely achieved.

A representative of the Board was appointed to the Law Society Task force which was established in 2007 to provide a constructive, independent report on legal aid in Ireland and to make recommendations for improving access to justice for those who cannot otherwise afford to access legal services.

HIGH-LEVEL GOAL: TO PUT IN PLACE AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION PROCESS

The updated Board website (www.legalaidboard.ie) was launched in June 2007 with the primary focus of the update being to improve its accessibility and content. It is anticipated that there will be further significant improvements to the website during the course of 2008.

The Board adopted a formal External Communications Strategy in 2007 with the stated aims of improving the level and quality of the Board's communications with the public, its clients and all stakeholders, including the media. It is also envisaged that the Strategy will enhance public awareness of the range and availability of the Board's services, particularly amongst the potential users of those services. In developing the Strategy, the Board took account of Government policy on social inclusion, best practice for effective communication, the Board's statutory obligations under its governing legislation as well as the objectives of its corporate plan.

The Board continued to have an active consultative panel through which it sought and continues to seek feedback in relation to how it can better inform the public about all aspects of legal aid and their potential entitlements to it. Additionally, a more active engagement was entered into with a number of other service organisations with a view to enabling the Board to respond more effectively to the needs of those seeking its services. The Board also initiated a review of its information services with a view to improving the level and quality of information given to those seeking its services. Pending the completion of this review the Board has deferred consideration of its proposed advice and telephone services.

DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE DEVELOPING THE CIVIL LEGAL AID SERVICE

HIGH-LEVEL GOAL: TO ENSURE THE BOARD IS INNOVATIVE AND RESPONSIVE IN ITS APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

As is evidenced from the information in relation to service delivery, the majority of the Board's work continues to be in the area of family disputes. During the course of 2007, the Board consistently sought to inform its clients, potential clients and the general public about the benefits of engaging in negotiation to resolve family problems rather than the more commonly used option of simply applying to the courts. With a view to avoiding the courts process where possible and appropriate, the Board is fully committed to ensuring that its solicitors have the requisite skills to negotiate fair solutions on behalf of their clients. In 2007, further training in the collaborative law dispute resolution model was facilitated for both its own solicitors and the private solicitors engaged by the Board. In addition, in appraising the performance of solicitors and law centres, significant emphasis was placed on their capacity to deliver non court based dispute resolution options to the Board's clients.

As outlined elsewhere, the specialist Medical Negligence Unit took over the handling of virtually all of the Board's medical negligence cases in 2007, thus ensuring that the requisite expertise was available in these cases.

The Board also took steps to develop an integrated approach to the delivery of legal and other related services in one particular area of Dublin (Ballymun) as a pilot project to, *inter alia*, improve service delivery and to inform future legal aid development requirements and delivery.

In 2007, the Board carried out a review of the operations of the Refugee Legal Service. This was in line with the overall public service modernisation process and, more directly, stemmed from the Board's 2006-2008 Corporate Plan which commits the Board to "ongoing review of the arrangements for providing legal aid services and consideration of how best to meet the needs of clients and potential clients". It also took account of the evolution of the asylum seeker situation in Ireland and how the Board should respond to that. The review examined a number of areas looking at the services delivered by the RLS and how they are delivered. On foot of the review, the Board implemented a number of changes to the way the RLS carries out its operations in order to optimise the effectiveness and efficiency of the service.

HIGH-LEVEL GOAL: TO PROVIDE SERVICES IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS APPROPRIATE TO THE BUSINESS BEING CONDUCTED BY THE BOARD

During the course of 2007, the Board reviewed its service delivery locations in the Dublin area. In view of the fact that it had three law centres within a close proximity of each other in the city centre, as well as the newly-opened Medical Negligence Unit, it decided to close the law centre at Ormond Quay in December 2007. Existing clients were assigned to other law centres in the city.

It is anticipated that the Board will re-establish service delivery from an office at the District Court at Dolphin House, East Essex Street, Dublin 2 in 2008. The premises have been significantly upgraded by the Courts Service. The Board will have a solicitor based there who will provide services in most District Court family law matters from this office. It is also anticipated that this office will act as a referral unit for District Court cases in the Dublin area that are assigned to private solicitors. This will facilitate those seeking remedies through the particular Court as at the moment they are obliged to attend at the Board's premises at Montague Court, Dublin 2 in order to apply for legal aid.

ENABLING SERVICE DELIVERY

In order to deliver on its core objectives, the Board relies on support services across a number of areas. These range from front-line services for solicitors in law centres to the support functions which are based in the Board's other office locations. The support services ensure that the necessary resources – whether human, financial or organisational – are in place to optimise the service delivery function. As well as developing the delivery of legal services, the Board also recognises the need to develop these support functions, both to assist the Board in delivering on its corporate objectives but also in view of the overall programme of modernisation of the public service.

LEGAL SERVICES

The Legal Services Section in the head office in Cahirciveen provides the main administrative support function to law centres in the client application phase. In 2007, its main role involved the processing of all applications forwarded from law centres, with a view to granting or refusing legal aid certificates to individual clients. It also managed the authorisation of additional services in some cases, for example the use of a barrister or an expert witness, such as a psychologist, as well as the facilitation of urgent cases and appeals. In all, 2,470 new legal aid certificates were issued in 2007, up over 2% on 2006. In respect of additional services, known as amendments, there were 1,287 certificates granted in 2007, up 17% on the previous year.

A comprehensive analysis was carried out by Legal Services Section in 2007 in order to put in place a more accurate system for assessing the Board's future liabilities in respect of counsel fees, a significant expenditure item for the Board, which involved the detailed examination of several thousand files. The results of this exercise will greatly assist financial and strategic planning into the future.

MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LEGAL AID

The Legal Aid (Management and Development) Section, based in Dublin, has overall responsibility for the effective management of the provision of legal services through the law centre network and private practitioners, for the development of an effective and responsive civil legal aid service and for ensuring that clients receive a quality and professional service.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The implementation of the Board's Human Resource Strategy, which has 130 specific actions, provided the main focus for the work of the Human Resources Section during 2007. The actions identified in the Strategy informed the development of the HR business plan and organisational priorities for the year. Some of the main HR issues addressed during the year are set out below.

A significant programme of training was undertaken across the organisation. As well as professional training for legal staff, training was offered in areas such as health and safety, soft skills, finance and IT. In all, over 1,700 training days were provided in 2007. Along with this, work was finalised on a model for the evaluation of training and development in the Board, which will assist the Board in appraising the effectiveness of the training it provides and planning for future needs.

The Board's Partnership Committee met on 6 occasions in 2007 and oversaw the work of its sub-committees during the year. The partnership process in the Board is an effective mechanism for staff to have an input into how things are done in the Board. A new sub-committee, tasked with drawing up an environmental policy for the Board, was instituted in late 2007. The sub-committees of Partnership that met in 2007 were as follows:

- Staff Training and Development
- Communications
- Organisation of Working Time Act
- Equality and Disability
- Health and Safety, and
- Environment.

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During 2007, the Partnership Committee had a significant input into monitoring of the Board's *Towards 2016* Action Plan. Progress reports on the action plan were submitted by the Board to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in respect of pay increases due with effect from 1 June, 2007 and on 1 March, 2008.

Further progress was made in respect of the Human Resource Management System (HRMS) in the Board. The progress made in populating the system will allow the Board to run management reports in respect of areas such as sick leave.

A number of recruitment and promotion competitions were run by the Board in 2007. These included recruitment competitions carried out by the Board under its licence from the Commission for Public Service Appointments for solicitor vacancies in a number of locations. The HR function in the Board was also involved in bringing a number of significant industrial relations matters to a conclusion during the year.

In the area of internal communications, there were 3 editions of the Board's internal staff magazine, *Lablife*, published in 2007. A wide variety of topics, from all parts of the organisation, featured in the magazine during the year. Furthermore, the Communications Sub-Committee of Partnership made progress towards drawing up a new Internal Communications Strategy.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Finance Unit is the Board's payment processing and financial management centre. In 2007, approximately 7,500 payments issued from the Unit, not including payroll payments. In terms of management information, the Unit produced monthly financial reports for consideration by the Finance Committee and the full Board. These detailed reports allowed for the regular monitoring of expenditure against budget during the year.

As is the case each year, a great deal of focus was placed on the preparation of the 2007 audit file for the annual audit carried out on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Unit also carried out a tender in 2007 in respect of its banking services, which resulted in the securing of better banking terms for the Board.

ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

Organisational support in 2007 continued to focus on ensuring that the Board's services were provided in an appropriate environment. In terms of the Board's property portfolio, the main development was the move to a new location of Letterkenny Law Centre. Organisation Unit provided facilities and supplies support to all of the Board's law centres and offices during the year.

This included carrying out market exercises in order to ensure that the Board received value-for-money for the goods and services it procured. Significant tenders were carried in respect of cleaning services for the Board's premises and also for telephone calls. As well as organising its own tenders, the Board also availed of drawdowns from market exercises carried out by central bodies such as the Government Supplies Agency, in areas including electricity, office supplies and equipment.

The Organisation Unit also acted as the liaison area for Freedom of Information matters and managed health and safety policy for the Board. It contributed to the internal audit function and managed the implementation of the Board's scheme under the Official Languages Act.

REFUGEE LEGAL SERVICE SUPPORT SERVICES

The RLS awarded a contract for the provision of interpretation and translation services in August 2006. These services are a very important support mechanism for the work of the Refugee Legal Service and services were procured in approximately 80 languages in 2007. The service provided under this contract was evaluated by a working group, which recommended that it should be extended for a further year, in accordance with the initial provisions of the tender. The Board approved this recommendation, and the contract was extended until August 2008.

ENABLING SERVICE DELIVERY *continued*

Further organisational support was provided through the Corporate Service function for the RLS which dealt with registration of new RLS clients, outreach services, interpretation and translation services, management of the RLS Private Practitioner service, and the management of the grant and refusal of legal aid, including in judicial review proceedings. This function also managed the interaction between RLS service providers and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the agencies dealing with asylum applications, and a number of other corporate functions.

LIBRARY

The role of the Legal Aid Board Library is to provide an information service to support the work of the Legal Aid Board. To this end, the Library functions as a central resource for information provision and lending to staff in Head Office and the law centres around the country.

The E-library developed under the AISIP project by the Refugee Documentation Centre (RDC) also incorporated a Library Management System and E-library for the Board, which provided electronic access for Board staff to its library catalogue. This system was launched in September 2007.

The library also continued to support access for the Board's solicitors to the Property Registration Authority's (formerly Land Registry) online LandDirect service.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The main focus in information and communications technology (ICT) in 2007 was on the continued implementation of the 2005-2007 ICT Strategy. The most notable developments in 2007 were the completion of the redesign of the Board's website and the implementation of the Board's disaster recovery site.

The Board's website (www.legalaidboard.ie) was re-launched in June 2007. It has been comprehensively redesigned to be more user-friendly, and now enables easier access to a wider range of information about the Board's services. All of the Board's information leaflets are available on the site in both Irish and English, while the RLS leaflets are available in English and seven other languages. It also includes downloadable versions of application forms for the Board's services, together with information on financial eligibility. The site provides easy access to recent events such as press releases and publications, as well as more detailed contact information - including maps - for head office, all law centres, offices of the Refugee Legal Service and the Refugee Documentation Centre. The site contains the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995 and the Civil Legal Aid Regulations as well as links to other relevant government agencies. It is also available in an Irish-language version.

The development of the Board's disaster recovery site was completed during the year and this will provide further resilience and effective disaster recovery. Thus central storage, introduced in 2005, together with the disaster recovery site will ensure greater continuity and reliability in the provision of service to customers.

The Board's IT Unit also developed a number of new software applications and managed the improvement of some existing applications during 2007 in order to support and enable better service delivery.

RESEARCH

The Board initiated a number of research projects during the year, including a comprehensive examination of the extent of financial eligibility for the Board's services. Research was also undertaken on the origin and law centre of choice of applicants for the Board's law centre service. It is expected that these studies will be brought to a conclusion in 2008.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Board adopted a new External Communications Strategy during 2007. The strategy has two main purposes:

- to improve the level and quality of the Board's communications with the public, clients and all stakeholders including the media, and
- to enhance public awareness of the range and availability of the Board's services, particularly amongst potential users of those services.

Responsibility for the implementation and development of this strategy was assigned to the Board's Corporate Services Unit.

INTERNAL AUDIT

The Board's internal audit function carried out a range of law centre audits and other examinations in 2007, in line with the annual audit plan drawn up in conjunction with the Audit Committee of the Board.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

In the area of workplace health and safety, staff in the Organisation Unit received training to allow them to carry out risk assessments in the Board's premises. By the end of 2007, up to date risk assessments had been completed in respect of 25 locations.

EQUALITY AND DISABILITY

The Board's Disability and Equality Strategy was drawn up in 2007. The purpose of the strategy is to outline the legislative obligations of the Board in the areas of Equality and Disability and the issues that need to be addressed to ensure compliance with these obligations. It also identifies the actions required both to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation and to complement the achievement of broader organisational objectives. This strategy was drawn up by the Partnership sub-committee on Disability and Equality.

There was also considerable liaison with the National Disability Authority in 2007 in connection with the Board's application under the Excellence through Accessibility Award scheme.

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The Board's financial statements for 2007 are shown at Appendix 1.

INCOME

The following are some comments on the sources of the Board's income.

(a) Grant-in-aid

As in previous years, most of the Board's income consists of a grant-in-aid received from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Funding provided by the Government in 2007 was €24.288 million, as compared with €21.913 million in 2006.

(b) Refugee Legal Service

Exchequer funding for the RLS in 2007 was €8.617 million, compared to €7.726 million in 2006. This level of funding was adequate to cover the full year cost of the provision of legal aid services by the Refugee Legal Service.

(c) Contributions

Persons who are provided with legal services pay a contribution related to their income and, in some cases, their capital resources. The minimum contribution is €10 for legal advice and €50 for representation in court. This minimum contribution can be waived in cases of hardship.

(d) Recovery of costs

The Board may recover the cost of providing legal services from:

- i. the other party to a dispute, either as a result of a court order or as part of an agreement to settle a dispute, or
- ii. from the legally aided person out of monies/property received by the person as a result of the provision of legal services.

The amount of costs recovered can vary significantly from year to year, especially if a legally aided person obtains an award for costs in a case in which the other party is in a position to meet the costs. This does not generally arise in family law cases, which form the bulk of the Board's caseload.

Costs recovered in 2007 (€1,128,800) were 16% lower than in 2006 (€1,347,433)

EXPENDITURE

The following are comments on the major items of expenditure shown in the 2007 financial statements:

1) Salaries

The increase of €1,938,085 (11%) in expenditure on employee costs in 2007 (excluding pension charges for solicitors) is due to a number of factors including the cost of pay increases under Towards 2016, increments, an increase in the number of employees to fill temporary vacancies and pay increases as a result of the Law Clerks Regrading Claim.

2) Accommodation and establishment costs

Expenditure in this area decreased by €310,634 (7%) in 2007. This decrease occurred mainly in the area of maintenance of premises, which incurred significant refurbishment costs in 2006. Maintenance of equipment also had significant costs associated with improved I.T. systems in library facilities and investment in internal ICT systems in 2006 compared to 2007.

The tenders carried out in 2007 in the areas of cleaning, lighting and heating also contributed to a reduction in accommodation and establishment costs.

3) Legal fees and expenses

There are a number of differing elements covered in this heading - see Note 7 to the accounts - and comment is provided on each of the various headings comprising the total as follows:

(i) Counsel fees

Expenditure on counsel fees decreased by €1.943 million or 28% when compared with 2006. This occurred as a result of the comprehensive analysis carried out by the Board in 2006 for the purpose of assessing its accrued liabilities in counsel fees. The Board adopted a work in progress basis for valuation of accrued counsel fees at year ending December 2006, compared to an accrual of three months counsel fees in previous years.

The accrual for counsel fees, where work has been incurred but not yet presented for payment at December 31st 2007, stands at €5,512,955.

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When costs are recovered, the amount recovered in respect of counsel fees is paid to the barrister and this is generally higher than the fee normally paid by the Board.

The following table shows the trend in expenditure on counsel fees in respect of legal aid and advice over the past seven years.

Year	Counsel Fees
2001	€2,318,000
2002	€3,326,000
2003	€3,978,000
2004	€2,995,000
2005	€5,376,000
2006	€6,847,000
2007	€4,903,000

(ii) Legal fees - expenses

These case-related expenses are the additional expenses incurred by the Board, over and above counsel fees, in providing a civil legal aid and advice service to members of the public. The expenditure amount under this heading is derived from the requirements of the cases handled by the Board in any particular year.

There was a decrease of 26% in 2007. This is mainly due to a reduction in expenditure on interpreters/translation services in 2007, which is a result of a decrease in the number of asylum seekers registering as clients of the RLS.

(iii) Private practitioner scheme

Expenditure in 2007 on the private practitioner scheme was down 16% to €2.6 million. The decrease arises primarily as a result of the Board introducing a revised method of accruing for legal aid certificates issued under the private practitioner scheme in 2006 after carrying out a comprehensive exercise for the purpose of assessing the Board's accrued liabilities in this area. In previous years the accrual was based on a figure of three months issued legal aid certificates. At December 31st 2007, the accrual for private practitioner fees, where work has been incurred but not yet presented for payment, stood at €1.597 million.

(iv) Other professional fees

Costs under this heading relate to the engagement by the Board of professionals to provide independent legal advice and other professional services to the Board. The decrease of 22% compared to 2006 reflects the decreased need on the part of the Board for recourse to its legal advisors, arising from cases taken against it and heard in 2007.

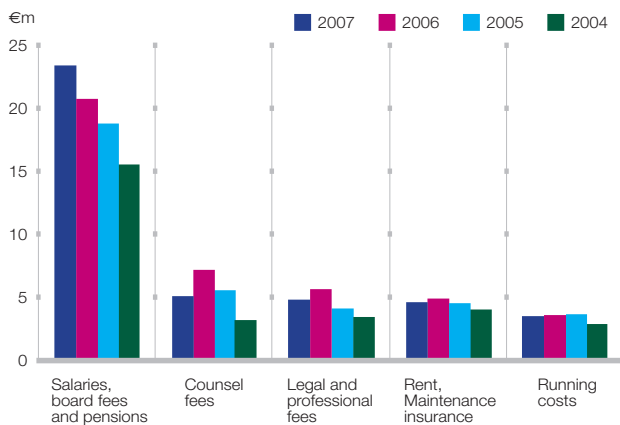
(v) Other expenses

Solicitors employed by the Legal Aid Board must have a practising certificate, which is issued by the Law Society of Ireland. The cost of these certificates in 2007 totalled €254,000. Also included under this heading is expenditure on training and education (€423,000) and annual membership subscriptions (€11,000).

FINANCE *continued*

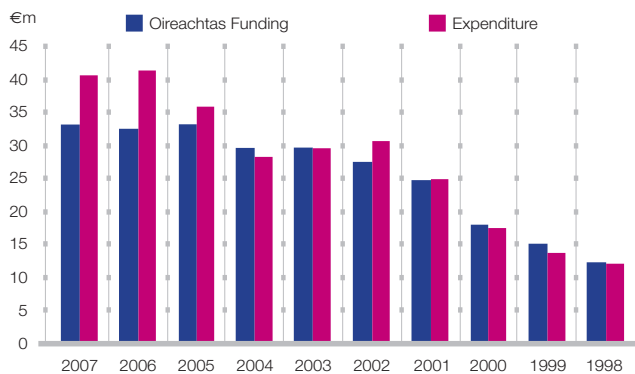
The following graph shows a breakdown of expenditure by the Board over the last five years.

Chart 6: Expenditure 2004-2007



The following graph shows the relationship between Oireachtas funding and the actual expenditure over the last ten years.

Chart 7: Funding vs Expenditure 1998-2007



CASH AT BANK AND ON HAND

The Balance Sheet shows that the Board had over €4.13 million on hand at the end of 2007. It can be seen from Note 12 to the accounts that the throughput of client funds in 2007 was €15.48 million. This arises from cases where, as a result of legal advice or representation in court, clients received moneys either from the other party or from the disposal of property. All such moneys are initially lodged to the Legal Aid Client Fund Account before being returned to clients less, in some cases, an amount in respect of costs incurred by the Board in providing legal services. The cash at bank figure, apart from client funds, is similar to the level of expenditure incurred by the Board each month and is considered to be a reasonable level of funding to have on hands at any one time.

PROMPT PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS ACT, 1997

Section 4 of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997 requires the Board to pay for the supply of goods or services by the prescribed payment date. This date is currently 30 days after the receipt of an invoice, or a lesser period as may be specified in a written contract. If the Board fails to make payment by the prescribed payment date, interest is payable to the supplier. Procedures ensure that the Board complies in all material respects with the requirements of the Act. The total amount of late payment interest paid to suppliers of goods and services during 2007 amounted to €nil.

APPENDIX 1 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2007

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LEGAL AID FUND STATEMENT OF BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 20 of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995 requires the Board to keep, in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, with the consent of the Minister for Finance, all proper and usual accounts of any moneys received or expended by it. In preparing those financial statements, the Board is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Fund will continue in operation, and
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Board is responsible for keeping proper books of account which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Fund and which enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 20 of the Act. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Fund and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.



Chairperson
27 June 2008



Board Member

LEGAL AID BOARD

STATEMENT OF INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROL

1. On behalf of the Board of the Legal Aid Board, I acknowledge that the Board is responsible for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated for the organisation.
2. Any such system can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material error. In considering the effectiveness of internal financial controls the Board has regard, among other things, to the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.
3. The key procedures that have been put in place by the Board, designed to provide effective internal financial control, include
 - **Control Environment:** the management and executive functions of the Board are delegated to the Chief Executive and senior management of the organisation by resolutions of the statutory Board, which monitors and reviews the work of senior management, who report to it at its monthly meetings and through its various Committees. A Corporate Governance Manual was developed in 2006 to provide a clear and comprehensive summary of the principal aspects of corporate governance for the Board and senior management. The current Board was appointed in December 2006 and was fully briefed on Board roles and responsibilities.
 - **Budget Information Systems:** the Board has a comprehensive budgeting system, that includes approval by the statutory Board of annual budgets and monitoring of monthly financial reports. Budgets are used to plan, authorise, monitor and control the way the funding of the Board is determined, allocated and spent.

The arrangements for budgetary control include the provision of regular, relevant and timely financial information to monitor income and expenditure in all areas and corrective action is taken, where necessary. The role of the Finance Committee of the Board is to consider the Board's finances in detail and report to the Board on such matters. This includes the review of budgets and financial reports, the approval of the Board's annual accounts and detailed consideration of financial matters in order to make appropriate recommendations to the Board and to advise management.

Decisions are taken either by the Board or by management, as appropriate, having regard to the recommendations and advice of the committee. The committee met on seven occasions during 2007 and, as part of its functions, examined detailed analysis reports on seven key areas of expenditure.

- **Risk Management:** the Board has adopted and implemented a clearly defined Risk Management policy and maintains a formal Risk Register that documents business risks and associated mitigations, controls and actions for all aspects of the Board's activities through the application of risk analysis techniques to its business objectives. Risk analysis principles have been systematically applied to the objectives of all Business Plans for the Board and risk management forms an integral part of the Business Planning Process. One of the functions of the Audit Committee of the Board is to provide an independent opinion on the adequacy of the Board's risk management arrangements.

During 2007, two members of the senior management team briefed the committee on risk issues for their areas of responsibility and the risk register was updated in March 2007. Towards the end of 2007, a major review of the Board's risk register was initiated having particular regard to pertinent risk issues associated with the high level goals of the Board's Corporate Plan. The Audit Committee was fully briefed on progress made in respect of the review. The revised risk register was presented to the committee at its meeting of 18 April, 2008 and was approved by the Board on 23 May, 2008.

STATEMENT OF INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROL

continued

- **Procedures:** the Board has clearly defined financial instructions and procedures, including delegated spending and authorisation limits and segregation of duties, approved by resolution of the statutory Board. In addition, the statutory Board has reserved approval of expenditure on contracts with value in excess of €65,000, while the Finance Committee of the statutory Board is notified of all contracts with value in excess of €10,000 and less than €65,000. During 2007, the internal audit function of the Board carried out audits of accounts and procedures in fourteen of the Board's law centres. In addition, audits of the cleaning tender competition and IT procurement were also carried out. A financial fraud prevention policy for the Board is currently being finalised and will be implemented during the first half of 2008.
- **Monitoring of Internal Control:** the Board has an Internal Audit function whose annual audit programme is approved by the Audit Committee of the statutory Board and one of whose functions is to review all aspects of internal financial controls. The Audit Committee reviews the work and recommendations of the Internal Audit function and monitors the action taken by management to resolve any issues that have been identified. The Committee also reviews all significant reports received by the Board from the external auditors including management's responses to these and makes recommendations on the issues raised. Correspondence with the Comptroller and Auditor General, including the audit Management Letter, and any issues raised, are brought to the attention of the Audit Committee and the statutory Board, which ensures that issues raised are pursued. With the exception of considering the Board's accounting policy regarding the depreciation of fixed assets, I can confirm that all other issues raised since the 2006 audit have been addressed and any recommendations adopted. The Board's accounting policy regarding the depreciation of fixed assets will be examined in 2008.

The Audit Committee must produce a formal report within three months of the end of the calendar year, outlining its activities, together with such advice and recommendations as it deems appropriate. The report for 2007 was adopted by the Board at its meeting on 18 April 2008.

4. I confirm that during the year ended 31 December 2007 the Board has continued to review the effectiveness of the Board's system of internal financial controls.



Chairperson
27 June 2008

LEGAL AID FUND

REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER & AUDITOR GENERAL FOR PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

I have audited the financial statements of the Legal Aid Fund for the year ended 31 December 2007 under the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995. The financial statements, which have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein, comprise the Statement of Accounting Policies, the Income and Expenditure Account, the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes.

Respective Responsibilities of the Members of the Board and the Comptroller and Auditor General

The Legal Aid Board is responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995 and for ensuring the regularity of transactions. The Board prepares the financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland. The accounting responsibilities of the Members of the Board are set out in the Statement of Board Responsibilities.

My responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

I report my opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland. I also report whether in my opinion proper books of account have been kept. In addition, I state whether the financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

I report any material instance where moneys have not been applied for the purposes intended or where the transactions do not conform to the authorities governing them.

I also report if I have not obtained all the information and explanations necessary for the purposes of my audit.

I review whether the Statement on Internal Financial Control reflects the Board's compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and report any material instance where it does not do so, or if the statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information of which I am aware from my audit of the financial statements. I am not required to consider whether the Statement on Internal Financial Control covers all financial risks and controls, or to form an opinion on the effectiveness of the risk and control procedures. I read other information contained in the Annual Report, and consider whether it is consistent with the audited financial statements. I consider the implications for my report if I become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the financial statements.

Basis of Audit Opinion

In the exercise of my function as Comptroller and Auditor General, I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board and by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures and regularity of the financial transactions included in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgments made in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Board's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

I planned and performed my audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations that I considered necessary in order to provide me with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming my opinion I also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, of the state of the Legal Aid Fund's affairs at 31 December 2007 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended.

In my opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the Board. The financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.



John Buckley
Comptroller and Auditor General
30 June 2008

LEGAL AID FUND

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

GENERAL

The Legal Aid Fund, which is provided for under Section 19 of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995, is managed by a Legal Aid Board appointed by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Fund consists of all the financial resources of the Board. In 2007, the Board operated out of 33 full-time centres and 12 part-time centres throughout the country.

BASIS OF ACCOUNTING

The financial statements are prepared under the accruals method of accounting, except as indicated below, and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles under the historical cost convention. Financial Reporting Standards recommended by the recognised accountancy bodies are adopted, as they become operative.

GOING CONCERN

The Legal Aid Board is a statutory body established under the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995. The financing of the Board's activities is predominantly met by grant-in-aid and exchequer funding from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

During the financial year the Board carried out a comprehensive exercise for the purpose of assessing the Board's accrued liabilities figure, in particular, Counsel Fees and the Private Practitioner service.

The balance sheet at 31 December 2007 shows an excess of liabilities over assets of €4,555,964. This deficit arises from the timing difference between receipt of funding to pay liabilities for legal services when they are due for payment and the provision for these liabilities that is recognised in these accounts under the accruals method of accounting.

A letter of ongoing support has been received from the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform confirming that the Board's activities will be funded into the future.

The Board takes the view that the going concern accounting convention applies to the accounts which represent the operations of the Board as long as the provisions of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 remain in existence.

The Board knows of no review of its operations or intention to suspend its activities or merge it with other organisations. It has therefore been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of these financial statements.

STATE GRANTS

Income under this heading is accounted for on a cash receipts basis.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM AIDED PERSONS

Due to the nature of this income, i.e. contributions from persons of modest means, it is considered prudent to account for such income on a cash receipts basis. The estimated amount collectable at 31 December, 2007 was approximately €24,000. There were no bad debts written off in 2007.

COSTS RECOVERED

The Board may recover the costs of providing legal services from:

- (a) the other party to a dispute, either as a result of a court order or as part of an agreement to settle a dispute, or
- (b) from the legally aided person, out of moneys/property received by the person as a result of the provision of legal services.

FIXED ASSETS AND DEPRECIATION

Fixed assets are shown on the Balance Sheet at cost less accumulated depreciation. Depreciation, which is calculated over the useful life of the assets using the straight line method, is charged at the following annual rates:

Leases, office furniture & equipment, computer equipment and premises fit out 20%

A half year's depreciation is charged in the year of purchase and in the year of disposal.

CLIENTS' FUNDS

These funds represent the gross amounts plus interest accrued, which were held by the Board at 31 December 2007, on foot of awards or settlements made in favour of clients represented by the Board. The Board may recover therefrom the total cost of providing such legal services and the balance is paid to the persons represented.

CAPITAL ACCOUNT

The capital account represents the unamortised amount of income used to purchase fixed assets.

PENSIONS

The Legal Aid Board operates a defined benefit pension scheme, which is funded annually on a pay-as-you-go basis from monies available to it, including monies provided by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and from contributions deducted from solicitors' salaries. Pension costs reflect pension benefits earned by solicitor staff in the period and are shown net of staff pension contributions which are retained by the Legal Aid Board. An amount corresponding to the pension charge is recognized as income to the extent that it is recoverable, and offset by grants received in the year to discharge pension payments.

Actuarial gains or losses arising on scheme liabilities are reflected in the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses and a corresponding adjustment is recognised in the amount recoverable from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Pension liabilities represent the present value of future pension payments earned by solicitor staff to date. Deferred pension funding represents the corresponding asset to be recovered in future periods from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

PROVISIONS

A provision is recognised when an obligation (whether legal or constructive) arises as a result of a past event, and when it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required to settle the obligation and that it can be reliably estimated.

The Legal Aid Board estimates the value of unbilled live cases each year to arrive at the amounts disclosed within the accounts as a provision. The amount is an estimate of the expenditure required to settle any obligation at the balance sheet date.

In estimating the provision, the Board has adopted prudent measurement techniques based on the latest data available. Improved data capture methods have been utilised in the Board's estimate for the current year. No income is anticipated for cases that may recover costs.

LEGAL AID FUND

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

for the year ended 31 December 2007

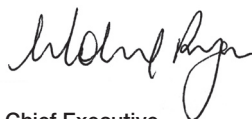
	Note	€	2007 €	€	2006 €
Income					
State funding	1	32,905,000		29,638,760	
Net deferred funding for pensions	2b	3,234,356		2,523,600	
Contributions from aided persons		659,520		497,473	
Costs recovered		1,128,800		1,347,433	
Other income	3	748,084		1,095,752	
			38,675,761		35,103,018
Transfer from Capital Account	4		142,398		296,873
			38,818,159		35,399,891
Expenditure					
Salaries and related expenses	5	20,113,972		18,175,888	
Pension costs	2c	2,888,302		2,228,743	
Fees to Board members		121,526		105,795	
Accommodation and establishment expenses	6	4,279,587		4,590,221	
Legal fees and expenses	7	9,464,686		12,303,074	
General administration	8	2,470,379		2,503,491	
Depreciation	9	749,039		1,102,556	
Audit fee		19,250		17,600	
			40,106,741		41,027,368
Deficit for year			(1,288,582)		(5,627,477)
Opening balance as at 1 January			(5,101,034)		526,443
Closing balance as at 31 December			(6,389,616)		(5,101,034)

All income and expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2007 relates to continuing activities.

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Cash Flow Statement, together with Notes 1 to 18, form part of these financial statements.



Chairperson
27 June 2008



Chief Executive

LEGAL AID FUND

STATEMENT OF TOTAL RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES

as at 31 December 2007

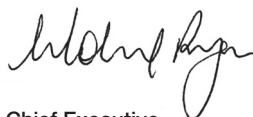
	Note	2007 €	2006 €
(Deficit) / Surplus for year		(1,288,582)	(5,627,477)
Experience (gains) / losses on pension scheme liability		(1,149,600)	1,579,000
Changes in assumptions underlying the present value of pension scheme liabilities		0	0
Actuarial (gain) / loss on pension liabilities	2e	(1,149,600)	1,579,000
Adjustment to deferred pension funding		1,149,600	(1,579,000)
Total recognised (gains) / losses		(1,288,582)	(5,627,477)

All income and expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2007 relates to continuing activities.

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Cash Flow Statement, together with Notes 1 to 18, form part of these financial statements.



Chairperson
27 June 2008



Chief Executive

LEGAL AID FUND

BALANCE SHEET

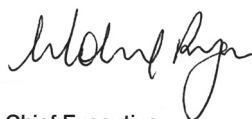
as at 31 December 2007

	Note	2007 €	2006 €
Fixed assets	9	1,833,652	1,976,050
Current assets			
Cash at bank and on hand		4,131,984	3,513,210
Debtors and prepayments	10	492,994	581,034
		4,624,978	4,094,244
Less current liabilities			
Creditors and accruals	11	8,977,591	7,687,331
Clients' funds	12	2,037,003	1,507,947
		11,014,594	9,195,278
Net current (liabilities) / assets		(6,389,616)	(5,101,034)
Total assets less current liabilities before pension		4,555,964	(3,124,984)
Deferred pension funding	2 d	25,457,730	23,602,600
Pension liabilities	2 e	(25,457,730)	(23,602,600)
		0	0
Total assets		(4,555,964)	(3,124,984)
Represented by:			
Income and Expenditure Account		(6,389,616)	(5,101,034)
Capital Account	4	1,833,652	1,976,050
		(4,555,964)	(3,124,984)

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Cash Flow Statement, together with Notes 1 to 18, form part of these financial statements.



Chairperson
27 June 2008



Chief Executive

LEGAL AID FUND

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

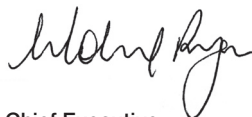
as at 31 December 2007

	Note	2007 €	2006 €
Net cash inflow / (outflow) from operating activities	14	1,038,734	(408,133)
Returns on investment and servicing of finance			
Interest received		233,118	108,711
Interest paid on client settlements		(42,669)	(17,977)
Investing activities			
Sale of tangible assets		0	0
Purchase of tangible assets		(610,409)	(796,503)
Net cash inflow / (outflow)		618,774	(1,113,902)
Increase / (decrease) in cash	15	618,774	(1,113,902)

The Statement of Accounting Policies, together with Notes 1 to 18, forms part of these financial statements.



Chairperson
27 June 2008



Chief Executive

LEGAL AID FUND

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

for the year ended 31 December 2007

1. State funding

State funding was received from Vote 19 - Office of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform as follows:

	2007	2006
	€	€
Subhead:		
C.2 Grant-in-aid	24,288,000	21,913,000
D.2 Asylum Seekers Taskforce - Legal Aid*	8,617,000	7,725,760
	32,905,000	29,638,760

* This funding was provided towards the expenditure incurred on the Refugee Legal Service. See Note 16

2. Pension costs

(a). Pension scheme

The Legal Aid Board operates a defined benefits superannuation scheme for solicitors. Superannuation entitlements arising under the scheme are paid out of current income and are charged to the Income and Expenditure Account, net of employee superannuation contributions, in the year in which they become payable.

The results set out below are based on an actuarial valuation of the liabilities of the scheme in respect of Legal Aid Board solicitor staff as at 31 December 2007. The valuation was carried out by a qualified independent actuary for the purposes of the accounting standard, Financial Reporting Standard No. 17- Retirement Benefits (FRS 17).

The financial assumptions used to calculate scheme liabilities for the purpose of FRS 17 were as follows:

	At 31/12/07	At 31/12/06	At 31/12/05
Discount rate	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%
Salary increase assumption	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Pension increase assumption	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Price inflation	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%

On the basis of these assumptions, and using the projected unit method prescribed in FRS17, the value of the accrued liabilities in respect of the Legal Aid Board solicitor staff at 31 December 2007 was estimated at €25.5m (compared with €23.6m as at 31 December 2006).

(b). Net deferred funding for pensions in year

	2007	2006
	€	€
Funding recoverable in respect of current year pension costs	3,350,000	2,600,000
State grant applied to pay pensioners	(115,644)	(76,400)
	3,234,356	2,523,600

(c). Analysis of total pension costs charged to expenditure

	2007	2006
	€	€
Current service cost	2,000,000	1,500,000
Interest on pension scheme liabilities	1,350,000	1,100,000
Employee contributions	(461,698)	(371,257)
	2,888,302	2,228,743

(d). Deferred funding asset for pensions

The Legal Aid Board recognises these amounts as an asset corresponding to the unfunded deferred liability for pensions on the basis of the set of assumptions described above and a number of past events. These events include the statutory basis for the establishment of the superannuation scheme, and the policy and practice currently in place in relation to funding public service pensions including contributions by employees and the annual estimate process. While there is no formal agreement regarding these specific amounts with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Board has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet such sums in accordance with current practice. The deferred funding asset for pensions as at 31 December 2007 amounted to €25.5m (€23.6m in 2006).

(e). Movement in Net Pension Liability during the financial year

	2007	2006
	€	€
Net Pension Liability at 1 January	23,602,600	19,500,000
Current Service Cost	2,000,000	1,500,000
Interest Costs	1,350,000	1,100,000
Actuarial (Gain) / Loss	(1,149,600)	1,579,000
Pensions paid in the year	(345,270)	(76,400)
Net Pension Liability at 31 December	25,457,730	23,602,600

(f). History of experience gains and losses

	2007	2006	2005
	€	€	€
Experience (gains) / losses on scheme liabilities			
Amount (€)	(1,149,600)	1,579,000	(820,000)
Percentage of the present value of the scheme liabilities	-4%	7%	-4%
 Total amount recognised in STRGL			
Amount (€)	(1,149,600)	1,579,000	(820,000)
Percentage of the present value of the scheme liabilities	-4%	7%	-4%

3. Other income

	2007	2006
	€	€
Interest received and receivable	101,960	98,300
Sundry receipts*	646,124	997,452
	748,084	1,095,752

* Sundry receipts primarily consist of rent rebate in respect of Montague Court

4. Capital account

	€	€
Balance as at 1 January		1,976,050
Transfer to Income and Expenditure Account		
- Income used to purchase fixed assets	502,264	
- Amount released on disposal of fixed assets	0	
- Income amortised in year in line with depreciation of assets	(564,267)	
		(62,003)
Balance as at 31 December		1,914,047

LEGAL AID FUND

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

for the year ended 31 December 2007

5. Employee numbers and costs

The total staff complement as approved by the Minister at 31 December, 2007 was 384. The number of staff actually employed by the Board at 31 December, 2007 was 383 (2006 - 389) The average number of employees in the Board during the year was 383 (2006 - 387). Employee and related costs were as follows:

	2007	2006
	€	€
Salaries	18,657,649	16,880,964
Cost of agency staff and secondment	57,409	54,281
Employer PRSI	1,398,914	1,240,643
	20,113,972	18,175,887

6. Accommodation and establishment expenses

	2007	2006
	€	€
Rents	2,766,309	2,717,830
Cleaning	318,535	331,304
Lighting and heating	255,824	299,109
Maintenance - Premises	545,442	713,129
Maintenance - Equipment	393,477	528,849
	4,279,587	4,590,221

7. Legal fees and expenses

	2007	2006
	€	€
Counsel fees	4,903,053	6,846,818
Legal fees	740,273	994,311
Private Practitioner Schemes	2,557,013	3,033,894
Other professional fees	576,043	742,700
Other expenses	688,305	685,351
	9,464,686	12,303,074

8. General administration

	2007	2006
	€	€
Stationery, office and training expenses	397,352	472,919
Books and printing	173,875	100,577
Postage and telephone	920,393	894,442
Insurance	178,877	253,897
Travel and subsistence	799,882	781,656
	2,470,379	2,362,296

9. Fixed assets	Leases	Office Furniture	Equipment & Computers	Premises Fit Out	Total
	€	€	€	€	€
Cost					
Balance as at 01/01/07	2,236,152	1,243,746	6,384,787	2,881,227	12,745,912
Acquisitions	56,025	48,352	250,967	251,297	606,641
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Balance as at 31/12/07	2,292,177	1,292,098	6,635,754	3,132,523	13,352,553
Depreciation of fixed assets					
Balance as at 01/01/07	1,838,531	1,117,363	5,447,685	2,366,283	10,769,862
Charge in year	132,974	51,798	338,656	225,611	749,039
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Balance as at 31/12/07	1,971,505	1,169,161	5,786,341	2,591,894	11,518,901
Net book value as at 31/12/07	320,672	122,937	849,413	540,629	1,833,652
Net book value as at 31/12/06	397,621	126,383	937,102	514,944	1,976,050

10. Debtors and prepayments	2007	2006
	€	€
Debtors - deposit interest	20,578	103,216
Prepayments		
- Rent	121,065	130,183
- Insurance	94,867	115,119
- Salaries	13,116	10,777
- Other	243,367	221,739
	492,994	581,034

11. Creditors and accruals	2007	2006
	€	€
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Creditors & accruals	8,977,591	7,687,331
	8,977,591	7,687,331

The Legal Aid Board estimates the value of unbilled live cases each year to arrive at the amounts disclosed within the accounts as a provision. The amount is an estimate of the expenditure required to settle any obligation at the balance sheet date.

In estimating the provision, the Board has adopted prudent measurement techniques based on the latest data available. Improved data capture methods have been utilised in the Board's estimate for the current year. No income is anticipated for cases that may recover costs.

LEGAL AID FUND

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

or the year ended 31 December 2007

12. Clients' Funds	€
Client funds held at 1 January (net of interest)	1,483,257
Add Awards/settlements received during 2007	15,480,401
Less Settlements paid out, including interest allowed and costs recovered	(14,957,196)
Client funds held at 31 December	2,006,462
Interest accruing on client funds held	30,541
Total due to clients	2,037,003

13. Commitments under operating leases

The Board occupies premises at Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry and Mount Street, Dublin and operates out of 34 other centres throughout the country. The Board is committed to pay rent of € 2,477,142 during 2008 in respect of leases expiring as follows:

	€
2008	0
2009-2013	126,297
2014 onwards	2,350,845

14. Reconciliation of surplus for year to cash from operating activities

	2007	2006
	€	€
(Deficit) / Surplus for year	(1,184,204)	(5,627,477)
Adjustment for non-operating items		
Bank interest receivable	(101,960)	(98,299)
Movement on capital account	(62,003)	(296,873)
Adjustment for non-cash items		
Depreciation	564,267	1,102,556
(Increase) / Decrease in debtors	5,402	0
Increase / (Decrease) in creditors	1,817,233	632,530
	1,038,735	(4,287,563)

15. Movement of cash

	2007	2006
	€	€
Balance at 1 January	3,513,210	4,627,112
Net cash inflow	618,774	(1,113,902)
Balance at 31 December	4,131,984	3,513,210

16. Refugee Legal Service

	2007	2006
	€	€
Expenditure and income relating to the Refugee Legal Service are included in the financial statements as follows:		
Salaries and related expenses	5,232,352	4,685,482
Accommodation expenses	1,264,411	1,737,362
Legal fees and professional fees	1,703,146	2,374,057
General administration	889,525	499,304
Fixed assets purchased	115,041	357,174
	9,204,475	9,653,379
Less contributions from legally aided persons and costs recovered	(383,326)	(765,826)
Total net expenditure in the year	8,821,149	8,887,553

17. Comparative figures

Some changes have been made to the presentation of items in the financial statements and the comparative figures have been restated where necessary on a basis consistent with the current year presentation.

18. Approval of financial statements

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 23 May 2008.

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF LAW CENTRES

FULL TIME LAW CENTRES

LAW CENTRE	MANAGING SOLICITOR	LAW CENTRE	MANAGING SOLICITOR
CAVAN Newcourt Shopping Centre, Church Street, Cavan Tel: (049) 433 1110 Fax: (049) 433 1304	Patricia O'Reilly	KILDARE Canning Place, Newbridge, Co Kildare Tel: (045) 435777 Fax: (045) 435766	Edel Poole
CLARE Unit 6A, Merchant's Square, Ennis, Co Clare Tel: (065) 682 1929 Fax: (065) 682 1939	Mary Cuffe	KILKENNY 87 Maudlin Street, Kilkenny Tel: (056) 776 1611 Fax: (056) 776 1562	Niall Murphy
CORK North Quay House, Popes Quay, Cork Tel: (021) 455 1686 Fax: (021) 455 1690	Betty Dineen	LAOIS Unit 6A, Bridge Street, Portlaoise, Co Laois Tel: (057)8661366 Fax: (057) 8661362	Deirdre O'Connor (Acting)
1A South Mall, Cork Tel: (021) 427 5998 Fax: (021) 427 6927	Deirdre Kissane	LIMERICK Unit F, Lock Quay, Limerick Tel: (061) 314599 Fax: (061) 318330	Fergal Rooney
DONEGAL Letterkenny Town Centre, Justice Walsh Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal Tel: (074) 912 6177 Fax: (074) 912 6086	Ray Finucane	LONGFORD Credit Union Courtyard, 50A Main Street, Longford Tel: (043) 47590 Fax: (043) 47594	Eugene Kelly
DUBLIN 45 Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin 1 Tel: (01) 874 5440 Fax: (01) 874 6896	Shane Dooley	LOUTH Condil House, Roden Place, Dundalk, Co Louth Tel: (042) 933 0448 Fax: (042) 933 0991	Deirdre McMichael
Tower Centre, Clondalkin Village, Dublin 22 Tel: (01) 457 6011 Fax: (01) 457 6007	Tom Nally	MAYO Humbert Mall, Main Street, Castlebar, Co Mayo Tel: (094) 902 4334 Fax: (094) 902 3721	Thomas O' Mahony
Village Green, Tallaght, Dublin 24 Tel: (01) 451 1519 Fax: (01) 451 7989	Pauline Corcoran	MEATH Kennedy Road, Navan, Co Meath Tel: (046) 907 2515 Fax: (046) 907 2519	Mary Pat Ahern
44/49 Main Street, Finglas, Dublin 11 Tel: (01) 864 0314 Fax: (01) 864 0362	Marie Quirke	MONAGHAN Alma House, The Diamond, Monaghan Tel: (047) 84888 Fax: (047) 84879	Stephanie Coggans
48/49 North Brunswick Street, Georges Lane, Dublin 7 Tel: (01) 646 9700 Fax: (01) 646 9799	Hugh Cunniam	OFFALY Harbour Street, Tullamore Tel: (057) 9351177 Fax: (057) 9351544	Orla Connolly
Unit 6-8, Business Centre, Clonsilla Road Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 Tel: (01) 820 0455 Fax: (01) 820 0450	Joan Crawford	SLIGO Bridgewater House, Rockwood Parade, Sligo Tel: (071) 9161670 Fax: (071) 9161681	Fiona McGuire
Medical Negligence Unit 7 – 11 Montague Court, Montague St Dublin 2 Tel: (01 4776200 Fax: (01)4776241	Margaret O'Shea-Grewcock	TIPPERARY Friars Court, Abbey Street, Nenagh, Co Tipperary Tel: (067) 34181 Fax: (067) 34083	Josephine Fair
Private Practitioner Centre 7 – 11 Montague Court, Montague St Dublin 2 Tel: (01 4776200 Fax: (01)4776241		WATERFORD Canada House, Canada Street, Waterford Tel: (051) 855814 Fax: (051) 871237	Aidan Lynch
GALWAY 9 St. Francis Street, Galway Tel: (091) 561650 Fax: (091) 563825	Mary Griffin		
KERRY 1 Day Place, Tralee, Co Kerry Tel: (066) 712 6900 Fax: (066) 712 3631	Carol Anne Coolican		

LAW CENTRE	MANAGING SOLICITOR	PART TIME LAW CENTRES Location and telephone	Open	Law Centre
WESTMEATH Paynes Lane, Irishtown, Athlone, Co Westmeath Tel: (090) 647 4694 Fax: (090) 647 2160	Phil O'Laoidé	CARLOW St. Catherine's Citizens Info. Bureau, St. Joseph's Road, Carlow Tel: (059) 9138700	First and last Friday of every month	Kilkenny
WEXFORD Unit 8, Redmond Square, Wexford Tel: (053) 9122622 Fax: (053)9124927	Niamh Murrán	CORK Citizens Info. Bureau, Wolf Tone Square, Bantry Tel: (021) 455168	Once a month	Cork (Popes Quay)
WICKLOW Bridge Street, Wicklow Tel: (0404) 66166 Fax: (0404) 66197	Barbara Smyth	DONEGAL The Courthouse, Donegal Town Tel: (074) 9126177	Once a month	Letterkenny
REFUGEE LEGAL SERVICE 48/49 North Brunswick Street George's Lane, Dublin 7 Tel: (01) 646 9600 Fax: (01) 671 0200	Frank Caffrey Gráinne Brophy Anke Boehm (Acting)	KERRY 52 High Street, Killarney Tel: (066) 7126900	Every Friday morning	Tralee
North Quay House, Popes Quay, Cork Tel: (021) 4554634 Fax: 021 4557622	Bernadette McGonigle	LEITRIM The Health Centre, Leitrim Road, Carrick-on-Shannon Tel: (043) 47590	Once a month	Longford
Seville House, New Dock Street, Galway Tel: (091) 562480 Fax: (091)562599	Cormac Faherty	LOUTH Drogheda Community Services Centre, Scarlett Crescent, Drogheda Tel: (041) 9836084/9833490	First and Second Thursday of every month	Monaghan
REGISTRATION OFFICE Timberlay House 79/83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2 Tel: (01) 631 0800 Fax: (01) 661 5011		MAYO The Pastoral Centre (Cathedral Grounds) Ballina, Co. Mayo Tel: (094) 9024334	Once a month	Castlebar
		Health Centre, Knock Road, Ballyhaunis Tel: (094) 9024334	Fourth Tuesday of every month	Castlebar
		ROSCOMMON Citizens Information Centre, 7 Elphin Street, Boyle Tel: (071) 9161670	Once a month	Sligo
		TIPPERARY Thurles Community Social Services, Rossa Street, Thurles Tel: (0504) 22169	Second Tuesday of every month	Nenagh
		Citizens' Information Centre, 14 Wellington Street, Clonmel Tel: (052) 22267	Three or four times a month	Nenagh
		WESTMEATH Enterprise Centre, Bishopgate Street, Mullingar Tel: (090) 6474694	Once a month	Athlone

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF LAW CENTRES (CONTINUED)

REFUGEE LEGAL SERVICE INFORMATION CLINICS

It should be noted that locations dates and times of these clinics may change depending on demand for the service.

DORAS CLINIC (LIMERICK)

Address: Mount St. Vincent,
O'Connell Avenue,
Limerick

Contact: Ella / Sr. Teresa (087) 7754160 / (061) 310328
Every Friday.

WATERFORD CLINIC

Address: Mount Sion Information Unit,
Barrack Street,
Waterford

Contact: (021) 4554634
Every second Wednesday.

TRALEE CLINIC

Address: Tralee Law Centre,
1 Day Place,
Tralee,
Co. Kerry

Contact: (087) 4190117
Every Wednesday and Friday.

KILLARNEY CLINIC

Address: 52 High Street,
Killarney,
Co. Kerry

Contact: (087) 4190117
Every Monday and second Wednesday.

ATHLONE CLINIC

Address: Athlone Accommodation Centre,
Lissywoolen,
Ballymahon Road,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath

Contact: Mattie (09064) 91982
Clinic takes place on demand.

SLIGO CLINIC

Address: The Family Resource Centre,
The Mall,
Sligo

Contact: Vincent / Orla (071) 9137448
Every second Tuesday.

BALLYHAUNIS CLINIC

Address: The Old Convent Hostel,
Main Street,
Ballyhaunis,
Co. Mayo

Contact: Manager: Pat O'Connor (094 9632846)
Third Friday of every month.

DUNGIBBONS INN CLINIC (CLIFDEN)

Address: Westport Road,
Clifden,
Co. Galway

Contact: Patricia (095 21379)
Third Thursday of every month.

DUBLIN CLINICS

Address: Kilmacud House,
Uppr Kilmacud Road,
Stillorgan,
Co. Dublin

Contact: (01) 2786090
Every Thursday.

Baleskin Centre,
Address: St Margaret's Road,
Finglas,
Dublin 11

Contact: (01) 8646291
Every Wednesday.

Georgian Court,
Address: Lr. Gardiner St,
Dublin 1

Contact: (01) 8557872
Every first and third Tuesday of the month.

Hatch Hall,
Address: Lr. Hatch St,
Dublin 2

Contact: (01) 6762953
Every second and fourth Tuesday of the month.

MOSNEY CLINIC

Address: Mosney Accommodation Centre,
Mosney,
Co. Meath

Contact: 01 6469600
Every first Tuesday of the month.