

To provide a professional, efficient, cost-effective
and accessible legal aid and advice service

ACCESS TO JUSTICE



annualreport2011

MISSION

To provide a professional, efficient, cost-effective and accessible legal aid and advice service.

VISION

To facilitate access to justice through the provision of a civil legal aid and advice service which compares favourably with best practice internationally.

GOALS

SERVICE

To provide a professional, accessible quality service.

COMMUNICATIONS

To put in place an effective public information, education and communication process.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

To achieve the best use of the financial and operational resources allocated to the Board and to ensure value for money.

INNOVATION

To ensure the Board is innovative, flexible and responsive in its approach to effective service delivery.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

To develop the capacity of the Board to deliver a quality professional service.

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OVERVIEW

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 (the "Act"). Section 54 of the Act was amended by the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 and gave the Board the additional responsibility to provide a family mediation service. The Board's remit is in the process of being further expanded, following a Government decision in 2010, to include the management and administration of the various Criminal Legal Aid Schemes previously administered by the Department of Justice and Equality.

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.

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.

Offices in Dublin, Cork and Galway include an asylum speciality and there are also dedicated units in Dublin dealing with medical negligence cases and cases involving children at risk of being taken into the care of the State.

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.

Responsibility for the Family Mediation Service (FMS) was on 1st November 2011 transferred to the Legal Aid Board under ministerial order giving effect to the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011. The FMS provides its services through four full time offices and twelve part time offices.

The first of the criminal legal aid ad-hoc schemes, the Garda Station Advice Scheme, transferred to the Board on 1st October 2011.

3 OBTAINING LEGAL SERVICES

A person seeking legal services must apply to any of the law centres set out at Appendix 3 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. Such cases can include domestic violence, child abduction, cases involving applications by the State to take children into care, and cases that have statutory time limits close to expiry.

4 PAYMENT FOR LEGAL SERVICES

All persons who are granted legal advice and/or legal aid are required to 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 OBTAINING MEDIATION SERVICES

A person seeking to avail of mediation must apply to any of the offices set out at Appendix 4. The second party also needs to contact the same office to confirm his/her interest in attending mediation. Once both parties have confirmed that they wish to mediate they will be offered an appointment as soon as possible. The Board is endeavouring to keep waiting times in all offices to a maximum of 2 months. There is currently no charge for the service.

6 HEAD OFFICE

The Board's head office is located in Cahirciveen, County Kerry where some 45 staff are located. Some of the headquarter functions also operate from Dublin.

7 GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The statutory Board is appointed by the Minister for Justice and Equality 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 Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 makes provision for the election of a Chairperson and 12 member Board. The term of the outgoing Board ended in October 2011 and a new Board was appointed in December 2011.

The Board continues to maintain the standards of corporate governance set out in the updated *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 2011, the Board held 10 Board meetings, 5 of which were in Cahirciveen.

Attendance at these 10 meetings in 2011 was as follows:

Member	No. of meetings
Anne Colley (Chair)	10
Bob Browne	9
Michael Buckley	9
Dara Foynes	7
Kate Hayes	10
Seamus Keelan	9
Breege Leonard	10
Niamh Moran	10
Elizabeth Murphy	7
Jerry O'Connor	8
Jim O'Farrell	9
Eamonn Purcell	10
Fergal Rooney	10

The committees of the Board met as follows in 2011:

Committee	No. of meetings held
Appeal Committee	12
Finance Committee	5
Audit and Risk Management Committee	6
Lawyers Committee	8
Human Resources Committee	2
Performance Committee	1

The Board utilises an in-house corporate governance manual 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.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee of the Board incorporates one independent external member, Dr. Conan McKenna, in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

In 2011, the Board members were paid fees in line with the relevant guidelines issued by the Department of Finance.

The term of office of the Board ended on 10 October 2011. On 14 December 2011 the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Mr. Alan Shatter, T.D. appointed a new Board with Ms. Muriel Walls as its Chairperson. Membership of the new Board is set out at page 7.

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRPERSON



This is the first annual report that I will be presenting on behalf of the Board following my appointment as Chairperson at the end of 2011. I was honoured to be asked by the Minister for Justice and Equality, Mr. Alan Shatter T.D. to take up this important appointment at this critical stage in the Legal Aid Board's development when the Board's remit is being widened to include the Family Mediation Service and Criminal Legal Aid. Given my own long-standing interest in the areas within the Board's remit, I was delighted to accept the Minister's offer. I am pleased to be given the opportunity to make a contribution to what is a very important area of public administration in Ireland. I hope that the trust the Minister and the Government have placed in the Board to manage both the traditional civil law remit and new areas of work effectively will not be misplaced. I am therefore looking forward to the challenge of contributing to the development of the organisation over the course of my term of office.

As I was only appointed as Chairperson in mid-December 2011, in presenting this report, I am reflecting the achievements of the outgoing Board, chaired by my predecessor, Ms. Anne Colley. On my own behalf, and on behalf of my colleagues on the Board, I would like to express my appreciation for the dedication displayed by the outgoing Board to the task at hand in a difficult economic environment. Under my predecessor's expert guidance, they have exercised their role with diligence, commitment and enthusiasm in challenging times. They have also laid important foundations in all areas of service delivery in the Board designed both to improve the cost effectiveness of services and address increasing demand with less resources.

The task of leading the organisation has now passed to my Board colleagues and I. This is a challenge that we are happy to take up. We look forward to working with the Board's Chief Executive, Dr. Moling Ryan, his senior management team and all staff of the Board during our

term of office. We recognise that a cooperative effort is required, on all our parts, to fulfil the Board's statutory mandate to provide legal and mediation services that are cost effective and reflect best practice. I am looking forward to meeting this challenge and to providing the leadership required to guide the organisation over the coming years in what is likely to remain a very difficult operating environment.

For now, however, I intend to focus on what has been achieved during 2011. As the Chief Executive points out in his introduction to this report, the main feature of the last few years has been the significant and sustained increase in demand for services across all the law centres. This increase in demand is largely driven by reduced household income with more and more people becoming financially eligible for our services. Since the end of 2006, demand for services has increased by a staggering 93% such that 4,500 applicants were on waiting lists for services at the end of 2011. Meeting this need with reduced manpower resources was the main challenge of 2011.

Some of the key developments during 2011 included the launch by the Board of an integrated mediation initiative based in Dublin in conjunction with the Courts Service and the Family Mediation Service. This initiative provides applicants for legal services with an alternative pathway towards the resolution of their legal issues through early referral to mediation with legal advice also available during the process, if required. The review of the initiative's operation demonstrates that there are clear benefits to this approach. Firstly there are tangible savings to the Board and the Courts Service principally through the avoidance of the expense of litigation. Secondly there are non-financial societal benefits relating to the durability of mediated agreements reached compared to court imposed arrangements.

As reflected in this report, the Board also made substantial progress in developing new service delivery mechanisms to maximise the use of available resources. These included the streamlining of financial assessment procedures, the operation of an “advice only” service on a pilot basis, the integration of the Refugee Legal Service offices in Dublin, Cork and Galway with law centres in those locations and the streamlining of some services in the Dublin area to address requirements to prioritise the provision of a greater level of resources for childcare cases.

The Board also successfully managed the transfer of the Family Mediation Service (FMS) to the organisation from the Family Support Agency. Significant progress was also made in the development of a new legal case management system. This new system, called “EOS”, will enable the Board to increase efficiency across the law centres, better manage risk and performance and improve the flow and quality of management information that will inform effective governance of the services.

Progress was also made in preparing the organisation for the transfer of responsibility for criminal legal aid from the Department of Justice and Equality and other agencies to the Board. Responsibility for the Garda Station Legal Advice Scheme transferred to the Board at the beginning of October 2011. It is anticipated that the transfer of the other ad-hoc schemes will take place on a gradual basis with the main scheme transferring to the Board following the enactment of new legislation. This is expected to be in place during 2013. The existing expenditure on criminal legal aid is significant and the Government will expect a considerable focus on cost control. This will be a challenge for the organisation during the course of this Board’s term of office.

The outgoing Board also had a major input into the development of a comprehensive discussion paper on the future of civil legal aid. This document will be of great benefit to this Board as we seek to chart a new direction for the organisation. We have recently signed off on a new Corporate Plan that reflects the challenging operational environment that we face in

relation to existing services while also addressing the manner in which the organisation is preparing for the widening of the Board’s remit. The new Plan identifies key organisational priorities that must be implemented. My colleagues and I on the Board look forward to the task of overseeing the further development of the organisation in the coming years. We envisage that we will build on the achievements that are reflected in this annual report, to ensure that the organisation continues to be in a position to robustly address the challenges of the future.

I would also like to express my thanks to the Minister for Justice and Equality who continued to show a real interest in and support for legal aid and for our work at a time when there were considerable financial and other pressures. The Secretary General and his staff have also been extremely supportive of the Board.

Finally, I would particularly like to thank the Chief Executive and all the staff in the many locations from which the Board provides service for their dedication to the task of meeting the Board’s mandate to provide legal and now mediation services during the course of 2011.



Muriel Walls
Chairperson

THE BOARD

Up to 10th October 2011 the Board was as follows:

Anne Colley

Chairperson

Bob Browne

Assistant Secretary, Department of Justice and Equality

Michael Buckley

Retired Consultant Physician

Dara Foynes

Barrister at law

Kate Hayes

Business Person

Elizabeth Murphy

Barrister at law

Séamus Keelan

Retired Accountant / Local Representative

Breege Leonard

Regional Manager (Retired), Department of Social Protection

Niamh Moran

Solicitor

Jerry O'Connor

Solicitor

Jim O'Farrell

Retired Principal, Department of Finance

Eamonn Purcell

Staff Representative

Fergal Rooney

Staff Representative – Solicitor

On 14 December 2011 a new Board was appointed as follows:

Muriel Walls

Chairperson

Oonagh Buckley

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Mary Dalton

Staff Representative

Kate Hayes

Business Person

Joy McGlynn

Health Service Executive

Oonagh McPhillips

Department of Justice and Equality

Donncha O'Connell

National University of Ireland, Galway

Micheál O'Connell

Barrister at law

John O'Gorman

Staff Representative – Solicitor

Philip O'Leary

Solicitor

Michelle O'Neill

Barrister at law

Ger Power

Department of Social Protection

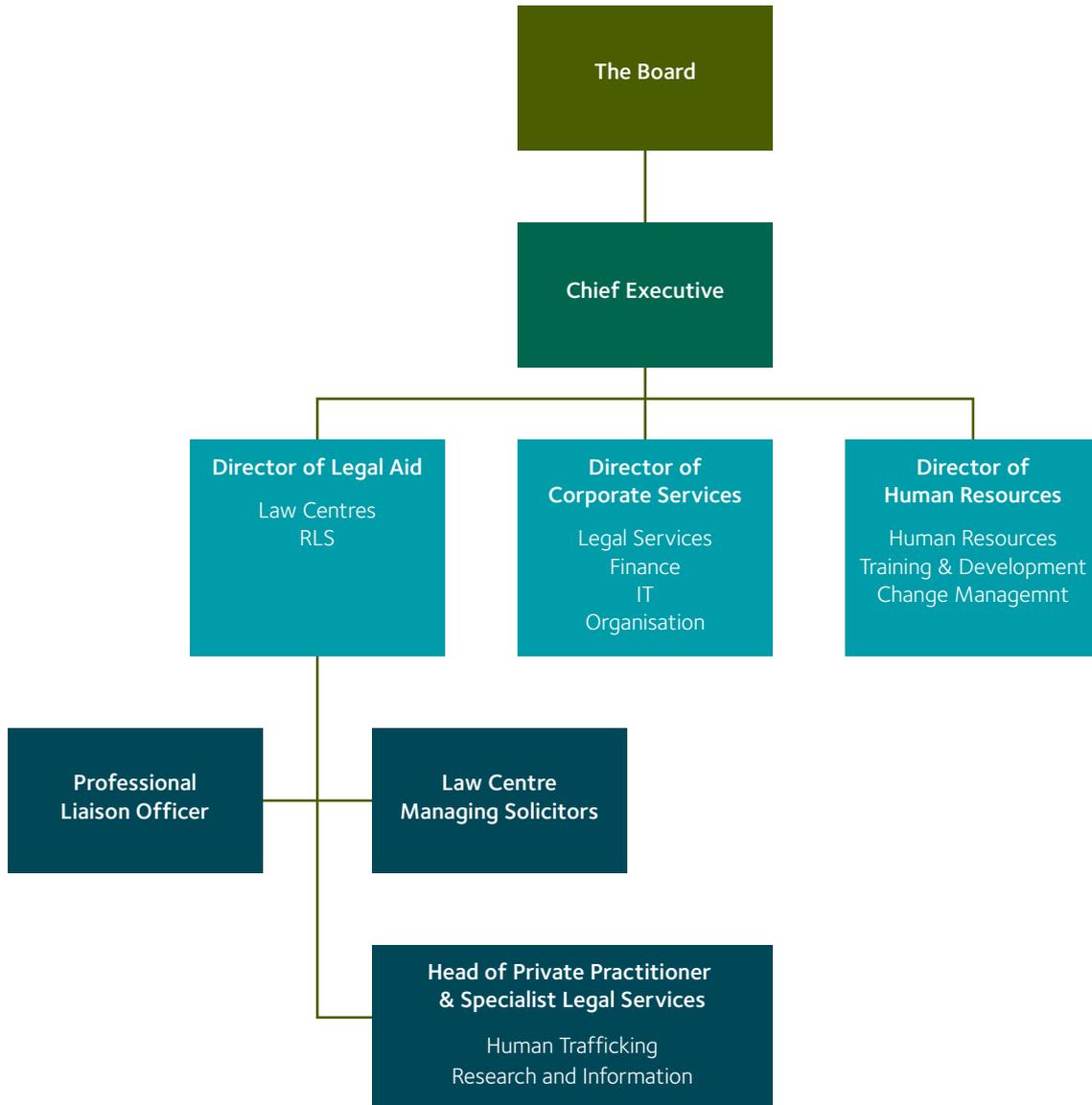
David Garvey (appointed in January 2012)

Chartered Accountant

HEAD OFFICE EXECUTIVE STAFF

Chief Executive Officer:	Moling Ryan
Director of Legal Aid:	Vacancy
Director of Human Resources:	Pat Fitzsimons
Director of Corporate Services:	Eileen Bowden
Professional Liaison Officer:	John McDaid
Head of Private Practitioner and Specialist Legal Services:	Frank Caffrey
Financial Controller:	Joan Enright
Secretary to the Board:	Clare Kelly
Auditors:	Comptroller and Auditor General
Solicitors:	Mason Hayes and Curran
Head Office:	Quay St. Cahirciveen Co. Kerry Phone: 066 9471000 LoCall: 1890 615200 Fax: 066 9471035
Dublin Office:	47 Upper Mount St. Dublin 2 Phone: 01 6441900 Fax: 01 6623661
Website:	www.legalaidboard.ie

STRUCTURE



INTRODUCTION BY THE CEO



During the year under review, demand for services from law centres continued to increase. The past five years has seen a cumulative increase in demand of 93%. As a result, some 4,500 applicants were waiting for service at the end of 2011 with over two thirds of our law centres having waiting times of 4 months or higher. There was, however, a moderation in the rate of increase which is welcome, given the pressure on the Board's resources. It still, though, leaves the Board with a huge ongoing challenge to address.

The Board's business model for service delivery is a 'mixed model' whereby the services of private sector solicitors and barristers are utilised to complement the main service provided by the Board's own solicitors. The reduced level of resources available coupled with increasing demand has put considerable pressure on our capacity to meet the extra demand even with the significant usage of private solicitors. In recent years we have been working to develop an organisational response that entails new ways of delivering services and that continues to meet the Board's statutory mandate while also utilising limited resources to best effect. The Chairperson, in her Foreword to this report, has highlighted the main initiatives and practical measures that have been taken during the year under review to achieve this objective. As a result of these initiatives and despite further reductions in staffing, the Board has again increased case throughput in 2011.

The number of cases processed by the Board's law centre network in 2011 increased by 7% to over 17,800. This increase coincided with a reduction in staffing numbers of 4.7% over the course of the year. Demand has increased in both family and non-family cases. The continuing downturn in the economy has meant an increase again in cases involving debt and employment. There was a particularly high increase of 12% in the number of child care cases, which tend to be extremely resource intensive, compared to other types of cases, during the year. The Board redeployed resources from

the Refugee Legal Service in Dublin, where demand continued to fall, to deal with this increasing number of child care cases. The resources applied, though, in this area are still far from adequate to meet the needs of an extremely sensitive and demanding area. The number of advice cases (some of which ultimately require legal representation in court) increased by over 14% during 2011 compared to 2010 reflecting the impact of the Board's advice-only pilot service that operated in a number of locations during the year as well as the overall increase in demand. This pilot project was designed to offer legal advice to clients soon after they had applied to the Board for service. The increase in family law advice cases was up by 23% compared to 2010, to a total of 5,960. This total represents 72% of all advice cases processed during the year.

A review of the operation of the Board's early advice service was completed during 2011. The positive results from the service are reflected in the statistics I have outlined above. The results of the review will be used as the basis for the introduction of a major new service initiative during 2012. This initiative will involve the introduction of a "triage service" whereby all applicants will be offered an initial advice appointment with a solicitor within a period of 4 weeks. The evidence from the operation of the Board's "advice only" service during 2011 clearly demonstrates that from the client's point of view, early access to a solicitor is of crucial importance. Such access facilitates clarification for the client on the process they are facing into to resolve their legal problem and also enables the Board to redirect some cases to more suitable resolution processes, such as family mediation. This is particularly important where the Board's resources, both financial and human, remain constrained. I believe this will meet a particularly pressing need but will not fully address the impact of the hugely increased demand.

One of the most significant initiatives during the year has been the establishment of the pilot integrated

mediation project in Dublin involving close cooperation with the Family Mediation Service and the Courts Service. The interim review of the first nine months of the service's operation clearly demonstrates that this new approach has both tangible and intangible benefits, the most significant being the benefit to children who are the subject of disputes. Over 300 applicants, who would otherwise have sought court-related remedies to their family law disputes, instead resolved the matters jointly through mediation. This initiative has resulted in a more effective use of resources in both the Courts Service and the Board while also meeting client needs in a less adversarial and less costly setting than the Courts system. The Board hopes to develop this model further during 2012 in cooperation with the Courts Service and to seek to extend its operation to other suitable locations.

Notwithstanding the impact of the various measures taken, they were insufficient to stop an overall rise in waiting times for services. The Board, though, continues to ensure that matters considered to be priority cases get immediate or near immediate service. These include cases of domestic violence, child abduction, applications by the State to take children into care and cases where statutory time limits are close to expiry. Last year, some 15% per cent of all cases dealt with by the Board's law centres came within this category.

As with other jurisdictions, the great bulk of civil legal services are provided in the family law area. Initial appointments in respect of family law matters were given in respect of close to 11,000 cases, an increase of over 5% compared to 2010. Most other areas of our work both family and non-family also experienced increases in demand over the year.

The decline in the number of clients seeking legal assistance in respect of asylum matters through the Refugee Legal Service continued in 2011 with numbers down by a further 32% per cent on the previous year. This ongoing downward trend is consistent with the overall reduction recorded of those seeking asylum status in the State in recent years. In response to this further reduction in demand, the Board successfully integrated the Refugee Legal Service with the law centres in Cork, Galway and Dublin. This involved new

management structures locally as well as changes in the deployment of staff and work practices, to enable resources previously deployed on asylum services to be re-allocated to providing services in other areas of civil law where demand has been rising significantly.

In order to give further impetus to the measures required to provide a more timely service, a discussion document on the future of civil legal aid was drawn up during the latter half of 2011. It sets out a number of clear principles that might govern the delivery of services and options for altering the Board's business model to improve the responsiveness of our services. The document suggests how best the Board might build on existing service delivery initiatives and integrate the Family Mediation Service into the Board's structures. The discussion document also builds on the recommendations of the independent Value for Money Review of the Board that was completed during 2011. It offers the new Board a comprehensive analysis of the organisation's structures and operating environment and options for the future evolution of the provision of civil legal aid services in Ireland over the medium to long term. I envisage that the impact of this document will be a theme to be taken up in future annual reports from the Board.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the ongoing commitment and dedication of staff in the organisation over the course of 2011. During the year we continued to face increasing demand for services coupled with resource constraints that impacted on our capacity to respond to service demand issues as we would wish. Were it not for the responsiveness and work ethic of the Board's staff, the Board would not have achieved the level of activity outlined in this report. While the years ahead are likely to be no less challenging than 2011, we can face into the future with confidence in our capacity to fulfil our mandate to the best of our ability.



Dr. Moling Ryan
Chief Executive Officer

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN 2011

The Board's law centre network for general civil matters dealt with a **9% increase in applications in 2011**. This followed a 21% increase in 2010 and 18% in 2009.

The number of new clients registering with the Board's **Refugee Legal Service** fell by 32%, in line with the reduction in recent years of the number of persons seeking asylum in this country.

Exchequer funding for the civil legal aid service fell marginally from €24.225 million in 2010 to €24.125 million in 2011. For the Refugee Legal Service, the Exchequer funding provision fell by over 21% to €6.24 million. Overall, staffing levels fell by 4.7% over the course of the year, from 359 whole-time equivalents at the end of 2010 to 342 at the end of 2011.

On 1st November 2011, the Board took over responsibility for the **Family Mediation Service** from the Family Support Agency. As a result, 26 staff in whole-time equivalents transferred to the Board with effect from that date. Accordingly, staffing levels at the year end, inclusive of Family Mediation Service staff, was 368 in whole-time equivalents.

Responsibility for the **Garda Station Advice ad-hoc Scheme** transferred to the Board from the Department of Justice and Equality on 1st October.

The number of **cases processed** during the year by the law centre network increased by 7% to over 17,800. The number of child care cases increased by 12%.

Waiting times for an appointment with a solicitor came under increasing pressure in 2011 due to increased demand and the constraints on the Board's resources. The issue of accessibility to timely legal services continued to prove difficult in 2011. While the Board provides a priority service or effectively prioritises a significant number of its clients, the waiting time for a first appointment with a solicitor for other matters was in excess of four months in 21 of the Board's law centres at the end of the year.

However, the Board continued to provide a priority service where it considered that an immediate, or near immediate, service was needed. These included cases of domestic violence, child abduction, cases involving applications by the State to take children into care, and cases that had statutory time limits close to expiry.

The Board continued to make use of **private practitioners** to help reduce the numbers of clients waiting for legal services. The private practitioner service currently operates for certain family law matters in the District Court. The Scheme for involving private practitioners in divorce and separation matters in the Circuit Court has been constrained for budgetary reasons.

The Board operated an **'advice only' service** in most of its law centres where the waiting time was in excess of 3 months. The service was evaluated in 2011 and on foot of that evaluation a recommendation was made that a 'triage' service be piloted in 2012. The objective of this approach will be to ensure that every applicant gets an appointment with a solicitor for the purpose of getting legal advice within a period of one month.

In 2011 the Board, as part of its promotion of non court based dispute resolution in the first instance in family disputes, engaged with the Family Mediation Service and the Courts Service to pilot a **'mediation initiative'** in the District Family Court premises in Dublin. Persons presenting at the District Court in relation to family disputes are provided with information on attending mediation. A key aspect is that mediators are on site in the same building enabling ease of access to this process.

The Board enhanced its presence in the District Family Court in Dublin during 2011 in order to develop its capacity to respond promptly to demands placed on it for legal services for parents who are at risk of having their children taken into the care of the State (HSE).

Significant progress was made during the year on the development of a comprehensive **legal case management system (EOS)** which will be available across the law centre network. The system will enable greater flexibility and effectiveness in the use of the Board's staffing resources. The system is expected to be operative in mid 2012.

The Board hosted its annual **family law conference** in June 2011. The theme of the conference was 'Protecting the Welfare of Children in Family Law Disputes.' The conference was addressed by a number of high profile speakers on various aspects of civil law in Ireland and abroad.

SERVICE PROVIDED IN 2011

The mission of the Legal Aid Board is to provide a professional, efficient, cost-effective and accessible legal aid and advice service to persons of modest means i.e., persons who cannot afford to retain a solicitor. Services are provided to clients primarily through a network of law centres which act as the first point of contact for persons seeking the Board's services. The Board also uses private solicitors to complement the law centres and to assist in managing the demand for its services.

Government agreed in late 2010 to transfer responsibility for the management and administration of the criminal legal aid scheme and the various ad-hoc schemes from the Department of Justice and Equality to the Board. On 1st October the Garda Station Legal Advice Scheme transferred to the Board. It is planned to transfer the other ad-hoc schemes during 2012 and the main criminal legal aid scheme in 2013.

On 1st November 2011 responsibility for the Family Mediation Service transferred to the Board from the Family Support Agency.

The Board experienced a particularly challenging year in 2011. Demand for its services continues to increase at a time when its resources are constrained. It will be noted that nearly 19,000 applicants sought legal services from the Board's law centres in 2011 which compares with a figure of less than 10,200 in 2007. There continued to be a fall off in demand for asylum services and that has enabled the Board to redeploy some resources but not sufficient to enable the Board to meet its target that every applicant gets to see a solicitor within a four month period (see Table 10 below).

The type of problems for which the Board provides legal services extends to most areas of civil law although in 2011, as has been the case since the Board's inception in 1980, the majority of applicants sought services in relation to family problems.

The total number of cases in which legal services were provided by the Board in 2011 was in the region of 23,650. This was an increase of about 350 on 2010. The number of cases dealt with in the law centres showed an increase on the previous year while, as mentioned above, the number of asylum cases declined as did the number of cases referred to private solicitors for the purpose of providing a service.

DEMAND FOR THE SERVICE

The following table gives the number of persons who applied for services to the Board in 2011 and the two previous years.

Table 1 – Number of applicants

Year	2011	2010	2009
Law centres	18,657	17,175	14,073
Refugee Legal Service	979	1,448	2,298
Total	19,636	18,623	16,371

Overall, the increase was just under 5.5% on the number of applications in 2010. Within this, there was an increase of nearly 9% in the number of applications at law centres, including the Dublin District Court centre¹. This followed a 21% increase in 2010 and an 18% increase in 2009. In 2011, the number of new clients registering with the Refugee Legal Service fell by over 32% to 979. This was consistent with the sustained fall-off in applications for asylum which has occurred in recent years (see below).

It should be noted that not every applicant is provided with legal services. A number of those who apply for legal services do not pursue their application when they are offered an appointment.

¹ This centre acts as a point of referral of certain District Court cases in Dublin to Private Practitioners.

While the numbers seeking legal services are not generally recorded by reference to the legal issues in respect of which they are seeking help, the breakdown of legal issues in respect of persons given a first appointment with a solicitor in 2011 (new cases) is likely to be indicative of the nature of the demand. Table 2 below gives that breakdown. It should be noted that this includes cases that were referred to private solicitors for the provision of a service.

Table 2 – Initial appointments by subject matter 2011

Subject matter	Number of new clients
General family law matters	7,155
Divorce / separation / nullity	3,175
Cases involving possible State care of children	616
Asylum and related matters	979
Other civil matters	1,349
Total	13,274

LAW CENTRES

Legal aid and advice was provided through the Board’s general law centres in 17,825 cases in 2011. Comparative information for the two previous years and a breakdown between aid and advice cases are set out below.

Table 3 – Cases handled in law centres

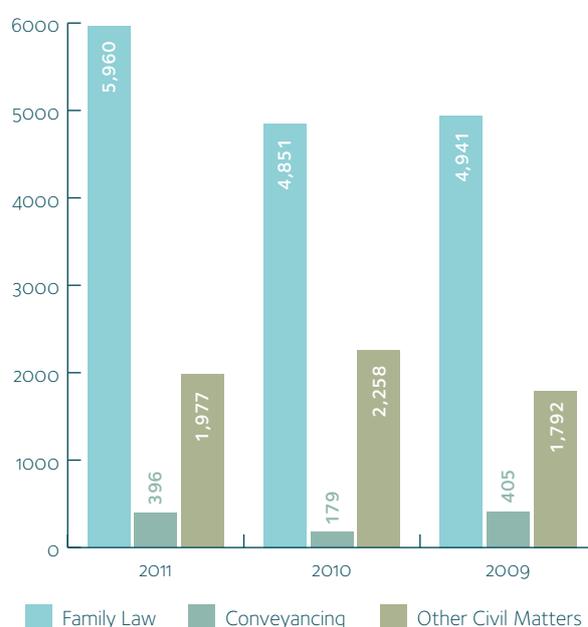
Year	2011	2010	2009
Advice only	8,333	7,288	7,138
Court proceedings	9,492	9,344	9,032
Total	17,825	16,632	16,170

As can be seen, the number of cases dealt with by the Board in its law centres increased by over 7% in 2011 compared to the previous year.

LEGAL ADVICE CASES

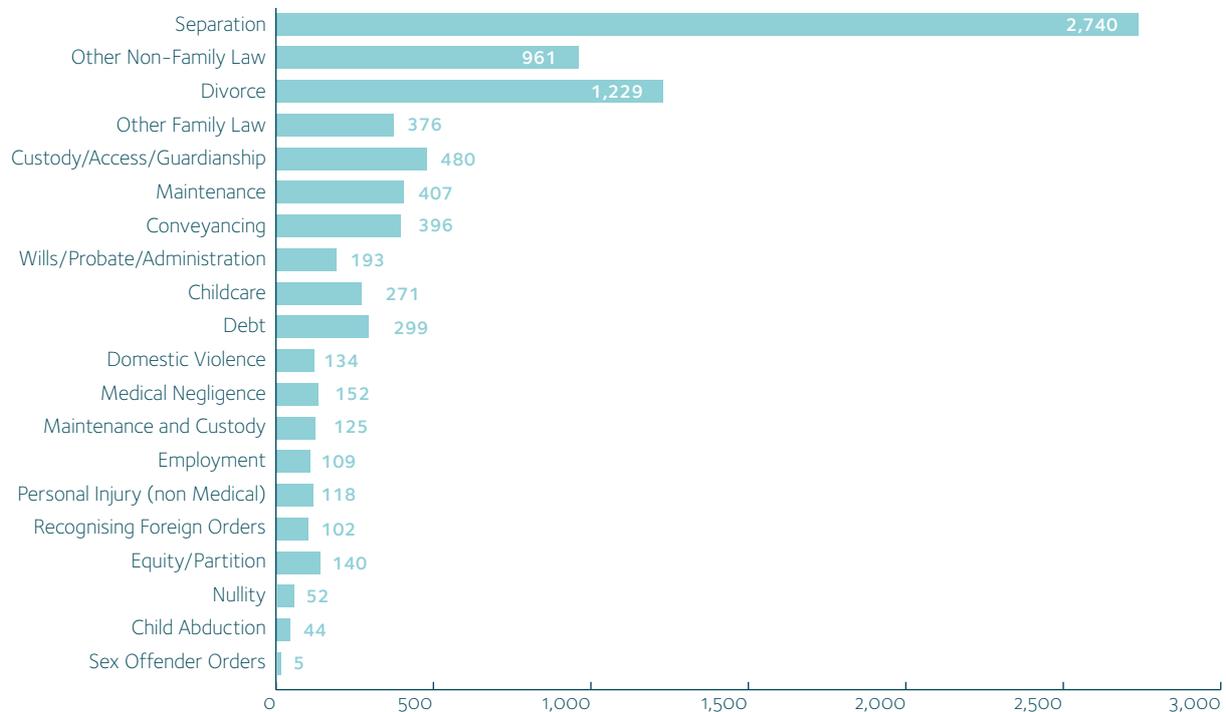
Chart 1 below highlights that family law continues to constitute the predominant area where the Board provides legal advice. Of the ‘advice’ cases handled in 2011, 71% were in the family law area. Legal advice cases are those where advice has been provided to the client but legal aid, i.e. representation in court, has not. Some of the persons who received advice in 2011 will subsequently be granted legal aid, depending on the circumstances of the case.

Chart 1: Legal Advice Cases 2009-2011



A more detailed breakdown of the main issues giving rise to these legal advice cases in 2011 is provided below in Chart 1a. In relation to a significant number of separation and divorce cases, it is likely that advice was also given on matters such as maintenance, domestic violence, and child welfare. Such additional advices are not separately recorded here.

Chart 1a: Advice Cases by Subject Matter 2011



LEGAL AID CASES

The issues in relation to which the Board’s law centre solicitors provided court representation in 2011 and the comparative information for the two previous years are set out in chart 2 below.

Chart 2: Legal Aid Cases 2009-2011

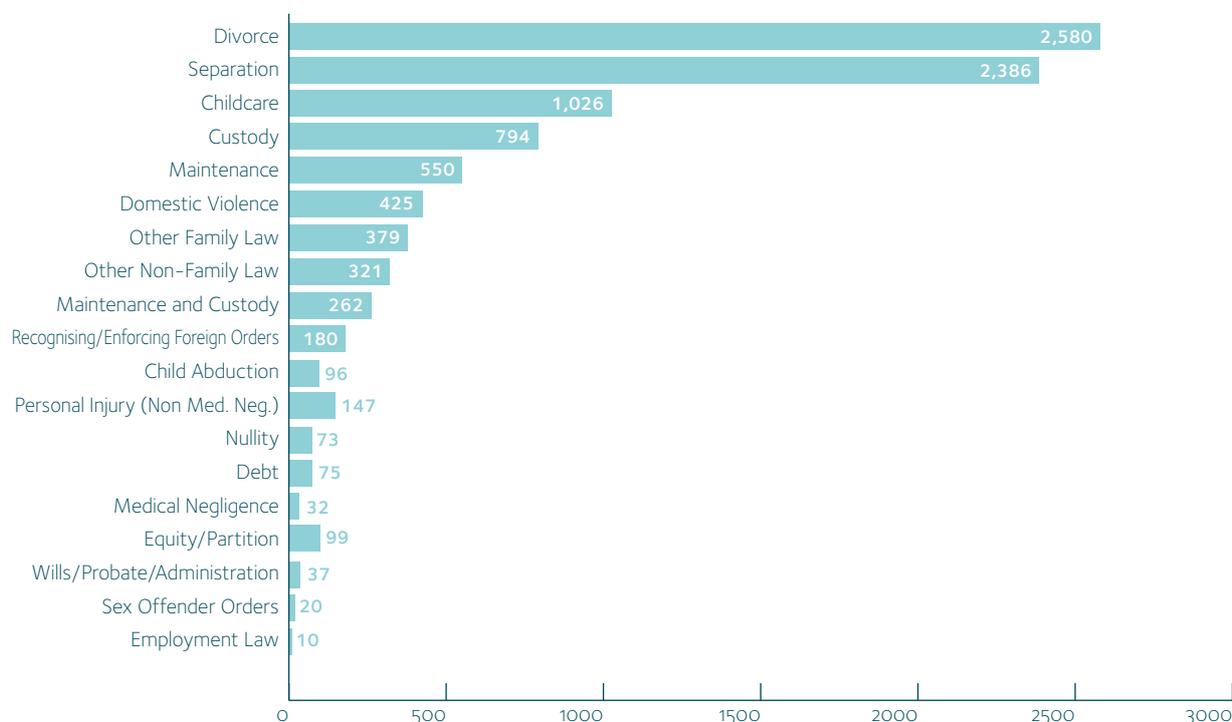


In 2011, the number of legal aid cases handled remained relatively consistent with the previous year. Within that figure the number of child care cases (cases involving children at risk of being taken into the care of the HSE) handled showed a 12% increase. There was also an increase in the separation / divorce / nullity cases and the other civil matters while there was a fall in the number of other family law matters dealt with.

A more comprehensive breakdown of the issues in respect of which legal aid was given in 2011 is provided below. In relation to a significant number of separation and divorce cases, it is likely that those cases also involved issues such as maintenance, domestic violence, and custody/access/guardianship. These are not separately recorded here.

The number of cases involving the recognition and enforcement of foreign orders, whilst relatively small, has seen a significant percentage increase on the 2010 figure.

Chart 2a: Court Proceedings by Subject Matter



Case turnover

A particular concern, given the significant increase in demand for the Board’s services, is to try and maximise the turnover of cases within law centres and within the Board generally. It can be seen from Table 4 below that there was an increase in the number of new cases taken on in the law centre network of the order of 6% in 2011 on the number of new cases taken on in 2010.

The Board consistently seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its service delivery. Some of the main developments towards this end are outlined in the next section of this report.

Table 4 – New cases in law centres

Year	2011	2010	2009	2008
New cases	7,506	7,069	7,240	6,479

Duration of court cases

Table 5 below provides an age profile of cases in which legal aid was provided in 2011, by court. The year is indicative of when the file was opened.

Table 5 – Legal aid cases handled in 2011; year file opened

Year	2011	2010	2009	Pre-2009	Total
District	1,482	817	307	195	2,801
Circuit	1,352	1,630	1,230	1,737	5,949
High	211	218	112	184	725
Supreme	2	4	2	9	17
Total	3,047	2,669	1,651	2,125	9,492

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. Of the Circuit Court cases dealt with by the Board in 2011, 29% of them commenced prior to 2009.

Of the 9,492 legal aid cases handled in the law centres in 2011, 3,546 (37%) were completed by the end of the year while the remaining 5,946 were still active on the 31st December. The number of completed court

cases showed an increase of about 7% on the 2010 figure. Table 6 below gives an age profile of those cases involving court proceedings completed in 2011 by subject matter.

Table 6 – Legal aid cases completed in 2011; year file opened

Year	2011	2010	2009	Pre-2009	Total
Divorce/ separation/ nullity	94	419	417	636	1,566
Child care	116	147	71	35	369
Other family law matters	574	521	169	111	1,375
Non-family law matters	56	92	46	42	236
Total	821	1,146	597	736	3,546

It can be seen from this table that divorce, separation and nullity cases generally take longer to reach completion than most other family law matters. Approximately 40% of divorce, separation and nullity cases completed in 2011 had been ongoing since before 2009.

Cases on hand

Table 7 below gives the status of all of the Board's active legal aid cases as of the 31st December 2011.

Table 7 – Legal aid cases active as at 31/12/2011

Status	No. of Cases
Legal aid certificate granted	630
Counsel briefed	696
Proceedings issued	998
At hearing	1,974
Final Orders made	1,488
Re-entry / under appeal	160
Total	5,946

This type of information helps the Board in monitoring the progress of cases through the court process.

PRIVATE PRACTITIONERS IN FAMILY LAW MATTERS

Private practitioners (PPs) are engaged by the Board to provide legal aid services to complement the service provided by law centres. This service assists the Board in trying to keep the waiting times as low as possible. The PP service currently operates for certain family law matters in the District Court (such as domestic violence, maintenance, guardianship and custody/access cases). The scheme for involving private practitioners in divorce and separation matters in the Circuit Court has been constrained for budgetary reasons. Budgetary constraints meant that some restrictions were required to be placed on the availability of the District Court Scheme in 2011.

A breakdown is given in Table 8 of the number of legal aid certificates granted to enable representation to be provided in the District and Circuit Courts by solicitors in private practice who are on the Board's panels.

Table 8 – PP certificates granted

Year	2011	2010	2009	2008
District Court	4,854	5,220	3,921	2,815
Circuit Court	8	59	91	168
Total	4,862	5,279	4,012	2,983

There tends to be a time lag between the granting of a certificate under the Circuit Court Scheme and the claim for payment due to the time involved in finalising such cases. Thus, certificates granted in a particular year will only materialise in subsequent years.

This payment time lag is much less of an issue for certificates granted in respect of District Court matters, which tend to be resolved more quickly. In addition, fees paid to private practitioners for District Court cases are only 10-15% of the fee payable for Circuit Court cases.

TIMELINESS OF THE SERVICE

There was significant pressure on waiting times caused by the increase in demand for the Board's services. The following table sets out the number of persons waiting on the 31st December 2011 and on the same date in the previous 3 years for a first appointment with a solicitor.

Table 9 – Numbers on waiting list

Year	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number waiting	4,443	3,153	2,228	1,681

The maximum waiting time in months, as of the 31st December 2011, is set out for the various law centres in table 10 below. It must be emphasised that this table gives a snapshot of waiting times at a particular point in time. Waiting times will go up and down depending on demand and on the capacity of each law centre to offer appointments to new clients. The Board acknowledges that the waiting times are getting longer and at the

end of 2011 the Board was pro-actively looking at ways in which a level of service could be provided to an applicant within a reasonably short period of time.

Table 10 – Waiting times in months on the 31st December 2011

Law centre	Waiting time
Athlone	5
Castlebar	5
Cavan	6
Cork	
Popes Quay	7
South Mall	5
Dublin	
Blanchardstown	5
Clondalkin	10
Finglas	8
Gardiner St.	6
Nth. Brunswick St.	8
Tallaght	10
Dundalk	1
Ennis	5
Galway	4
Kilkenny	7
Letterkenny	4
Limerick	3
Longford	5
Monaghan	4
Navan	7
Nenagh	9
Newbridge	8
Portlaoise	7
Sligo	4
Tralee	4
Tullamore	4
Waterford	6
Wexford	6
Wicklow	6

PRIORITY SERVICE

The Board continued to provide a priority service where it considered that an immediate, or near immediate, service was needed. These included cases of domestic violence, child abduction, cases involving applications by the State to take children into care, and cases that had statutory time limits close to expiry.

In addition to the cases given priority in the law centres, most of the cases referred out to solicitors on the Board's private practitioner panels were so referred immediately or shortly after the person had applied for legal aid.

APPEAL COMMITTEE

In 2011, the Appeal Committee of the Board met on 12 occasions. This is a statutory sub-committee of the Board and it rules on cases where a person makes an appeal against a decision of the executive. Most of the cases that come before it relate to decisions to refuse legal aid.

There were 135 appeals heard in 2011. Of the appeals heard in 2011, the decision of the executive was upheld in 102 cases. There were 22 appeals where the original decision was overturned. Table 11 below provides an outline of the position.

Table 11 – Appeal committee

Year	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of decisions upheld	102	85	98	85
- <i>Financial criteria</i>	21	25	24	24
- <i>Merits criteria</i>	81	60	74	61
Number of decisions overturned	22	36	36	29
Number of appeals on hands	4	5	2	4
Withdrawn/resolved	7	5	3	3
Number of appeals	135	131	139	121

ASYLUM

The Refugee Legal Service (RLS) provides legal services at all stages of the asylum process and, in appropriate cases, on immigration and deportation matters. In 2011 it continued to provide services through offices in Dublin, Cork and Galway. With the fall off in demand for its services, a consequence of falling asylum applications generally, a level of integration into the general law centre network has occurred particularly in relation to the Cork and Galway offices.

RLS: Challenges faced in 2011

2011 saw further integration of services as the Board continued to realign its resources in the face of declining RLS registrations. Both the Cork and Galway RLS offices are now fully integrated into the Law Centres and while Dublin RLS maintains its separate identity, solicitor/paralegal staff now divide their time between asylum and specialist child-care work. Dublin based administration staff who had formerly been assigned specifically to the RLS, now operate an integrated reception, call handling, registration and finance service for the three co-located Law Centres on the premises. This level of integration was achieved without a reduction of service and without affecting the quality and timeliness of service.

RLS: new client registrations

There were 979 new clients registered in 2011. This is a decrease of 32% from the previous year and is a direct consequence of the decline in the number of new asylum seekers registering in the state. RLS registrations represent the equivalent of 76% of all asylum applicants registered with the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) in the year, compared to 75% in 2010 and 85% in 2009.

Table 12: Asylum Applications

Year	2011	2010	2009	2008
RLS Registrations	979	1,448	2,298	3,219
ORAC Applications	1,290	1,939	2,691	3,866

Of the new clients that registered with the service in 2011, approximately 63% of them required services for the first stage of the asylum process, while the remainder required services for appeals or other related issues.

Minors

The RLS has a dedicated Children's Unit located in Dublin to handle asylum applications by unaccompanied minors. Staff in the unit have received relevant specialised training. In 2011, a total of 162 minors applied for legal aid in asylum cases. This was down on the comparable figure for 2010, which was 250.

Legal aid certificates

The Board granted 649 legal aid certificates in asylum cases last year to enable representation before the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT). This was a significant drop on the figure of 1,013 certificates issued in 2010. The RAT decides appeals of those asylum seekers whose application for refugee status has not been recommended by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner. The following table shows the breakdown between the numbers of certificates in which representation was provided by RLS solicitors and by private solicitors/barristers, acting on behalf of the RLS.

Table 13 – RLS certificates granted

Year	2011	2010	2009	2008
RLS solicitors	210	548	876	859
Private solicitors on RLS Panels	360	310	601	496
Barristers instructed by the RLS	79	155	532	703
Total	649	1,013	2,009	2,058

The use of private practitioners by the RLS in asylum matters was extended in 2010 to include advice/representation at Subsidiary Protection/Leave to Remain stage as well as appeals to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Subsidiary Protection

Subsidiary Protection is protection **other than refugee status** against a real risk of suffering "serious harm" which consists of: death penalty or execution; or torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of an applicant in the country of origin; or serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict. Applications for Subsidiary Protection must be made within 15 days of an invitation to do so by the Minister for Justice and Equality. Up until the end of 2010 the RLS handled all these applications internally. Because of the tight deadline, the transfer of these cases back from private practitioners posed heavy burdens on prospective applicants, those practitioners and the Board's administrative staff.

The number of applications for Subsidiary Protection submitted by the RLS in 2011 decreased significantly from the previous year. This was attributable to the fact that such submissions can only be made by invitation of the Minister for Justice and Equality and the number of such invitations dropped in 2011. In addition, the Board retained private solicitors to make such submissions if they had processed the client's appeal to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. There is an ongoing need to update submissions already made on account of changing circumstances in many of the countries of origin.

Table 14 – Applications for subsidiary protection

Year	2011	2010	2009	2008
Number of applications	417	1,339	1,822	1,147

Judicial review

The Board instituted judicial review proceedings in 15 asylum cases in 2011.

Five of these proceedings were instituted arising from decisions of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal while the remaining proceedings related to issues arising during other aspects of the asylum determination / post determination process. The Board has had a high level

of positive outcomes in relation to the judicial review cases taken and of those which have been finalised or settled. Cases that are settled are generally on terms that are no less advantageous to the asylum seeker than if they were successfully litigated in court. A process exists whereby attempts are made to resolve matters between the relevant bodies in appropriate cases prior to the taking of proceedings.

Perhaps the most significant proceedings in 2011 were a number of cases relating to the State's capacity to transfer persons seeking asylum to Greece for the purpose of having their asylum application determined there. The clients had entered the EU in Greece and, on foot of an EU Convention, the responsibility in the first instance for considering their asylum claims lay with the Greek State. The clients subsequently travelled to Ireland and made asylum applications here. It was established that they had been in Greece and the State therefore sought to have them transferred back to Greece to allow their status to be determined there. The grounds for seeking not to have them so transferred related to the adequacy of the Greek asylum system and concerns about the accommodation and care they would receive pending any determination of their asylum claims. Issues in relation to the cases were referred to the European Court of Justice, along with a number of similar cases in the UK, which issued a decision that is, on the face of it, favourable to the asylum seekers' claim and is likely to result in them not being returned to Greece and being allowed to have their asylum applications determined in this country. It should be noted that the cases were in some ways 'test' cases and may have an impact for other asylum seekers who the State may feel, on the face of it, should be returned to Greece on the basis of the EU Convention.

Trafficking

In late 2009 the Legal Aid Board commenced providing legal services on certain matters to persons identified by the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) as potential victims of human trafficking under the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008. The Civil

Legal Aid Act 1995 was amended in 2011 to facilitate the provision of these services.

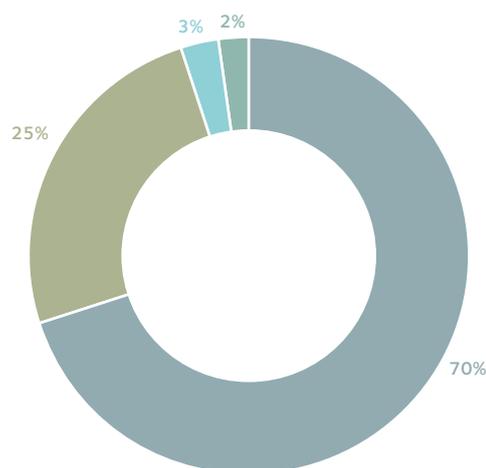
There is no requirement to satisfy the Board's financial eligibility or 'merits' criteria and a potential victim of human trafficking is not required to make a financial contribution to the Legal Aid Board. The service is provided by Board employees who have received specialised training in human trafficking issues.

The service provides initial advice to persons identified as potential victims of human trafficking on their legal rights. It also provides legal services to suspected victims of human trafficking who may be acting as witnesses in prosecutions taken under specified provisions of the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008.

In 2011, 64 potential victims of human trafficking had been notified to the Board by GNIB, 45 of whom were registered with the Board and had received their first consultation.

A number did not pursue the matter with the Board.

Chart 3: Human Trafficking



TRAFFICKING PURPOSE

- Sexual Exploitation 45
- Labour Exploitation 16
- Unknown 2
- Sexual & Labour 1

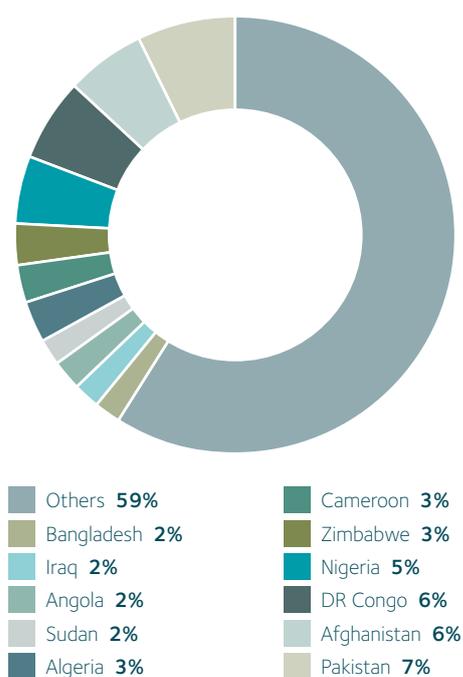
Total (updated 24 Feb 2012) 64

THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

The Refugee Documentation Centre (RDC) is an independent service operating under the aegis of the Legal Aid Board. The main role of the Centre is to provide an objective research and query service for key organisations involved in the asylum process, with a particular focus on providing Country of Origin Information (COI). Members of the public and other agencies may also use the Documentation Centre to conduct their own research. The RDC continues to maintain a close working relationship with UNHCR.

In 2011, the RDC Query Service provided a total of 1,486 query responses. This represented a decrease of 16% on 2010. On average, about 76% of queries related to Country of Origin Information, with the remaining 24% split between legal/quasi-legal and library queries. The country which gave rise to the largest single number of queries in 2011 was Pakistan. The main countries subject to COI queries are set out in Chart 4 below.

Chart 4: RDC Queries 2011



A brief sample of the type of information sought in the queries received is set out below:

- Afghanistan: Information on reports of individuals being pressurised to join the Taliban. Treatment of individuals suspected by authorities of involvement with Taliban who surrender to authorities.
- Pakistan: Under what circumstances will a Pakistani national professing the Ahmadi faith have his religion listed as 'Islam' on the relevant pages of a Pakistani national passport?
- Georgia: Societal and state treatment of Ossetians; of Russian-Ossetians; of Georgian Ossetians; of Russian-Georgian-Ossetians (mixed parentage).
- Iran: Any reports of people who were formerly practising Muslims but have now rejected their religion encountering problems with employment, university or the authorities. Any reported consequences for a person openly rejecting their religion.
- Albania: Information on blood feuds. How common are they and what is their legal status? What options are available to those involved?
- Egypt: Information on current religious tensions between Muslims and Christians in Cairo.
- Rwanda: Information on Gacaca courts; general information, laws, tribunals, punishments handed down, death penalty, criminal prosecutions.

The RDC continued to work closely with ORAC (Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner) and other users of its services in 2011, with a view to strengthening co-operation and meeting the various needs of its users.

There were two editions of the RDC's periodical *The Researcher* published in 2011, which were made available internally and to relevant external agencies. To complement this, three RDC Library Bulletins were also produced in 2011 giving updates on new acquisitions

to the library, book reviews, case law summaries and other information.

Training activities took place throughout 2011 in the areas of COI and also on the use of the E-Library. COI Network project work in the area of training continued in 2011. Blended learning courses were provided domestically and internationally to groups of Irish and international asylum agencies. The RDC participated in three international projects in the areas of Medical COI, COI for Judges and Appeal Instances and the European COI Portal.

The RDC now forms part of the Research and Information Unit of the Board (RIU). The RIU also manages the Legal Aid Board staff library and information service and carries out a number of other support and information functions for the Board including web content management for the Board's website, preparation of the Board's annual report, Official Languages Scheme and various other activities.

FAMILY MEDIATION SERVICE

Responsibility for the Family Mediation Service (FMS) transferred to the Board from the Family Support Agency on 1st November 2011 following the enactment of the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011.

The FMS is a free professional and confidential service for couples whether married or non-married, who have decided to separate or divorce and who together want to negotiate the terms of their separation or divorce. The FMS also deals with a small number of cases which involve conflict between other members of a family (e.g. parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren on issues such as wills). The vast majority of the cases that the FMS deal with are the separation arrangements of partners and spouses. It is a national service based in 16 locations; there are 4 full-time offices (Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick) and the remaining 12 are open for mediation two days a week.

Waiting Lists

A very strong emphasis has been placed on reducing the Family Mediation Service waiting lists nationally to ensure that the service complements that of the Board's law centres and that people who wish to try and resolve matters through mediation are not waiting longer than two months for a consultation with a mediator.

Private mediators from the FMS panel have been used to complement the work of its own mediators in those offices where the waiting time exceeds this target.

Table 15 – Comparative waiting times October 2011 and December 2011

Office	Waiting Time Oct-11	Waiting Time Dec-11
Dublin:		
Earlsfort Terrace	6 months	3 months
Tallaght	6 months	4 months
Blanchardstown	6 months	6 months
Raheny	5 months	4 months
Athlone	6 months	3 months
Castlebar	3 months	2 months
Cork	6 months	1 month
Dundalk	3 months	3 months
Galway	9 months	3 months
Letterkenny	3 months	3 months
Limerick	5 months	3 months
Portlaoise	6 months	4 months
Sligo	6 months	4 months
Tralee	6 months	3 months
Waterford	6 months	2 months
Wexford	6 months	4 months

Table 16 – Applications for mediation services 2009-2011

Below is a table showing the total number of applicants for mediation services in each centre for the years 2009 to 2011.

Centre	2009	2010	2011
Dublin	362	334	302
Tallaght	66	76	80
Blanchardstown	68	73	83
Raheny	63	65	57
Athlone	56	69	66
Castlebar	50	43	30
Cork	123	114	63
Dundalk	90	102	81
Galway	106	99	113
Letterkenny	68	40	44
Limerick	117	102	102
Portlaoise	65	86	77
Sligo	36	60	38
Tralee	44	58	61
Waterford	35	58	62
Wexford	52	56	64
Total	1,401	1,435	1,323

Table 17 – FMS service provision in 2010

2010	Intake Sessions Attended	Reached Agreement	% reached full agreement	Carried over to 2011
Dublin	243	185	76%	129
Limerick	68	45	66%	18
Cork	61	35	57%	15
Galway	64	38	59%	23
Wexford	38	22	58%	12
Dundalk	73	36	49%	15
Tallaght	59	37	63%	14
Raheny	46	25	54%	31
Blanchardstown	42	25	60%	13
Athlone	50	24	48%	12
Castlebar	31	13	42%	7
Tralee	33	20	61%	14
Waterford	44	26	59%	14
Letterkenny	29	7	24%	14
Portlaoise	68	28	41%	37
Sligo	42	18	43%	17
Total	991	584	59%	385

Total Cases dealt with in 2010: 1387

2010 (Summary)

396 couples were carried forward from 2009.

991 couples attended a First Mediation Session.

Total numbers of couples in Mediation in 2010 was 1387 of which 584 (42%) reached agreement. 385 couples in the mediation process were carried forward to 2011.

418 (30%) left mediation during the process.

Table 18 – FMS service provision in 2011

2010	Intake Sessions Attended	Reached Agreement	% reached full agreement	Carried over to 2012
Dublin	236	105	44%	144
Limerick	67	27	40%	59
Cork	80	44	55%	42
Galway	100	44	44%	45
Wexford	38	19	50%	19
Dundalk	54	21	39%	16
Tallaght	40	12	30%	29
Raheny	37	19	51%	44
Blanchardstown	54	19	35%	18
Athlone	36	17	47%	24
Castlebar	30	14	47%	18
Tralee	55	30	55%	19
Waterford	41	14	34%	35
Letterkenny	36	15	42%	13
Portlaoise	53	33	62%	25
Sligo	38	26	68%	15
Total	995	459	46%	565

Total Cases dealt with in 2011: 1380

2011 (Summary)

385 couples were carried forward from 2010.

995 couples attended a First Mediation Session.

Total numbers of couples in Mediation in 2011 was 1380 of which 459 (33%) reached agreement. 565 couples in the mediation process were carried forward to 2012.

356 (26%) left mediation during the process.

In 2010, 69% of couples entering into the mediation process either completed or remained in the process.

In 2011, 73% of couples entering into the mediation process either reached agreement or remained in the process.

Dolphin House tripartite initiative

In addition, the Family Mediation Service and the Legal Aid Board have worked with the Courts Service in an initiative, based on-site at the Court’s offices in Dolphin House, Dublin 2 to offer mediation as an alternative to litigation in the Dublin District Court Family Courts. Since commencement in March 2011 the initiative provided information on mediation to over 1400 individuals in the 9 month period to the end of 2011 and assisted over 400 people to reach agreements on matters that would otherwise have gone before a District Judge. There were discrete financial benefits accruing to the courts in terms of time saved due to these cases not going to court and to the Legal Aid Board as, for the most part, legal aid was not required by the parties. The net minimum financial benefit in a full year from the operation of the project has been calculated conservatively at over €100,000. There are also, less easily quantifiable benefits associated with the approach which are extremely important and merit highlighting to the same, or even a greater extent. These include providing parties to conflict with a sense of joint ownership of the issues and the solutions with the greater likelihood of adherence by both parties; the fostering of more productive relationships between the parties relating to issues associated with the children with the consequent benefits to the children, the parents, many State systems and, ultimately, society; more speedy resolution of issues and, thus, less likelihood of matters continuing to re-appear in court lists as is frequently the case at present.

Mediation process at Dolphin House

After referral, in the main by the Courts Service in Dolphin House, first appointments are given to people expressing an interest in mediation and if, after the second party has attended an information session, both wish to proceed with mediation a first joint mediation appointment is given and the mediation process may begin.

The cumulative statistics for the Dolphin House Family Mediation Service to the end of December 2011 were as follows:

Table 19 –Dolphin House Family Mediation Service Statistics

1st party information sessions attended	918
2nd party information sessions attended	562
Mediation sessions attended in total	597
Finalised Agreements	206

The Board hopes, with the Courts Service, to build on the experience of this initiative and to extend the process outside of Dublin in 2012.

FMS/NUI Maynooth Family Mediation Training

From September 2011 the Family Mediation Service’s professional mediation training has been accredited by NUIM as part of its Post Graduate Certificate in Family Mediation and Conflict Intervention. This training programme is the only third-level University-linked family mediation training available in Ireland. The training runs annually from September to May. There are currently 6 trainees placed with the FMS for the 2011-2012 training programme. The continuance of this training programme ensures that the standard and numbers of Family mediators available for contract work for the FMS are maintained and increased.

CRIMINAL LEGAL AID

While the Legal Aid Board’s statutory remit has to date primarily extended to civil legal aid, the Government decided in December 2010 to transfer the responsibility for the administration and management of the various Criminal Legal Aid Schemes from the Department of Justice and Equality to the Legal Aid Board. Arising from that decision the Board has been engaged in a process to develop the necessary systems and structures to facilitate the remit transfer. As a result of the Government decision, responsibility for the following Schemes are to be transferred to the Board –

- Criminal Legal Aid (CLA) Scheme;
- Attorney General’s (AG’s) Ad-hoc Scheme;
- Garda Station Legal Advice Ad-hoc Scheme;
- Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) Legal Aid Ad-hoc Scheme;

- District Court (Counsel) Ad-Hoc Scheme.

With a view to achieving an efficient and seamless transfer process to the Board, it was decided to progress the handover on a phased basis. As a first tangible step in that process, the remit for the administration of the Garda Station Legal Advice Scheme was transferred to the Board on the 1st October 2011. It is expected to transfer the remit for both the Attorney General’s (AG’s) Ad-hoc Scheme and Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) Legal Aid Ad-hoc Scheme in the first half of 2012 with the remaining Schemes transferring to the Board in 2013. It is envisaged that the experience gained in operating the Garda Scheme will inform and assist the Board as it prepares for the challenge of taking over the Attorney General’s, Criminal Assets Bureau and the mainstream Criminal Legal Aid Scheme at a later date.

GARDA STATION LEGAL ADVICE SCHEME

The Garda Station Scheme is designed to provide free legal advice to persons detained in Garda Stations who qualify under specific qualifying criteria. Overall expenditure on the Scheme in recent years is as follows:

Table 20: Expenditure on Garda Station Legal Advice scheme

Year	Expenditure
2009	1m
2010	1.3m
2011	1.2m

Since commencing work on the Scheme on the 1st October until the year’s end, the Board processed over 800 claims to a value of some €150,000 for payment to solicitors for consultations with detainees in Garda Stations. In addition, the Board has completed a review of the operation of the Scheme and will, in 2012, introduce a new Guidance Document and Claim Form to improve the efficiency of the process. The Board has also developed a new database to collate a wide range of information which is expected to assist in the future formation of policy relevant to the Scheme.

SAMPLE CASES

Child Abduction- the Child's views

The Board represented both parties in a matter that came before the Supreme Court on the application of international child abduction legislation. The Supreme Court upheld a decision of the High Court not to order the return of two boys aged 7 and 8 to their former home in the US in the face of their strong objections.

There was a difficult history between the parties which culminated in the children's mother taking them to another European country before arriving in Ireland. This was done without the consent of the father. At the time there were family law proceedings ongoing in the US Courts. Following the departure of the children from the US, the Court there ordered that legal custody of the children be awarded to the father as the mother had not appeared for the hearings scheduled. The father applied, through the Irish Central Authority, to have the children returned to the US.

The matter came before both the High Court and the Supreme Court. Both Courts refused to order the return of the children. The decisions were rooted in evidence which established that: (a) the children were mature and intelligent; (b) the children strongly objected to a return to the US and to further contact with their father; and (c) there were valid and cogent reasons for their objections. The Supreme Court affirmed a broader discretion to make such an order of non-return when the child's objection defence is established in this way under the Hague Convention, although the court cautioned that the cases where such non-return Orders would be made would continue to be exceptional. It approved reasoning which recognised the growing importance of listening to the children involved in children cases since it is the child, more than anyone else, who will have to live with what the court decides. It determined that the court's discretion was required to be exercised in light of the policies and objectives underpinning the Hague Convention – in particular the deterrence of international child abduction and the jurisdictional role of the courts in the child's place of habitual residence – however, the trial judge was also

entitled to consider the likely effects of a mandatory return for the welfare of the children.

The decision has been met with great interest both in the press and in the legal profession in general. It focuses on the interests of the children involved and unusually overrides the presumption that children in such cases will be returned to the country in which they normally reside for the issues in question to be addressed by the courts there.

Domestic Violence

The client and her husband had two young children. She was granted a legal aid certificate to take proceedings against her husband for a barring order. This was her third application on foot of the domestic violence legislation and she had withdrawn the two previous applications. She was able to furnish copy medical reports in relation to injuries which she advised arose from incidents giving rise to the two previous applications.

Her application on this occasion arose from an incident when she and the children were locked out of the family home by her husband and were obliged to stay outside in the snow for about 15 minutes. When they were admitted to the home, she and her husband argued and when she attempted to leave the room, he grabbed her by her hair and repeatedly banged her head leaving her with a deep cut. She had photographs of the cut taken shortly after it was inflicted and on the court date her forehead remained visibly bruised. She had copy medical reports in respect of the suturing and treatment of the cut. The local Garda who had visited the home had taken the photograph but had arrived after the event and could give no relevant evidence save that her forehead was bleeding and that she complained of an assault by her husband.

The application proceeded in the District Court and lengthy evidence was given by the parties and the Garda who attended the incident. The client's husband denied the assault and claimed that the injury was caused as a result of an accidental fall. The judge preferred the evidence of the client and granted a barring order for a period of 2 years. He also made orders directing the

husband to pay a certain amount of maintenance and directing the level of contact that the husband should have with the children.

Divorce

A client sought legal aid in order to obtain a divorce. The client had a serious illness which she had been suffering from for some time. Shortly after she was granted legal aid her condition worsened and she underwent major surgery. Her husband confirmed that he would consent to a divorce. As the children of the marriage were no longer dependant, the main issue to be addressed was the family home. The client's husband owned and resided in another property. After some negotiation he agreed to transfer the family home to the client. The client did not seek a share of her husband's pensions. Terms of agreement were drafted and signed. There was urgency as the client was to begin major post operative treatment. She was advised that she would suffer memory loss and loss of speech as a result of this treatment, and might be unable to give evidence to a court. The matter was therefore brought before the court at very short notice. At the court it was necessary to revisit the settlement terms due to the fact that there was an outstanding mortgage on the property. After a day of negotiation the client's husband agreed to continue to discharge the mortgage. In the event of either party's' death there were insurance policies in place which would discharge the mortgage. The matter came before the Judge. The client was able to give evidence and the settlement terms were approved and the parties granted a divorce. The client was pleased with the outcome as she felt that affairs were now in order should she not survive the treatment.

Asylum

An asylum seeker sought advice from the Refugee Legal Service with regards to her asylum case in 2006. She had fled from a war torn country, and due to the chaotic circumstances in which she fled, she became separated from her children. She had applied for asylum in Ireland, and her application was refused. After taking her instructions and seeing the record of her application and interview with the Office of the

Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC), it was felt she had a very strong case. Representations were made to ORAC to withdraw the negative recommendation made in her case, which they agreed to do, and the client was re- interviewed. The client was also advised to seek help from the Irish Red Cross and UNHCR to find her children, which she did. Her application was refused again, and it was decided to pursue her application by way of appeal at the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Her appeal was refused and it was decided there were strong grounds to challenge the decision in the courts. On foot of those proceedings she was given a further appeal. While waiting for the appeal to be heard, the Irish Red Cross located her children in a UNHCR Refugee Camp, and evidence also became available to verify her identity, ethnicity and from where she had fled. The client was granted refugee status and subsequently was able to apply for visas to have her children join her in Ireland.

Asylum

An application for refugee status was made by an Asian female in a war torn country, whose deceased brother was a journalist with a political magazine. The applicant also worked occasionally as a photographer for the magazine. She was forced to work as a nurse for the war wounded in a politically controlled hospital. Major conflict took place between the political party and State forces and the applicant was taken along with others to a prison camp. During her time in the camp, the applicant was tortured and sexually assaulted on a number of occasions. The applicant was held in the internment camp for over a year. The applicant escaped the camp and arrived in Ireland.

The client sought refugee status. Steps were taken to ascertain the existence of the particular prison camp as initially it proved difficult to verify its existence. A medical assessment was also undertaken for the purpose of the proceedings. The report noted that the client's symptoms were "highly consistent" with post traumatic stress disorder, and further noted that her physical injuries, including cigarette burns, were highly consistent with her account of events. She had

presented to the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit of the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin shortly after arriving in Ireland and a report from the Unit was presented to the Tribunal. Significantly, the applicant had extensive knowledge of details of the fighting that had taken place in the area in which she lived. The applicant was successful before the Tribunal and was granted refugee status.

Medical Negligence

The Medical Negligence Unit- a specialist unit of the Board- represented a client in a High Court action based in professional clinical negligence. The client had undergone eye surgery a number of years ago.

This complex surgical procedure was performed by a Registrar whom it was alleged had conducted the procedure under the professional supervision of a consultant on the date the operation was performed. As both doctors were directly responsible for the manner in which the client's medical treatment and care was carried out and both owed the client a duty of care it was deemed prudent to take court proceedings against both doctors. A formal independent medical expert report was obtained. A second independent medical expert report was subsequently obtained which necessitated the client attending with the expert in the United Kingdom for a full examination. This second report extended the level of liability attaching to both doctors and, in particular, the consultant. There were issues relating to the professional competence of both doctors and, in particular, their respective professional competencies to perform this complex surgery.

The client's case was grounded on the basis that she had not been appropriately counselled about the risks and potential complications associated with this particular surgery before it was performed including that she was at high risk of developing loss of sight or blindness because of a pre-existing condition. The client did in fact go on to sustain a substantial loss of sight and it was further contended that it was not appropriately managed by her treating doctors.

The doctors alleged that the client was at least partly responsible on the basis of her failure to undergo further

surgery which had been offered to her in an attempt to mitigate the level of damage and for her failure to attend at the hospital and/ or her treating doctors for some two years after the initial surgery.

Following protracted negotiations the client's claim was settled in 2011 for a considerable sum. The settlement was made without a full admission as to liability.

DEVELOPING THE SERVICE

The downturn in the economy in recent times has created a very different environment from that experienced prior to the onset of national economic problems. The combination of the tighter financial constraints in which the Board is required to operate, the government moratorium on filling positions and the very significant increase in demand for the Board's services, contributed to the Board being unable to meet its target of ensuring that every eligible applicant gets to see a solicitor for a first appointment within a four month period.

As a result of the above factors the Board has seen a significant increase in waiting times at law centres for non priority appointments (see Table 10) and also a significant increase in the total numbers waiting for a first appointment with a solicitor compared to the numbers a few years ago.

To provide a professional accessible quality service

The issue of accessibility to timely legal services continued to prove difficult in 2011. While the Board provides a priority service or effectively prioritises a significant number of its clients, the waiting time for a first appointment with a solicitor for other matters was in excess of four months in 21 of the Board's law centres at the end of the year.

The Board operated an 'advice only' service in a number of its law centres where the waiting time was in excess of three months. The objective of this service is to ensure that every eligible applicant gets to see a solicitor within a four month period. The service operates on the basis that if a person is unlikely to be given a full appointment with a solicitor within four months, they should be offered a short half hour appointment for the purpose of being advised in relation to their legal problem. The service was evaluated in 2011 and on foot of that evaluation a recommendation was made

that a 'triage' service be piloted in 2012. The objective of the 'triage' approach will be to ensure that every applicant gets an appointment with a solicitor for the purpose of getting legal advice within a period of one month as well as allowing for early evaluation and referral of suitable cases.

The Board continued to take steps to assure the quality of the services provided to its clients, primarily by the conduct of case file reviews. The files were again reviewed on the basis of checklists benchmarked against best practice guidelines for the core services provided by the Board. File reviews were conducted both in respect of cases handled by the Board's employed solicitors and those handled by private solicitors on the Board's panels.

To put in place an effective public information, education and communication process

As in previous years, in 2011 the Board's main tool for communicating with its stakeholders was the External Consultative Panel. The group has representatives from a range of organisations whose members or clients use the services provided by the Board, as well as the representative bodies of the legal profession.

The Board also provided information on its services through a variety of other means. A series of leaflets was made available to all Law Centres, Citizen's Information Centres and other key locations. The Board also undertook to revise its website in 2011 and to increase the amount and scope of information available there. New sections were added to reflect the new areas under the Board's remit.

To achieve the best use of the financial and operational resources allocated to the Board and to ensure value for money

The Board has taken a number of initiatives to enable it to better meet the additional demands placed on its services. The Board's Administrative Procedures Handbook was updated. It acts as a blueprint for the operation of its law centres. It seeks to standardise processes and procedures in the law centre network with a view to achieving a greater consistency of approach.

Management engaged more proactively with the individual law centres and, in particular, the individual managing solicitors with a view to trying to address any issues that might have been impacting on the centre's case throughput capacity.

2011 saw the completion of a value for money review conducted by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform² and the Department of Finance³. The review group's report has been furnished to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform though it is yet to be published. The main focus of the review was to explore comparative performance between different law centres. The report identifies potential for improving efficiencies in certain law centres and the Board is actively pursuing this with the law centres in question. The group also undertook a comparative assessment with the cost of referring a case to a private solicitor on a fee per case basis. The report did not recommend a wholesale reappraisal of the manner in which legal services are delivered.

To ensure that the Board is innovative, flexible and responsive in its approach to effective service delivery

The Board continued to promote non court based dispute resolution which it regards as generally appropriate in the first instance in family disputes. A focus continued to be put on the capacity of Law Centres and solicitors to offer meaningful non court based dispute resolution options.

In 2011 the Board engaged with the Family Mediation Service and the Courts Service to pilot a mediation initiative in the District Family Court premises in Dublin. On foot of the pilot initiative, persons presenting to the District Court office seeking remedies in the District Court in relation to the welfare of a child are given information about attending mediation in order that they can try to achieve their own solution with the assistance of a trained mediator. A key aspect of the initiative is that mediators are on site in the same building with a view to there being at least as good, if not better, ease of access to mediation as to the Court process. Details of the outcome of the early months of the initiative are outlined earlier.

In 2011 the Board enhanced its presence in the District Family Court in Dublin in order to develop its capacity to respond promptly to demands placed on it for legal services for parents who are at risk of having their children taken into the care of the State (HSE). This initiative commenced in December 2010 and it has assisted in providing legal services promptly in relation to these cases though some challenges still remain in this regard.

To develop the capacity of the Board to deliver a quality professional service

One of the Board's longer term strategies, with which significant progress was made in 2011, was developing a comprehensive legal case management system to be available across its law centre network. The benefits that an enterprise-wide case management system would bring to the Board include greater flexibility and effectiveness in the use of its staff resources and would, in particular, enable the Board to move to a situation where solicitors were engaged to a significantly greater extent than at present, in higher value legal work. It is anticipated that the system will be operative in the law centres in the middle of 2012.

² Now the Department of Justice and Equality

³ Now the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

SUPPORTING SERVICE DELIVERY

By virtue of its business model, the Legal Aid Board relies on a central support structure to facilitate and manage the delivery of services through its law centre network and other means. This central support structure is based in the Board's Head Office in Cahirciveen and a support office in Dublin.

LEGAL SERVICES SUPPORT

The Board's operational model requires the final decision on the granting or refusing of all non-routine legal aid certificates, and other decisions in relation to case expenditure, to be made at an executive level in Head Office. This is to ensure that such decisions are made in line with the Board's governing legislation and it also helps to ensure consistency in decision making.

This executive function rests with Legal Services. Some applications, for example those relating to District Court matters, are determined at law centre level, while applications for Circuit Court upwards are generally determined by Legal Services, which is based in the Board's head office in Cahirciveen. Decisions on additional case expenditures are also made here. In addition, the unit administers the Board's private practitioner schemes and deals with general queries from members of the public.

In 2011, there were 3,252 certificates granted by Legal Services on foot of submissions made by law centres on behalf of applicants. This was slightly up on the previous year. The unit also granted 1,641 amendments to legal aid certificates, up by 8% on the previous year; these amendments are effectively authorisations for additional services on a certificate, such as a barrister or a medical report. Legal Services is also tasked with decisions to refuse applications for legal aid certificates, where the application is refused on its merits, in line with the Board's governing legislation. In 2011, there were 319 applications formally refused on this basis, up 9% on the previous year. A number of these refusals

were then appealed to the Appeal Committee of the Board (see above).

Overall, the increased output in Legal Services reflects the overall demand for the Board's services and the increase in demand has also been evident in the increased number of telephone and email queries received from the public.

CIVIL LEGAL AID (OPERATIONS)

This Unit is responsible for the operational delivery of legal services through the law centre network. A significant focus in 2011 was put on engaging with the law centres and, in particular, with the managing solicitors with a view to making best use of the resources available to the Board and to explore ways that the Board, and individual law centres can provide services more efficiently and more effectively. This was particularly important in the light of the ongoing increase in demand for the Board's services against a backdrop of limited resources. It was informed by the value for money review mentioned above.

HUMAN RESOURCES

2011 was a busy, challenging year for the Board's Human Resources function. One of the key tasks undertaken during the first half of 2011 was to support the conduct of an external value for money review of the Board. During the second half of the year there was a significant input from HR Section to the task of facilitating the smooth transfer of responsibility for the Family Mediation Service from the Family Support Agency to the Board. This transfer became effective from 1st November 2011.

Progress was also made throughout the year on the implementation of the Board's Croke Park Agreement Action Plan. The Plan sets out how the Board intends to meet the challenges of the overall public service

reform programme. Major organisational projects, such as the introduction of a new legal case management system, the preparatory work for the Board taking over responsibility for criminal legal aid and the introduction of new service delivery initiatives, identified in the Board's Action Plan, were progressed during 2011. Some further details on these projects are reflected elsewhere in this report.

One of the key elements of the strategic role of HR is to ensure that maximum value is achieved from the staffing resources available to the Board. This included continued proactive management of the very limited derogation from the moratorium on public service recruitment that the Board had received in 2010. As a result of receiving this sanction, the Board recruited a number of temporary staff and these were deployed exclusively to front-line service delivery roles. The implementation of the Board's workforce planning strategy for the effective use of staff resources included ongoing reviews of activities in various areas of the Board's operations, redeployment of staffing resources as appropriate to areas of priority, principally to front-line service delivery areas, and managing absenteeism. In relation to the latter, the Board's absenteeism rate is 3.5% which is almost 30% below the Civil Service average of 4.9%.

24 staff left the Board during the year due to retirements and resignations and the non-renewal of the contracts of some temporary staff due to the moratorium on recruitment.

The Board has ongoing communications with the six unions representing staff in the Board, including IMPACT who represent the mediators who transferred to the Board with the Family Mediation Service towards the end of the year. Other areas of focus included implementing the Board's action plan under the Croke Park Agreement, joint review of a pilot advice service and the successful integration of Refugee Legal Service staff into the Law Centre network.

The Board also engaged with other bodies such as the Equality Tribunal on HR matters.

The Board supported the National Intern Strategy (JobBridge) during 2011 by offering work placement opportunities of up to nine months duration to unemployed solicitors in receipt of Job-Seekers allowance. During 2011, solicitors availed of placements under the scheme in Cork, Sligo, Cavan, Nenagh, Tralee, Longford, Wicklow, Portlaoise, Wexford and Ennis as well as in the Board's seven Dublin-based law centres.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The provision of Learning and Development services in the Legal Aid Board is driven by the Board's Learning and Development Strategy document which covered the period 2009-2011. The Strategy sets out how the Learning and Development Unit fosters a learning culture in the organisation that responds to developing organisation needs and changing financial conditions.

Training Delivered

Learning and Development Unit organised/facilitated a total of 130 professional training sessions (or 700 training days) during 2011. The activity undertaken was sufficient to meet organisational learning and development priorities, including Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements for the Board solicitors.

Follow up on the 2009 IT Skills Audit

In 2009, a comprehensive online IT Skills audit was carried out by staff of the Learning and Development Unit to analyse the level of IT competence within the organisation. Follow up training was provided.

An online IT Skills audit was conducted in late 2011 with a view to identifying progress made on improving organisational IT skills and to identify any new IT training needs. This is particularly important in ensuring full staff engagement in the context of the roll out of the EOS Case Management System in 2012.

Training in the use of the EOS Legal Case Management system also took place towards the end of the year targeted at those staff who were involved in the first round of testing the system, which commenced in January 2012.

Payment of Course Fees (Advance/Refund of Fees for Third Level courses)

The Board supported 33 staff who pursued a course of education outside of working hours.

FAMILY LAW CONFERENCE

The Learning and Development Unit organised the Board's annual Family Law Conference which provided over 550 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours for Board staff while focusing on delivering targeted training topics in a cost efficient way for the organisation. The Conference took place in the Ashling Hotel in Dublin and had an attendance of almost 200 delegates, a majority of whom were staff of the board.

The theme of the Conference was "Protecting the Welfare of Children in Family Law Disputes". The conference was formally opened by Ms. Frances Fitzgerald, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and included a number of speakers from a range of interests involved, including, a member of the judiciary, Judge Brendan Toal, the Chairperson of the Legal Aid Board, Ms. Anne Colley, the Ombudsman for Children, Ms. Emily Logan, Mr Robin Balbernie, a UK based Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, Mr Colm Roberts, Managing Solicitor, Legal Aid Board, Mr Gordon Jeyes, National Director of Children and Family Services in the HSE and Ms. Freda McKittrick from Barnardos.

Further details of the conference can be obtained from the board's website www.legalaidboard.ie.

THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

In 2011, the Partnership Committee met on four occasions. The issues discussed by the Committee during the year included:

- The evolving role and function of the Partnership Committee;
- The budgetary position of the Board;
- Matters concerning the integration of the Family Mediation Service into the Board;

- Matters arising from the Croke Park Agreement, including;
 - updates on the transfer of responsibility for Criminal Legal Aid and associated schemes into the Board; and
 - progress with important organisational projects such as the development of EOS, the Value for Money Review of the Board and new service delivery initiatives, including the integrated mediation initiative in Dublin and the development of a discussion paper on the Future of Civil Legal Aid;
- Organisational priorities;
- Code of business conduct for staff; and
- Liaising with central government Departments and the Board's parent Department on the public service reform agenda.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Two major projects dominated the ICT work for the Board during 2011. They were the development of a new legal case management system ('EOS') and the upgrade of the Board's network.

The development of a new legal case management system was the most significant project in 2011. It is the largest ICT Project undertaken by the Board to date. Significant work was undertaken in the planning and analysis of requirements for this system since 2009. A market exercise was conducted throughout 2010 and a contract was awarded for the delivery of this new system in January 2011. The development project is nearing completion.

EOS was developed for the Board as an IT solution which incorporates an end to end legal case management system including applications, submissions, and appeals. The new system will allow staff to handle all aspects of cases from one application. The system will incorporate

- Scanning,
- Templates which can be administered by the Board,
- Workflows which can be administered as the needs of the Board develop,
- Email integration,
- Report generation for up to date key business information.

The Board expects that EOS will deliver enhanced risk management, efficiency and standardisation in the handling of cases by staff. All cases will have a default risk and priority status to enable their progress to be managed.

In January 2011, the contract for the development and installation of EOS was signed. After a short project initiation phase, a total of 14 workshops to define the key functionality to be included in the new system were held between January and the end of March. These involved the participation of staff from all parts of the organisation, particularly front line staff from the Law Centres. This analysis phase of the project resulted in the production of detailed documented functional specifications for the new system. Development of EOS commenced at the end of March and continued during the year in accordance with the project schedule.

At the end of the year the Project was fully on schedule with all milestones having been met within the Project Plan. The project is due for completion in mid-2012.

The Board went to the market under the Government framework to achieve better value and an improved data communications network. Additional bandwidth was required to support the data traffic between the Board's offices. This was achieved without an increase in the cost of the network to the Board.

Enhancements and upgrades were applied to the Refugee Documentation Centre's query management system. A new database was developed in-house to allow case tracking of the Garda criminal legal aid advice scheme. Hardware and software upgrades were

also implemented. In addition, the Family Mediation Service's ICT systems are in the process of being taken into the Board's network.

ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

In 2011, the Organisation Unit continued to focus on providing accommodation, supplies and services support to the Board's law centres and administrative offices whilst maintaining its emphasis on obtaining greater value for money and reducing costs. Running costs for the Board as an organisation fell again in 2011 and it is notable that overall running costs in the area of accommodation, establishment and general administration have fallen by over 25% (over €1.8 million) in the period from 2006 to 2011. This has been a very important lifeline to the Board in a time of reducing Exchequer funding and has allowed a much greater share of the Board's financial resources to be allocated to legal expenditure, and the District Court Private Practitioner Scheme in particular. This redistribution of resources has helped to alleviate, to some extent, the significant pressures around waiting times.

The move of the Family Mediation Service to the Legal Aid Board at the end of 2011 provides another challenge for the Board's Organisation Unit. With the addition of the 16 FMS offices, the Unit will be required to provide accommodation, supplies and services support to offices in over 50 locations across the country.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES SCHEME

The Board undertook to prepare its second Language Scheme under the Official Languages Act in 2011. Following an invitation for submissions advertised in the national Press, the revised Scheme was prepared, agreed and submitted to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in July. As part of the preparatory work in drafting the revised scheme, a survey of Irish language usage and capacity amongst Board staff was completed. An implementation plan for the revised Scheme was drafted by the end of the year. The revised Scheme again commits the Board to a number of actions intended to promote the availability

of the services provided by the Board through the Irish language and builds on the achievements of the first Scheme.

EQUALITY AND DISABILITY

The Legal Aid Board is fully committed to its responsibility to provide equal access to its services to all people, regardless of their circumstances or abilities and continues to ensure that the provisions of the Disability Act 2005 are complied with by implementing its Equality and Disability Strategy.

Considerable progress has been made in improving the accessibility of our services, including the Board's web site, built environment, accessible information formats, procurement policy and appointment of both Disability Liaison Officer and Access Officer. The Board also hosted a one day Job Shadow Initiative during 2011 set up through the Disability Liaison Network with great success for the participant and staff involved.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Board's Finance Unit is responsible for the financial management of the organisation. During 2011, the Unit continued to support the work of the Board through maintenance of effective accounting systems. Regular financial reports, together with periodic expenditure analysis reports were provided to Management, the Finance Committee and the Board to assist in the effective management of the Board's budget.

The Unit successfully facilitated the annual audit carried out on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

INTERNAL AUDIT

The Audit and Risk Management Committee of the Board met six times during the year. An annual plan was agreed with the Audit and Risk Management Committee and guided the work in this area in 2011. Work on internal audit was carried out by two staff-members on a part-time basis. The internal auditors focused mainly on the financial procedures in law centres but also carried out audits on head office expenditure. The Committee also placed a great deal of emphasis on scrutinising corporate risk in the Board and were presented with two updates of a Corporate Risk Materialisation Report during the year. In addition, the Committee was also kept informed on developments such as the annual audit by the C&AG and also work carried out in respect of the Board by the Internal Audit Unit of the Department of Justice and Equality. On the conclusion of the term of the outgoing Board in October, the Committee produced an interim report for 2011.

FINANCE

The Board's financial statements for 2011 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 and Equality. Funding provided by the Government in 2011 was €24.125 million, as compared with €24.225 million in 2010.

(b) Refugee Legal Service (RLS)

Exchequer funding for the RLS in 2011 was €6.245 million, compared to €7.967 million in 2010. 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. Contributions received in 2011 (€809,967) were nearly 4% lower than in 2010 (€844,201).

(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 2011 (€974,331) were 6% higher than in 2010 (€921,717).

EXPENDITURE

The following are comments on the major items of expenditure shown in the 2011 financial statements:

1) Salaries

Salary and related costs fell by just over €248,000 in 2011. This was as a result of the moratorium on public sector recruitment and as a result of reduced pay rates introduced on January 1st 2010.

2) Accommodation and establishment costs

Expenditure in this area has decreased by €146,000 (3.8%) in 2011. This was largely down to lower overall costs associated with the maintenance of premises and equipment and cleaning. Rents and energy costs were broadly static.

3) Legal fees and expenses

There are a number of differing elements covered in this heading - see Note 10 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 increased by €96,000 (2%) when compared with 2010. An increased level of expenditure in respect of the LAB was a factor in this. The increase in the demand for civil legal aid during 2011 would also have an impact on counsel fees.

The accrual for counsel fees, where work has been

undertaken but not yet presented for payment at December 31st 2011, stands at €5.071 million, 1.6% lower than at the end of 2010.

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

Table 21 – Counsel Fees

Year	Counsel Fees
2005	€5,376,000
2006	€6,847,000
2007	€4,903,000
2008	€3,986,500
2009	€5,125,472
2010	€4,793,475
2011	€4,889,622

(ii) Legal fees (Expert witnesses etc.)

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 significant decrease in expenditure of 21% from 2010 to 2011. Reduced expenditure on the RLS side was the main reason for the decrease. The 8% reduction in professional fees in 2009 and again in 2010 also had an effect in controlling expenditure on this item.

(iii) Private practitioner scheme

Expenditure on the private practitioner scheme was up 15% to €3 million in 2011. This was largely down to increased expenditure on the LAB scheme.

At December 31st 2011, the accrual for private practitioner fees, where work has been incurred but not yet presented for payment, stood at €2.019 million.

The accrual for 2010 was €2.029 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. Expenditure in 2011 was 31% higher than in 2010. This reflects an increase in the number of cases where independent legal advice is sought.

(v) Other expenses

This category saw a 3.6% drop in expenditure in 2011. This was largely down to reduced spending in the area of training and education.

4) General administration

Costs under this heading were 8% lower in 2011 at €1.609 million. The main factors in this were lower costs attaching to telecommunications and lower stationery and library costs.

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

Chart 5: Expenditure Categories 2007-2011

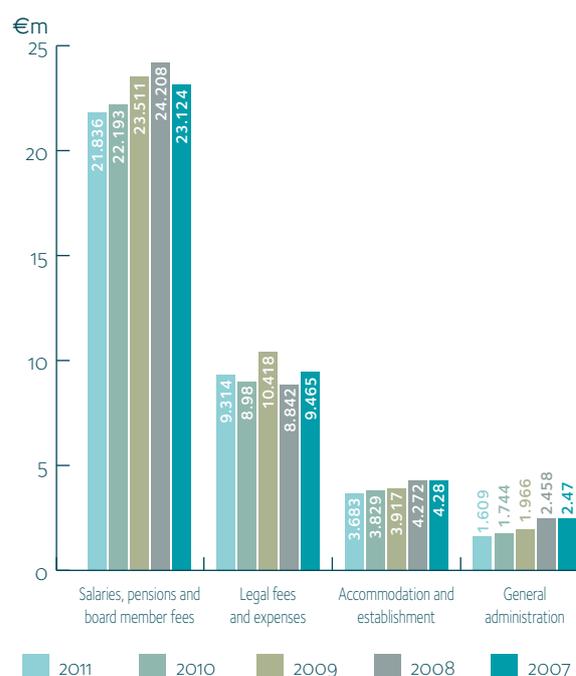
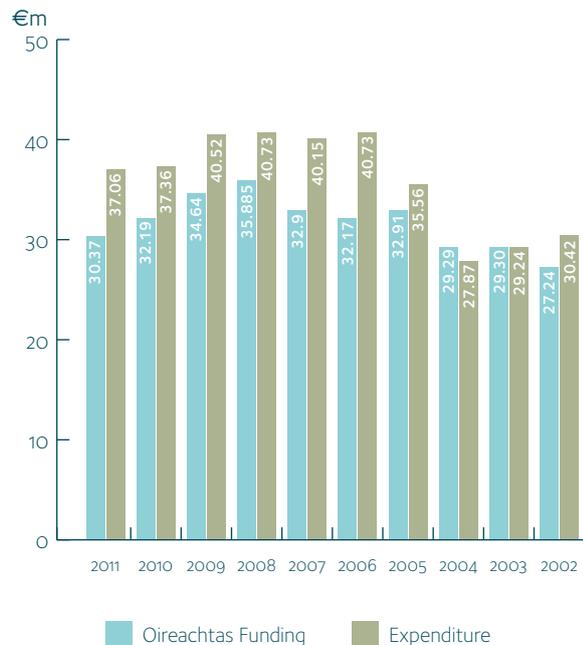


Chart 6 below shows the relationship between Oireachtas funding and actual expenditure over the last ten years.

Chart 6: Oireachtas Funding vs Expenditure



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 2011 amounted to €0.

Cash at bank and on hand

The Balance Sheet shows that the Board had €3.8 million on hand at the end of 2011. This included €0.71 million held on behalf of clients. It can be seen from Note 15 to the accounts that the throughput of client funds in 2011 was €4.47 million. This arises from cases where, as a result of legal advice or representation in court, clients received monies either from the other party or from the disposal of property. All such monies 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 hand at any one time.

APPENDIX 1: FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

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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 and Equality, with the consent of the Minister for Finance, all proper and usual accounts of any monies 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 Legal Aid Board 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 Legal Aid Board and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.



Muriel Walls
Chairperson

Date: 6 November 2012



Kate Hayes
Board Member

STATEMENT ON 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. Actions have been taken to ensure compliance with the revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, published in June 2009. These actions included the amending of the Board's own Corporate Governance Manual to take account of the 2009 Code of Practice and the revised Corporate Governance Manual was formally approved by the former Board at its meeting in November 2009. A revised Code of Business Conduct for Board Members was also approved by the former Board in October 2009. As required under the 2009 Code of Practice, the Board developed and implemented a Travel Policy during 2009 which sets out how the Board complies with the current Department of Finance regulations and guidelines on travel and subsistence. A financial fraud prevention policy for the Board was approved and implemented during 2008 which includes, inter alia, procedures whereby employees of the Board may in confidence, raise concerns about possible irregularities in financial reporting and other matters and ensure that such matters are followed up in a meaningful way. A Corporate Procurement Policy was finalised in September 2010 and forwarded to the Finance and Audit and Risk Management Committees for information prior to implementation. The current Board was appointed in December 2011 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 Finance Committee is a committee of the Board which considers the Board's finances in detail and reports to the Board on the financial affairs and policies of the Board. This includes the review of budgets and financial reports, the recommendation of approval of the Board's annual accounts to the Board 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 former Committee met on five occasions during 2011 and, as part of its functions, examined the subhead of other Establishment Costs and considered a comprehensive review that was carried out on outstanding liabilities on the Circuit Court Private Practitioner Scheme. Using information gathered from a number of sources, Management carried out a comprehensive analysis of the legal aid certificates granted under the Circuit Court Private Practitioner Scheme between 2005 and 2010 which was presented to the former Committee in March 2011. As a result of this exercise, the Board was in a position to reduce the outstanding liability in respect of outstanding Circuit Court Private Practitioner fees by €300,000. Over the past five years, twenty key areas of expenditure have been examined by the Committee. During 2011, in addition to the monthly financial reports, the former Committee also considered a mid year financial review and two multi annual end of quarter reviews.

- 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 and Risk Management Committee of the Board is to provide an independent opinion on the adequacy of the Board's risk management arrangements. In February 2009, the former Committee agreed to a change in its procedures and terms of reference to reflect the increasing importance of and focus on managing corporate risk. As a result of this change, the Committee was re-titled the Audit and Risk Management Committee (previously

Audit Committee). An external member to the Board was reappointed to the new Committee in January 2012. The former Committee met on six occasions in 2011. As proposed by the former Committee, Management implemented in March 2010 a formal risk materialisation reporting system on any potential and real risks that materialised or near miss occurrences. The report has been modelled on the Board's Corporate Risk Register and is updated in conjunction with the risk register on a twice yearly basis. Both the risk register and the risk materialisation reports were presented to the former Committee in February and July 2011. The former Committee adopted recommendations arising from the Board's review of the internal audit process in October 2010. As part of this review, Management carried out an examination of the capacity and role of the Board's internal audit function and brought forward proposals on this issue to the former Committee. The review identified, inter alia, that the risk register should be consulted and the highest areas of risk should be identified in the context of determining the key areas for examination by the internal audit function.

- 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 2011, the internal audit function of the Board carried out audits of accounts and procedures in twelve of the Board's law centres. It was recommended in the review of the internal audit process that the law centre audit process should focus on areas that generate highest risk in the law centre and the frequency of law centre audits should be reduced to every three years with a view to

increasing Head Office auditing and/or procedural auditing with reference to the risk register and other relevant issues. In April 2011, the former Board requested that an internal investigation be carried out concerning two robbery incidents at Newbridge law centre and that a report be prepared for the Audit and Risk Management's consideration. The former Committee made recommendations to the former Board which have all been implemented.

- Monitoring of Internal Control: the Board has an Internal Audit function whose annual audit programme is approved by the Audit and Risk Management Committee of the statutory Board and one of whose functions is to review all aspects of internal financial controls. The Audit and Risk Management 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 capacity and role of the Internal Audit function was comprehensively reviewed by the former Committee in 2010 in the context of the internal audit review process. The main purpose of the internal audit review process was to identify where the emphasis of the internal audit function should best be placed subject to the availability of resources and the requirements of the Board. The former Committee adopted a Charter for the Internal Audit function of the Board early in 2011. The Charter sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Internal Audit function, including the planning, reporting and accountability elements of its operation. 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 and Risk Management Committee and the statutory Board, which ensures that

issues raised are acted upon. I can confirm that all issues raised since the 2010 audit have been addressed and any relevant recommendations adopted. Having regard to the documentation of a formal policy on the retention of confidential information, the Board has file management procedures in place for maintaining client files and introduced new confidentiality procedures into the Board's Administrative Procedures Handbook in March 2012. Records management will also be addressed in the context of the Board's new Legal Case Management system. The Internal Audit Unit of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform also carried out an audit on outsourced legal fees in 2011 and the recommendations are awaited. The Audit and Risk Management Committee is required to 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 outgoing Committee prepared an interim report for 2011 in October 2011 which was noted by the new Committee in March 2012.

4. I confirm that during the year ended 31 December 2011, the Board conducted a review of the effectiveness of the Board's system of internal financial controls.



Muriel Walls
Chairperson

Date: 6 November 2012

COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL

REPORT FOR PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

Legal Aid Fund

I have audited the financial statements of the Legal Aid Fund for the year ended 31 December 2011 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. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland.

Responsibilities of the Members of the Board

The Board is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements, for ensuring that they give a true and fair view of the state of the Legal Aid Fund's affairs and of its income and expenditure, and for ensuring the regularity of transactions.

Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

My responsibility is to audit the financial statements and report on them in accordance with applicable law.

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation.

My audit is carried out in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) and in compliance with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of Audit of the Financial Statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of

- whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Board's circumstances, and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed
- the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made in the preparation of the financial statements, and
- the overall presentation of the financial statements.

I also seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit.

In addition, I read all the financial and non-financial information in the Annual Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies I consider the implications for my report.

Opinion on the Financial Statements

In my opinion, the financial statements, which have been properly prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, give a true and fair view of the state of the Legal Aid Fund's affairs at 31 December 2011 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended.

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

Matters on which I report by exception

I report by exception if

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- my audit noted any material instance where moneys have not been applied for the purposes intended or where the transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them, or
- the information given in the Board's Annual Report for the year for which the financial statements are prepared is not consistent with the financial statements, or
- the Statement on Internal Financial Control does not reflect the Board's compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, or
- I find there are other material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I have nothing to report in regard to those matters upon which reporting is by exception.



Andrew Harkness
For and on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General
14 November 2012

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

GENERAL

The Legal Aid Board, 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 and Equality.

The Fund consists of all the financial resources of the Board. In 2011, 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 and Equality.

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 31st December 2011 shows an excess of liabilities over assets of €1,684,571

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 General of the Department of Justice and Equality 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, 2011 was approximately €18,000. There were no bad debts written off in 2011.

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 monies/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, and premises fit out	20%
Computer equipment	33%

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 2011, on foot of awards or settlements made in favour of clients represented by the Board. The Board may recover these from 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 and Equality 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 recognised 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 and Equality. 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 and Equality.

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 2011

	Note	2011		2010	
		€	€	€	€
Income					
State funding	1	30,370,000		32,192,000	
Net deferred funding for pensions	3c	3,959,943		4,065,932	
Contributions from aided persons		809,967		844,201	
Costs recovered		974,331		921,717	
Loss on sale of assets		0		0	
Other income	4	377,960		493,327	
			36,492,201		38,517,177
Transfer from Capital Account	5		(547,767)		393,802
			35,944,434		38,910,979
Expenditure					
Salaries and related expenses	6	17,911,108		18,158,935	
Pension Costs	3a	3,842,426		3,934,823	
Fees to Board members		82,573		99,619	
Accommodation and establishment expenses	9	3,683,821		3,829,478	
Legal fees & expenses	10	9,314,872		8,980,156	
General administration	11	1,609,479		1,744,234	
Depreciation	12	603,170		590,184	
Audit fee		18,095		18,095	
			37,065,544		37,355,524
Surplus for year			(1,121,110)		1,555,455
Opening balance as at 1 January			(2,710,505)		(4,265,960)
Closing balance as at 31 December			(3,831,615)		(2,710,505)

All income and expenditure for the year 31 December 2011 relates to continuing activities.

The Statement of Accounting Policies, together with Notes 1 to 21, form part of these financial statements.



Muriel Walls
Chairperson

Date: 6 November 2012



Molling Ryan
Chief Executive

STATEMENT OF TOTAL RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

	Note	2011		2010	
		€	€	€	€
Surplus / (Deficit) for year			(1,121,110)		1,555,455
Experience losses / (gains) on pension scheme liability	3d	(2,659,943)		(4,865,932)	
Changes in assumptions underlying the present value of pension scheme liabilities		0		0	
Actuarial loss / (gain) on Pension Liabilities	3b		(2,659,943)		(4,865,932)
Adjustment to Deferred Pension Funding			2,659,943		4,865,932
Total Recognised Gains / Losses			(1,121,110)		1,555,455

The Statement of Accounting Policies, together with Notes 1 to 21, form part of these financial statements.



Muriel Walls
Chairperson

Date: 6 November 2012



Moling Ryan
Chief Executive

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2011

	Note	2011		2010	
		€	€	€	€
Fixed assets	12		2,147,044		740,512
Current assets					
Cash at bank and on hand		3,815,835		6,272,217	
Debtors and prepayments	13	899,698		767,658	
		4,715,533		7,039,875	
Less current liabilities					
Creditors and accruals	14	7,834,418		8,527,896	
Clients' funds	15	712,730		1,222,484	
		8,547,148		9,750,380	
Net current (liabilities)			(3,831,615)		(2,710,505)
Total assets less current Liabilities before Pension			(1,684,571)		(1,969,993)
Deferred pension funding	3c		37,700,000		36,400,000
Pension liabilities	3b		(37,700,000)		(36,400,000)
			0		0
Total assets			(1,684,571)		(1,969,993)
Represented by:					
Income and Expenditure Account			(3,831,615)		(2,710,505)
Capital Account	5		2,147,044		740,512
			(1,684,571)		(1,969,993)

The Statement of Accounting Policies, together with Notes 1 to 21, form part of these financial statements.



Muriel Walls
Chairperson

Date: 6 November 2012



Moling Ryan
Chief Executive

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

	Note	2011 €	2010 €
Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities	17	(1,402,431)	1,793,006
Returns on investment and servicing of finance			
Interest received		110,623	137,200
Interest paid on client settlements		(10,062)	(16,079)
Investing activities			
Sale of tangible assets		0	0
Purchase of tangible assets		(1,154,513)	(192,806)
Net cash inflow/(outflow)		(2,456,382)	1,721,321
Increase/(Decrease) in cash	18	(2,456,382)	1,721,321

The Statement of Accounting Policies, together with Notes 1 to 21, form part of these financial statements.



Muriel Walls
Chairperson

Date: 6 November 2012



Moling Ryan
Chief Executive

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2011

1 STATE FUNDING

State Funding was received from Vote 19 - Office of the Minister for Justice and Equality as follows:

Subhead	2011 €	2010 €
C.2 Grant-in-Aid	24,125,000	24,225,000
D.2 Asylum Seekers Taskforce - Legal Aid*	6,245,000	7,967,000
	30,370,000	32,192,000

* This funding was provided towards the expenditure incurred on the Refugee Legal Service. See Note 19.

2 TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

(a) Family Mediation Service

On November 1 2011 (the date of transfer) responsibility for the provision of family mediation services transferred to the Legal Aid Board from the Family Support Agency (FSA) in accordance with the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 2011. On this date, all assets pertaining to the provision of such services were transferred to the Legal Aid Board at their net book value of €858,765 (refer Note 12).

Also on the date of transfer the Board took on responsibility for the leases on premises used in connection with the provision of family mediation services. Details of the commitments taken on in this regard are set out at Note 16.

Forty five members of staff were also transferred to the Board. For administrative efficiency, the FSA continued to meet the payroll costs of the transferred staff for the period 1 November to 31 December 2011. The staff joined the Board's superannuation scheme with effect from the date of transfer and all pensions earned from that date are the liabilities of the Board.

(b) Criminal Legal Aid

The Government decided in December 2010 to transfer the responsibility for the administration and management of the various Criminal Legal Aid Schemes from the Department of Justice and Equality to the Legal Aid Board. Arising from that decision the Board has been engaged in a process to develop the necessary systems and structures to facilitate the remit transfer. As a result of the Government decision responsibility for the following Schemes are to be transferred to the Board

- Criminal Legal Aid (CLA) Scheme;
- Attorney General's (AGs) Ad-hoc Scheme;
- Garda Station Legal Advice Ad-hoc Scheme;
- Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) Legal Aid Ad-hoc Scheme;
- District Court (Counsel) Ad-hoc Scheme.

With a view to achieving an efficient and seamless transfer process to the Board, it was decided to progress the handover on a phased basis. As a first step in that process, the remit for the administration of the Garda Station Legal Advice Ad-hoc Scheme was transferred to the Board from the Department of Justice and Equality on the 1 October 2011 on an administrative basis pending legislation.

The Garda Station Legal Advice Ad-hoc Scheme is designed to provide free legal advice to persons detained in Garda Stations who qualify under specific qualifying criteria.

Since commencing work on the Scheme on the 1 October, the Board processed over 800 claims to a value of some €150,000 for payment to solicitors for consultations with detainees in Garda Stations. Such payments were made from and charged to the Department of Justice and Equality Vote.

In addition, the Board has completed a review of the operation of the Scheme and will, in 2012, introduce a new Guidance Document and Claim Form to improve the efficiency of the process. The Board has also developed a new database to collate a wide range of information which is expected to assist in the future formation of policy relevant to the Scheme. The costs incurred by the Legal Aid Board in 2011 in respect of this scheme amounted to €233,000. Of this amount, €141,000 was in respect of salary costs and €92,000 for overhead costs.

The transfer of the remit for the Garda Station Legal Advice Scheme to the Board took place on 1st October 2011. Responsibility for the administration of the Attorney General's (AGs) Ad-hoc Scheme passed to the Board from 1st June 2012 and it is anticipated that responsibility for the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) Legal Aid Ad-hoc Scheme will transfer to the Board on 1st January 2013. The remaining Schemes will transfer to the Board later in 2013. It is envisaged that the experience gained in operating the ad-hoc schemes which have been transferred to the Board will inform and assist as it prepares for the challenge of taking over the remaining ad hoc schemes and the mainstream Criminal Legal Aid Scheme at a later date.

3 PENSION COSTS

	2011 €	2010 €
(a) Analysis of total pension costs charged to Expenditure		
Current service cost	2,300,000	2,400,000
Interest on Pension Scheme Liabilities	2,000,000	2,000,000
Employee Contributions	(457,574)	(465,177)
	3,842,426	3,934,823
(b) Movement in Net Pension Liability during the financial year		
Net Pension Liability at 1 January	36,400,000	37,200,000
Current Service Cost	2,300,000	2,400,000
Interest Costs	2,000,000	2,000,000
Actuarial (Profit)/Loss	(2,659,943)	(4,865,932)
Pensions paid in the year	(340,057)	(334,068)
Net Pension Liability at 31 December	37,700,000	36,400,000

(c) 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 and Equality, the Board has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet such sums in accordance with current practice.

The Net Deferred Funding for Pensions recognised in the Income and Expenditure Account was as follows:

	2011 €	2010 €
Funding recoverable in respect of current year pension costs	4,300,000	4,400,000
State grant applied to pay pensioners	(340,057)	(334,068)
	<u>3,959,943</u>	<u>4,065,932</u>

The deferred funding asset for pensions as at 31 December 2011 amounted to €37.7 million (€36.4 million in 2010).

(d) History of defined benefit obligations

	2011 €	2010 €	2009 €
Defined Benefit obligations	37,700,000	36,400,000	37,200,000
Experience losses / (gains) on Scheme Liabilities amount	(2,659,943)	(4,865,932)	2,704,544
Percentage of the present value of the scheme liabilities	-7%	-13%	7%

The cumulative actuarial loss recognised in the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses amounts to €25,852.

(e) General Description of the Scheme

The pension scheme is a defined benefit final salary pension arrangement with benefits and contributions defined by reference to current “model” public sector scheme regulations. The scheme provides a pension (eightieths per year of service), a gratuity or lump sum (three eightieth per year of service) and spouse’s and children’s pensions. Normal Retirement Age is a member’s 65th birthday, and pre 2004 members have an entitlement to retire without actuarial reduction from age 60. Pensions in payment (and deferment) normally increase in line with general public sector salary inflation. The valuation used for FRS 17 (Revised) disclosures has been based on a full actuarial valuation (Apr ‘12) by a qualified independent actuary taking account of the requirements of the FRS in order to assess the scheme liabilities at 31 December 2011.

The principal actuarial assumptions were as follows:

	2011 €	2010 €
Rate of increase in salaries	4.0%	4.0%
Rate of increase in pensions in payment	4.0%	4.0%
Discount Rate	5.5%	5.5%
Inflation Rate	2.0%	2.0%

The average future life expectancy according to the mortality tables used to determine the pension liabilities were as follows:

	2011 €	2010 €
Male aged 65	22	22
Female aged 65	25	25

4 OTHER INCOME

	2011 €	2010 €
Interest received and receivable	74,226	146,145
Sundry receipts	303,734	347,182
	<u>377,960</u>	<u>493,327</u>

5 CAPITAL ACCOUNT

	€	€
Balance as at 1 January		740,512
Transfer to Income and Expenditure Account		
- Income used to purchase fixed assets	1,150,937	
- Amount released on disposal of fixed assets	0	
- Income amortised in year in line with depreciation of assets	(603,170)	
		547,767
- Transfer of Assets from Family Mediation Service		858,765
Balance as at 31 December		2,147,044

6 EMPLOYEE NUMBERS AND COSTS

The total staff complement as approved by the Minister at 31 December, 2011 was 346. The number of staff actually employed by the Board at 31 December, 2011 was 346 (2010 - 360) The average number of employees in the Board during the year was 351 (2010 - 359). Employee and related costs were as follows:

	2011 €	2010 €
Salaries	16,676,058	16,898,865
Cost of Secondment	55,920	57,683
Employer PRSI	1,179,130	1,202,387
	17,911,108	18,158,935

€1,020,125 was deducted from staff by way of pension levy and was paid over to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

7 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER SALARY AND EXPENSES

	2011 €	2010 €
CEO Salary	145,912	145,998
CEO Benefits	4,200	3,635
	150,112	149,633

The CEO received salary payments of €145,912. The pre-existing performance related pay scheme was discontinued in 2008 and no bonus has been paid in 2011. The CEO also received an amount of €4,200 in respect of expenses. The CEO is a member of an unfunded defined benefit public sector scheme and his pension entitlements do not extend beyond the standard entitlements in the public sector defined benefit superannuation scheme.

8 BOARD MEMBERS FEES AND EXPENSES

	2011 €	2010 €
Board Members Fees	82,572	99,619
Board Members Expenses	32,440	24,558
	115,012	124,177

Board Members	Fees €	Board Members	Fees €
Anne Colley	9,303	Fergal Rooney	5,980
Kate Hayes	6,354	Robert Browne	5,980
Jerry O'Connor	5,980	Jim O'Farrell	5,980
Elizabeth Murphy	5,980	Seamus Keelan	5,980
Michael Buckley	5,980	Dara Foynes	5,980
Eamonn Purcell	5,980	Michelle O'Neill	376
Breege Leonard	5,980	Micheal O'Connell	376
Niamh Moran	5,980	Philip O'Leary	376

9 ACCOMMODATION AND ESTABLISHMENT EXPENSES

	2011 €	2010 €
Rents	2,505,710	2,548,148
Cleaning	255,438	280,156
Lighting and heating	236,394	238,702
Maintenance - Premises	385,411	434,896
Maintenance - Equipment	300,868	327,576
	<u>3,683,821</u>	<u>3,829,478</u>

10 LEGAL FEES AND OTHER EXPENSES

	2011 €	2010 €
Counsel fees	4,889,622	4,793,475
Legal fees (incl. expert witness fees)	698,263	888,943
Private Practitioner Schemes	2,998,231	2,611,655
Other professional fees	257,275	196,740
Other expenses	471,481	489,343
	<u>9,314,873</u>	<u>8,980,156</u>

11 GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

	2011 €	2010 €
Stationery and office expenses	267,052	316,671
Books and printing	100,663	146,431
Postage and telephone	722,510	782,739
Insurance	43,085	54,440
Travel and subsistence	476,169	443,953
	<u>1,609,479</u>	<u>1,744,234</u>

12 FIXED ASSETS

	Leases €	Office Furniture €	Equipment & Computers €	Premises Fit Out €	Total €
Cost					
Balance as at 01/01/11	2,292,177	965,108	2,890,092	3,413,701	9,561,078
Acquisitions	0	0	1,150,937	0	1,150,937
Disposals	0	(410,980)	(584,009)	0	(994,989)
Transfer from FMS	0	1,600,811	478,851	0	2,079,662
Balance as at 31/12/11	2,292,177	2,154,939	3,935,871	3,413,701	11,796,688
Depreciation of fixed assets					
Balance as at 01/01/11	2,280,440	937,537	2,464,285	3,138,304	8,820,566
Charge in year	11,205	18,787	428,256	144,922	603,170
Disposals	0	(410,980)	(584,009)	0	(994,989)
Transfer from FMS	0	808,681	412,216	0	1,220,897
Balance as at 31/12/11	2,291,645	1,354,025	2,720,748	3,283,226	9,649,644
Net book value as at 31/12/11	532	800,914	1,215,123	130,475	2,147,044
Net book value as at 31/12/10	11,737	27,571	425,807	275,397	740,512

On November 1 2011, responsibility for the provision of family mediation services transferred to the Legal Aid Board. On this date, all assets pertaining to the 16 premises used for the provision of family mediation services were transferred to the Legal Aid Board at their net book value. On November 1 2011 the net book value of those assets was €858,765.

An exercise to review fixed assets was carried out during 2011 whereby obsolete assets were identified. All of these assets were fully depreciated and the computer equipment was disposed of in line with EU directive 2002/96/EC.

13 DEBTORS AND PREPAYMENTS

	2011 €	2010 €
Debtors - deposit interest	81,743	106,500
Prepayments		
- Rent	135,852	117,002
- Insurance	17,907	19,314
- Salaries	15,977	26,870
- Other	330,064	237,579
- Practising Certificates	318,155	260,393
	899,698	767,658

14 CREDITORS AND ACCRUALS

	2011 €	2010 €
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Creditors & accruals	7,834,418	8,527,896
	7,834,418	8,527,896

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 2011, the amount provided for in relation to unbilled cases was €7,089,580 (2010-€7,179,575).

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.

15 CLIENTS' FUNDS

	€
Client funds held at 1 January (Gross)	1,222,484
Interest	(21,954)
Client funds held at 1 January (Net of Interest)	1,200,530
<i>Add</i> Awards/settlements received during 2011	3,960,539
<i>Less</i> Settlements paid out, including interest allowed and costs recovered	(4,471,871)
Client funds held at 31 December	689,198
Interest accruing on client funds held	23,533
Total due to clients	712,730

16 COMMITMENTS

(a) Commitments under operating leases

The Board occupies premises at Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry and Mount Street, Dublin and operates out of 33 other centres throughout the country. The Board is committed to pay rent of €2,423,662 during 2012 in respect of leases expiring as follows:

The Family Mediation Service transferred to the Legal Aid Board on November 1 2011. The FMS operates out of 16 premises throughout the country and the Board is committed to pay €436,210 during 2012 in respect of leases expiring as follows:

	FMS	€
2012	38,944	139,440
2013-2016	359,514	652,099
2017 onwards	37,752	1,632,123

(b) Commitments in respect of Legal Fees

Counsel Fees and Private Practitioner Schemes	Total €
Open cases certified at 1 January 2011	15,336,892
Additional fees certified in 2011	7,205,033
2011 Payments	(7,977,848)
	14,564,077
Provided for at 31 December 2011	(7,089,580)
Outstanding commitments at 31 December 2011	7,474,497

At 31 December 2011, the Legal Aid Board had a number of ongoing cases where the matter of fees had not yet been settled. In accordance with its operating policy on these matters the Legal Aid Board makes partial provision against these fees based on a statistical model which recognises the average term to crystallise for such costs. This model is applied consistently across all cases handled. At 31 December 2011, the Legal Aid Board had provided for legal fees of €7,089,580 and had outstanding commitments in the amount of €7,474,497.

17 RECONCILIATION OF SURPLUS FOR YEAR TO CASH FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2011 €	2010 €
(Deficit) / Surplus for year	(1,121,110)	1,555,455
Adjustment for non-operating items		
Bank interest receivable	(74,226)	(146,145)
Movement on Capital Account	547,767	(393,802)
Adjustment for non-cash items		
Depreciation	603,170	590,184
(Increase) / Decrease in debtors	(156,797)	86,849
Increase / (Decrease) in creditors	(1,201,235)	100,465
	(1,402,431)	1,793,006

18 MOVEMENT OF CASH

	2011 €	2010 €
Balance at 1 January	6,272,217	4,550,896
Net cash inflow	(2,456,382)	1,721,321
Balance at 31 December	3,815,835	6,272,217

19 REFUGEE LEGAL SERVICE

	2011 €	2010 €
Expenditure and income relating to the Refugee Legal Service are included in the financial statements as follows:		
Salaries and related expenses	4,096,383	4,395,738
Accommodation expenses	1,207,620	1,208,437
Legal fees and professional fees	895,487	1,283,424
General administration	272,891	352,095
Fixed assets purchased	390,480	50,614
	6,862,861	7,290,308
Less contributions from legally aided persons and costs recovered	(290,308)	(276,952)
Total net expenditure in the year	6,572,553	7,013,356

20 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.

21 APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The Financial Statements were approved by the Board on 22 June 2012.

APPENDIX 2: ENERGY USAGE 2011

MANAGING ENERGY USAGE

The Board has a network of 34 offices throughout the country. The main source of energy is electricity, with gas heating in six offices and oil heating in the Cahirciveen head office.

OVERVIEW OF ENERGY USAGE IN 2011

In 2011 the Board consumed 1499 MWh of electricity across its network of offices. This compares with a consumption of 1549 MWh in 2010 which results in a reduction of 50 MWh in the consumption of electricity in 2011. 72MWh of natural gas was used in the Mount Street office. OPW audits indicate that the level of oil used in the head office in Cahirciveen was approximately 232 MWh. This was slightly down on the figure of 233MWh in 2010. (Note: the remote monitoring system for oil was malfunctioning and adjustments have been made based on oil purchased). There was a substantial reduction in electricity used in Cahirciveen from 101 MWh to 68MWh, representing a reduction of 33%.

ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN IN 2011

In 2010 the Board undertook a number of initiatives to improve our energy performance, including:

- Participation of the Board's head office in Cahirciveen in the OPW Optimising Power at Work initiative. The audits on head office in Cahirciveen show that the overall energy consumption for that office has been reduced by an average of 70MW/h each year since 2007.
- Advising staff in each of the locations to turn off lighting and office machinery when not in use.
- Minor adjustments to air conditioning levels in ICT comms room, Cahirciveen.

Overall, in 2011, the Board reduced electricity consumption by 50 MWh MWh, representing a reduction of 3.22%

ACTIONS PLANNED FOR 2012

The Board will concentrate on controlling and reducing consumption in offices in 2012, as well as maintaining progress in offices where decreased consumption was recorded. The Board has been proactive in recent years in introducing measures to ensure that all PC's are automatically turned off at night and at weekends. All staff will be advised to turn off lights when the office is not in use. All machines, photocopiers, printers, PCs will be turned off, (rather than left on standby) when not in use, particularly at evenings and weekends. Minor adjustments to heating and air conditioning controls will be made where necessary to reduce energy consumption. In addition the board has taken over administration of 16 Family Mediation Service offices and efforts will be made to reduce energy consumption in these offices also.

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF LAW CENTRES

FULL TIME LAW CENTRES

LAW CENTRE	MANAGING SOLICITOR
CAVAN Newcourt Shopping Centre, Church Street, Cavan Tel: (049) 433 1110 Fax: (049) 433 1304	Patricia O'Reilly
CLARE Unit 6A, Merchant's Square, Ennis, Co Clare Tel: (065) 682 1929 Fax: (065) 682 1939	Mary Cuffe
CORK North Quay House, Popes Quay, Cork Tel: (021) 455 1686 Fax: (021) 455 1690	Betty Dineen
Fifth Floor, Irish Life Building, 1A South Mall, Cork Tel: (021) 427 5998 Fax: (021) 427 6927	Deirdre Kissane
DONEGAL Letterkenny Town Centre, Justice Walsh Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal Tel: (074) 912 6177 Fax: (074) 912 6086	Ray Finucane
DUBLIN 45 Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin 1 Tel: (01) 874 5440 Fax: (01) 874 6896	Shane Dooley
Tower Centre, Clondalkin Village, Dublin 22 Tel: (01) 457 6011 Fax: (01) 457 6007	Tom Nally
Village Green, Tallaght, Dublin 24 Tel: (01) 451 1519 Fax: (01) 451 7989	Pauline Corcoran
44/49 Main Street, Finglas, Dublin 11 Tel: (01) 864 0314 Fax: (01) 864 0362	Marie Quirke
48/49 North Brunswick Street, Georges Lane, Dublin 7 Tel: (01) 646 9700 Fax: (01) 646 9799	Hugh Cunniam
Unit 6-8, Business Centre, Clonsilla Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15 Tel: (01) 820 0455 Fax: (01) 820 0450	Joan Crawford
Medical Negligence Unit, 7 – 11 Montague Court, Montague St, Dublin 2 Tel: (01) 477 6208 Fax: (01) 477 6241	Margaret O'Shea-Grewcock
George's Lane, 48/49 North Brunswick Street, George's Lane, Dublin 7 Tel: (01) 646 9740 Fax: (01) 646 9750	Anke Hartas

Dolphin House office, East Essex Street, Dublin 2 Tel: (01) 675 5566/(01) 675 5565 Fax: (01) 764 5116	Garrett Searson
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
KILDARE Canning Place, Newbridge, Co Kildare Tel: (045) 435777 Fax: (045) 435766	Edel Poole
KILKENNY 87 Maudlin Street, Kilkenny Tel: (056) 776 1611 Fax: (056) 776 1562	Niall Murphy
LAOIS Unit 6A, Bridge Street, Portlaoise, Co Laois Tel: (057) 866 1366 Fax: (057) 866 1362	Catherine Martin
LIMERICK Unit F, Lock Quay, Limerick Tel: (061) 314599 Fax: (061) 318330	Fergal Rooney
LONGFORD Credit Union Courtyard, 50A Main Street, Longford Tel: (043) 334 7590 Fax: (043) 334 7594	Edel Hamilton
LOUTH Condil House, Roden Place, Dundalk, Co Louth Tel: (042) 933 0448 Fax: (042) 933 0991	Deirdre McMichael
MAYO Humbert Mall, Main Street, Castlebar, Co Mayo Tel: (094) 902 4334 Fax: (094) 902 3721	Thomas O' Mahony
MEATH Kennedy Road, Navan, Co Meath Tel: (046) 907 2515 Fax: (046) 907 2519	Mary Pat Ahern
MONAGHAN Alma House, The Diamond, Monaghan Tel: (047) 84888 Fax: (047) 84879	Stephanie Coggans

<p>OFFALY Harbour Street, Tullamore Tel: (057) 935 1177 Fax: (057) 935 1544</p>	Deirdre O'Connor
<p>SLIGO Bridgewater House, Rockwood Parade, Sligo Tel: (071) 916 1670 Fax: (071) 916 1681</p>	Fiona McGuire
<p>TIPPERARY Friars Court, Abbey Street, Nenagh, Co Tipperary Tel: (067) 34181 Fax: (067) 34083</p>	Catherine Ryan
<p>WATERFORD Canada House, Canada Street, Waterford Tel: (051) 855814 Fax: (051) 871237</p>	Aidan Lynch
<p>WESTMEATH Paynes Lane, Irishtown, Athlone, Co Westmeath Tel: (090) 647 4694 Fax: (090) 647 2160</p>	Phil O'Laoide
<p>WEXFORD Unit 8, Redmond Square, Wexford Tel: (053) 912 2622 Fax: (053) 912 4927</p>	Geraldine Harhen
<p>WICKLOW Bridge Street, Wicklow Tel: (0404) 66166 Fax: (0404) 66197</p>	Barbara Smyth
<p>REFUGEE LEGAL SERVICE 48/49 North Brunswick Street, George's Lane, Dublin 7 Tel: (01) 646 9600 Fax: (01) 671 0200</p> <p>Registration Office Timberlay House, 79/83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2 Tel: (01) 631 0800 Fax: (01) 661 5011</p>	Gráinne Brophy

PART TIME LAW CENTRES

LOCATION AND TELEPHONE	OPEN	LAW CENTRE
CARLOW St. Catherine's Citizens Info. Bureau, St. Joseph's Road, Carlow Tel: (059) 913 8700	Twice a month	Kilkenny
CORK Citizens Info. Bureau, Wolf Tone Square, Bantry Tel: (021) 455 1686	Once a month	Cork (Popes Quay)
DONEGAL The Courthouse, Donegal Town Tel: (074) 912 6177	Once a month	Letterkenny
KERRY Arbutus Hotel, 52 High Street, Killarney Tel: (066) 712 6900	By appointment	Tralee
LEITRIM The Health Centre, Leitrim Road, Carrick-on-Shannon Tel: (043) 47590	Once a month	Longford
LOUTH Drogheda Community Services Centre, Scarlett Crescent, Drogheda Tel: (041) 983 6084/983 3490	By appointment	Monaghan
MAYO The Pastoral Centre (Cathedral Grounds) Ballina, Co. Mayo Tel: (094) 902 4334	Once a month	Castlebar
Health Centre, Knock Road, Ballyhaunis Tel: (094) 902 4334	Fourth Tuesday of every month	Castlebar
ROSCOMMON Citizens Information Centre, 7 Elphin Street, Boyle Tel: (071) 916 1670	Once every 2 months	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	Four times a month	Nenagh
WESTMEATH Unit 11, Enterprise Centre, Bishopgate Street, Mullingar Tel: (090) 647 4694	Once a month	Athlone

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF FAMILY MEDIATION SERVICE OFFICES

FULL TIME OFFICES

Dublin

1st Floor, St Stephen's Green House,
Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2
Phone: (01) 634 4320
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm

Cork

3rd & 4th Floor, Hibernian House,
80A South Mall, Cork
Phone: (021) 425 2200
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm

Galway

3rd Floor, Merchant's Square,
New Dock Street, Galway
Phone: (091) 509730
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm

Limerick

3rd Floor, Riverpoint, Lower Mallow Street,
Limerick
Phone: (061) 214310
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm

PART TIME OFFICES ARE LOCATED IN:

Donegal

3rd Floor, Riverfront House, Pearse Rd,
Letterkenny, Co Donegal
Phone : (074) 910 2240
Opening hours: Monday & Tuesday 9am - 1pm, 2pm - 5pm.
Wednesday 9am - 12.30pm (admin cover)

Dublin

Blanchardstown

West End House, West End Business Park,
Snugborough Road Extension, Blanchardstown,
Dublin 15
Phone: (01) 811 8650
Opening hours: Thursday & Friday 9am - 1pm, 2pm - 5pm.
Monday 9am - 12.30pm (admin cover)

Raheny

Skillings House, 1st floor offices, Raheny Shopping
Centre, Howth Rd, Dublin 5
Phone (01) 851 0730
Opening hours: Thursday & Friday 9am - 1pm, 2pm - 5pm.
Tuesday 9am - 12.30pm (admin only)

Tallaght

The Rere, Tallaght Social Services Centre, The Square,
Tallaght, Dublin 24
Phone: (01) 414 5180
Opening hours: Tuesday & Wednesday 9am - 1pm,
2pm - 5pm.
Monday 9am - 12.30pm (admin only)

Kerry

Unit 2, Market Place, Main Street, Tralee, Co. Kerry
Phone: (066) 718 6100
Opening hours: Monday & Tuesday 9am - 1pm, 2pm - 5pm.
Wednesday 9am - 12.30pm (admin cover)

Laois

Level 2, Grattan House, Grattan House Business
Centre, Portlaoise, Co Laois
Phone: (057) 869 5730
Opening hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 9am - 1pm &
2pm - 5pm,
Thursday 9am - 12.30pm (admin cover)

Louth

10 Seatown, Dundalk, Co. Louth
Phone: (042) 935 9410
Opening hours: Tuesday & Thursday 9.30am - 1pm,
2pm - 5.30pm.
Wednesday 9am - 12.30pm (admin cover)

Mayo

c/o Family Centre, Chapel St, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Phone: (094) 903 5120
Opening hours: Thursday & Friday 9am - 1pm, 2pm -
5pm.
Wednesday 9am - 12.30pm (admin cover)

Sligo

Level 6, Quayside Shopping Centre, Wine Street, Sligo
Phone: (071) 915 4260
Opening hours: Monday & Tuesday 9am - 1pm, 2pm
- 5pm.
Wednesday 9am - 12.30pm (admin cover)

Waterford

13B Wallace House, Maritana Gate, Canada St,
Waterford
Phone (051) 860460
Opening hours: Monday & Tuesday 9am - 1pm, 2pm
- 5pm.
Wed 9am - 12.30pm (admin only)

Westmeath

Suite 10, 1st Floor, Inish Carraig Business Centre,
Golden Island, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
Phone: (0906) 420970
Opening hours: Monday & Tuesday 9am - 1pm, 2pm
- 5pm.
Wednesday 9am - 12.30pm (Admin only)

Wexford

32 Key West, Custom House Quay, Wexford
Tel: (053) 916 3050
Opening hours: Monday & Tuesday 9am - 1pm, 2pm
- 5pm.
Wednesday 9am - 12.30pm (admin cover)



Quay St, Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry.

Tel: 066 947 1000

LoCall: 1890 615 200

Fax: 066 947 1035

Email: info@legalaidboard.ie

www.legalaidboard.ie