



22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

### **Limerick Family Court / Dispute Resolution Centre Project**

Dear Stakeholder,

We are writing to you regarding the Limerick Family Court / Dispute Resolution Centre Project, to update you on progress thus far and our next proposed steps.

You may recall meeting in the Courthouse on the 5th March 2020 when we outlined the thinking behind the project. The pandemic intervened immediately following that meeting. However, recently a Steering Board has been established to lead the Project comprising members of the local judiciary, senior managers in the Courts Service and the Legal Aid Board, representatives of the legal professions, Tusla and the Department of Justice. Also involved are representatives from local NGOs who expressed an interest in joining the project following our invitation last December.

The Steering Board has agreed broad objectives of the two year pilot which are firstly to encourage persons who are experiencing family difficulties in Limerick to make more informed choices about how to try and sort out their issues in a manner that is best for children and families and secondly, to ensure that the ways used to resolve family disputes are conducted in a manner that involves people and that conclude in a timely way.

The Project is shortly going to move to the next stage which will be the examination of specific themes in the area of family justice. We strongly believe the pilot will work better if informed by stakeholders such as you who are involved in family dispute resolution processes locally in Limerick. To that end, the Steering Board is proposing to hold a number of consultations over the next few months where these themes will be discussed and explored. The proposed schedule is as follows – you will see that on some of the consultation days a number of themes will be discussed:

<b>Consultation Theme</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>1. Introductions</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2021 at 3.30pm
<b>2. Information sources about the resolution of family problems</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 3.30pm
<b>3. Non court focused dispute resolution in family justice</b>	

<b>4. Reimagining the structure of civil legal aid in family justice</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 3.30pm
<b>5. The Family Courts</b>	
<b>6. The Voice of the Child</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 3.30pm
<b>7. Education, training and learning</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2021 at 3.30pm
<b>8. The cost of resolving family disputes</b>	
<b>9. Further consultations if required</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2021 and/or 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2021

It is envisaged that these consultations will take place remotely and we invite you to attend any or all of the consultations that are of interest to you and the role you play in the resolution of family disputes in Limerick. Details of the virtual platform to be used for the consultations will be sent prior to each consultation.

Can we take the opportunity to thank you for your interest to date in the Project. We would really value your input and engagement in the consultation process.

Yours sincerely,

*John McDaid*

John McDaid  
CEO  
Legal Aid Board

*Peter Mullan*

Peter Mullan  
Assistant Secretary  
Courts Service of Ireland