



LEGAL AID BOARD

Corporate Plan 2012 - 2014

Foreword by Chief Executive

I am very pleased to present this Corporate Plan for the period 2012 - 2014. It reflects the Board's statutory functions, our mission, values and main strategic priorities to be addressed over the three year period ending in 2014.

It is in a much more concise format than the Board's previous Corporate Plans. This format is intended to make it easier for our other stakeholders to identify the main functions of the Board, our priorities for service delivery and how we account for the resources entrusted to us by the Government. The detailed operational programmes required to implement this Plan will be developed under the Board's ongoing procedures for managing organisational performance and risk. While its implementation will be challenging for the organisation, I am confident that together we can achieve our medium-term objectives and fulfil our mandate in a cost effective, efficient and responsive manner by maximising the use of our available resources for service delivery.

Moling Ryan

Chief Executive

Purpose of Corporate Plan 2012 - 2014

The purpose of this Plan is to :

Outline the broad strategic direction for the Legal Aid Board over the period 2012 – 2014; and

Identify the factors both internal and external to the organisation, and the key organisational priorities that need to be implemented, for the Board to fulfil its statutory mandate;



LEGAL AID BOARD

Our Mission, Vision and Values

- **Our Mission**
- *Our mission is to provide a professional, efficient, cost-effective and accessible legal aid and mediation service in accordance with the terms of our statutory mandate.*
- **Our Vision**
- *Our vision is to facilitate access to justice through the provision of civil legal aid and advice and family mediation services in a manner that compares favourably with best practice internationally.*
- **What We Value**
- *High professional standards in the provision of our services.*
- *Responsiveness to evolving customer and other stakeholder demands and Openness to Change.*
- *High ethical standards.*
- *Effective Leadership at all levels.*
- *Cost effectiveness and value for money.*
- *Effective accountability arrangements with an emphasis on organisational performance and active risk management*

Drivers of Organisational Performance

- *Effective leadership at all levels;*
- *A culture of professionalism and high performance that addresses the needs of our client population;*
- *Ongoing innovative development of services;*
- *Ongoing consultation and engagement with staff;*
- *Implementation of new work practices including making best use of available new technology;*
- *Effective assimilation of new areas of work (Family Mediation Service, Criminal Legal Aid, Mental Health Legal Aid Scheme);*
- *Implementation of the Croke Park Agreement on modernisation and reform in the public service;*
- *The outcome and recommendations of the Value for Money Review completed in 2011; and*
- *Requirement for effective accountability and Governance structures at all levels.*
- **Challenges**
- *Pressures arising from increased demand for services;*
- *Managing resources, both financial and staffing, and the capacity to provide a meaningful service;*
- *Managing expectations of stakeholders;*
- *The capacity to exploit the potential for developing more effective models of service delivery arising from the assimilation of new services within the Legal Aid Board's structures; and*
- *The need to increase the throughput of cases by improving the organisation's efficiency and cost-effectiveness.*



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Development Of Services 2012 – 2014

- **This plan will cover the following main areas:**
 - Measures to ensure that the range and scope of services currently available are delivered in a cost effective and efficient manner;
 - The development of proposals for the evolution of Civil Legal Aid with options for service delivery in the future.
 - Measures to integrate new areas of work into the organisation (Family Mediation Service, Criminal Legal Aid, Mental Health Legal Aid Scheme).
 - The implementation of the Board's Organisational Change Programme, principally through the Board's Croke Park Agreement Action Plan.
- **During the lifetime of this Corporate Plan, the Board will therefore:**
 - Build on initiatives already underway to improve the cost effectiveness and quality of services provided;
 - Develop new service delivery initiatives, to address increasing demand, with an emphasis on:
 - embracing new technology to better manage risk and performance and improve the effectiveness of service delivery;
 - developing more cost effective methods of service delivery, including the full exploitation of the potential to utilise non-legal means of resolving disputes; and
 - developing the capacity to successfully integrate new areas of work into the organisation's operations.



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Civil Legal Aid

- **In order to underpin the development of civil legal aid services over the three year timespan of this Plan, the Board will:**
 - Working with managing solicitors and other staff, through an ongoing process of active engagement, seek to increase the throughput of cases consistent with ensuring that the delivery of a quality professional service is maintained in the law centre network;
 - Develop and implement a “triage” system of service delivery with the aim of ensuring that all applicants receive legal advice from a solicitor within one month of establishing their eligibility for services;
 - Roll-out a new legal case management system (“EOS”) during 2012 to enhance the organisation’s capacity for managing risk and improving performance, including the improvement of service delivery capacity;
 - Ensure that the most effective means for the resolution of disputes are identified with an emphasis on:
 - the best outcome for the individual at least cost;
 - Early resolution of disputes and problems to prevent their escalation;
 - Exploiting the opportunities for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR);
 - Identifying and developing appropriate synergies between civil legal aid and family mediation; and
 - Making the most effective use of counsel and private solicitors.



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Family Mediation Service

- **Over the lifetime of this Plan, the Board will:**
 - Ensure that applicants for mediation are given a timely intake appointment with a mediator;
 - Further develop the service to ensure that a quality and timely professional mediation service is provided consistently across all locations;
 - Develop synergies through the integration of the family mediation service into the Board's structures and services to further exploit the potential for resolving family disputes through mediation as an alternative to litigation;
 - Undertake a detailed analysis of the Dublin-based integrated family mediation pilot project involving the Board, inclusive of the Family Mediation Service, and the Courts Service; and
- Engage with the Minister, the Department of Justice and Equality and other relevant organisations on the possible future development of the integrated service model in the light of the analysis undertaken.



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Criminal Legal Aid

- **Over the lifetime of this Plan, the Board will:**
 - Actively manage the process of taking over responsibility for all criminal legal aid schemes to include:
 - Developing the Board's expertise in this new area of work principally through assuming early responsibility for a number of the smaller scale "ad-hoc" legal aid schemes;
 - Putting in place resources and structures in the Board to actively manage and administer criminal legal aid;
 - Liaising with the Department of Justice and Equality and other organisations involved in the administration of criminal legal aid to ensure that:
 - the gradual transfer of responsibilities to the Board is managed effectively; and
 - Proposals for improving the cost-effectiveness of criminal legal aid are evaluated and arrangements are put in place for their implementation;
 - Develop structured arrangements for engaging with the main stakeholders with an interest in the policy and practice underpinning the operation of criminal legal aid; and
 - Ensuring that the Board's governance arrangements are further developed and adapted to ensure that robust procedures are in place:
 - for the active management of criminal legal aid within the Board's structures; and
 - For complying with the new legislative framework for criminal legal aid with particular reference to ensuring that the schemes of criminal legal aid are managed and administered in a cost effective and efficient manner.



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Corporate Support Services

- **Over the lifetime of this Plan, the Board's corporate support areas will continue to underpin the Board's service delivery mandate. This will involve overseeing the implementation of:**
 - the Board's Croke Park Agreement Action Plan, including various reviews of organisational structures and services;
 - the Value for Money Review of the Board's Services;
 - a number of ongoing policies and procedures on Corporate risk, including workforce planning, performance management, including management of absenteeism, procurement and properties management, and
 - the outcome of a review of the Board's financial management policies and procedures in the light of the governance, including budgetary, implications of the widening of the Board's remit.
- New strategies in the following areas will also be developed and implemented over the lifetime of this Plan:
 - Human Resources;
 - Learning and Development; and
 - Information Technology.



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Implementation and Monitoring of Progress

- Business plans for each area of the Board, identifying the more detailed elements of each main project reflected in this Plan will be developed, and will underpin the monitoring of progress with the implementation of the Plan.
- Progress will be monitored quarterly by the Senior Management Team by reference to the main priorities identified above. A quarterly progress report will be prepared for this purpose and will also be submitted to the Board for consideration covering the following main items:
 - case throughput and service developments;
 - progress with implementation and organisational impact of:
 - Croke Park Agreement Action Plan;
 - Organisational strategies for corporate governance and management of risk and performance, HR, Learning and Development and IT;
 - Value for Money Review of the Board;
 - Integration of new services into the organisation; and
- Any evolving organisational issues requiring Board consideration.