



Legal Aid Board Statement of Strategy

2024 – 2026



**An Bord Um
Chúnamh Dlíthiúil**
Legal Aid Board

Providing access to justice since 1979

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**1. Foreword by
Chairperson and
Chief Executive**

For nearly three decades, the Legal Aid Board has been steadfast in offering expert legal advice and representation to our clients. Over the years, we have expanded our services, including the addition of the Family Mediation Service, solidifying our position as a respected agency offering legal and mediation services to the public. Our journey, one we are immensely proud of, continues to evolve, presenting new challenges and inspiring us to excel.

It is on this journey that we introduce the Statement of Strategy for 2024-2026. This sets out a comprehensive framework to enhance the delivery of legal and mediation services to the public. This encompasses our purpose, mission, vision, and values, while also addressing key objectives and challenges. With a strong focus on community service, alternative dispute resolution, and civil justice reform, this Statement of Strategy emphasises quality, inclusivity, and transparency – principles that we hold in the highest of regards.

The core features of this Statement of Strategy are set out below under four main pillars:

Adapting Amidst Unprecedented Challenges

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic brought unforeseen challenges that underscored the indispensable nature of the services we provide. During this period, our team displayed extraordinary dedication, resilience and professionalism. Their unwavering commitment has been the cornerstone of our achievements. This period of adversity has not only reshaped us but also fuelled a positive transformation within our organisation.

Strategic Foundations

This Statement of Strategy stands as a testament to comprehensive consultation and deep introspection. It is built upon five pivotal themes: Quality of Service, Community Engagement, Mediation and Dispute Resolution, Civil Justice Reform, and Organisational Culture, People and Communications. These themes serve as guiding pillars, propelling us to set even higher standards for ourselves.

Navigating New Frontiers

As we start the next three years, we anticipate fresh challenges and ongoing reform processes. Our unwavering focus remains on fortifying our organisational resilience, ensuring adaptability while concurrently elevating the quality of our fundamental services to the clients we serve.

Empowerment and Collaboration

Our successes are inseparable from the individuals who make up our workforce. Thus, we remain committed to attracting, retaining and empowering individuals with the requisite skills, experience and drive to achieve the ambitious goals in this Statement of Strategy. We look forward to the Legal Aid Board's continued growth, forging collaborative partnerships across public and non-governmental sectors to materialise our shared vision of access to justice for all.



Nuala Egan, S.C.



Joan Crawford, CEO



2. Introduction

2.1. Introduction to our Statement of Strategy 2024 - 2026

Access to Justice is a cornerstone of a just society. The Legal Aid Board has been at the forefront of advocacy and empowerment, assisting our clients to resolve and mediate disputes for thirty years. This Statement of Strategy for the three years 2024 – 2026 is informed by a deep reflection on what has been achieved in that time, an appreciation for the challenges we face in our everyday work, and an ambition to take on new responsibilities and mandates, while continuing to deliver our work at the level of professionalism and expertise for which we have developed a well-earned reputation.

Our renewed mission, vision, and values statements reflect those ambitions, and will guide us in nuancing our course over the next three years, and in facing the new challenges that will emerge in that time. At the heart of the Legal Aid Board, there is a shared commitment to serving our clients to the very best of our abilities and to offering an exceptional public service.

Our strategic objectives represent the main body of work we wish to achieve by 2026. Achieving these will require careful scrutiny and sound leadership, and we have intentionally approached them with the public in mind, presenting our plans as expectations which the public is entitled to expect us to live up to. These objectives will be implemented by the staff and executive leadership of the organisation, with attentive leadership and guidance from the Statutory Board, responsible for representing the Minister for Justice and the Public's interests and ensuring adherence to the strategic direction set out here.

Each one of the strategic objectives is accompanied by an oversight mechanism in the form of key actions, key performance indicators, and a description of what success will look like for that expectation. These are presented in Appendix 1.

2.2. Our Approach

Our approach to developing this Statement of Strategy was informed by a desire to seek the views of staff, partner organisations in the public service, and of allied non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and third-sector partners. The Board commissioned Crowe Ireland to assist with preparing this Statement of Strategy and to consult widely to inform its content. The methodology adopted sought to ensure our strategic ambition is informed by and in so far as possible aligned with those of our partners. Our intent is ambitious and focused on addressing the challenges facing the organisation and its clients.

As part of that process, many stakeholders participated in one-on-one discussions with the consulting team, took part in our staff surveys, submitted written observations, and took part in focus groups and meetings. The Board is grateful to contributors for their time, for their candour, and for their guidance in helping us identify how our shared vision can be effectively progressed over the next three years.

The approach we have adopted to present our strategic objectives for the next three years is to set ourselves a set of 28 expectations, organised into five themes. These expectations are phrased to enable the public and our strategic stakeholders to easily understand what we are aiming to achieve with this statement of strategy at a glance. Associated with each expectation are key actions, and indicators of success, which are presented in appendix 1 of this document, and which will be used by the Board and Executive to ensure that our shared expectations are met in a measurable and effective manner.



Recognising our obligations as a public body which considers the championing of human rights as a core obligation of all of our work, and subject to the terms of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, we present a high-level overview of this Statement of Strategy from a human rights perspective in appendix 2.

2.3. Our Contextual Position

As we set out our strategic direction over the next three years, it is necessary to reflect on the context in which we operate, and how political, environmental, social, and technological challenges shape and inform our work. The intertwined nature of these challenges demands an approach that acknowledges and mitigates risk while also identifying opportunities to make a positive impact despite those factors that we cannot directly influence.

Our capacity to attract and retain skilled, talented and dedicated staff has faced increasing challenges recently. This issue is especially noticeable in hiring recently qualified solicitors, due to the current highly competitive job market, but it also extends to other specialist roles. Notwithstanding these facts, the Legal Aid Board is and strives to be an excellent employer, with supports for our employees, and measures to ensure staff retention and satisfaction are high on our agenda.

Gaps in our permanent workforce have given rise to certain geographic shortfalls in our service provision. Where historically we have been able to deploy private practitioners from our panels on a case-by-case basis there are some areas where no panel members are available, which represents a challenge to our ability to provide a consistent, uniform, and accessible service nationwide. Concerted efforts are required to address the causes of this issue, and we are committed to ensuring a consistent level of service across the country.

Our information technology systems have not kept pace with the rate of innovation in the sector. Too often our staff are unable to access important information or documentation in a timely manner, or to collaborate with colleagues internally across the organisation, or externally with practitioners, with the Courts Service, or with clients. A major investment is required to bring about a fit-for-purpose IT system that enables, rather than frustrates, our ambitions.


We wholeheartedly welcome the current process to reform family justice in Ireland and are determined to play a leading role based on the first-hand experience and practical wisdom that the Legal Aid Board represents. The Board looks forward to contributing to and adopting the recommendations to modernise civil legal aid. In addition, the Board, through engagement with the Department of Justice, will be prepared to take over the full administration of Criminal Legal Aid when required. These important changes represent fundamental challenges. The necessary skills, agility and determination will be embedded to ensure reform promoted by Government is implemented with utmost efficiency. The required change management will build upon recent work to take forward, inter alia, assisted decision making, the voice of the child and the handling of personal insolvency cases.

These welcome major reforms proposed to the Family Courts; the timely revision of the civil legal aid system and proposals to assign responsibility for the criminal legal aid system to the Legal Aid Board shall necessitate that the Legal Aid Board continues to be hard working, adaptable and imaginative in pursuit of best practice.



This Statement of Strategy sets out the areas where we believe we can make the most effective interventions to accomplish our objectives. We acknowledge and address these challenges, which have informed our strategic planning, and which require our focus, to ensure we can achieve our ambitions.





3. Purpose, Mission Vision and Values

3.1. Purpose

The Legal Aid Board is an independent body established by the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 to make provision for the grant of legal aid and advice to persons of insufficient means in civil cases. Since then, our remit has grown and evolved to encompass responsibility for:

- Civil Legal Aid and Advice;
- Family Mediation Services;
- The administration of three non-statutory Criminal Legal Aid Schemes (Garda Station Legal Advice Revised Scheme; Legal Aid – Custody Issues Scheme; and the Criminal Assets Bureau – Ad-hoc Legal Aid Scheme);
- Providing legal advice to relevant persons as defined by the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015;
- Representing applicants for International Protection; and
- Facilitating the provision of legal advice to people who are in debt and at risk of losing their home through the Abhaile Scheme.

There are dedicated units that focus on cases involving personal injury, medical negligence, cases involving the welfare of children, representing complainants in rape and sexual assault cases, and potential victims of human trafficking. The Board has established a Mincéir/Traveller Legal Support Service that targets services for members of the Traveller community.



3.2. About the Legal Aid Board



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Legal Aid Board
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34 Law Centres

20 Mediation Offices



10 Co-located Offices



3 Court-based Mediation in Dublin, Carlow and Ennis



3 Criminal Legal Aid Ad-hoc Schemes

Divorce and Separation

Inquests

Barrister Omnibus

Family Law District Court

8

**Private
Practitioner
Panels**

International Protection

Abhaile

Child Care

Assisted Decision-making

548

Staff Members



3.3. Mission

Our mission is to assist in the resolution of disputes through family mediation where possible and appropriate, and to ensure that the civil legal system is available to all citizens who are eligible. We provide expert legal services to clients of modest means and family mediation services to all through local Law and Mediation Centres, which are based in the communities they serve.

3.4. Vision

Our vision is to ensure that those entitled to our services are provided with them in a responsive, professional, caring, and dynamic manner.

3.5. Values

Child-Centred

We recognise that children are at the heart of many of the disputes we seek to resolve, and we acknowledge the constitutional provisions of Article 42A concerning children. We will endeavour to have regard to the best interests of the child and to ascertain the voice of the child in so far as practicable. We will develop a range of policies and mechanisms to ensure that these constitutional imperatives are incorporated into the resolution of all proceedings concerning children that we are involved in.

Respect

We demonstrate respect for the dignity and human rights of the people who use our services, our colleagues and all who work with the Legal Aid Board.

Integrity

We are an open organisation that promotes candour and transparency in how we make decisions at all levels of the organisation and do so in a manner that is honest, accountable, and forthcoming by default.


Collaboration

We work in partnership and consultation with stakeholders across the justice system to achieve shared objectives and to be informed by the needs of the communities in which we are based and whom we serve.

Expertise

We provide an excellent service, where our clients are assisted by leading professionals in their field. We foster a culture of learning that fosters and promotes expertise, and which shares that expertise with the justice sector and informs public and policy discourse.





4. Strategic Objectives

4.1. Overview

To fulfil the strategic ambition of the Legal Aid Board there is a need to make progress in key areas during the period 2024–2026. Our strategic objectives are set out under five themes:

- Quality of Service;
- Serving the Community;
- Mediation and Alternatives to Court-Based Dispute Resolution;
- Civil Justice Reform and Reorganisation; and
- Culture, People, and Communications.

During this strategic period, our service will be asked to take on new duties or to change the way we operate those schemes for which we are already responsible. Legislative and policy reform is advanced in the fields of family justice, civil legal aid reform, and criminal legal aid. We will be best placed to accommodate new developments as they impact on our work by building a resilient and agile organisation. We are proud of the quality of Legal Aid Board services and are committed to public service and the common good.

We will promote mediation in family law cases and alternative dispute resolution and will continue to build and share our expertise in all the areas of civil justice in which we work.

We shall be assertive in the promotion of legal aid and seek every resource and opportunity to recruit the right people in the right places to deliver this ambitious strategy.

We recognise and are committed to undertaking all tasks in a sustainable and environmentally appropriate manner.

4.2. Quality of Service

4.2.1. Overview

The Legal Aid Board is proud of the quality of our work. We strive to be client-centred and, where appropriate, child-centred.

We will maintain a resilient and agile organisation that is ready and able to take on new responsibilities and respond to changing service demands. We will develop quality-assurance procedures and be accountable for the outputs from our services and the outcomes that are achieved..



4.2.2. Key Expectations

Key expectations in the development of quality services include:

- a. The development of environments that are client-friendly and accessible and, where appropriate, child-friendly;
- b. The establishment of a quality-assurance system to assist in the preparation of improvement plans and the identification of best practice;
- c. The promotion of feedback from all clients to generate data to improve our practice;
- d. The introduction of a resource-allocation model in order that services are planned and delivered according to need, not solely based on demand; and
- e. The monitoring of waiting lists and the establishment of minimum-service standards in the context of resources, vacancies, and local circumstances.

4.3. Serving the Community

4.3.1. Overview

The Legal Aid Board will become a more visible and vocal part of the communities we serve, to ensure that all of the people who are entitled to our support are aware that we are available and know how to access our services. This requires local engagement as well as strategic engagement with key partners in the legal sector, the public service, and representative bodies. A campaign of national public awareness is required to underline this work.

It is critically important that we are sure that we are offering the right services in the right places. To that end, we will pilot outreach to target particular sectors of society (e.g., clients in homelessness), further develop and promote our expertise at working with applicants for International Protection, as well as carry out a national mapping exercise to ensure that our service provision is correctly aligned with need..

4.3.2. Key Expectations

Key expectations to enable the strengthening of partnership arrangements include:

- a. To learn from the Mincéir/Traveller Legal Support Service and explore similar projects where a gap in service uptake is identified;
- b. To approve and implement the organisation's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy;
- c. To augment our working partnerships with the Department of Justice, the Courts Service, and other related statutory bodies such as the new Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency;
- d. To develop further consultation and joint working with NGOs; and
- e. To provide services informed by trauma and seek to eliminate re-traumatisation, being cognisant of the vulnerability of many of our clients.



4.4. Mediation and Alternatives to Court-Based Dispute Resolution

4.4.1 Overview

Our strategic objective under this heading is to ensure that mediation is a central component of our service offering. Everyone who seeks services from the Legal Aid Board, and for whom it is an appropriate consideration, should be encouraged to seek resolution to their dispute via mediation or other non-litigation proceedings.

At present there is insufficient public understanding of the nature and effectiveness of mediation as a means to resolve disputes. Mediation is particularly appropriate in the resolution of family justice matters, being a process that aims to resolve issues in an effective, non-adversarial way. It is of particular benefit in cases involving children.

4.4.2 Key Expectations

Key expectations for actions to promote mediation and alternatives to court-based dispute resolution include:

- a. To ensure the availability of mediation whenever appropriate in all local Law and Mediation Centres and Court houses when agreed;
- b. To increase the number of persons trained, certified, and available to work for the Legal Aid Board either directly or through a private practitioners' panel;
- c. To promote, through national and local campaigns, the nature of mediation and its effectiveness in specific circumstances; and
- d. To develop further expertise in alternative dispute resolution

4.5 Civil Justice Reform and Reorganisation

4.5.1 Overview

At present, the civil justice system is preparing for significant reform and reorganisation. The Legal Aid Board is involved fully in the development of these reform proposals. We are committed to ensuring that change takes account of the practical experience and wisdom from within the Legal Aid Board. This includes the ongoing implementation of the Government's Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025 and the development of future strategies, and to respect fully the voice of the child in legal proceedings in which their welfare is at issue. To fully implement the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015, it will be necessary to develop exemplary partnerships with the Courts Service, Decision Support Service, HSE, and others to share support and expertise. Additionally, the Legal Aid Board is ready to respond to developments arising from the review of legal aid and the transfer of full responsibility to the Board for criminal legal aid.



4.5.2 Key Expectations

Key expectations arising from the Legal Aid Board's contribution to proposals to reform the civil justice system, the operation of legal aid, and the administration of criminal justice include:

- a. To contribute as a lead agency in the ongoing implementation of the Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025 and the development of future strategies, promoting practical solutions for a family justice system that supports simple, early, fair, and, where possible, non-adversarial solutions;
- b. To influence and prepare for the outcome of the review of Civil Legal Aid;
- c. To prepare for taking full responsibility for the administration of criminal legal aid;
- d. To seek strong partnerships with other Government agencies to ensure a holistic approach to emerging areas such as assisted decision-making; and
- e. To develop a range of policies to ensure that children's views and interests, where they are affected, are fully considered in our work.

4.6. Culture, People, Communications

4.6.1. Overview

The Legal Aid Board aspires to be an excellent employer and place to work, where people are valued, rewarded for their work, encouraged to grow and to innovate, and where we demonstrate pride in our work. We shall foster an internal culture where our conduct, service provision, behaviours, and communications reflect our values. Our employees will continue to be supported and encouraged to innovate and excel.

We will carry out a comprehensive analysis of our structures and workforce to ensure that our organisational structures and management systems are optimally designed and functioning correctly to achieve the objectives in this Statement of Strategy and to be able to accommodate change when needed.

To provide a comprehensive service to clients in Law and Mediation Centres, Legal Aid Board offices, courthouses, and all locations across the country where we work, our technological infrastructure needs to be capable of assisting and supporting a uniformly high standard of work. We will carry out an ambitious digital transformation over the next three years that will be supported by investment, training, ongoing communications, and progress reporting.



4.6.2. Key Expectations

Key expectations to promote a culture based on rewarding, retaining, and challenging staff, and modernising all aspects of communication, both digital and direct, include:

- a. To promote a culture that values all staff contributions, provides and supports responsibility, and rewards and retains our highly talented and qualified staff;
- b. To respond to an organisational and structural review;
- c. To seek a balance between local delivery and first-class support systems to promote quality based on sound policy and an equitable distribution of resources;
- d. To implement comprehensive digital transformation;
- e. To develop the website in the interests of clients seeking interactive assistance, enabling clients to locate the right service and advice;
- f. To ensure effective and inclusive communications using a wide range of media and with all staff, management, and non-executive board members;
- g. To approve and implement the organisation's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy;
- h. To market the opportunities and rewards associated with working for the Legal Aid Board; and
- i. To address the challenge of attracting private practitioners and counsel fully committed to the work of the Legal Aid Board, and seeking support and appropriate remuneration for them, as the retention and involvement of the private sector is part of our strength, vitality, and viability.

4.7. Implementation

4.7.1. Overview

We are committed to full and transparent implementation of this statement of strategy. We shall produce and scrutinise detailed annual plans. An initial summary of action is included in appendix 1.


The Board of the Legal Aid Board is committed to support based on thorough scrutiny and will monitor each annual implementation plan brought forward by the executive to fulfil the expectations set out above. These plans will have specific targets and clear metrics.

4.7.2. Audit and Quality Assurance

The implementation process will be supported by further developments in the audit and quality assurance process. In particular, audits shall evaluate the mitigation of the key risks identified by the Board, by, for example:

- a. The necessary development and implementation of a 21st century information and communication strategy fully cognisant of the requirement for effective cyber security;
- b. The need for robust and competitive recruitment and retention;
- c. Capacity to meet the continuing pressures from international uncertainty by contributing to international protection;
- d. Demonstrating agility to accept new challenges as the government's justice reforms take root.





**Appendix
One: Key Actions
and Success
Indicators**

Ref	Strategic Expectation	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like	Key Performance Indicators
1	Quality of Service			
1.a	The development of environments that are client-friendly and accessible and, where appropriate, child-friendly.	Undertake a systematic Improvement and refurbishment of all existing premises, accompanied by a Capital Investment Plan to be approved by Board.	All Legal Aid Board premises are universally accessible, suitable workplaces for our staff, welcoming for clients and relevant premises are appropriate for children.	An audit of our premises is undertaken to assess the level of accessibility of each; Capital Investment Plan is developed.
1.b	The establishment of a quality-assurance system to assist in the preparation of improvement plans and the identification of best practice.	Develop a quality improvement system to include peer review, international comparator research and dissemination and promotion of findings internally.	A culture of continuous improvement in all services, processes and management systems informed by evidence-based quality assurance and review.	External review of our quality assurance processes completed; A Quality Improvement System is developed to include peer review, international comparator research and dissemination and promotion of findings internally.
1.c	The promotion of feedback from all clients to generate data to improve our practice.	Develop and roll out client satisfaction tracking , with documented processes in place to use and action client feedback.	Clients are engaged with meaningfully on how to improve our service, that feedback is incorporated into regular quality improvement cycle.	Client experience surveys are developed as part of the Quality Improvement System.
1.d	The introduction of a resource-allocation model in order that services are planned and delivered according to need, not solely based on demand.	Put in place a resource allocation model which will be reviewed regularly, and will inform management practice.	Services are available to clients consistently, with sufficient flexibility to be able to provide particular services in cases of acute need.	A resource allocation model is designed and implemented.



1.e	The monitoring of waiting times and the establishment of minimum-service standards in the context of resources, vacancies, and local circumstances.	Agree minimum service waiting time targets with the board, to be reviewed and revised with an aim to reach no more than twelve weeks for any service.	No client needs to wait more than twelve weeks for their initial consultation with a Legal Aid Board solicitor or mediator. Case completion times are monitored with efficient completion times achieved for all cases.	Continuous monitoring of waiting times is developed and mitigation measures are taken as appropriate.
2	Serving the Community			
2.a	To learn from the Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service and explore similar projects where a gap in service uptake is identified.	Expand the Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service. Pilot and support similar target projects, where successful.	Those most in need of Legal Aid Board services are facilitated to access them, and innovative service provision models are trialled, and rolled out when proven effective.	A review of the Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service is undertaken; New innovative service provision models are identified, trialled and rolled out, if proven effective.
2.b	To approve and implement the organisation's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy.	Publish and implement the EDI strategy. Action any recommendations that require action outside the organisation's remit.	EDI strategy adopted, published on website, and progress against indicators reported on annually.	EDI strategy adopted, actions implemented and reported on.
2.c	To augment our working partnerships with the Department of Justice, the Courts Service, and other related statutory bodies such as the new Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency.	Continue formal and informal cooperation with the named agencies, report on in annual reports and furnish regular reports to the Board.	Regular engagements with associated agencies and Department of Justice contribute to improved outcomes and efficiency for our clients, and our practise experience informs national policy.	Participation in Cross-Organisational Committees is tracked and reported as is participation in Groups which relate to national policy.

2.d	To develop further consultation and joint working with NGOs.	Participate in regular formal engagements with NGOs at all relevant levels in the Legal Aid Board.	Our work is informed by the insights and recommendations of our NGO partners, and, where appropriate, decisions are made having consulted with the most relevant stakeholders.	Engagement between the Executive Management Team and the External Consultative Panel is continued.
2.e	To provide services informed by trauma and seek to eliminate re-traumatisation, being cognisant of the vulnerability of many of our clients.	Provide training for all staff in trauma-informed practice.	Regular engagements with experts to ensure services are designed and delivered according to best trauma-informed practice standards.	Training provided for relevant staff in trauma-informed practice. Research to inform any future designed led service initiatives.
3	Mediation and Alternatives to Court-Based Dispute Resolution			
3.a	To ensure the availability of mediation whenever appropriate in all local Law and Mediation Centres and Court houses when agreed.	Put in place a documented and mainstreamed procedure to ensure the full mainstreaming of mediation and legal services; Evaluate our current mediation presence in court houses, with a view to improving, and building on the Take the First Steps Programme to increase awareness of mediation at district court level.	Full integration of Family Mediation Service and legal services. All clients for whom it is appropriate are referred to mediation.	Continuous monitoring of waiting times is developed with mitigation measures taken when intervention is necessary, including use of the Private Mediator Panel.
3.b	To increase the number of persons trained, certified, and available to work for the Legal Aid Board either directly or through a private practitioners' panel.	Develop and implement a Mediators' Training Plan with targets for numbers of mediators trained, certified, and	Waiting times to access family mediation services reduced. Increased numbers of mediators trained, certified, and	Roll out a Mediators Training Plan; Continue to offer trainee Mediator positions within the



		appointed to positions in the Legal Aid Board.	appointed to positions in the Legal Aid Board.	Legal Aid Board.
3.c	To promote, through national and local campaigns, the nature of mediation and its effectiveness in specific circumstances.	Carry out a wide-reaching public awareness campaign promoting mediation.	Increased public understanding and appreciation of mediation, with a commensurate increase in public queries for mediation.	A communication plan is developed with a view to conducting a public awareness campaign to promote mediation.
3.d	To develop further expertise in alternative dispute resolution.	Include non-litigation dispute resolution processes as a key theme in one of the Board's conferences over the course of this statement of strategy. Support for staff research and publication of findings on Alternative Dispute Resolution, Quasi-Judicial Decision Making, and related processes.	The Legal Aid Board is more recognised for its expertise in non-litigation dispute resolution.	Dispute Resolution content delivered in one or more conference(s); Alternative Dispute Resolution is included in any training and research initiatives by the Board.
4	Civil Justice Reform and Reorganisation			
4.a	To contribute as a lead agency in the ongoing implementation of the Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025 and the development of future strategies, promoting practical solutions for a family justice system that supports simple, early, fair, and, where possible, non-adversarial solutions;	LAB personnel will actively contribute and lead key strands of the Family Justice Implementation Group's over the course of this Statement of Strategy. The CEO and Board will be an important voice on policy innovations in this area and will inform	Our work will inform innovations and new policy developments in Family Justice and be informed by colleagues in associated State agencies, and the Department of Justice through the Family Justice Implementation Group.	LAB personnel have actively contributed and have led key strands of the Family Justice Implementation Group's work over the course of this Statement of Strategy.



		public discourse and policy development.		
4.b	To influence and prepare for the outcome of the review of Civil Legal Aid.	LAB personnel will be constructively involved in the review of Civil Legal Aid and the Board will strategically implement internal reforms necessary to adapt to any legislative or policy changes enacted.	A seamless transition to the professional delivery of any eventual adapted Civil Legal Aid reform.	Any recommendations accepted by Government and referable to the Board will be implemented.
4.c	To prepare for taking full responsibility for the administration of criminal legal aid.	The Board will implement necessary internal reforms if required to ensure the effective delivery of any legislative or policy changes implemented affecting our work.	Any legislative or policy changes in this area will be addressed effectively and in a timely manner.	A due diligence engagement between Department of Justice, National Shared Services Office, Courts Service and LAB is conducted in order to prepare for the introduction of the proposed legislation; Prepare and execute implementation plans which explore and reconcile personnel, facilities (including property), and systems in place to administer all functions relating to the criminal legal aid functions which transfer to LAB.



4.d	To seek strong partnerships with other Government agencies to ensure a holistic approach to emerging areas such as assisted decision-making.	Participate in regular formal and informal interactions with other Government agencies; Provide regular policy inputs in areas within our competence and relevant to our work.	Policy development in areas in which we are expert are informed by that practice-based expertise, and we are supported by other Government agencies to provide our services effectively.	Participation in Cross-Organisational Committees and Groups which relate to national policy is tracked.
4.e	To develop a range of policies to ensure that children's views and interests, where they are affected and where it is appropriate, are fully considered in our work.	Develop a practical, service-focused, Voice of the Child Policy which encompasses our approach to children's rights, welfare, and voice in all areas in which we work, which is to be launched by 2025.	LAB Voice of the Child Policy published at the latest by 2025 and implemented.	Service provision carried out in accordance with the Voice of the Child Policy in all cases in which children are involved.
5	Culture, People, and Communications			
5.a	To promote a culture that values all staff contributions, provides, and supports responsibility, and rewards and retains our highly talented and qualified staff.	Regularly publish consistent internal communications which highlight any recent work-related achievements and significant wins across the organisation.	Underpinned by good leadership, all staff feel encouraged to excel and build deep expertise in their chosen area of focus and successes are celebrated.	Staff engagement policy is implemented.
5.b	To respond to an organisational and structural review.	Carry out an independent organisational and structural review.	Organisational and Structural review recommendations implemented and embedded by 2026.	Organisational and structural review carried out, recommendations considered, costed, evaluated, and implementation planning completed.




5.c	To seek a balance between local delivery and first-class support systems to promote quality based on sound policy and an equitable distribution of resources.	Put in place employee feedback mechanisms that contribute to the building of fit-for-purpose systems and structures that contribute to a consistent national service, responsive to local needs in each centre.	Our law and mediation centres are consistent in the quality of service available but reflective of the communities in which they are based.	A resource allocation model is designed and implemented; The recommendations of the Organisational Review are implemented, as appropriate; Recruitment campaigns include consideration that staff are reflective of the community which the office services.
5.d	To implement comprehensive digital transformation.	In 2024, commence a digital transformation project which will modernise our IT infrastructure. Publish an action plan by the end of 2024, and a significant first phase of upgrades will be complete in 2025.	Our IT systems are effective, interoperable, and reliable.	Digital transformation action plan is published by end of 2024.
5.e	To develop the website in the interests of clients seeking interactive assistance, enabling clients to locate the right service and advice.	Develop, publish, monitor and update a client information and signposting tool.	Our website assists potential clients to locate the right service, learn about the services we provide, and to understand the options available to them.	A refresh of the LAB website is conducted.

5.f	To ensure effective and inclusive communications using a wide range of media and with all staff, management, and non-executive board members.	We will publish regular all-staff updates which promote an understanding of the importance of the work we carry out in all areas of the organisation. These will be supported by a calendar of events where senior leadership (Management and Board) meet and discuss with colleagues the work of the organisation and what improvements could be made.	Publication of a full employee engagement calendar and events carried out to include regional meetings, local meetings with senior leadership, and regular internal communications with an emphasis on giving employees a clear picture of the important work carried out across the organisation.	An internal communications plan is developed; An employee experience application is developed and implemented.
5.g	To approve and implement the organisation's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.	Publish and implement the EDI strategy. Action any recommendations to ensure that our workforce is reflective of the diversity within our community.	EDI strategy adopted, published on website, and progress against indicators reported on annually.	EDI strategy adopted, actions implemented and reported on.
5.h	To market the opportunities and rewards associated with working for the Legal Aid Board.	Develop a recruitment strategy which seeks to promote employment by the board to legal professionals, mediators, and specialist staff. This should include a focus on early-stage law students, trainee solicitors, and early-career mediators.	Employment opportunities with the Legal Aid Board are promoted. Vacancies and waiting lists reduced accordingly.	Vacancies subject to budget are filled swiftly; A People Strategy is developed with a focus on recruitment, which includes attendance at job fairs, 3rd level institutions, and other relevant promotional opportunities.



5.i	To address the challenge of attracting private practitioners and counsel fully committed to the work of the Legal Aid Board, and seeking support and appropriate remuneration for them, as the retention and involvement of the private sector is part of our strength, vitality, and viability.	As part of our recruitment strategy, we will seek to ensure our offering to private practitioners is effective at attracting and retaining talented and qualified colleagues to fill places on the panels.	Opportunities on Legal Aid Board Private Practitioner Panels are promoted in the legal sector. Vacancies and waiting lists reduced accordingly.	The Terms and Conditions of LAB's Private Practitioner Scheme have been regularly evaluated and adjusted, where need is evidenced; The provision of training to private practitioners in relevant areas is continued.
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**Appendix
Two: Human
Rights Positive
Public Duty**

Under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, every public body is required to set out in its strategic plan an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to its functions and purpose, and the actions it is taking, or proposes to take, to address those issues. All public bodies have an obligation to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and promote the human rights of the public and their staff.

The Legal Aid Board is and will remain a leader in championing human rights and equality matters, and this Statement of Strategy should be read in conjunction with our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023–2026. This Statement of Strategy and the EDI Strategy have core objectives to promote a more diverse working environment for our staff and to promote equality and human rights through our day-to-day work with clients and throughout the organisation.

The promotion and championing of the rights of the people who use our services, their families, and our employees provide the foundation for our work. We are committed to providing a rights-informed, client-centred, and child-centred service.

The Mission, Vision, and Values of the Legal Aid Board are inherently informed by the human rights of the people we serve. We are child-centred in cases that concern children and are client-oriented in everything we do. We are committed to demonstrating respect, integrity, collaboration, and expertise in all aspects of our work.

Among the strategic objectives most relevant to human rights and equality matters are those concerning our ambition to reform our service to be child-centred. We will develop a range of policies and mechanisms to ensure that the welfare of children affected by cases we handle is vindicated in proceedings concerning children that we are involved in. We are committed to addressing infrastructural matters with a view to providing services in the locations where they will be most effective, improving and refurbishing our existing premises to ensure universal accessibility for clients and staff, and an IT infrastructural transformation that will more effectively support reasonable accommodation and empower staff to work effectively. We will continue to support our Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service and will pilot the provision targeted legal service outreach initiatives providing services and signposting to targeted potential clients with particular needs. We will enable trauma-informed service provision. Our communications and internet presence will be refreshed, incorporating a digital signposting and information tool that will assist potential clients with accessing many services remotely.

It is incumbent on us to acknowledge that our staff and leadership are insufficiently reflective of the communities we serve, or of Ireland as a whole. Our statement of Strategy and our EDI Strategy acknowledge that we must take steps to bring representative voices of our service users into our decision-making processes, and ultimately into the Board. We will engage more and better with the communities we serve and where we are based, to be a more visible and engaged part of those communities. We strive to ensure that everyone who needs and is entitled to our services is welcomed and supported.

We will continue to report on actions taken and progress made on these matters in our Annual Reports. The Chairperson of the Board has been identified as responsible for ensuring our commitments under the 2014 Act are fulfilled, with the support of the People and Culture Committee, and Strategy and Opportunity Committee, which are tasked with monitoring and reporting on progress toward achieving these goals. The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring liaison and engagement between the Board and the executive staff in these matters.



