



## Legal Aid Board Scheme 2007–2010 under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 – Chapter 2 – Overview of the Legal Aid Board

### 2.1 Mandate

The Legal Aid Board was established by the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 as the statutory, independent body responsible for the provision of civil legal aid and advice to persons of modest means. Section 5(1) of the Act states: “The principal function of the Board shall be to provide, within the Board’s resources and subject to the other provisions of this Act, legal aid and advice in civil cases to persons who satisfy the requirements of this Act.”

### 2.2 Mission

The Board’s Corporate Plan 2006 to 2008 defines its mission as follows: “To provide a professional, efficient, cost-effective and accessible legal aid and advice service.”

### 2.3 Governance

The Board is governed by a statutory Board, appointed by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Board consists of a chairperson and 12 ordinary members. It has responsibility under the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995 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.

### 2.4 Services provided

The Board makes the services of solicitors and, where necessary, barristers available to persons of modest means in relation to matters of civil law. The Board’s current statutory remit and the level of resources provided are the main determinants of the range and responsiveness of the services provided by the organisation. The services provided include legal advice covering advice on matters relating to civil law and legal aid covering representation by a solicitor or a barrister engaged by the Board to provide representation in court proceedings as permitted by the Act. The service also covers legal advice and legal aid to applicants for asylum in the state. The service is provided on a nationwide basis with some 33 full-time and 12 part-time law centres across the country, including 3 full time law centres that comprise the Refugee Legal Service (RLS). In 2005, the Board provided service in some 17,500 cases through its law centre and RLS services. 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.

### 2.5 Board Staff

The Board has over 380 staff in total, headed by the Chief Executive, and includes some 110 solicitors who are located in 33 law centres throughout the country and supported by paralegals and administrative staff. There are also a number of key units in Cahirciveen and Dublin, managing functions including legal support services, finance, ICT, human resources and corporate services.

### 2.6 Head Office

The Board’s Head Office is located in Cahirciveen, County Kerry where some 50 staff are located. Some of the headquarters’ functions are also undertaken in Dublin. Details of the individual law centres and head office locations can be found in the main navigation menu for this website.

## **2.7 Clients and stakeholders**

As a state funded professional legal service, the Board's clients are persons eligible for legal services who avail of the Board's services. The statutory and professional requirements of the solicitor client relationship apply in the case of all such clients.

The Board's stakeholders are a much broader group including:

- Government
- Taxpayers
- Potential Clients
- The Courts Service
- The Legal Profession State Agencies dealing with the Board's client base
- Voluntary Groups dealing with the Board's client base.