An Bord Um Chúnamh Dlíthiúil
Legal Aid Board

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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Chairperson Foreword



Nuala Egan
Chairperson

The publication in July 2025 of the first ever review of the civil legal aid scheme by Minister Jim O'Callaghan will, it is hoped, be a hugely significant moment in the story of the Legal Aid Board. That review was undertaken by the Civil Legal Aid Review Group and resulted in both a majority and a minority report. There is considerable overlap between both reports as far as the recognition of the problems facing the organisation is concerned, but significant differences of approach as to how the right of access to justice in civil law matters can best be vindicated in the State. Both reports recognise the many difficulties encountered by the Legal Aid Board which have dogged this vital public service since its formation on an administrative basis in 1979 and which continued after its placement on a statutory basis with the enactment of the *Civil Legal Aid Act* in 1995.

The Legal Aid Board feels validated by seeing its lived experiences reflected in the two reports and is most anxious to ensure that the recommendations regarding resourcing need which will enable the provision of a timely service to its clients, by a staff in receipt of the support that they need, aided in their task where appropriate by private practitioners, do not simply gather dust. It is, most unfortunately, fair to say that a lack of proper resourcing - with the attendant delays for clients in need of legal aid - has been a constant in the organisation's 46 year history. Thus, for example, in 1984, Professor Gerry Whyte wrote about the temporary closure by the Legal Aid Board of law centres in order to enable them to address their backlog - and some five years later, for seven months between 1989 and 1990, staff were forced to confine their work to emergency applications. The then-board of the organisation, chaired by Nial Fennelly, subsequently Advocate General at the European Court of Justice and Judge of the Supreme Court, also resigned in 1989 in protest at ongoing underfunding. Indeed, Dáil and Seanad debates on the *Civil Legal Aid Bill 1995* contain numerous references to the underfunding that had become a trademark of the organisation over its then16-year history and to the impact of such inadequate funding upon the timely provision of services. The Minister for Equality and Law Reform at the time, Mervyn Taylor, referring to the legal aid scheme as "one of the flagships of the State's services to those in need"[1], was upfront about these historical difficulties but added that, since he had assumed his ministerial role two years previously, he had established a private practitioner solicitors panel and the funding provided to the Legal Aid Board had more than doubled, enabling a doubling of staff, all of which facilitated a significant reduction in waiting lists. Such political focus upon the Legal Aid Board's needs at that point and in the preceding two years derived from the impending divorce referendum, with Minister Taylor noting that it was one of a number of relevant legislative measures being adopted in preparation for a society in which divorce would be available, noting that the Legal Aid Board was involved "essentially in the provision of family law services" and thus facing

[1] 2nd stage debate, Dáil Éireann, 27th Dáil, Vol. 455 No. 3, 29th June 1995

a considerable increase in workload if, and when, the referendum passed.

That anticipated workload increase did indeed materialise once divorce was introduced in 1996, but, unfortunately, the period of relative abundance was short-lived, as reference to the case of *O'Donoghue v Legal Aid Board*[2] makes clear. Although a 2004 case, the underlying facts occurred between 1997 – 1999. Marie O'Donoghue, herself seeking legal aid as she wished to obtain a divorce, waited - through no fault of the Legal Aid Board's staff - a shocking 25 months to get her first appointment with a solicitor in a law centre. Documents opened in court revealed strenuous efforts made by the Legal Aid Board between1995 and 1997 to obtain funding from the Department of Equality and Law Reform to enable it to cope with the increased demand for its services; but no response was received until some law centres were threatened with closure. Additional funding was provided at that point which enabled the appointment of a solicitor to the law centre to which Mrs O'Donoghue had applied for legal aid and a first meeting took place with that solicitor, as noted, some 25 months after she first sought legal aid. Mrs O'Donoghue instituted High Court proceedings seeking both damages and a declaration that her right of access to justice pursuant to the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights had been violated by this delay. The Court agreed with her argument, finding that lack of resources was "directly responsible for the 25-month delay", adding that;

> *"The purpose of the 1995 Act is that persons who meet the statutory criteria shall receive legal aid. That carries the implication that the entitlement to legal aid will be effective and of meaning. How can it be if a delay of 25 months is encountered? Equally, how can the scheme be fair if a qualified person cannot get to see a solicitor for such a lengthy period?"*

In the aftermath of that judgment, the funding situation again improved somewhat but, as consideration of other annual reports shows, the pattern of under-resourcing re-emerged, such that it is fair to say that underfunding of the organisation has been a constant, while the extent of the underfunding and the level of neglect of the real need of its clients and of the organisation itself has varied, often reaching a cliff edge before an emergency response is then forthcoming and short-lived. In recent years, the organisation has been in a phase of lengthening delays, as it faces a range of operational issues, as well as an expanding range of work assigned to it – the Abhaile scheme pursuant to which legal aid is provided to those who are personally insolvent and parties to litigation likely to lead to the repossession of the family home, representation of relevant persons in applications pursuant to the *Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act, 2015*, international protection applications (noting the imminent implementation in June 2026 of domestic measures to give effect to the EU Migration Pact, which will add to that workload), applications for civil restraining orders and the provision of advice to victims of sexual offences in relation, amongst other things, to the disclosure of counselling records, to name the most significant – such that Minister Mervyn Taylor's categorisation of the Legal Aid Board in 1995 as one essentially involved in the provision of family law services is no longer accurate. Such growth in workload has, however, not been accompanied by the provision of corresponding resources, yet the staff of the Legal Aid Board continue to stretch themselves beyond all reasonable measure in their attempts to address the needs of their clients. All this despite the fact that, as recognised by the minority report of the Review Group, solicitors in the Legal Aid Board have different - less attractive - pay scales than those in operation in the Chief States Solicitor's Office or in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, a definitive factor in the organisation's worrying recruitment and retention rates. Equally, the fee structure for the solicitors on the Legal Aid Board's private

[2] [2004] IEHC 413

practitioners panel and for counsel retained by it have remained unchanged since 2012 (noting that before that date, fee rates were reduced by 8% twice in the period between 2008, when they were set, and 2011). Furthermore, the unreasonably low rate payable to experts who prepare reports for clients of the Legal Aid Board mean that few of the relevant professionals are willing to undertake the work in question. Added to the above is the fact that the IT system is outdated and unfit for purpose and the unwieldy case management system is itself a further cause of delay and of stress to staff.

Despite this array of difficulties, law centre staff continue to go above and beyond what could reasonably be asked of them, regularly working longer hours than obliged to do, with outdated tools, in order to ensure the best for their clients. In many respects, their diligence keeps the wobbling structure upright, as they display their deep commitment to the clients to whom they provide this fundamentally important public service. I truly hope that they know how many lives have been changed for the better by the work that has been done in law centres – and indeed by those of the Legal Aid Board's private panels – over the past 46 years. It has been a privilege to observe this commitment to clients and public service first hand.

But that staff commitment cannot plug all gaps left by years of under-resourcing by the State. All of the factors discussed above impede significantly the Legal Aid Board's ability to meet client's needs in the appropriate timely fashion. As this annual report shows, the average waiting time for a first appointment with a solicitor is 22 weeks, with a delay in excess of one year - 62 weeks – in the worst affected area. This year that area is Sligo - but the law centre with the longest waiting list changes from year to year, depending by and large upon staffing issues and the availability of solicitors on the private practitioners panel run by the Legal Aid Board who are willing to undertake work at the rates payable. Sligo has been a "legal desert" for some time, leaving the law centre without the release valve of private practitioner input to relieve the pressure upon the centre's staff from their own onerous workload.

It is important to consider the position of a client waiting for an extended period of time for his or her first meeting with a Legal Aid Board or private panel solicitor in order to begin addressing whatever legal difficulty he or she is experiencing. Such difficulty will most likely touch upon a matter of fundamental personal importance to the lives of the client and perhaps to the lives of his or her children, whether it be a family law matter or not. Add to that the difficulty awaiting down the line of getting a professional willing to accept the fee payable for expert reports - once again possibly in relation to matters affecting that client's children, and words such as effective access to justice begin to sound somewhat hollow and, where the other party has the resources to pay for such expert input and private representation, the sense of equal access may seem unreal. The equation by former Chief Justice Wagner of Canada of denial of access to justice with a denial of dignity, the semblance "that some people are worthy of justice and some people aren't"[3] may begin to feel apt. And in the midst of this, let us not forget the impact of all of this upon the children of clients - how delays in progressing cases and inequalities in terms of access to expert reports are entirely contrary to their best interests. And, of course, all of this presupposes that a person in need of legal aid will satisfy the entirely inadequate financial eligibility thresholds. Such thresholds have not been updated since 2006; in effect, greatly reducing the proportion of the population eligible for legal aid, given the increase in disposable income in the intervening period. While the long title to the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 talks about the creation of a legislative regime of legal aid for "persons of limited means", today significant numbers of persons who may so be described – those in receipt of income (with certain allowances) in excess of €18,000 per annum - can derive no benefit from

[3] Access to Justice; A Societal Imperative – Speech at 7th National Pro-Bono Conference, Vancouver, 4th October 2018.

the regime that it created. It is by no means unknown for persons working on a minimum wage basis or indeed those in receipt of social welfare to earn more than the permitted thresholds and thus be excluded from the civil legal aid scheme. And yet, such persons will be entirely unable to afford private representation; once again, for such persons, the language of access to justice may not have any real meaning.

The problems facing the Legal Aid Board in 2025 are numerous. The publication of the two reports of the Civil Legal Aid Review Group has focussed a welcome spotlight upon those problems and provided a real opportunity to address them in a comprehensive manner. The commitment of Minister O'Callaghan to bring proposals for reform to Government addressing the issues arising is to be warmly welcomed. It is sincerely hoped that the next chapter of the history of the Legal Aid Board is one in which its clients – and the staff who work so hard in their interests – benefit from a real and ongoing commitment by the State to the vindication of their rights to access justice.

Nuala Egan
Chairperson



CEO Foreword



Joan Crawford
CEO

2025 was a year of significant activity and considerable change for the Legal Aid Board, both in the scale of services delivered and in the broader context within which we operate. Demand for legal aid and mediation services remained high, reflecting ongoing social, legal and economic pressures affecting many individuals and families. Against this backdrop, our focus throughout the year remained firmly on ensuring access to justice for those who need it most, delivered in a manner that is professional, independent and responsive to changing circumstances.

Throughout 2025, the Legal Aid Board continued to operate in an environment characterised by complexity and transition. Record levels of demand in recent years for international protection services began to stabilise, while remaining at historically high levels. At the same time, family law services, assisted decision making under the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015, applications for children in State care and services for victims of crime continued to grow in importance and volume. These developments required ongoing flexibility in how we deploy resources and organise services, while maintaining our statutory obligations and service standards.

A central feature of the year was the continued implementation of the assisted decision making framework, which represents a fundamental reform in how the law supports individuals to exercise their rights and autonomy. Supporting the transition from wardship and ensuring access to legal representation in this context placed a significant operational and professional demand on staff. The volume of applications increased substantially during the year, and the Legal Aid Board continued to work closely with colleagues across the justice system to respond effectively and sensitively to this important reform.

In family law and mediation services, we saw sustained demand across law centres and mediation offices nationwide. Mediation continued to play a vital role in supporting families to resolve disputes in a non adversarial way, often at points of significant personal stress and vulnerability. Court based mediation initiatives were further embedded, and collaboration with justice partners remained critical in supporting early resolution and reducing conflict where possible.

The Legal Aid Board played a central leadership role in delivering Strategic Goal 4 of the Family Justice Strategy, driving significant progress in promoting alternative dispute resolution across the system. As lead organisation, we introduced innovative services such as the mediation call-back function, expanded practitioner training, and established a successful Family Mediator Private Practitioner Panel. These initiatives have strengthened collaboration, enhanced service quality, and contributed to a more accessible, less adversarial family justice system.

The Legal Aid Board expanded our digital presence on social media, as well as significantly revitalising our website to ensure clearer public information and easier access to supports. Key publications, alongside numerous Ministerial visits to our sites and increased private practitioner panel applications and training, highlighted the value of legal aid and mediation services. Together, these efforts have enhanced visibility, encouraged earlier engagement, and supported greater use of less adversarial pathways within the family justice system.

The year also saw continued investment in our physical infrastructure and working environments. The opening of the new Castlebar Law and Family Mediation Centre, alongside the refurbishment and development of the Seville House and Eight Building offices, reflected our commitment to providing accessible, modern and client focused spaces. These improvements support both staff and service users and contribute to more effective service delivery at a local level.

> *Our staff continue to demonstrate professionalism, resilience and commitment in managing high caseloads and complex work*

Internally, 2025 was marked by ongoing organisational development and change. Our programme of digital transformation continued, with significant preparatory work completed to modernise systems and support new ways of working. Investment in staff development, including trauma informed practice and leadership support, remained a priority. Our staff continue to demonstrate professionalism, resilience and commitment in managing high caseloads and complex work, and I would like to acknowledge their contribution across all areas of the organisation.

During 2025, the Statutory Board and its committees continued to provide oversight and strategic direction, supporting the organisation through a period of transition while maintaining a focus on effectiveness, value for money and risk management. We updated many of our internal risk processes including risk management and internal audit, while engagement with the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and other stakeholders, including working closely with members of our External Consultative Panel remained constructive and essential to the delivery of our services.

Looking ahead, the challenges facing the Legal Aid Board remain substantial. Legal and social change, evolving patterns of demand and ongoing reform across the justice system will continue to shape our work. Within this context, our priorities remain clear: to strengthen access to justice and, to deliver high quality services in a fair and respectful manner. To ensure that the organisation is equipped, supported and governed effectively to meet future needs, we are implementing the recommendations in our organisational review which was completed by consultants and hope this process enables us to provide a robust service future proofed for many years.

I would like to thank the Chairperson, Statutory Board members, management and staff for their continued dedication during 2025, and to acknowledge the cooperation of our justice sector partners and stakeholders. This Annual Report outlines the work undertaken during the year and reflects our ongoing commitment to serving the public in accordance with our statutory role and values.

Joan Crawford
CEO



The role of the Legal Aid Board is to ensure that individuals who may otherwise face barriers to accessing the justice system can obtain legal support that is impartial, professional, and delivered in accordance with the law.

About Us



The Legal Aid Board is an independent, publicly funded organisation providing civil legal aid and advice, family mediation services, and administering three ad-hoc legal aid schemes connected with criminal matters. The Legal Aid Board was established by the Oireachtas under the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 to provide civil legal aid and advice to persons unable to afford a solicitor. Since 2011 we also provide family mediation services.

The Legal Aid Board is governed by a Statutory Board appointed by the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, which is responsible for setting strategic direction and overseeing organisational performance. The day to day management of the organisation is carried out by the Chief Executive Officer, supported by an Executive Management Team (EMT). Consisting of 559 staff in 48 offices across the country, the Legal Aid Board delivers services nationwide through a network of law centres and Family Mediation offices supported by centralised operational and corporate functions.

The role of the Legal Aid Board is to ensure that individuals who may otherwise face barriers to accessing the justice system can obtain legal support that is impartial, professional, and delivered in accordance with the law. Through this work, the Legal Aid Board contributes to the effective administration of justice and the protection of fundamental rights.

While operating under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Legal Aid Board performs its statutory functions independently. This independence is central to public confidence in Legal Aid Board services and to the integrity of the justice system as a whole.

Demand for legal aid and mediation services continues to be shaped by social, economic, and legal change, including developments in family law, housing and accommodation challenges, and evolving international protection frameworks. In this context, the Legal Aid Board remains focused on delivering services that are accessible, responsive, and of consistently high quality.

The Legal Aid Board's approach is grounded in professionalism, ethical practice, and respect for the diverse circumstances of those who use our services. It aims to provide clear, timely and effective legal services while ensuring that public resources are used responsibly and transparently.

The work of the Legal Aid Board is supported by collaboration with justice sector partners, Government departments, statutory agencies and community organisations. These

relationships help to strengthen service delivery and promote a more coherent and inclusive justice system.

As the organisation continues to evolve, the Legal Aid Board remains committed to strengthening access to justice and responding effectively to changing legal and societal needs.

What We Do

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

The Legal Aid Board provides civil legal aid and advice through a nationwide network of law centres. Services cover a wide range of civil law matters, including family law, child care, and other civil disputes. Legal services are delivered primarily by in-house solicitors, supported by legal and administrative staff, and supplemented where appropriate by private practitioners.

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 Legal Aid Board has established a Mincéir/Traveller Legal Support Service that targets services for members of the Traveller community.

The Legal Aid Board also provides legal advice to relevant persons as defined by the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015.

Family Mediation Services

The Family Mediation Service supports separating or separated couples in reaching voluntary, sustainable agreements in a confidential and non adversarial setting. Mediation helps reduce conflict, promotes cooperative decision making, and supports arrangements that are in the best interests of children where relevant.

International Protection Legal Services

The Legal Aid Board provides legal advice and representation to applicants for international protection at all stages of the protection process, including applications and appeals. These services are delivered in line with domestic legislation and Ireland's international obligations.

Abhaile Scheme

The Legal Aid Board facilitates the provision of legal advice to people who are in debt and at risk of losing their home through the Abhaile Scheme.

Ad-hoc Criminal Legal Aid Schemes

The Legal Aid Board administers 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).

Staffing

Legal Aid Board staffing consists of solicitors, mediators, and corporate and operational support personnel working across Ireland. They play a central role in delivering independent, high quality, services to the public.

The Legal Aid Board is committed to supporting staff development, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and maintaining a safe and respectful working environment.

Looking ahead, the Legal Aid Board will continue to focus on strengthening service delivery, enhancing accessibility, and ensuring sustainable operations in support of access to justice.

Mission, Vision and Values

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.

Vision

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

Values

- Child-Centred
- Respect
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Expertise

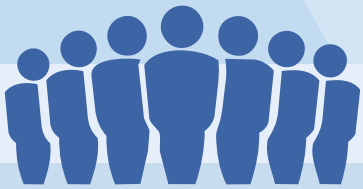


Our vision is to ensure that those entitled to our services are provided with them in a responsive, professional, caring and dynamic manner

Structure of the Legal Aid Board

The Legal Aid Board provides legal aid services to eligible persons and free family mediation services to families who are divorcing, separating or living apart. The Board also administers three ad hoc criminal legal aid schemes.

559
Staff



Service delivery is supported by staff in:

1. Office of the CEO (2)
2. Civil Operations (7)
3. Family Mediation Operations (8)
4. Decision Making and External Services (Civil) (30)
5. Corporate Services (25)
6. Human Resources (12)
7. Information, Communications, Technology (26)
8. Learning and Development (2)
9. Internal Audit (4)



Civil Operations is the directorate responsible for managing and developing the law centre network.

Services Provided in 2025

Civil Legal Aid

Service Quality, Governance and Practice

Civil Operations is the directorate responsible for managing and developing the law centre network. A central priority during the year was maintaining and strengthening the quality of services provided to legally aided persons by updating procedures and guidance, enhancing solicitor file reviews, and the ongoing monitoring of waiting times. This oversight helped to identify emerging service pressures at an early stage and to work collaboratively with law centres to address them.

Targeted training and induction supports were developed to build professional capability across the network and promote sustained quality and consistency of practice. A new complaints form was developed to streamline and improve the process for clients or applicants who wish to make a complaint in relation to services or seek a change of solicitor. The pilot was successful and yielded a reduction in the time taken to deal with complaints. This form is now permanently in use for both law centre and Private Practitioner Panel member complaints.

Access to Justice, Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement

Community engagement remained an important element of supporting access to justice in 2025. Outreach activity by Civil Operations and law centre teams, including the Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service and the Dublin-based Assisted Decision-Making Service, increased awareness of legal aid services among public bodies, members of the judiciary and non-governmental organisations.

A series of productive meetings took place with the Courts Service across 2025 helping to progress shared priorities with a particular focus on advancing work on the Courts Service Portal and supporting preparations for the implementation of the Family Courts Act.

Significant consultation took place with key stakeholders on the discharge from wardship process, where challenges arose in meeting statutory deadlines. The Legal Aid Board worked closely with the Wards of Court Office to address these issues, resulting in the assignment of legal aid for all wards of court who were not already legally represented in the process.

Civil Operations also lead the public information campaign *"Your Voice, Your Choice – with Legal Supports"*, which helped raise awareness of Assisted Decision-Making services and to encourage families to engage in early conversations about decision-making supports.

External Consultative Panel and Equality Engagement

The External Consultative Panel continued to provide an important forum for engagement and feedback and met on three occasions. A well-attended in-person Panel meeting in November, facilitated direct engagement between Panel members and the Statutory Board. This engagement strengthened relationships and helped inform service planning and delivery across the organisation.

The Directorate also engaged with representatives of the National Action Plan Against Racism in relation to the Minceir/ Traveller Legal Support Service, contributing to broader consideration of how services meet the needs of diverse communities.

Policy, Reform and Interagency Working

Throughout 2025, structured engagement with key State bodies, including the Courts Service, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the HSE and relevant NGOs, supported effective coordination and informed policy development. This engagement contributed to strengthened service responses across areas such as victim representation, domestic violence, family law, assisted decision-making, traveller legal services and international protection. The Directorate continued to participate in relevant national committees, including the Family Justice Strategy Implementation Group.

Civil Operations supported a more integrated approach to access to justice through the co-location of law centres and family mediation services. Greater awareness of the Family Mediation Service was promoted among applicants for family law legal services, supporting informed choices and where appropriate, earlier resolution of disputes.

Engagement with government departments on civil justice reform continued, supporting alignment between policy development and operational delivery. Preparatory work also continued in anticipation of the implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact and the commencement of the Family Courts Act.

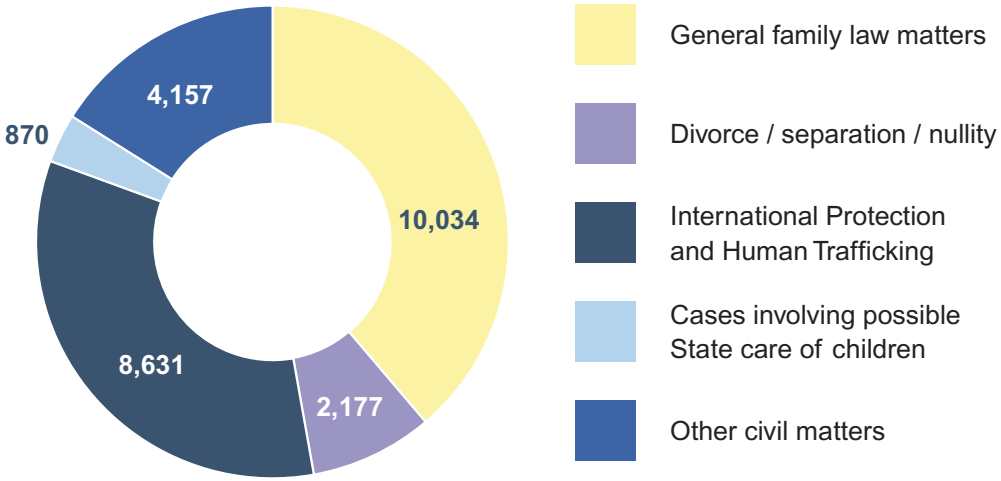
In parallel, the Directorate responded to significant changes in complainant representation arising from a Supreme Court judgment on the disclosure of counselling records. Services in this area were substantially expanded during 2025, with the Directorate working closely with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to support the delivery of high-quality legal services to complainants.

Civil Legal Aid in Numbers

Table 1 - Number of Applicants 2020-2025

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
General	13,209	13,827	13,849	14,554	16,361	17,238
International protection	1,174	1,464	6,858	9,918	11,689	8,631
Total	**14,383**	**15,291**	**20,705**	**24,472**	**28,050**	**25,869**

Chart 1
Number of Applications by Case Type 2025



Key Developments

Assisted Decision-Making

The Legal Aid Board worked closely with Government Departments, public bodies and NGOs to support the implementation of the Assisted Decision-Making framework and respond to emerging operational and policy issues. This formed part of the Supported Decision-Making – A Multiagency Programme of Reform, which was shortlisted in the Citizen Impact and Customer Service category of the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards.

While applications under the Act grew gradually following its commencement in April 2023, demand increased significantly during 2025, particularly in relation to Part 6 discharge from wardship cases ahead of the statutory deadline of 25 April 2026. The Legal Aid Board processed applications on behalf of approximately 1,300 wards and issued 1,280 Legal Aid Certificates between June and August 2025, enabling the Courts Service to progress these matters through the courts in a timely manner.

Civil Restraining Orders

The Law Centre network has taken on a new area of work in relation to orders under the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023. This is an area in which law centre staff are leading on the development of practice and procedure in the courts. Civil Operations has provided knowledge, updated procedures and training to staff on service delivery and worked with the Courts Service in developing more efficient court forms and better information provision.

EU Migration Pact

Colleagues from the International Protection law centres commenced substantial preparatory work for the implementation of the International Protection Act 2026. This involved collaboration with various stakeholders, including Government Departments, public bodies, and NGOs, to ensure effective service delivery in accordance with the EU Migration and Asylum Pact, which is scheduled to come into force in 2026.

Complainant Representation

There was a substantial increase in applications for legal services related to complainant representation in 2025. The increase was first observed in May and from October to December following a significant Supreme Court judgment regarding the disclosure of counselling records, issued in The People (DPP) v. AM in May 2025. This ruling has fundamentally altered the approach to disclosing counselling records in rape and other sexual assault cases.

Previously, demand for services in this specific area was minimal, only 7 out of 106 cases in 2024, with the primary need centred on representation during cross-examination concerning a victim's prior sexual history. The Legal Aid Board now anticipates an increased requirement for its services in the majority of rape and sexual offence prosecutions, effectively establishing a new area of service delivery. Nearly all cases will necessitate a Section 19A application.

In December 2025, the Minister published the Criminal Law and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2025, which, if enacted as currently drafted, will eliminate the option of consenting to waive the right to a hearing regarding the disclosure of counselling records. This legislative change is anticipated to substantially impact the volume of applications to the Legal Aid Board, as any sexual offence prosecution involving potential disclosure of counselling records, where covered under Section 28(5B) of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995, will require referral to the Legal Aid Board for legal representation in a full Section 19A hearing. At present, not every case proceeds to a full hearing, so resource implications are less pronounced than they are expected to be should this amendment be implemented.

Child Protection Policy

In 2025, the Service Delivery Directorates undertook a comprehensive review and update of the Child Protection Policy and Safety Statements to enhance efficiency and improve overall processes.

Gaeilge

Tá ról ceannaireachta á ghlacadh ag fostaithe i nOibríochtaí Sibhialta chun comhlíontacht lenár ndualgais faoin Acht um Theangacha Oifigiúla 2003 a chinntiú, maidir le soláthar seirbhísí an Bhoird as Gaeilge. Tá fostaithe spreagtha chun páirt a ghlacadh i gcúrsaí Gaeilge agus tá Lionra Gaeilge bunaithe chun úsáid na Gaeilge in oifigí a chur chun cinn. Tá an grúpa i dteagmháil le fostaithe ar fud na tire agus tá comhoibriú iontach bainte amach maidir le húsáid na Gaeilge.

Civil Operations staff have taken a lead role in ensuring compliance with our duties under the Official Languages Acts (2003 & 2021), in terms of the provision of the Legal Aid Board's services in Irish. Staff have been encouraged to engage in Irish language courses and a Lionra Gaeilge has been set up to encourage the use of the Irish language in offices. The group has been in contact with staff throughout the network and has had high levels of participation with staff using the Irish language.



Case Studies

Application Under the Hague Convention for Return of a Child

Background

The client sought legal assistance following the removal of his son from England to Ireland by the child's mother, seeking an order under Article 12 of the Hague Convention, requesting the return of the child to his habitual residence

in England. The parents were separated but shared joint custody, with the mother having primary care and control of the child. Agreed access arrangements were in place in England.

Legal Proceedings

A Legal Aid Certificate was granted to the client on a priority basis to initiate proceedings in the High Court. The child's mother was similarly granted Legal Aid on a priority basis and represented by another law centre.

At the initial court hearing, an order was made preventing the removal of the child from Ireland, except for the purpose of returning him to England. The Gardaí and port authorities were notified of the order.

The High Court further directed that an independent assessor be appointed to hear the voice of the child and prepare a report to be finalised after both parties had submitted sworn affidavits outlining their respective positions. The respective legal representatives agreed access between the child and his father in the interim.

Outcome

Upon completion of the report, it was noted that the child did not object to returning to England, expressing that he missed his father, friends, and extended family there.

Following discussions regarding the report, the mother consented to the child's return to England. The parties agreed on a return date and reached a financial arrangement to support the return. The child was returned in accordance with the agreement having spent approximately five months in Ireland. Importantly, with the benefit of legal aid representation, the child's views were ascertained, and the matter was resolved in a timely manner without the need for a full contested hearing.

Human Trafficking

The Legal Aid Board Human Trafficking Unit has provided services to a number of human trafficking victims who were exploited in Donegal. This case received considerable media attention as the traffickers received prison sentences of eleven and thirteen years for their crimes. This was a landmark case, representing the first conviction in Ireland for trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation.

The Unit received referrals for these clients when the Gardaí identified them as victims of human trafficking. At present in Ireland, the Gardaí are the only authority which can identify victims of trafficking. The Unit provided early legal advice on trafficking to these clients. Throughout the investigation, the Unit liaised with the Gardaí and the clients to ensure they were fully informed about the legal process. Victims of trafficking often have complex needs, and the HSE Anti-Human Trafficking Team provided practical support in areas such as accommodation and accessing healthcare.

These clients had been scheduled to give evidence at a trial due to commence in Autumn 2026. In advance of the hearing, the Unit met with them to provide advice and guidance on the criminal trial process and what they could expect as witnesses. However, following guilty pleas entered by the traffickers, the clients were ultimately not required to give evidence.

The outcome in this case is a testament to the growing awareness of human trafficking in Ireland. The work of the Gardaí and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions on this case is to be commended.

Application for Release of Counselling Notes under Section 19A of the Criminal Evidence Act 1992

Case E was referred to the Law Centre by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in advance of a pre-trial application before the Circuit Criminal Court. The application concerned the potential disclosure of counselling records under Section 19A of the Criminal Evidence Act 1992. The client was an adult complainant in proceedings involving allegations of childhood

sexual abuse by a person closely connected to her family. She had a diagnosis of complex post-traumatic stress disorder and experienced significant ongoing mental health difficulties.

The client had previously consented to the release of her counselling notes to the prosecution. The defence subsequently sought disclosure of those records. The application arose in the context of the Supreme Court decision in DPP v AM (2025), which underlined the need for disclosure procedures to protect complainants' privacy rights while also ensuring the accused's right to a fair trial. The judgment also reinforced the importance of access to independent legal advice for vulnerable complainants before decisions are made about the disclosure of sensitive therapeutic records.

The Law Centre was notified of the matter seven working days before the hearing. On the hearing date, it became apparent that an intermediary had been appointed to support the client during the criminal proceedings because of her particular vulnerabilities. Engagement with the client required careful, trauma-informed legal support. Consultations were complex and emotionally demanding, with frequent breaks needed to support the client's participation. An initial four-hour consultation resulted in partial consent only, and the court granted a one-week adjournment to allow further engagement outside the court setting. Following additional consultations, including consideration of further HSE records disclosed at a later stage, the client ultimately provided full consent to the release of all relevant notes.

This case illustrates the practical and legal complexity of Section 19A applications, particularly where clients are vulnerable and the records sought are highly sensitive. It demonstrates the important role of specialist, independent legal advice in enabling complainants to understand the issues, exercise informed choice, and participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their privacy, dignity and engagement with the criminal justice process.

Family Mediation Service

The Legal Aid Board's Family Mediation Service is free with universal access to services in 20 locations: 10 full-time offices (Athlone, Ballymun, Cork, Dolphin House, Galway, Jervis House, Limerick, Portlaoise, Tallaght, and Wexford) and 10 part-time offices (Carlow, Castlebar, Dundalk, Ennis, Kilkenny, Letterkenny, Nenagh, Sligo, Tralee and Waterford) open for mediation 3 to 4 days a week.

The Legal Aid Board offers family mediation to clients who are separating or divorcing, to negotiate the terms of their agreement. It also offers family mediation to clients to resolve issues such as parenting disputes, access, guardianship and maintenance.



During 2025, significant progress was made in strengthening service delivery, workforce arrangements and the service's role within the wider family justice system. There is continuous monitoring of waiting times with mitigation measures applied, including active use of the Private Mediator Panel to manage demand. While resource constraints continue to influence the pace of expansion, the service remains well positioned for future growth and development.

Dolphin House Law and Family Mediation Centre continues to develop a collaborative model between Courts Service and the Legal Aid Board designed to embed family mediation within the court process. The model aims to increase mediation uptake, improve client outcomes, and reduce pressure on the courts through a coordinated, multi-agency approach. It aims to deliver a streamlined and accessible client pathway, ensuring clients are informed about mediation at multiple touchpoints, supported in making early decisions, and enabled to resolve disputes outside of court where appropriate. Key Features include:

- Early engagement at court entry points (information desks, signage, QR referrals, trained staff)
- Judicial support, with mediation promoted during court proceedings.
- Co-location of services (Courts Service, Law Centre, and Mediation Service)
- Structured mediation pathway (screening, joint sessions, agreement drafting)
- Strong emphasis on collaboration, communication, and staff training

The model aligns with family justice reform objectives and supports the mainstreaming of mediation within court processes. It provides a scalable and replicable framework, subject to appropriate resourcing.

The Family Mediation Service continued to play an important role in supporting the implementation of family justice reform during 2025. Through its contribution to national family justice initiatives, the Legal Aid Board helped advance a more accessible, user-centred and coordinated approach to resolving family disputes, with a particular emphasis on promoting mediation and other alternatives to court proceedings.

During the year, the Legal Aid Board successfully completed all actions assigned to it under the Family Justice Strategy implementation programme. Key achievements included the continued development of a client call-back service, enhanced collaboration with the Courts Service to increase the uptake of court-based mediation by 42%, the development and dissemination of training resources on domestic violence, coercive control and risk screening, and the delivery of training to mediation practitioners. The Legal Aid Board also provided leadership in efforts to establish a Mediation Council and embedded the Private Practitioner Mediation Scheme on a permanent basis.

These initiatives have strengthened the availability and visibility of family mediation services, enhanced practitioner capability, improved cross-agency collaboration, and supported greater use of mediation as an effective means of resolving family disputes. Collectively, they contribute to a family justice system that is more accessible, responsive and focused on achieving positive outcomes for families and children.

Family Mediation in Numbers

Table 2 - New Cases 2020-2025

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Issues (couples)	1,091	1,186	1,148	1,199	1,985	1,694
Court Based	251	326	355	314	309	439
Telephone Helpline Cases	248	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**1,590**	**1,512**	**1,503**	**1,513**	**2,294**	**2,133**

Table 3 - Total Agreements 2020-2025

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Issues (couples)	581	819	726	707	844	735
Court Based	162	187	291	221	201	273
Telephone Helpline Cases	173	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**916**	**1,006**	**1,017**	**928**	**1,045**	**1,008**

Supporting Service Delivery

Decision Making and External Services (Civil)

Operating primarily from the Legal Aid Board's Head Office in Cahirciveen, Decision Making and External Services (Civil) (DMES) is the directorate responsible for making decisions on applications for civil legal aid and associated expenditure in accordance with the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995, relevant regulations and the policy guidelines set out in the Circular on Legal Services.

DMES is responsible for determining applications for legal aid in matters that are not subject to delegated decision-making arrangements within law centres, principally High Court and Circuit Court and other complex civil matters. DMES also determines applications for additional expenditure, including the retention of counsel, expert witnesses and specialist reports where required to support the effective representation of legally aided persons. In addition, it manages the Legal Aid Board's solicitor and barrister panels, undertakes quality assurance reviews of legal aid services delivered by private practitioners, supports the integration of new statutory services, and develops policy relating to legal aid decision-making and the engagement of private practitioners.

Key Actions

A campaign to reopen the Abhaile Solicitor Panels was undertaken to address gaps in geographic coverage, particularly within the Duty Solicitor Panel. The information campaign launched in September included targeted communications and social media engagement aimed at encouraging applications from practitioners in areas with limited representation. While the campaign generated significant levels of interest and online engagement, recruitment challenges continued to impact panel expansion.

Aspects of the DMES administrative processes were modernised by introducing electronic submission arrangements for invoices and claim forms. This improved operational efficiency, reduced paper-based processing and enhanced the accessibility of services for panel practitioners.

DMES facilitated the processing of substantial volumes of applications for legal services under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 arising in relation to wards who must be discharged from wardship under part 6 of the Act. This ensured access to legal representation during this significant programme of legislative reform.

DMES also supported the provision of legal services to complainants and witnesses in certain cases involving sexual offences. During 2025, DMES processed 288 applications under this scheme for registration and assignment to law centres, representing a substantial increase on the 112 applications received in 2024.

DMES also continued to engage with Government Departments, statutory bodies and stakeholder organisations across a range of policy areas, including Abhaile, Assisted Decision-Making, and financial eligibility for civil legal aid. Through this work, DMES supported the ongoing development of legal aid services and contributed to ensuring that legal assistance remains accessible, responsive and aligned with the needs of those who rely upon it.

Decision Making and External Services in Numbers

Table 4 - Number of Referrals to Private Solicitors 2020-2025

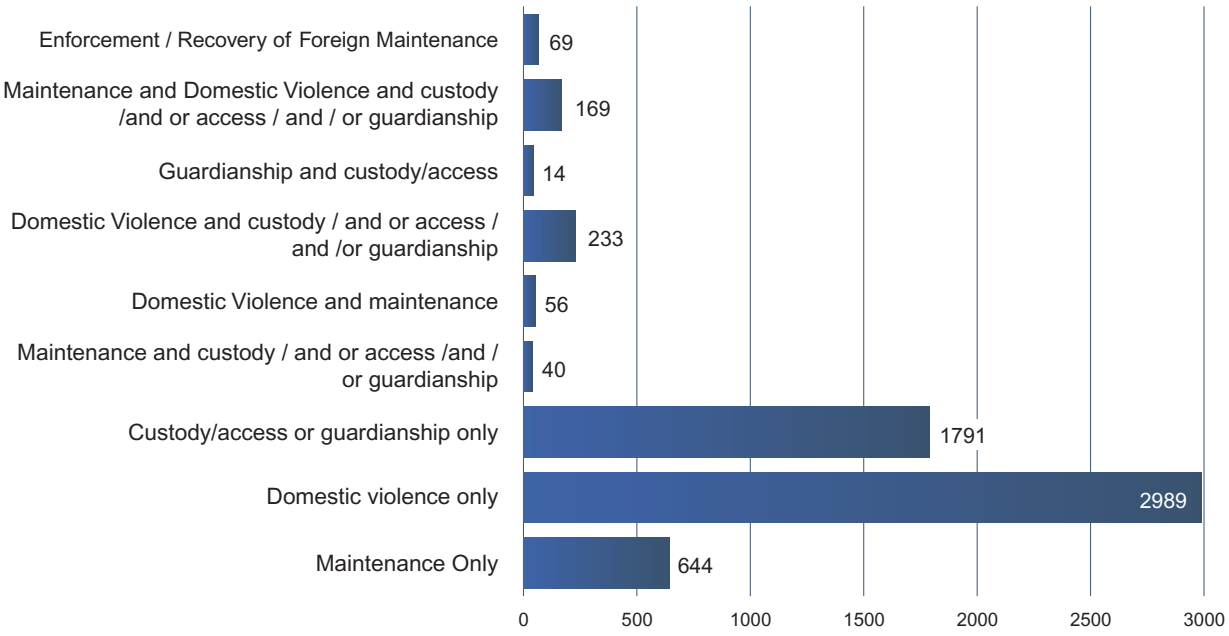
Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
District Court Private Family Law	6,042	6,961	7,086	7,082	7,484	7,030
District Court Child Care	47	55	92	172	193	231
Circuit Court	7	145	327	101	116	126
International Protection	941	918	5,725	8,850	11,109	10,088
Coroner's Inquest	7	50	15	32	14	9
Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity)	N/A	N/A	N/A	41	838	2,413
Total	**7,044**	**8,129**	**13,245**	**16,278**	**19,754**	**19,897**

Table 5 - Abhaile Scheme Cases 2020-2025

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Consultations using MABS voucher	346	219	301	238	222	321
Authority to conduct further negotiations	51	25	12	3	3	1
Number of duty solicitor days scheduled	264	272	262	351	392	378
Legal Aid certificates granted for PIA reviews	414	324	254	229	334	315
Legal aid certificates granted for PIA appeals	148	101	70	21	25	57
Counsel granted for Circuit Court	259	139	41	23	838	2,413
Total	**1,482**	**1,080**	**940**	**865**	**1,025**	**1,100**

Chart 2 - Legal Aid Certificates Granted in the District Court on Foot of the District Court PP Scheme 2025

We provide legal advice and representation to those who qualify in areas such as international protection, family law, and assisted decision-making.



Human Resources

The Human Resources (HR) Unit supports staff throughout the employment lifecycle, provides guidance on HR policies and procedures, and ensures that developments across the wider Civil Service HR landscape are communicated and implemented within the organisation.

The Legal Aid Board holds a recruitment licence from the Commission for Public Service Appointments and conducts all recruitment competitions in accordance with the Code of Practice for Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service. During 2025, a total of 28 recruitment competitions were completed across a range of grades and disciplines. Staffing levels reduced from 571 at the end of 2024 to 559 at the end of 2025, primarily as a result of a temporary recruitment pause introduced in July 2025 to ensure compliance with pay budget parameters. Recruitment activity resumed during the final quarter of the year; however, staffing levels had not returned to their pre-pause position by year-end due to normal recruitment lead times and staff turnover which stood at 13.6%.

HR also continued its engagement with potential future employees and the wider community. Representatives attended both the UCC Law Careers Fair and the Iveragh Jobs Fair during the year. In addition, 26 individuals participated in work experience placements across the Legal Aid Board's law centres, family mediation offices and Head Office functions, providing valuable insight into careers within the organisation and the public service.

Recruitment and retention of professionals remained a significant challenge for the Legal Aid Board during the year, with salary disparities between the Legal Aid Board and other State legal employers impacting its ability to attract and retain experienced staff.

Learning and Development

The Learning and Development Unit (LDU) supports the Legal Aid Board's commitment to developing a skilled, adaptable and high-performing workforce. Through the provision of training, professional development opportunities and academic supports, LDU seeks to foster a culture of continuous learning, innovation and service excellence.

During the year, more than 1,400 training bookings were coordinated across a wide range of professional, technical and organisational development programmes. Training initiatives were delivered in response to emerging legislative, operational and strategic requirements, while also supporting staff wellbeing and professional growth.

A significant initiative during 2025 was the rollout of Child Inclusive Mediation training. Recognising the importance of ensuring that children's perspectives are properly considered in family mediation processes, 32 mediators completed a comprehensive 40-hour programme involving online and in-person learning, independent study and assessed coursework. This investment supports the continued development of specialist mediation services and aligns with the Legal Aid Board's commitment to child-centred dispute resolution.



Training event

The Academic Fees Scheme continued to support staff pursuing third-level and postgraduate qualifications. During 2025, funding was approved for 67 staff members undertaking programmes ranging from undergraduate certificates to postgraduate diplomas, master's degrees and doctoral research. The scheme remains an important mechanism for developing organisational capability while supporting individual career development.

Training on the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 was delivered to 101 staff members in partnership with the Decision Support Service and SAGE Advocacy. The programme addressed the Act's decision-support framework and was also made available to members of the Legal Aid Board's Private Practitioners Panels, promoting a broader understanding of the legislation across the legal services sector.

Specialised training was delivered to senior managers on obligations arising under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and the implementation of the Legal Aid Board's revised FOI decision-making framework. Directors, Assistant Principals and equivalent grades completed a comprehensive programme covering all aspects of FOI administration, including the assessment of requests, application of exemptions, public interest considerations and decision-making responsibilities.

L&D also facilitated climate action leadership training for members of the Statutory Board, the Executive Management Team and the Environmental Working Group, supporting compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate and reinforcing the organisation's commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility.

New Developments

A new in-person induction programme was launched, providing a more comprehensive onboarding experience for new employees. During the year, 64 staff members attended induction sessions covering the history and role of the Legal Aid Board, human resources and learning supports, Freedom of Information, data protection, ICT policies and staff wellbeing services.

Additional support was provided through the introduction of a New Staff Liaison Officer role, offering structured assistance to employees during their initial period with the organisation. The initiative includes regular engagement with new staff, signposting to available supports and guidance in navigating organisational processes. New managers were also supported through dedicated one-to-one management development training.

The rollout of trauma-informed practice training continued during 2025, reflecting the Legal Aid Board's commitment to delivering services that are responsive to the needs of clients who may have experienced trauma. A total of 103 staff members completed trauma-informed practice workshops during the year, strengthening organisational capability to provide services in a manner that promotes dignity, understanding and positive client outcomes.

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services Directorate has responsibility for Finance, Governance, Risk Management, Facilities Management, Health and Safety, Portfolio Management and Property Management. Through these functions, the Directorate supports the effective administration, accountability and operational resilience of the Legal Aid Board.

Facilities Management Unit

The Facilities Management Unit provides facilities management services to the Legal Aid Board's network of law centres and offices.

The Unit is responsible for the provision of goods and services, invoice processing, service user change requests, health and safety-related requests, and access requirements for persons

with disabilities. It operates a centralised ticketing system to support the delivery of goods and services, maintenance, and the upkeep of premises and equipment.

In 2025, the Unit actioned more than 22,300 service user requests, in addition to managing general Facilities Help Desk correspondence. The Unit also continued to support the Legal Aid Board in securing value for money across goods and services by reviewing contracts, considering the financial cost, quality and reliability of services, and seeking competitive contractual arrangements where appropriate. In 2025, the Unit had responsibility for a budget of €4.47 million.

The Unit also provided practical and logistical support for office refurbishments, Ministerial visits, Statutory Board meetings, governance-related activities, health and safety matters, and staff events nationwide.

Health and Safety Unit

The Health and Safety Unit oversees the implementation and maintenance of the Legal Aid Board's Health and Safety Management System, supporting compliance with health and safety legislation and recognised best practice.

During 2025, the Unit worked collaboratively with directorates, managers, employees and safety representatives to maintain high standards of health and safety across the organisation. This included supporting consultation with employees and ensuring that health and safety considerations remained embedded in day-to-day operations.

The Health and Safety Officer maintained an active on-site presence across Legal Aid Board offices during the year. This included providing information and guidance to employees on key workplace risks, including violence and aggression, driving for work, and Display Screen Equipment. The Health and Safety Officer also worked closely with middle and senior management to ensure that risk assessments remained up to date and that safety statements and fire safety management continued to receive appropriate attention.

Property Portfolio Unit

In March 2025, the Legal Aid Board marked a significant milestone with the official opening of its new Castlebar Law and Family Mediation Centre. The centre was formally opened by Minister of State Niall Collins TD and attended by Chief Executive Officer Joan Crawford and Legal Aid Board Chairperson Nuala Egan SC.

Delivered following the modern fit-out and refurbishment of newly acquired premises, the centre provides a contemporary and functional environment for clients and staff. It strengthens the Legal Aid Board's capacity to deliver accessible civil legal aid and family mediation services in line with its statutory remit and strategic objectives.



In March 2025, the Unit commenced the project to establish new corporate offices at the Eight Building, Dublin, with completion scheduled for March 2026. The project involves the acquisition, refurbishment and fit-out of new premises to provide a modern and fully functional working environment for staff.

The Unit also completed the refurbishment of the Galway Law & Family Mediation Centre (Woodquay) in Galway in July 2025. This project delivered a modern, co-located facility and supported service continuity through the consolidation of the former Seville House Law Centre and Family Mediation Service at Merchant's Quay.



Galway Law & Family Mediation Centre (Woodquay)

Works at the Smithfield property also continued throughout the year, with the project progressing through key delivery phases and advancing towards completion.

In addition, the Unit oversaw the provision of temporary law centre accommodation at Otteran Place, South Parade, Waterford, following the closure of the law centre at Railway Square. This temporary accommodation was delivered to minimise disruption and ensure continuity of service for clients in the region.

Board Secretary

The Board Secretary provides support to the Statutory Board. During 2025, the Board met on 11 occasions, with meetings held in Dublin, Cahirciveen and a number of law centres to coincide with official openings and local engagements.

Governance

The Legal Aid Board has a range of governance, reporting and compliance obligations. In addition to risk management, responsibility for delivering a number of key reporting and compliance requirements rests with the Director of Corporate Services.

These responsibilities include the preparation and coordination of the Financial Statements, the Letter to the Minister, Governance Statements, finance reports, parliamentary questions, briefing papers, and the Performance Agreement with the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

Finance Unit

The Finance Unit plays a critical role in supporting accountability, transparency and the effective stewardship of public funds. In 2025, the Executive Management Team initiated a comprehensive review of the Legal Aid Board's finance function as part of the wider organisational reform programme.

The review, undertaken by external consultants, was commissioned to assess the effectiveness of the finance function across systems, processes, technology and capability. It was initiated in the context of sustained growth in demand for services, increasing financial throughput, and longstanding capacity and systems constraints which had limited the function's ability to move beyond a predominantly transactional role.

During 2025, the Finance Unit processed payments with an aggregate value of approximately €66 million across pay and non-pay expenditure. This highlights the scale and operational complexity of the function within existing resource and system limitations.

A further objective of the review was to support the Legal Aid Board's preparedness for a future transition to the National Shared Services Office Finance Shared Services model.

Information, Communications, Technology & Criminal Legal Aid

The Directorate of Information, Communications, Technology & Criminal Legal Aid supports the organisation in delivering services through modern digital infrastructure, effective communications, robust information and data management, and the administration of criminal legal aid schemes.

The Directorate comprises the ICT Infrastructure & Operations Unit, the Digital Solutions Unit, the Communications Unit, the Knowledge & Information Unit (including FOI, GDPR, Research and Country of Origin Information), and the Criminal Legal Aid Unit. Together, these functions underpin service delivery, accountability, transparency and continuous improvement across the organisation.

Digital Modernisation and New Ways of Working

In parallel with the organisation's Statement of Strategy 2024–2026, the Directorate operates under its own Information & Communications Strategy 2024–2027 which provides a focused framework for delivering digital modernisation, communications, and information governance in direct support of the Legal Aid Board's overarching objectives.

2025 marked a major turning point in the Legal Aid Board's digital transformation with the commencement of the transition away from legacy desktop infrastructure to a modern Microsoft 365 based environment. This was supported by the rollout of new laptops, cloud services and enhanced cybersecurity controls.

Over 100 staff were migrated during the initial phase, establishing a secure, scalable foundation for organisation wide rollout in 2026. To complement this infrastructure change, a new Digital Solutions Team was established to work directly with business areas on process improvement, automation and the development of smarter, more efficient digital workflows. Early, practical outcomes were delivered, including staff alerts, a pilot central contracts register, AI assisted tools and support for Courts Service digital filing initiatives.

2025 witnessed the establishment and successful first year of operation of the IT Workgroup as a subgroup of the Statutory Board, strengthening governance and oversight of digital transformation.



Communications, Public Engagement and Organisational Visibility

Throughout 2025, the Communications Unit delivered a programme of work strengthening both external engagement and internal communications. Key achievements during the year included:



Castlebar launch

Launch of the Castlebar Law and Family Mediation Centre, supported by coordinated national and regional communications activity, including press engagement, stakeholder communications and updates to online service information, promoting awareness of new co located services available to the public.



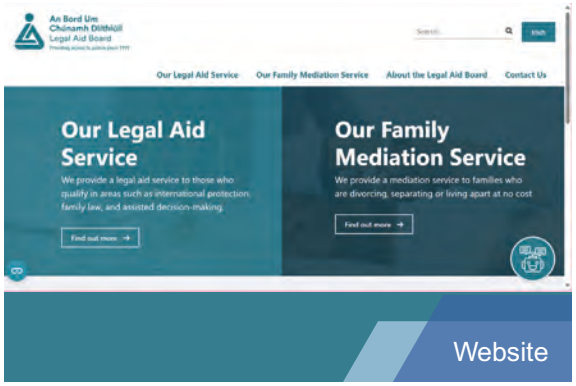
Marquee Event

Delivery of the Legal Aid Board Staff Marquee Event (May 2025), a large scale, two day internal engagement event involving over 250 staff. The event supported staff connectivity, knowledge sharing and leadership engagement, and received very positive feedback from participants.



LAB News

Publication of LAB News, the organisation's internal staff newsletter, supporting improved internal communications, information sharing and staff engagement across services and locations.



Website

Completion of a major refresh and redevelopment of the Legal Aid Board website (legalaidboard.ie), launched in May 2025. The refreshed website delivered a fully modernised, accessible and user centred digital platform, including a complete content overhaul, WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility compliance, improved navigation, enhanced search visibility and the introduction of a robust analytics framework, resulting in increased user engagement and improved access to service information.

Strengthened Governance, Compliance and Public Accountability

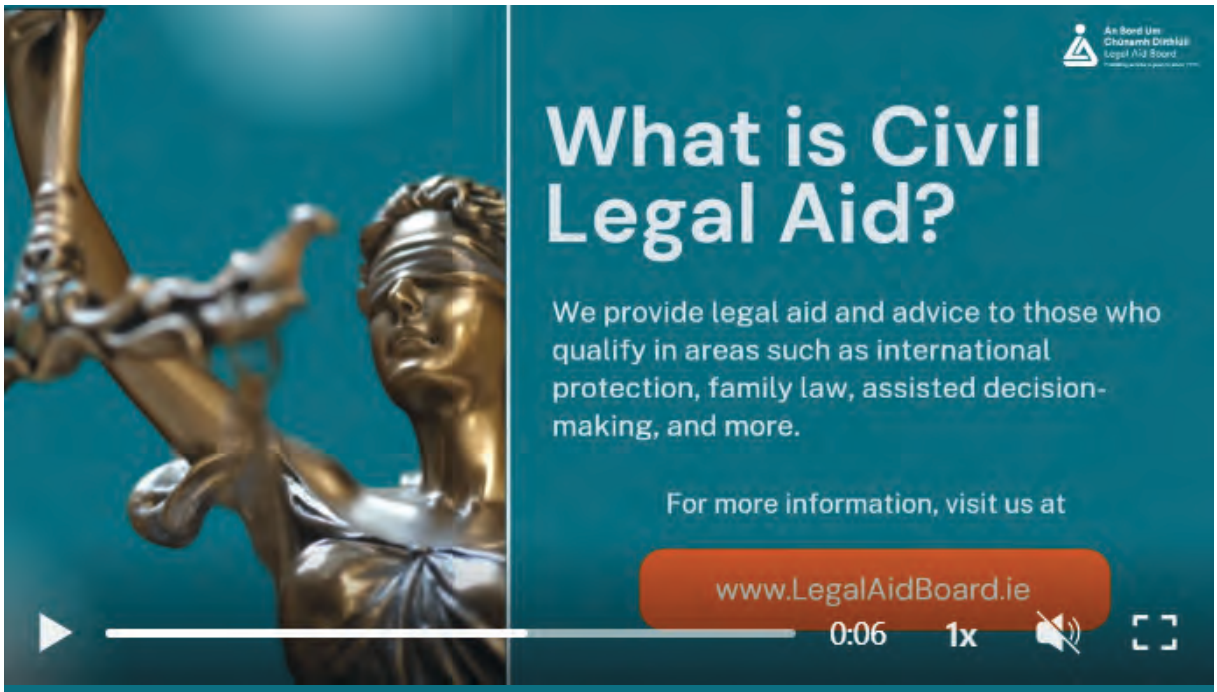
All data protection policies were refreshed, the FOI framework was modernised and embedded, and the organisation published its first datasets to the Government Open Data Portal, meeting national publication standards.

In parallel, the Knowledge & Information Unit established and operationalised a formal Research Strategy and Research Framework, providing clear governance, ethical oversight and structured processes for internal and external research engagement. This work supports the organisation's longer term move towards evidence informed policy development, service planning and decision making.

Communications activity further enhanced transparency and public awareness through national campaigns, service information videos and ongoing improvements to internal communications.

Improving Transparency and Public Access

The organisation's "Data as a Driver" agenda was progressed through strengthened information governance, GDPR compliance and the establishment of research frameworks. A review and refresh of GDPR policies was completed alongside targeted staff training supporting compliance and accountability. The organisation published datasets on the Government Open Data Portal for the first time, meeting national publication standards. This work supports greater openness, improved public understanding of Legal Aid Board services, and stronger evidence based decision making across the organisation.



Service Information Video

Criminal Legal Aid Unit

While the Legal Aid Board does not provide criminal legal aid directly, it administers three non-statutory criminal legal aid schemes: Garda Station Legal Advice Revised Scheme; Legal Aid Custody Issues Scheme; and the Criminal Assets Bureau Scheme.

- Garda Station Legal Advice Revised Scheme: Offers legal advice to detainees in Garda stations, including solicitor consultations and attendance during interviews.
- Legal Aid – Custody Issues Scheme (LA-CIS): Provides legal representation in specific High Court, Court of Appeal, and Supreme Court cases not covered by standard legal aid, such as habeas corpus applications, certain judicial reviews, extradition cases, and European Arrest Warrant applications.
- Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) Scheme: Covers legal representation in proceedings involving the Criminal Assets Bureau, including cases under the Proceeds of Crime Act, certain tax appeals, and social welfare appeals where the CAB is a party.

The Criminal Legal Aid Unit within the Legal Aid Board oversees the administration of the aforementioned schemes. Its responsibilities include:

- Processing Applications: Evaluating and approving applications for legal aid under the specific schemes, ensuring applicants meet the eligibility criteria.
- Managing Payments: Handling fee claims from solicitors, barristers, and other service providers involved in these schemes, ensuring timely and accurate payments.
- Providing Guidance: Issuing procedural guidelines and forms to legal practitioners to facilitate compliance with scheme requirements.
- Liaising with Stakeholders: Coordinating with courts, legal professionals, and other relevant bodies to ensure the effective operation of the schemes.

In 2025, structured engagement took place with key external stakeholders across the Justice sector. This work supported greater consistency, assurance and preparedness within existing schemes, while also advancing preparatory planning and inter agency collaboration in anticipation of potential future reform and expansion of criminal legal aid responsibilities.

Internal Audit Unit

The Legal Aid Board's Internal Audit Unit provides an independent and objective internal audit service in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards. Internal Audit's scope and coverage extend across all Directorates, units and relevant activities within the organisation. The Unit reports to the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee, which reviewed audit reports throughout the year with a focus on addressing systemic issues and strengthening internal controls. Audit findings highlighted the importance of continuous staff training in supporting procedural understanding, compliance and good governance.

The Internal Audit Three-Year Work Plan (2024–2026) was developed with input from the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee and incorporates audits relating to ICT and GDPR compliance, alongside enhanced professional development for auditors. Staffing challenges affected the audit schedule during 2025, resulting in the rescheduling of a number of planned audits to 2026. All Internal Audit staff completed professional training during the year as part of the Unit's commitment to continuous improvement.

Throughout 2025, Internal Audit placed a strong emphasis on communication and engagement with operational management. Regular meetings were held with Managing Solicitors, Managing Mediators and senior service delivery management to discuss audit findings, monitor compliance with administrative procedures and agree actions to address areas requiring improvement. These engagements strengthened the effectiveness of the audit process by ensuring that findings were understood, risks were appropriately considered and corrective measures were implemented in a timely manner.

The ongoing dialogue between Internal Audit and management reflected a shared commitment to continuous improvement. While maintaining its independence, Internal Audit provided insight and advice on control enhancements, procedural weaknesses and emerging risks, helping management to strengthen governance arrangements and improve operational effectiveness.



The Legal Aid Board has a range of governance, reporting and compliance obligations.

Reporting Obligations

Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021

The Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 introduced the legislative basis for gender pay gap reporting in Ireland. Regulations under the Act came into operation on 31 May 2022. The regulations now require organisations with over 50 employees to report on their gender pay gap and to report on their hourly gender pay gap across a range of metrics. In 2025, the Gender Pay Gap in the Legal Aid Board was 2.47%. This means that, on average, men were paid 2.47% higher than women in 2025. Employees of the Legal Aid Board are Civil Servants, and the Legal Aid Board has equal pay for men and women in the same grades. The difference in average pay results from more men than women occupying senior roles over the course of the reporting period and in certain instances those men being in those positions longer and thus on higher points of the pay scales.

Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010

The Legal Aid Board has obligations under the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 which rendered solicitors "designated persons" and defined certain legal services as AML regulated. To address evolving risk the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Act 2021 expanded existing obligations.

Due to the general operating environment for the Legal Aid Board, the level of risk from the services that the Legal Aid Board provide is relatively low. A Regional Manager is the Board's Anti-Money Laundering Officer, and the Legal Aid Board is committed to providing ongoing training to staff which will be relevant to the role that the staff member discharges in relation to the prevention of money laundering.

Protected Disclosures Act 2014

Each public body is required under Section 22 of the Act to publish an annual report setting out the number of protected disclosures received in the preceding year and the action taken (if any). The Legal Aid Board publishes this each year on its website.

The Legal Aid Board received reports under the relevant policy in respect of four protected disclosures during the reporting period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. One of the four reports did not require investigation and was closed with no further follow-up. One anonymous report was assessed in 2025. No reports relating to a potential breach of EU law as set out in Directive 2019 / 1937 were assessed by the Legal Aid Board in 2025.

Disability Act 2005

In accordance with section 26(2) of the Disability Act 2005, the Legal Aid Board is required to appoint an Access Officer. The Access Officer acts as the designated point of contact for persons with disabilities seeking access to, or information about, Legal Aid Board services and facilities. In 2025, over 100 individual contacts were received and responded to, via telephone and email. The Access Officer remains available to assist with queries through both channels and provides support in facilitating access to services and ensuring that appropriate information and assistance is made available where required. The type of case request which the Legal Aid Board's Access Officer dealt with ranged from the application process/queries regarding instructions/ assistance in contacting the Law Centres on behalf of applicants, queries relating to legal representation and queries relating to certain rules relating to the provision of legal aid.

Public Sector Energy Performance - Statement of Energy Use

- In order to determine the Legal Aid Board's trajectory towards its 2030 Climate Change Emissions and Climate Change Energy Efficiency Targets, the Legal Aid Board provides data annually to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI) Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) system. Since 2025, the progress on implementation of the Climate Action Mandate is also tracked through the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI) Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) system.

Official Languages Scheme

The Legal Aid Board is committed to meeting all of its obligations under the Official Languages Acts (2003 & 2021). A member of Senior Management monitors the performance and report on the Legal Aid Board's obligations under the Official Languages Acts (2003 & 2021).

The Legal Aid Board took the following actions during 2025 to ensure compliance with the Act:

- 16 staff attended an Irish Language telephone skills online training 4 staff completed Gaelchultúr Irish Courses, and 3 staff completed the TEG exam.
- A basic phrases in Irish video training course was uploaded to One Learning platform and useful Irish language phrases were emailed to all staff.
- Further videos about how to apply for Legal Aid were made and uploaded to social media.

Other compliance activities in relation to the Official Languages Acts (2003 & 2021) that were undertaken

- Civil Operations assisted Law Centres who moved premises with their Irish Language address for both the website and stationery letter heads.
- Regular emails were sent to staff notifying them of internal Irish language events and details circulated to all staff in relation Gréasan Gaeilge na hEarnála Poiblí.

During 2025, the new obligations under section 10A. (Advertising by Public Bodies) which require a minimum of 20% (10A. (1)(b)) of all advertising to be in Irish were met

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014

The Legal Aid Board recognises its obligations under the relevant legislation to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment for its staff and the individuals it serves, and protect the human rights of its members, staff, and service users.

To support these goals, the Legal Aid Board continues to provide the Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service, staffed by a solicitor and a support staff member, specifically tasked with providing legal services to the Traveller community. Established on a permanent basis in 2022, this service includes, within the framework of standard legal aid rules, litigating on behalf of clients regarding accommodation issues, applications under section 19 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003, and other legal matters. Additionally, the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015, which commenced on 26th April 2023, introduces a new legal framework for supported decision-making in Ireland. This Act empowers individuals who may have difficulties making certain types of decisions. We provide legal aid to those navigating the provisions of this Act, ensuring their rights and choices are respected and upheld. Through this service, we are enhancing support for vulnerable individuals, promoting autonomy, and safeguarding the legal rights of those requiring decision-making assistance.

The Public Sector Duty is equally relevant to the experience of Legal Aid Board staff. In line with organisational values, with commitment to creating an environment where positive engagement is promoted, alongside open and



All data protection policies were refreshed, the FOI framework was modernised and embedded, and the organisation published its first datasets to the Government Open Data Portal, meeting national publication standards.

honest communication, embracing diverse perspectives while striving to be inclusive in all that we do.

The Legal Aid Board has two Disability Liaison Officers who facilitate both new colleagues, and long-term staff with emergent needs, with the assistance they require for full participation in the workplace. Several applications for Reasonable Workplace Accommodation in line with the Equality Acts were granted in 2025. The percentage of staff members that declared a disability in 2024 was 5.7% and for 2025 this has risen to 11.9%. However, this increase may be attributable to the definition of what may constitute a disability having a broader definition and explanation a recent survey to assist colleagues understanding.

The Legal Aid Board's Human Resources Unit facilitates applicants in recruitment competitions with reasonable accommodations to ensure full and equal participation while competing for opportunities for both internal and external candidates. This follows through with facilitating new colleagues and those who acquire a disability during their employment with the Legal Aid Board with reasonable accommodation to ensure they commence and continue their journey within the Legal Aid Board.

As part of the Legal Aid Board's commitment under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, the Learning and Development Unit facilitated numerous Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training events throughout 2025. Key sessions included Neurodiversity Law on Reasonable Accommodation, Minceir Unit training on Traveller Rights, Ability Disability and Reasonable Accommodation training, Supporting Neurodiversity in the Workplace, Dignity at Work seminar, and Authentic and Inclusive Leadership. These initiatives build staff awareness and practical skills to support neurodiversity, invisible disabilities, and cultural rights, while fostering inclusive leadership and anti-discrimination practices to promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights for staff and service users.

Legal Aid Service

Civil Operations which is responsible for the provision of services to Legal Aid Board clients, maintains a suite of plain-language information leaflets, along with plain English materials available on the Legal Aid Board website. The leaflets are available in every Law Centre nationwide for clients and other stakeholders and are also provided in multiple languages. They are kept under regular review and updated as required.

All correspondence between law centres and clients is written in plain English, using technical or official terminology only where absolutely necessary. While some legal terminology is unavoidable in a legal environment, its use is minimised and explained wherever possible.

As part of its ongoing commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, the Legal Aid Board continues to deliver legal services through the Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service. This service has been expanded and provides tailored legal support to the Traveller community, alongside dedicated services in the area of Assisted Decision-Making, which promote autonomy and self-determination. The Legal Aid Board also engaged in the Assisted Decision-Making campaign, Your Voice, Your Choice.

We continue to monitor and adapt organisational approaches to ensure compliance, both legally and morally, with evolving Equality, Diversity and Inclusion legislation and guidance.

The Information, Communications, Technology & Criminal Legal Aid Directorate supports and coordinates compliance with a range of statutory and governance reporting obligations, including:

- Freedom of Information (FOI) under the FOI Act 2014
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Open Data and wider information governance obligations

Access to Information on the Environment

The Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) Regulations 2007-2018 gives the public the right to access environmental information held by, or for, Public Authorities.

The Legal Aid Board received no Access to Information on the Environment requests in 2025.

Section 15 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.

The Legal Aid Board, in the performance of its functions, has regard to s.15. (1) (d) of the Act which has the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State. The Legal Aid Board has, throughout 2025, continued to work with the Office of Public Works (OPW) via its Optimising Power @ Work campaign to focus on staff awareness campaigns, behavioural change and minor works projects that generate savings in energy usage along with associated reduction in carbon emissions.

Public Sector Climate Action Mandate

By 2025, the Legal Aid Board had achieved a 38.1% reduction of energy consumption, over a 2009 baseline. Returns are made to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on an annual basis. We predict the annual figures in 2026 to follow the trajectory from 2025 to meet organisational goals in 2030 following the Legal Aid Board's Climate Action Roadmap. The Legal Aid Board's Climate Action Roadmap sets out a plan for the organisation to achieve its targets of a 50% reduction in Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and an improvement in energy efficiency from 33% to 50% by 2030, as outlined in the Government's Climate Action Plan 2023. Information regarding implementation of the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate can be found in the Climate Action Roadmap. Regarding Circular 1/2020, the Legal Aid Board records carbon emissions associated with official air travel. These emissions are reported in line with Civil Service requirements, with the application of a carbon value based on the prevailing domestic carbon tax rate undertaken at central level.

Governance Statements and Board Members Report 2025

Legal Aid Board

Governance Statement and Board Members' Report

For the year ended 31 December 2025

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Maurice Lawlor

Niamh O'Hanlon

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Freda McKittrick

Catherine Keane

Tracy O'Keeffe

Michael Patrick Bourke

Patrick Durcan *Resigned on 19 August 2025

Catherine Ryan *Resigned on 18 July 2025

Liam Ryan

Jane McGowan

Maeve Brett

Sara Kearney **New Appointee on 3 October 2025

Donnchadh Woulfe **New Appointee on 3 October 2025

Chief Executive

Joan Crawford

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V23 YN90

Solicitors

Holmes O'Malley Sexton

Bishopsgate

Henry Street

Limerick

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Auditors

Comptroller and Auditor General

3A Mayor Street Upper

Dublin 1

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GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND BOARD MEMBERS' REPORT

Governance

The Board of the Legal Aid Board (the "Board") was established under the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 (as amended) (the "Act"). The functions of the Board are set out in Section 5 of the Act. The Board is accountable to the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and is responsible for ensuring good governance and performs this task by setting strategic objectives and targets and taking strategic decisions on all key business issues. The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the Legal Aid Board are the responsibility of the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team. The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team must follow the broad strategic direction set by the Board and must ensure that all board members have a clear understanding of the key activities and decisions related to the entity, and of any significant risks likely to arise.

Board Responsibilities

The functions of the Board are set out in Section 5 of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 (as amended) (the "Act") and its responsibilities are set out in the Board's Governance Manual, as follows:

- 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.

Section 20 of the Act requires the Board of the Legal Aid Board to keep in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, all proper and usual accounts of the resources of the Legal Aid Board.

In preparing these financial statements, the Board of the Legal Aid Board is required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and 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 it 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 adequate accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, the Legal Aid Board's financial position and enables it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 20 of the Act. The maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the Legal Aid Board's website is the responsibility of the Board.

The Board is responsible for approving the annual plan and budget. The Audit, Risk and Finance Committee reviewed the 2025 budget at its meeting on 29 January 2025 and recommended it for approval by the Board. An evaluation of the performance of the Legal Aid Board by reference to the 2024 annual plan and budget was carried out at its February meeting on 27 February 2025.

The Board discussed the 2025 budget in detail at its meeting on 27 February 2025. The Statement of Strategy covers the period 2024-2026 and a new Strategy for 2027-2029 will commence shortly. Reflecting the objectives in that Statement of Strategy, the executive drafted an annual set of organisational priorities which can be seen to align with the strategic objectives of the revised strategy. The annual priorities were presented to the Board for review at its meeting on 27 February 2025.

The Board reviewed the monthly financial reports throughout 2025. These reports detailed actual expenditure against the monthly profiled budget. In 2025, the Board were also presented with comprehensive reports in July, October and November which examined the year-to-date expenditure against the annual budgeted figures and forecasted outturn figures for year-end. The mid-year review of the 2025 actual out-turn compared to budget for 2025 took place at the Board meeting held on 24 July 2025.

The Board is also responsible for safeguarding the Legal Aid Board's assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Board considers that the financial statements of the Legal Aid Board give a true and fair view of the financial performance and the financial position of the Legal Aid Board on 31 December 2025.

Board Structure

The Act makes provision for the appointment of a chairperson and 12 ordinary members to the Board. The current Board was appointed by the Minister for Justice Home Affairs and Migration.

The table below details the appointment period for the outgoing and current board members who served during 2025:

Name	Date of first Appointment	Date of re-appointment	Term Expiry date	Basis of Appointment
Members eligible for re-appointment (who were appointed via an open competition and where the Minister is responsible for final selection):				
Liam Ryan	01/11/2021	n/a	31/10/2026	Open competition appointment Practicing Solicitor, fulfilling s4(3)(b)(ii) of the 1995 Act
Michael Bourke	01/11/2021	n/a	31/10/2026	Open competition appointment Former solicitor, fulfilling s4(3)(a) of the 1995 Act
Jane McGowan	03/10/2024	n/a	31/10/2026	Open competition appointment Practicing Barrister, fulfilling s4(3)(b)(i) of the 1995 Act
Donnchadh Woulfe	03/10/2025	n/a	31/10/2026	Open competition appointment Practicing Barrister, fulfilling s4(3)(b)(i) of the 1995 Act

Name	Date of first Appointment	Date of re-appointment	Term Expiry date	Basis of Appointment
Members eligible for re-appointment (who were appointed following a nomination process):				
Niamh O'Hanlon	01/11/2021	n/a	31/10/2026	Legal Aid Board Staff representative, fulfilling s4(3)(b)(iii) of the 1995 Act
Maeve Brett	08/03/2024	n/a	31/10/2026	Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation representative
Sara Kearney	03/10/2025	n/a	31/10/2026	Legal Aid Board Staff representative, fulfilling s4(3)(b)(iii) of the 1995 Act
Members, having served two terms, who are not eligible for re-appointment:				
Nuala Egan BL Chairperson)	21/02/2017	01/11/2021 Appointed as chairperson 04/01/2024	31/10/2026	Open competition appointment Practicing Barrister, fulfilling s4(3)(b)(i) of the 1995 Act
Freda McKittrick	01/11/2016	01/11/2021	31/10/2026	Open competition appointment fulfilling s4(3)(a) of the 1995 Act
Gordon Jeyes	01/11/2016	01/11/2021	31/10/2026	Open competition appointment fulfilling s4(3)(a) of the 1995 Act
Catherine Keane	09/06/2020	01/11/2021	31/10/2026	Open competition appointment Practicing Solicitor, fulfilling s4(3)(b)(ii) of the 1995 Act
Maurice Lawlor	01/11/2016	01/11/2021	31/10/2026	Department of Social Protection representative
Tracy O'Keeffe	01/08/2021	01/11/2021	31/10/2026	Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration representative.

Committee Structure

At the start of 2025, the Board had five committees supporting the work of the Board namely:

Appeal Committee

This Appeal Committee considers requests by legal aid applicants for decisions made by the executive in a particular case to be reversed. The Appeal Committee is chaired by Mr Liam Ryan and met sixteen times in 2025

Audit, Risk and Finance Committee

This committee supports the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities in relation to good financial governance, financial reporting, risk management and control systems.

The Audit, Risk and Finance Committee is chaired by Mr. Gordon Jeyes. The Audit, Risk and Finance Committee convened eight times in 2025 and seven times in 2024.

IT Committee

On the 29 January 2025 the Committee approved its Terms of Reference which were subsequently presented at the meeting of the Statutory Board held on 30th January 2025. Ms. Freda McKittrick was Chairperson during 2025. The IT Committee met a total of five times during 2025.

The IT Committee is a Committee of the Board to consider general IT matters within the Board and to consider the implementation of the IT elements of the Information and Communications Strategy (ICS) as agreed by the Board on 22 February 2024.

The IT Committee will consider the implementation of the IT transformation program. The committee will have a broad scope to consider the impact of the changes on the working methods of all areas of the Board. The committee will from time to time focus on timelines for delivery and review and receive updates on the delivery of each of the stages of the program and on the goals of the next stages and any barriers to progress.

Performance Committee

The Performance Committee is set up to consider the objectives of the Chief Executive and the extent to which those objectives have been achieved. The Performance Committee is chaired by Mr. Gordon Jeyes and met three times in 2025 and four times in 2024.

Strategy Committee

The role of the Strategy Committee is to support the work of the Board in relation to:

- Overseeing the implementation of the Statement of Strategy 2024 – 2026,
- Support the new Strategy 2027-2029,
- Reviewing the strategic objectives and organisational priorities of the Board,
- Considering any relevant areas of reform including new areas of work, and policy initiatives or proposed legislation that may have implications for the work of the Board.

The Committee will report and make recommendations to the Board as it considers appropriate. The Strategy Committee was chaired by Ms. Catherine Ryan until June 2025 being replaced by Jane McGowan from July 2025 and it met four times in 2025 and twice in 2024.

Key Personnel Changes During 2025

- Mr. Tomás Keane was appointed Director of Information, Communications, Technology & Criminal Legal Aid on 12 May 2025.
- Ms. Adrienne Doherty was appointed as Director of Human Resources on 1 December 2025.

Matters specifically reserved to the Board itself

In compliance with the requirement in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the Board has a formal schedule of matters specifically reserved to it for decision to ensure that the direction and control of the body is firmly in its hands. In the case of the Legal Aid Board, the matters specifically reserved are:

- Significant acquisition, disposal and retirement of assets. The Board must approve acquisitions, disposals and retirement of assets with an anticipated value at or above a threshold level of €65,000; The Board is to be notified of any acquisitions/disposals/retirement of assets with a value at or above €10,000;
- No contract valued over €65,000 can be entered, directly or by way of draw down, without the prior approval of the Board. The Audit, Risk and Finance Committee is to be notified of the awarding of contracts with a value over€10,000;
- Approval of terms of major contracts;
- Assurances of compliance with statutory and administrative requirements in relation to the approval of the appointment, number, grading, and conditions of all staff, including remuneration and superannuation;
- Approval of the Annual Budget;
- Approval of the Legal Aid Board's Corporate Plans which are prepared every 3 years;
- Approval of the annual report and financial statements consistent with the Board's obligations under the 1995 Act;
- Approval of recommendations to the Minister for the amendment of legislation;
- Approval of Legal Aid Board policy documents which it is proposed to publish or disseminate;
- Responsibility for systems of internal financial and other controls;
- Delegated authority levels and risk management policies;
- Appointment, remuneration and assessment of the performance of, and succession planning for, the Chief Executive; and
- Significant amendments to the pension benefits of the Chief Executive and staff (which may require Ministerial approval).

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies provides that the Board should meet at least twice a year without executive Board members or management present to discuss any matters deemed relevant.

In the case of the Legal Aid Board, Section 4 (6) of the Act states that the Board shall hold such and so many meetings as may be necessary for the performance of its functions.

Delegations to Management

Under the provisions of Section 10(2) of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995, the Board may assign certain functions to the Chief Executive. The Board has formally assigned responsibility for the day-to-day management of the provision of a legal aid and advice service to the Chief Executive, subject to the provisions of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995 and any Regulations made under the Act.

Specifically, the Board has assigned the following functions to the Chief Executive:

- Reporting to and advising the Board on the operation of the legal aid and advice service;
- Ensuring that the legal aid and advice service is administered in the most efficient and cost-effective manner;
- Decision making in relation to the provision of legal aid and advice in individual cases;
- Management of the dissemination, for the benefit of those for whom its services are made available, of information in relation to those services and their availability;
- The nomination of solicitors and barristers for the purpose of providing a person with legal aid and advice or the referral of a person to the solicitors' panel as appropriate;
- Liaison between the Board and relevant interests including its clients and the public generally;
- Monitoring and evaluating the performance of the law centres and their staff;
- Maintaining a high standard of communication with the Board, law centres and staff;
- Subject to any policy directives of the Minister and / or of the Board, policy development and the formulation and implementation of suitable strategies;
- Management of the Board's resources, including physical resources;
- Management of human resource matters; and
- Financial management, including the keeping of appropriate accounts and records as provided for in Section 20 of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995.

In turn, the Chief Executive may, with the consent of the Board, specify any of these functions to be performed by a member of staff. The Board's resolutions set out the decisions taken by the Board in these matters. The Chief Executive is accountable to the Public Accounts Committee of the Oireachtas. This is on the basis that the financial statements of the State body are audited by the Controller and Auditor General and laid before the Oireachtas in accordance with the State body's governing legislation.

Schedule of Attendance

In 2025, the Board held 11 board meetings. The meetings took place in a combination of video conference and in-person formats. A schedule of attendance at the board meetings, fees and expenses paid for 2025 are set out below:

	Board	Committees of the Board					Fees €	Expenses €
		Appeal committee	IT committee	Audit, Risk & Finance committee	Performance committee	Strategy committee		
Number of meetings:	11	16	5	8	3	4		
Board Members								
Nuala Egan	11	-	-	6	3	-	11,970	419
Catherine Keane	9	1	3	-	3	-	7,695	203
Gordon Jeyes	9	-	-	8	3	-	7,695	68
Maurice Lawlor	11	14	-	-	-	-	-	2,070
Freda McKittrick	8	13	5	-	-	-	7,695	-
Tracy O'Keeffe	9	-	-	2	-	3	-	-
Michael Patrick Bourke	11	15	-	-	3	-	4,609	-
Patrick Durcan*	4	9	-	1	-	-	4,871	1,223
Niamh O'Hanlon	8	-	5	-	-	4	-	-
Catherine Ryan*	6	1	-	-	-	2	-	1,101
Liam Ryan	9	15	-	-	-	2	7,695	430
Jane McGowan	10	12	-	-	-	4	7,695	-
Maeve Brett	9	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
Sara Kearney*	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Donnchadh Woulfe*	2	-	-	-	-	-	1,924	-
Michael Flynn External**	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-
Keith Moran External**	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	
Total							**61,849**	**5,514**

Maurice Lawlor, Tracy O'Keeffe, Niamh O'Hanlon, Catherine Ryan and Maeve Brett and Sara Kearney, who are public servants, did not receive a Board Fee under the One Person One Salary principle.
*Patrick Durkan and Catherine Ryan both resigned in 2025 being replaced by Sara Kearney and Donnchadh Woulfe
**Michael Flynn is an external member of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee having received a fee of €3,078 and Keith Moran is an external member if the IT Committee having received a fee of €1,197 these expenses are included in Consultancy costs.

Disclosures Required by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016)

The Board is responsible for ensuring that the Legal Aid Board has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies ("the Code"), as published by the Department of Public Expenditure, infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation in August 2016. The following disclosures are required by the Code:

Employees' short-term benefits breakdown

Employees' short-term benefits in excess of €60,000 are shown in note 6(b) to the financial statements 2025.

Key management personnel

The key management personnel in the Legal Aid Board are:

- The Chief Executive,
- The Director of Decision Making and External Services (Civil),
- The Director of Human Resources, Learning and Development,
- The Director of Information, Communications, Technology and Criminal Legal Aid. (On 12 May 2025 Criminal Legal Aid was moved from the Corporate Services Directorate to the Director of Information, Communications and Technology)
- The Director of Family Mediation,
- The Director and Regional Managers of Internal Service Delivery (Civil), and
- The Director of Corporate Services

The total value of short-term employee benefits for key management personnel in 2025 was €972,004. (2024: €1,007,803.) The key management personnel are members of an unfunded defined benefit public sector scheme, and their pension entitlements do not extend beyond the standard entitlements for such schemes.

Consultancy Costs

Year	2025 €	2024 €
Legal advice – Property	732,300	674,927
Human resources and information technology	477,599	22,140
Business improvement	92,689	114,263
	1,302,588	811,330

Legal costs and settlements

The table below provides a breakdown of amounts recognised as expenditure/(income) in the reporting period in relation to settlements or judgements in legal actions taken against the Legal Aid Board, and the legal fees associated with these actions. The Legal Aid Board self-insures in respect of Public Liability/Employer Liability matters. A figure of €22,420 credit has (2024: €307,240 credit) has been included in Litigation liabilities in 2025 for public liability. The Legal Aid Board recognises the latter under Note 11 General Administration: Insurance.

It does not include legal fees incurred by the Legal Aid Board on behalf of its clients in the normal course of business, or general legal advice on other matters received by the Legal Aid Board, which is disclosed in Consultancy Costs above.

Year	2025 €	2024 €
Litigation liabilities (includes public liability)	32,875	(402,935)
Legal Fees – Legal proceedings	62,117	(7,939)
	94,992	(410,874)

Travel and subsistence expenditure

Year	2025 €	2024 €
Domestic		
- Board*	15,856	16,312
- Employees	636,129	483,167
International		
- Board	-	-
- Employees	3,477	894
	655,462	500,373

*Includes travel and subsistence of €5,514 paid directly to Board members in 2025 (2024: €5,172). The balance of €10,342 (2024: €11,140) relates to expenditure paid by the Legal Aid Board on behalf of the Board members.

Hospitality expenditure

Hospitality expenditure of €13,310 (2024: €7,998) was incurred by the Legal Aid Board during 2025, of which approximately €533 (2024: €2,208) was incurred for external hospitality provided. The balance of €12,777 (2024: €5,790) related to expenditure incurred under the staff support and well-being program.

Risk Management

The board has established a risk management system in line with ISO Standards. The Corporate Risk Register is a live document that is a regular item on Executive Management Team and Board Meeting agendas. The Legal Aid Board principal risks are reviewed and managed regularly. The principal risks include Prompt Payment, Financial Reporting and Health and Safety risk relating to violence and aggression in the workplace.

The Legal Aid Board has a comprehensive set of internal controls across all its functional areas. These are reviewed annually by the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee. There is a programme of regular reporting to the Statutory Board on developments in relation to risk, including a Risk Register and Risk Realisation Report.

External Review of the Board

As outlined under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016), the Board is obliged to conduct an annual self-assessment of its performance. The Annual Board Performance Review for 2025 was initiated in July 2026 for all members of the Board. The final report from this review was completed in September 2026. An external review of the Board was completed, and findings were presented at the March 2026 Board meeting.

Public Spending Code

The Legal Aid Board seeks to obtain maximum value for all its expenditures. Its primary area of non-pay expenditure is in the referral of client cases to private legal practitioners. The fee rates for such referrals are set out by the Legal Aid Board in the terms and conditions for the panels of private legal practitioners.

In other procurements, the Legal Aid Board operates under Public Procurement Guidelines and utilises the Office of Government Procurement centralised purchasing arrangements wherever this is possible.

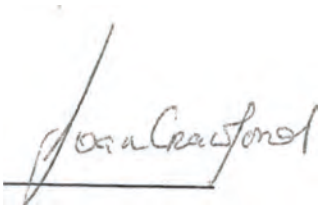
Statement of Compliance

The Board has adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) and has put procedures in place to ensure compliance with the Code. The Legal Aid Board was in compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies in 2025.



Nuala Egan
Chairperson

Date:25/9/2026



Joan Crawford
Chief Executive

Date: 25/9/2026

Appendix A: Progressing the Statement of Strategy 2024-2026 in 2025

The table below summarises the progress made during 2025 in advancing the Legal Aid Board's Statement of Strategy 2024-2026. It is organised by strategic theme and numbered strategic action.

1 Quality of Service

Ref	Strategic objective	Status at end 2025	Progress at end 2025
1.a	The development of environments that are client-friendly and accessible and, where appropriate, child-friendly.	In progress	Throughout 2025, the Legal Aid Board continued to deliver a significant programme of property, accommodation and facilities management initiatives aimed at maintaining and modernising its estate and supporting effective service delivery. Major progress was achieved across several capital projects, including the successful completion of refurbishment works at Woodquay, Galway, substantial progress towards completion of the Smithfield redevelopment project, and the commencement of construction works at the Eight Building, which remained on schedule throughout the year. The Legal Aid Board also successfully concluded a number of significant leasehold, dilapidation, and property-related matters across its estate portfolio, while continuing to actively manage landlord relationships, lease obligations and accommodation risks. A notable achievement during the year was the successful relocation of the Waterford Law Centre to temporary accommodation at Otteran Place, ensuring continuity of client services following the fire incident at Railway Square. This complex project involved securing new premises, coordinating the relocation of operations, and establishing the office for public use within a compressed timeframe. Planning and preparatory work also progressed on several future accommodation projects, including proposed works at Cavan and Tralee, while ongoing engagement with landlords, professional advisors, project managers and local management teams supported the continued development of a safe, compliant, and fit-for-purpose estate for staff and service users.

1 Quality of Service (cont)

Ref	Strategic objective	Status at end 2025	Progress at end 2025
1.b	The establishment of a quality-assurance system to assist in the preparation of improvement plans and the identification of best practice.	In progress	Updates to the Administrative Procedures Handbook and Circular continued during the year. Work also progressed on the Quality Assurance Framework for Service Delivery, with surveys conducted and collated. Completion of the Quality Assurance Review is expected by the end of Q2 2026.
1.c	The promotion of feedback from all clients to generate data to improve our practice.	In progress	An improved client feedback survey was developed and issued to clients to capture feedback on service quality. The Quality Assurance Framework within Civil Operations is being assessed and reviewed, with reporting expected in Q2 2026.
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.	In progress	The resource allocation model forms part of the implementation planning arising from the organisational review.
1.e	The monitoring of waiting times and the establishment of minimum-service standards in the context of resources, vacancies, and local circumstances.	Operational	Waiting times continued to be monitored on a consistent and regular basis, with mitigation measures employed as appropriate.

2 Serving the Community

Ref	Strategic objective	Status at end 2025	Progress at end 2025
2.a	To learn from the Mincéir/Traveller Legal Support Service and explore similar projects where a gap in service uptake is identified.	In progress	A review of the Mincéir/Traveller Legal Support Service is being undertaken.
2.b	To approve and implement the organisation's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy.	In progress	The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy has been identified as a priority for 2026.
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.	Operational	The objective is completed and embedded as operational. Engagement and collaboration with the Department of Justice, the Courts Service and related statutory bodies continued and will remain an ongoing feature of the Legal Aid Board's work.
2.d	To develop further consultation and joint working with NGOs	Operational	The objective is completed and embedded as operational. Engagement with NGOs continued, including through the External Consultative Panel and other stakeholder engagements, and will remain an ongoing feature of the Legal Aid Board's work.
2.e	To provide services informed by trauma and seek to eliminate re-traumatisation, being cognisant of the vulnerability of many of our clients	Operational	The objective is completed and embedded as operational. Trauma-informed practice training continues to be offered to staff and the process for providing this training is in place.

3 Mediation and Alternatives to Court-Based Dispute Resolution

Ref	Strategic objective	Status at end 2025	Progress at end 2025
3.a	To ensure the availability of mediation whenever appropriate in all local Law and Mediation Centres and Court houses when agreed	Operational	The objective is completed and embedded as operational. Waiting times for mediation services are monitored and this monitoring will continue to identify areas where mitigation steps may be required.
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.	Partially completed	The objective was partially completed. Continuing professional development for mediators remained in place, and further discussions on funding for mediator training and trainee mediator positions were identified for 2026.
3.c	To promote, through national and local campaigns, the nature of mediation and its effectiveness in specific circumstances.	Operational	The objective is completed and embedded as operational. Public awareness activity in relation to mediation will continue, including further targeted communications activity.
3.d	To develop further expertise in alternative dispute resolution	Operational	The objective is completed and embedded as operational. Alternative dispute resolution was included in the Legal Aid Board's main event in 2025 and will continue to feature in future events, conferences and relevant learning initiatives.

4 Civil Justice Reform and Reorganisation

Ref	Strategic objective	Status at end 2025	Progress at end 2025
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;	Operational	The objective is completed. The Legal Aid Board's involvement as a lead agency in the implementation of the Family Justice Strategy concluded, while implementation of relevant actions within the Legal Aid Board's remit continues as operational work.
4.b	To influence and prepare for the outcome of the review of Civil Legal Aid.	Operational	The review of civil legal aid was completed and the reports were published. The Legal Aid Board provided its response to the recommendations. Further work will focus on implementing any recommendations accepted by the Minister that fall within the Legal Aid Board's remit.
4.c	To prepare for taking full responsibility for the administration of criminal legal aid.	In progress	Internal reform activity commenced and preparation for expanded criminal legal aid scheme responsibilities continued. Engagement with justice bodies progressed, covering database access, fee schedules and transition milestones, and engagement by IT on system requirements.
4.d	To seek strong partnerships with other Government agencies to ensure a holistic approach to emerging areas such as assisted decision-making.	Operational	The objective is completed and embedded as operational. Collaboration with other Government agencies, including in relation to assisted decision-making and related policy areas, will continue.
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.	Substantially completed	The objective is completed apart from finalisation of the Law Centre Voice of the Child Policy. Work on Voice of the Child policy arrangements for law centre operations will continue.

5 Culture, People, and Communications

Ref	Strategic objective	Status at end 2025	Progress at end 2025
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.	Partially completed	The 2025 priority was partially completed. The Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey report was finalised for consideration by the CEO and Board and is intended to inform the People Strategy in 2026.
5.b	To respond to an organisational and structural review.	Partially completed	The 2025 priority was partially completed. Phase 1 of the organisational review implementation plan is moving forward in 2026, with implementation dependent on available resources and budget allocation.
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.	Partially completed	The 2025 priority was partially completed. Engagement with Managing Solicitors continued, audit tracking arrangements were progressed and work continued on a resource allocation model as part of the organisational review implementation work.
5.d	To implement comprehensive digital transformation	Partially completed and ongoing	The strategic objective was partially completed and remains ongoing. The initial deployment of the modern digital desktop was completed for 108 users across selected locations and business units. Microsoft 365 deployment, device management improvements, cloud disaster recovery, case management optimisation and the establishment of the Digital Solutions team all progressed during 2025.
5.e	To develop the website in the interests of clients seeking interactive assistance, enabling clients to locate the right service and advice.	Completed and operational	The strategic objective is completed. A refreshed website was launched in 2025. Ongoing work to improve layout, content and usability will continue as part of normal operational management.
5.f	To ensure effective and inclusive communications using a wide range of media and with all staff, management, and non-executive board members.	Partially completed and ongoing	The strategic objective was partially completed and remains ongoing. The staff newsletter review was completed, with results informing future publications, and further newsletters issued in October and December 2025.

5 Culture, People, and Communications (cont)

Ref	Strategic objective	Status at end 2025	Progress at end 2025
5.g	To approve and implement the organisation's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.	Partially completed	The 2025 priority was partially completed. Finalisation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is planned for 2026.
5.h	To market the opportunities and rewards associated with working for the Legal Aid Board.	Partially completed	The 2025 priority was partially completed. Work commenced on a draft People Strategy, with finalisation planned for 2026, and recruitment-related promotional activity continued.
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.	Operational	The objective is completed and embedded as operational. Revised terms and conditions for the District Court Private Practitioner Scheme and for the retention of barristers were submitted to the Department of Justice. The Legal Aid Board will continue to explore further opportunities to attract solicitors and barristers to undertake work for the Legal Aid Board.

Appendix B: Tables and Charts

Table 6 - Cases Handled in Law Centres 2020-2025

Year*	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total	16,236	16,400	16,477	16,526	17,646	16,663

*Data for all years include international protection cases

Chart 3 - Cases Handled in Law Centres 2020-2025

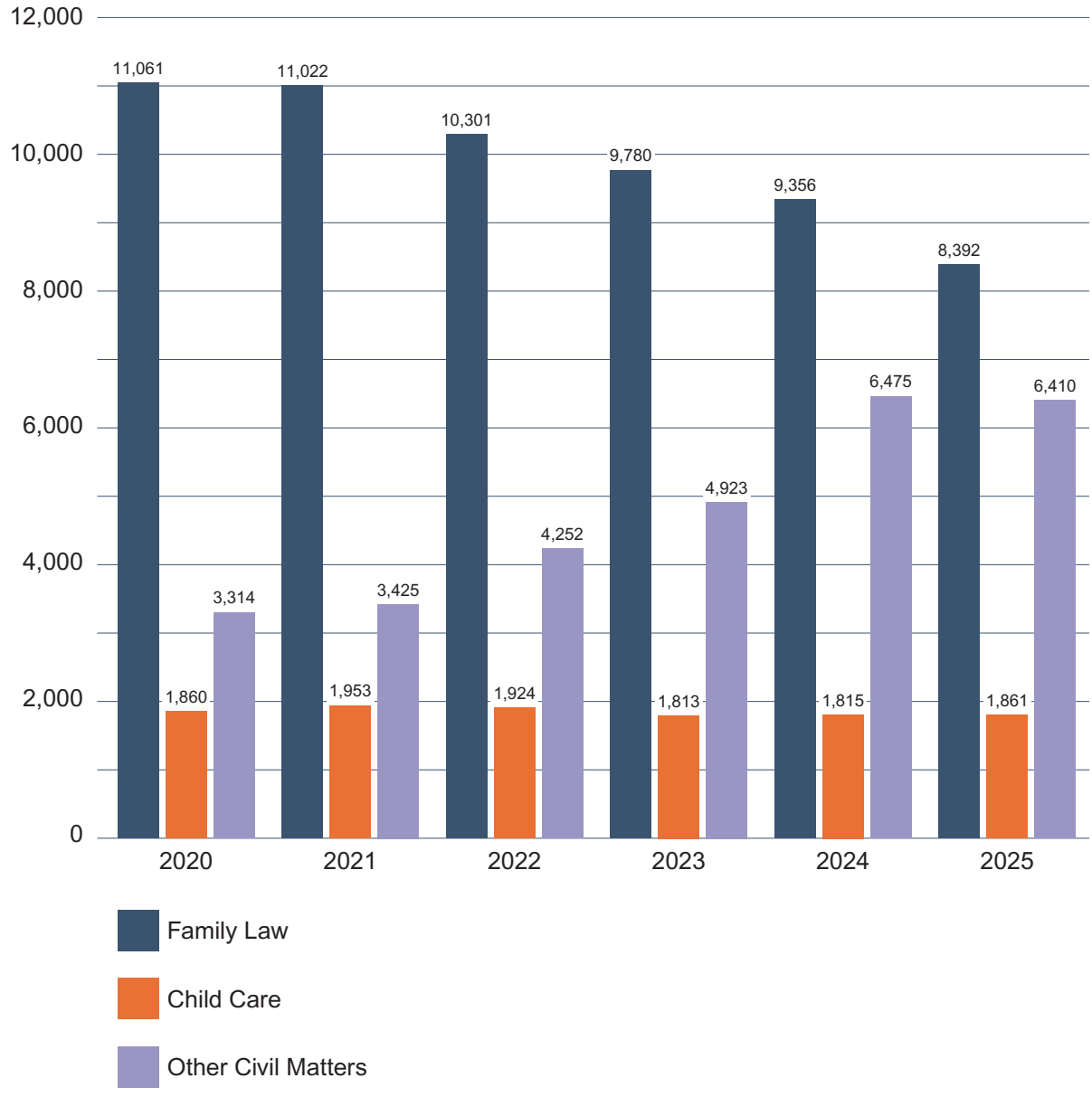


Chart 4 - Cases by Subject Matter 2025

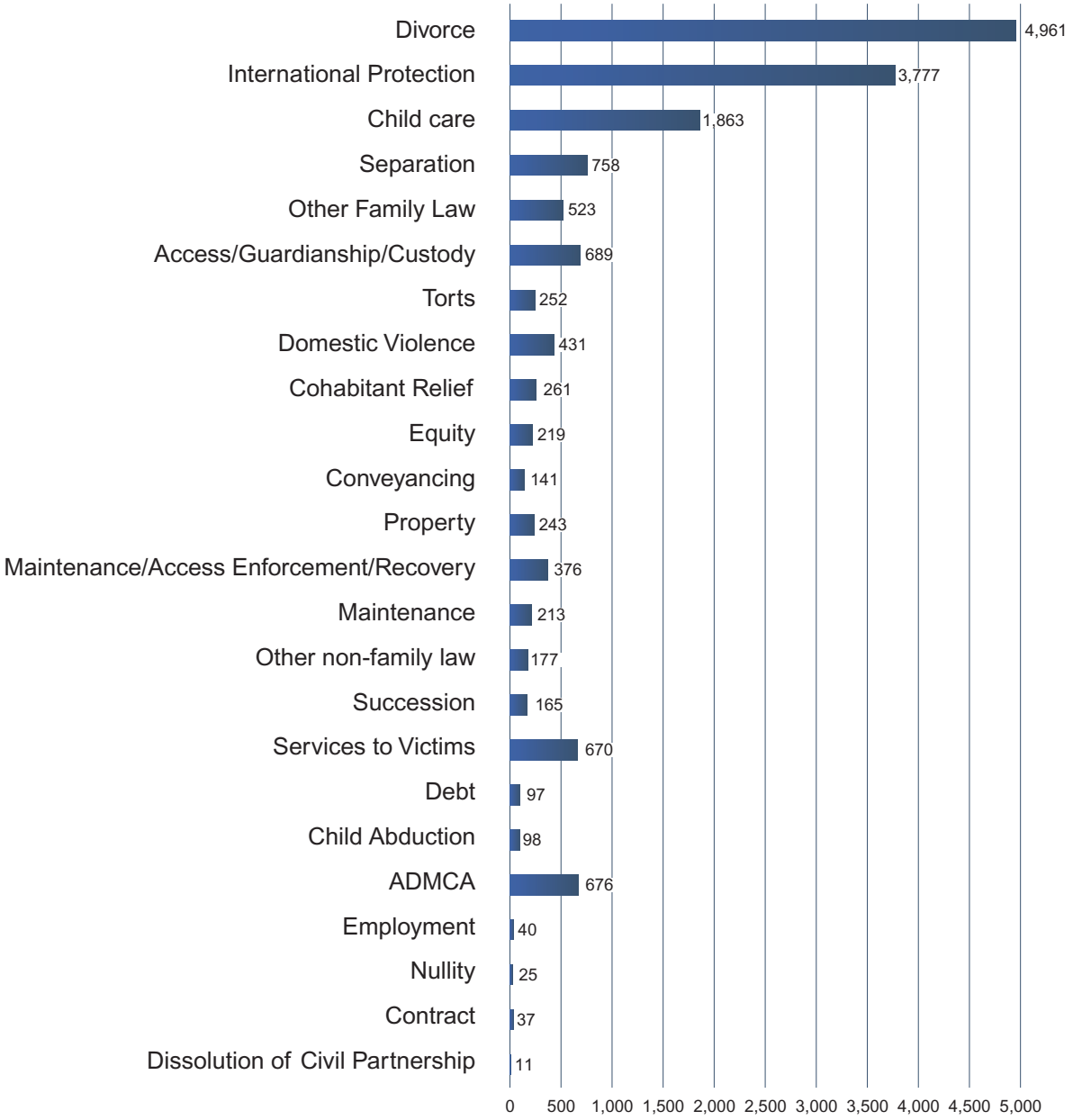


Table 7 - New Cases in Law Centres

Year	2020*	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
New Cases	5,261	5,025	5,289	6,118	6,996	5,594

*Including international protection cases

Table 8 - Cases Handled in 2025, Year of Application

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number	1,706	2,279	3,780	5,199	5,954	4,523

Table 9 - Number of Cases Closed 2020-2025

Year	2020*	2021*	2022*	2023*	2024*	2025*
Cases Closed	4,841	4,903	5,561	5,360	5,444	5,553

*Including international protection cases

Table 10 - Cases Completed in 2025, Length of Time Open

Case Type	<1 Year	1-2 Year	2-3 Years	3+ Years	Total
International protection	379	389	209	52	**1029**
Child care	188	97	71	145	**501**
Divorce/separation/nullity	332	404	299	838	**1873**
Non-family law	548	215	47	80	**890**
Other family law	788	269	93	110	**1260**
Totals	**2,235**	**1,374**	**719**	**1,225**	**5,553**

Chart 5 - Civil and Family Law Cases Active at 31 December 2025

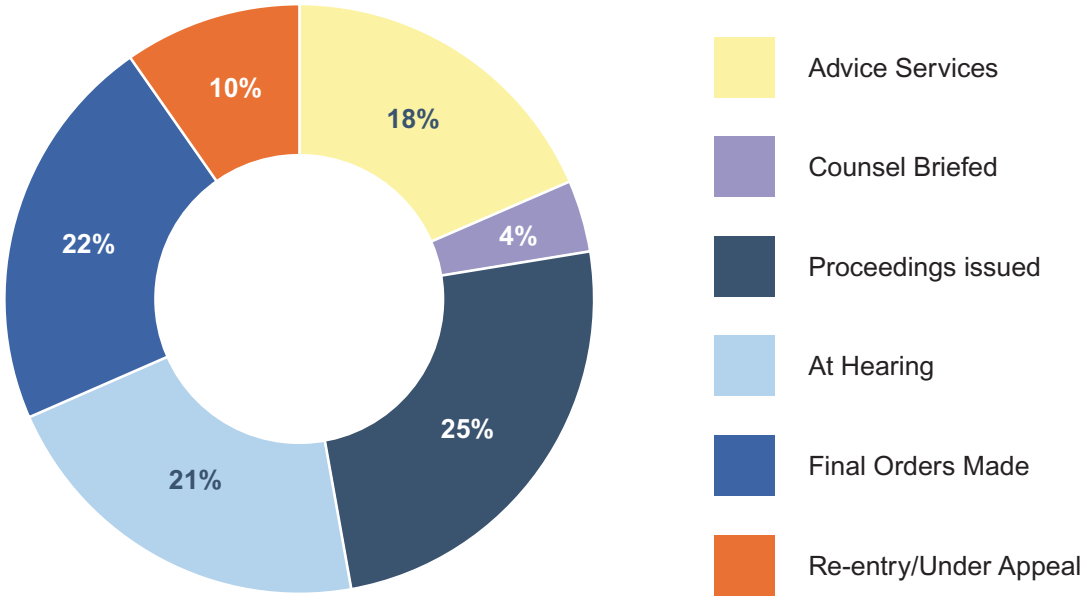


Table 11 - Number of Persons Waiting at 31 December 2025

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number Waiting	2,019	1,588	1,279	950	1,269	1,269	1,643

Table 12 - Waiting Times for First Consultation in Law Centres at 31 December 2025

	Waiting for 1st Consultation	
Law Centre	**Max waiting time (weeks)**	**Numbers Waiting**
Athlone	12	28
Ballymun	56	101
Blanchardstown	5	3
Castlebar	36	109
Cavan	32	42
Clondalkin	28	33
Cork Popes Quay	21	72
Cork South Mall	13	57
Dundalk	16	21
Ennis	46	61
Galway Francis St	27	46
Galway Woodquay*	12	17
Jervis Street*	45	119
Kilkenny*	8	21
Letterkenny*	24	53
Limerick	43	130
Longford	23	45
Minceir Traveller Legal Support Service	49	24
Monaghan	15	18
Navan	36	95
Nenagh	19	53
Newbridge	28	27
Portlaoise*	25	35
Sligo	64	120
Smithfield	22	76
Tallaght	37	79
Tralee	29	59
Tullamore	15	11
Waterford	46	71
Wexford	40	61
Wicklow	12	22

*Including international protection cases

Table 13 - Breakdown by Type of Cases Receiving Priority Service

Case Type	Total
Child care	583
Child abduction	47
Family Law, including Domestic Violence	2,962
International Protection	1,116
Legal Services for victims of crime	876
Assisted Decision-Making	404

Table 14 - International Protection Applications

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
LAB Applications	1,174	1,464	6,858	9,918	11,689	8,631
IPO*	1,566	2,649	13,651	13,277	18,561	13,162

*International Protection Office Applications taken from website

Chart 6 - International Protection Case Outcomes 2025

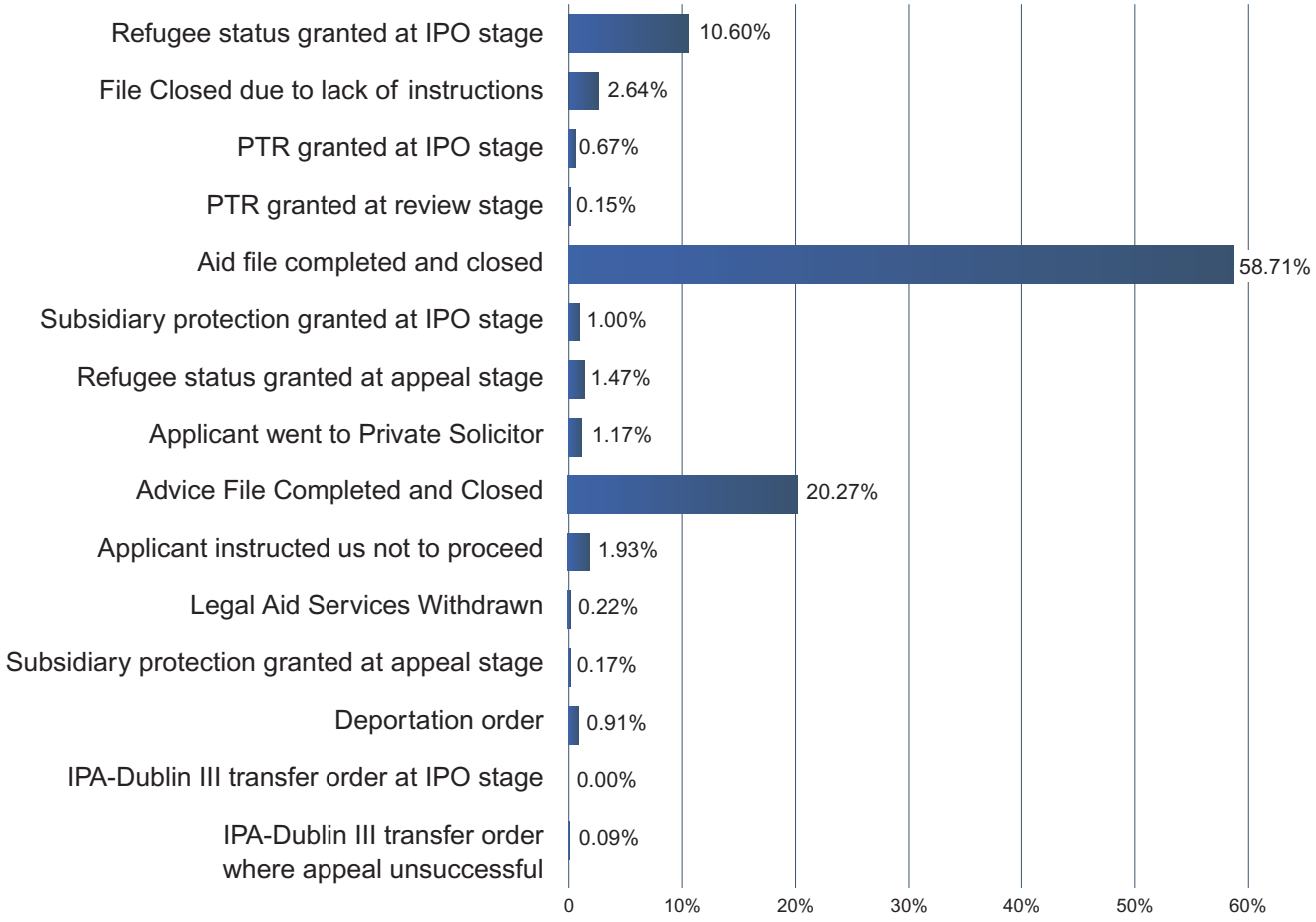


Chart 7 - Country of Origin Registration 2025

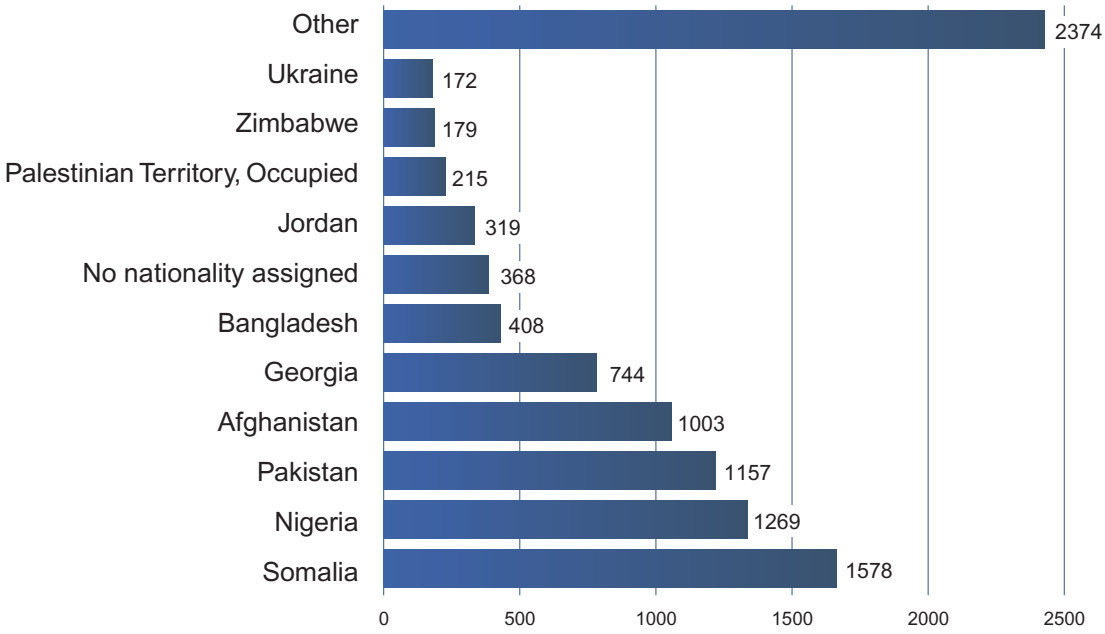


Chart 8 - Country of Origin Registration 2025

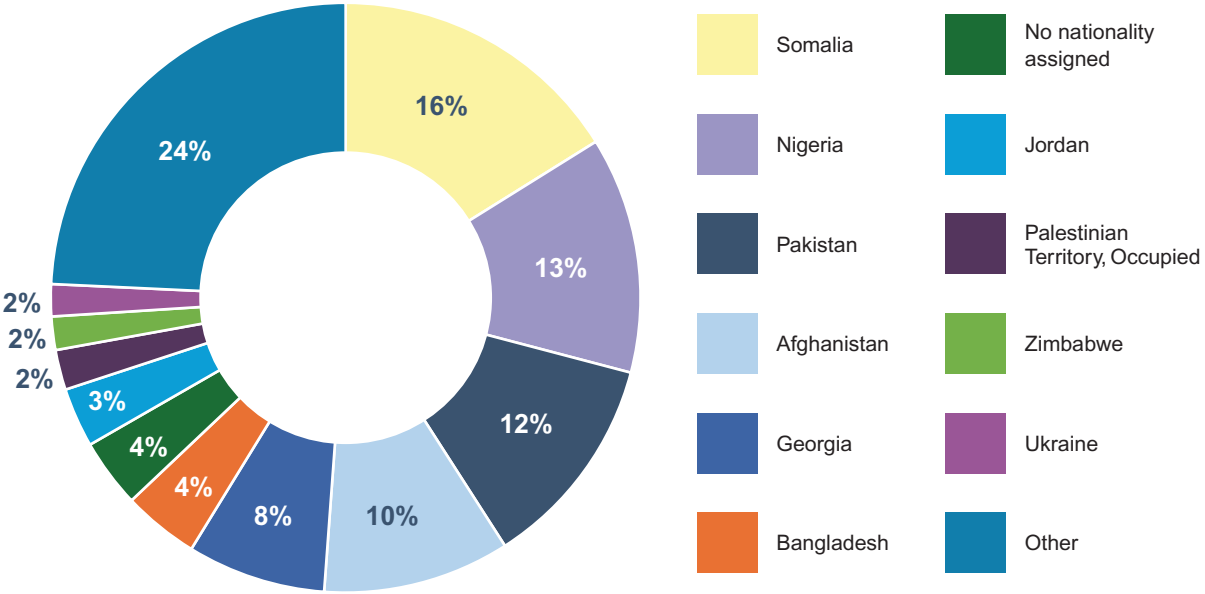
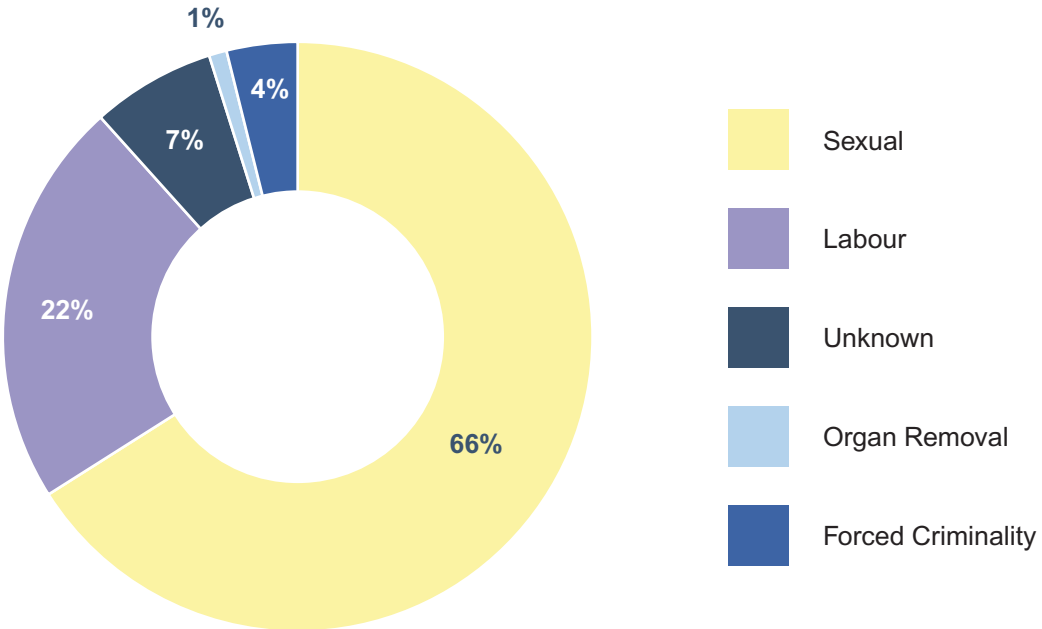


Chart 9 - Human Trafficking Cases Referred to the Legal Aid Board During 2025



The Family Mediation Service in Numbers

Table 15 - New Cases 2021-2025

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Issues (couples)	1,186	1,148	1,199	1985	1,694
Court Based	326	355	314	309	439
Telephone Helpline Cases	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**1,512**	**1,503**	**1,513**	**2,294**	**2,133**

Table 16 - Total Agreements 2025

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All Issues (couples)	819	726	707	844	735
Court Based	187	291	221	201	273
Telephone Helpline Cases	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**1,006**	**1,017**	**928**	**1045**	**1,008**

Table 17 - Total Joint Mediation Sessions and Information Sessions 2020-2025

	Sessions	All Issues (Couples)	Court Based	Telephone Helpline Cases	Total
2020	Joint	7,563	1,886	1,906	11,355
	Information	438	780**	733	1,951
2021	Joint	5,716	1,233	-	6,949
	Pre Mediation	1,340	971**	-	2,311
2022	Joint	5,201	910**	-	6,111
	Pre Mediation	2,494	992**	-	3,486
2023	Joint	5,286	693	-	5,979
	Pre Mediation	2,459	1,038	-	3,497
2024	Joint	5,695	1,216	-	6,911
	Pre Mediation	2,892	1,023	-	3,915
2025	Joint	5,394	1,124	-	6,518
	Pre Mediation	2,857	985	-	3,842

**Additional court cases completed in Full-time offices

Table 18 - Cases closed 2020-2025

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Cases Closed (including Information Sessions)	2,687	3,867	3,196	2,911	3,262	2,738
Cases not progressed to Mediation	695	665	796	776	873	407
Total Mediation Cases Closed (excluding cases opened but not progressed beyond Information Sessions/Pre-mediation Sessions)	1,992	3,202	2,400	2,135	2,389	2,331

Table 19 - Demand/Service Provision

Office	New Cases 2025	Total Mediation Sessions	Reached agreement
Athlone	2025	344	78
Ballymun	243	487	69
Carlow	32	198	22
Castlebar	61	239	47
Cork	162	701	109
Dolphin House	335	659	211
Dundalk	87	152	12
Ennis	48	168	31
Galway	96	271	40
Jervis Street	193	747	92
Kilkenny	54	207	22
Letterkenny	40	208	21
Limerick*	132	571	67
Portlaoise	53	60	7
Sligo	47	3	1
Tallaght	213	702	89
Tralee	40	305	52
Waterford	87	405	30
Wexford	67	91	8
Total	**2133**	**6518**	**1008**

*Includes Nenagh

Table 20 - Family Mediation Law Centre Referrals 2025

Centre	1st Pre-Mediation Session	2nd Pre-Mediation Session	Total Mediation Sessions	Reached agreement
Athlone	15	15	34	11
Ballymun	0	0	1	1
Carlow	0	0	0	0
Castlebar	19	19	59	14
Cork	11	10	34	4
Dolphin House	0	0	11	2
Dundalk	7	7	8	1
Ennis	5	5	10	3
Galway	0	1	1	0
Jervis Street	5	5	17	1
Kilkenny	8	8	29	2
Letterkenny	7	6	26	5
Limerick	4	3	10	1
Nenagh	3	3	8	1
Portlaoise	1	1	5	0
Sligo	0	0	0	0
Tallaght	2	2	6	1
Tralee	16	12	40	8
Waterford	0	0	0	0
Wexford	2	1	6	0
Total	**105**	**98**	**305**	**55**

Table 21 - Court-Based Mediation Initiatives 2025

Office	New Cases (1st Joint Mediation Session)	Total Sessions	Agreements
Athlone	0	0	0
Ballymun	4	14	2
Carlow	19	51	10
Castlebar	0	0	0
Cork	29	61	23
Dolphin House	240	450	208
Dundalk	2	11	0
Ennis	7	14	7
Galway	0	0	0
Jervis Street	3	14	3
Kilkenny	1	3	1
Letterkenny	0	0	0
Limerick	18	48	13
Nenagh	2	4	2
Portlaoise	5	16	2
Sligo	0	0	0
Tallaght	2	4	1
Tralee	4	12	0
Waterford	1	7	1
Wexford	0	0	0
Total	**337**	**709**	**273**

Table 22 - Family Mediation Office Waiting Times 2020-2025

Office	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Athlone	49	8	32	13	10	11
Ballymun	24	12	24	17	9	15
Carlow	8	15	14	24	10	15
Castlebar	Vacant	26	Vacant	16	14	6
Cork	24	14	7	13	9	4
Dolphin House	-	-	-	-	5	15
Dundalk	32	24	11	26	13	13
Ennis	-	-	-	-	13	13
Galway	16	12	10	18	12	16
Jervis Street	24	24	16	15	6	5
Kilkenny	8	15	14	20	10	30
Letterkenny	20	6	8	14	11	2
Limerick	12	15	5	15	7	12
Nenagh	-	-	-	-	11	12
Portlaoise	28	10	20	7	14	12
Sligo	15	10	12	31	16	9
Tallaght	36	15	22	20	13	8
Tralee	24	10	2	13	4	3
Waterford	16	4	7	15	13	22
Wexford	28	13	10	16	15	47

Table 23 - Number of Legal Aid Submissions Granted and Refused 2025

	Granted	Refused
Family Law Legal Aid Certificate	10,701	32
International Protection Legal Aid Certificate	11,948	0
Review of PIA Legal Aid Certificate	359	2
Non-Family Law Legal Aid Certificate	1,142	102
Amendments to all types of certificates	7,867	14
Authorisations- all case types	526	10
Waiver or reduction of Contribution	9,621	47
Waiver of Costs	168	23
Termination & Revocation of Legal Aid Certificate	148	3
Instalment Arrangement	275	0
Coroners' Inquest Certificates	14	0

Table 24 - Garda Station Legal Advice Revised Scheme - Annual Expenditure of claims processed

Year	Number of claims authorised for payment	Total Sessions
2021	4,177	€1,888,000
2022	3,266	€1,435,000
2023	3,148	€1,439,569
2024	2,746	€1,315,288
2025	1,857	€679,621

Table 25 - Legal Aid – Custody Issues Scheme - Annual Expenditure of claims processed

	2021	2022*	2023*	2024*	2025*
Expenditure	€2.43m	€1.98m	€3.05m	€2.55m	€1.63m

(*Exclusive of VAT)

Table 26 - Criminal Assets Bureau Ad-hoc Legal Aid Scheme

There were four authorised payments in 2025 at a cost of €31,927.08.

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Expenditure	€331,938	€40,846	€57,946	€82,287	€31,927

Notes

An Bord Um Chúnamh Dlíthiúil
Legal Aid Board

ANNUAL REPORT 2025