**Launch of Ballymun Law and Mediation Centre**

**Speech notes for CEO Joan Crawford: AM event**

 **(6 minutes)**

Good morning, Minister and distinguished guests,

It is a great honour to stand before you today as we mark the launch of the new Ballymun Law and Family Mediation Centre.

It is a great honour because today is an important day for both the Legal Aid Board and for the Ballymun community.

For the Legal Aid Board, our new Ballymun Law and Family Meditation Centre embodies our mission to empower communities through accessible civil legal aid and family mediation services. As a state body, the services at our Centre include supported decision-making under the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015, and the Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service. The Family Mediation Service at the Legal Aid Board is co-located at this Centre too. With these services, we tirelessly work to break down barriers, ensuring that people, regardless of socio-economic background, have access to the civil legal aid and family mediation services that they need.

For the Ballymun community, it is through our community-driven engagement that we empower people to navigate legal challenges and family changes, contributing to the resilience of these communities. There is such a thriving community in Ballymun, with community helping community, day in and day out, and we have been made to feel so very welcome already in our new Centre.

As the Legal Aid Board’s 34th national centre, this centre is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together. It is the result of tireless efforts, visionary planning and the collective achievements of so many people. And I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank some of the key contributors.

To Minister Helen McEntee and her Department who have given family law a real prominence, especially in regards to the Family Justice Strategy, I want to thank her and her team most especially for their support.

To the judiciary who work together with us every day. Your continuous support is of the utmost importance. I thank you most especially for the essential role you play in upholding justice and we are deeply thankful for your dedication.

To my team at the Legal Aid Board that I have the pleasure of working with every day. Your hard work and expertise have been critical in turning our vision for a new Law and Family Mediation Centre into a reality. Each of you has played a crucial role in this journey and it is your collective efforts that have brought us to this day.

To my team at the Ballymun Law and Family Mediation Centre who provided their expertise and guidance in the establishment of this new Centre. I thank Area Manager Catherine Fahy, Managing Solicitor Peadar Browne, Managing Solicitor of the Traveller/Mincier Legal Support Service Claire Castinel, and Managing Mediator Keave O’Donnell, along with our administration and support staff. Your unwavering commitment to excellence has made this day possible and I thank you most sincerely.

To the work of the Independent Law Centres and the Ballymun Community Law Centre – along with its founding solicitor Frank Murphy, who was on secondment from the Legal Aid Board when he set up that great service a few years ago. I would like to pay tribute to your work and the welcome you extended to us in coming to Ballymun. We are working so well together already and I look forward to building on this in the future.

It is working alongside such other existing services, that the Ballymun Law and Family Mediation Centre will serve as a vital resource where people and families can seek help, and we estimate that our new Centre will help 2,800 people in its first year.

In fact, every one of you here today has contributed to the success of this Ballymun Law and Mediation Centre in meaningful ways. Your hard work, dedication, passion and support have been a driving force and I thank you for your attendance here today.

What we have seen so far is that the heart of the Legal Aid Board’s impact lies in the stories of those we serve. Each case resolved, each person supported, signifies the importance of access to justice and support. What I have noticed is that when family issues are left unresolved, both communities and overall society can break down. With our services, in particular with our Family Mediation Service, we can help families develop and improve their overall family relationship, and get the chance to meaningfully move on with their lives.

I am so incredibly proud of what we have achieved so far and even more excited about what the future holds. Together, we are making a profound difference in the lives of so many.

In short, I am honoured to have you here today for both the Legal Aid Board and for the Ballymun community in launching the new Law and Family Mediation Centre.

Thank you.

**Speech notes for CEO Joan Crawford: PM event**

 **(6 minutes)**

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It is a great honour to stand before you today as we mark the launch of the new Ballymun Law and Family Mediation Centre.

It is a great honour because today is an important day for both the Legal Aid Board and for the Ballymun community.

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To Minister Helen McEntee and her Department who have given family law a real prominence, especially in regards to the Family Justice Strategy, I personally thanked her and her team earlier today for their support.

To the judiciary who work together with us every day. Their continuous support is of the utmost importance. I shared my thanks with them too earlier, and thanked them most especially for the essential role they play in upholding justice.

To my team at the Legal Aid Board that I have the pleasure of working with every day. Your hard work and expertise have been critical in turning our vision for a new Law and Family Mediation Centre into a reality. Each of you has played a crucial role in this journey and it is your collective efforts that have brought us to this day.

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