

LEGAL AID BOARD



annual report  
**2009**

Access to Justice  
[www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie)

## Mission

To provide a professional, efficient, cost-effective and accessible legal aid and advice service.

## Vision

To facilitate access to justice through the provision of a civil legal aid and advice service which compares favourably with best practice internationally.

## Goals

- Service: To provide a professional, accessible quality service.
- Communications: To put in place an effective public information, education and communication process.
- Resource Management: To achieve the best use of the financial and operational resources allocated to the Board and to ensure value for money.
- Innovation: To ensure the Board is innovative, flexible and responsive in its approach to effective service delivery.
- Capacity Development: To develop the capacity of the Board to deliver a quality professional service.

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# Overview

## 1. Function and purpose

The Legal Aid Board is the statutory, independent body responsible for the provision of civil legal aid and advice to persons of modest means, in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995.

Legal advice is any oral or written advice given by a solicitor or barrister, including writing letters and negotiations.

Legal aid is representation by a solicitor or barrister in court proceedings. A person must first obtain a legal aid certificate, which specifies the legal services being granted, and must pay the legal aid contribution specified on the certificate.

Legal services are provided across a wide range of civil law matters.

## 2. Service provision

Legal aid and advice are provided primarily through a network of law centres by solicitors employed by the Board. A complementary service is provided by solicitors in private practice who are engaged by the Board on a case-by-case basis.

The service is provided on a nationwide basis through 33 full-time and 12 part-time law centres, and includes 3 full-time law centres comprising the Refugee Legal Service (RLS).

The Board also operates a specialised Refugee Documentation Centre, which provides an independent and professional research and library service for all of the main bodies involved in the asylum process.

## 3. Obtaining legal services

A person seeking legal services must apply to any of the law centres set out at Appendix 2 and must complete an application form, stating the subject matter on which legal advice and/or aid is sought and giving details of income and any capital resources.

The Board seeks to ensure that a person who qualifies for legal services will be offered an appointment with a solicitor within a maximum period of 4 months from the time the application is completed. In certain cases, a priority service is provided. Such cases can include domestic violence, child abduction, cases involving applications by the State to take children into care, and cases that have statutory time limits close to expiry.

## 4. Payment for legal services

All persons who are granted legal advice and/or legal aid are required to pay a contribution to the Board. The legal advice contribution is assessed on the applicant's disposable income, i.e. income after certain deductions. The legal aid contribution is assessed on the applicant's disposable income and disposable capital. The minimum contribution is €10 for legal advice and €50 for legal aid. The law centre advises a person of the actual contribution in each individual case. In the event that a person recovers money or property arising from the case, the Board may seek to recover the cost to the Board of providing legal services to the client.

## 5. Head office

The Board's head office is located in Cahirciveen, County Kerry where some 45 staff are located. Some of the headquarter functions are also located in Dublin.

## 6. Governance arrangements

The statutory Board is appointed by the Minister for Justice and Law Reform and has responsibility for:

- the strategic direction of the organisation
- determining policy and monitoring its implementation
- overseeing the proper and effective management of the organisation
- monitoring the implementation of effective financial procedures and providing accountability

- approving and monitoring budgets, and
- certain reserved decisions.

The Board normally consists of a chairperson and 12 ordinary members. The current Board was appointed in December 2006.

The Board continues to maintain the standards of corporate governance set out in the updated Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This involves:

- at Board level, the use of six committees to assist it in achieving its objectives and in the effective discharge of its responsibilities (see below)
- a defined division of roles between the Board, the Chairperson and the Chief Executive
- submission to the Minister of an annual report that meets the requirements of the Code
- an internal audit function that operates effectively and as required, and
- a code of conduct, which incorporates procedures to deal with any conflict of interest issues.

In 2009, the Board held 11 meetings – 7 of which were in Cahirciveen and 4 in Dublin. Attendance at Board meetings in 2009 was as follows:

Member	No. of meetings
Anne Colley (Chair)	11
Bob Browne	10
Dr. Michael Buckley	9
Dara Foyne	7
Kate Hayes	8
Margaret Heneghan*	9
Seamus Keelan	11
Breege Leonard	10
Niamh Moran	10
Jerry O'Connor	11
Jim O'Farrell	11
Eamonn Purcell	9
Fergal Rooney	11
* Margaret Heneghan was a Board member for only 10 meetings in 2009.	

In 2009, the Board members were paid fees in line with the relevant guidelines issued by the Department of Finance.

The committees of the Board met as follows in 2009:

Committee	No. of meetings held
Appeal Committee	16
Finance Committee	9
Audit and Risk Management Committee	6
Lawyers Committee	9
Human Resources Committee	3
Performance Committee	1

The Board utilises an in-house corporate governance manual to provide a clear and comprehensive summary of the principal aspects of corporate governance as it affects the Board and senior management. It is also intended to ensure that Board members are fully informed of their legal responsibilities and that they are familiar with statutory provisions relevant to their position and the key organisational issues, policies and strategies that inform their role.

The Audit and Risk Management Committee of the Board incorporates one independent, external member, Mr. Conan McKenna, in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. Mr. McKenna is an Assistant Secretary in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

# Foreword

## by the Chairperson



At the time of publication of this Report in 2010 we are also celebrating the 30th anniversary of state-funded civil legal aid in this country. From very small beginnings we have developed to the extent where we now offer a critical service in some 30 locations around the country, in addition to the Refugee Legal Service, and are striving to meet an ever-increasing demand.

A number of factors, not least the economic downturn, has meant that in 2009 applications at the Legal Aid Board's law centres were 18% ahead of demand in 2008; 38% greater than 2007; and 45% more than in 2006. Almost all categories of case showed increases with some particularly noticeable ones e.g. debt and employment cases (admittedly from a modest base). Clearly, we are very much on the frontline where the impact of the downturn in the economy is most felt. The only area of the Board's operations not to have experienced increased demand in 2009 was the Refugee Legal Service.

The noticeable challenge now faced by the Board in delivering services is the fact that this surge in applications for our services has occurred at a time when our resources have been depleted as a consequence of the moratorium on staff recruitment. The fact that a great number of our offices have just one, two or three solicitors has meant that the loss of a single staff member can have a huge impact on the time within which we can provide our service. The combination of those factors has led to a situation where waiting times in a number of our centres for an appointment with a solicitor have slipped beyond our target time of four months.

The Board and I are seriously concerned at the impact of the delay in providing essential legal services is having on the individuals concerned as well as on others associated with them and, even, on the wider community. We have put in place a number of initiatives designed to address the situation. We have made extensive use of our Private Practitioner service. We have put an early advice-only service in place in centres with waiting times in excess of three months. We have utilised the services of a number of solicitors through the FÁS Work Placement Programme, and even some in a voluntary capacity with the support and co-operation of the Law Society. We have engaged in a rigorous review of all aspects of our own operations with a view to ensuring we are operating as efficiently as possible. All of these initiatives have paid dividends but the organisation remains under a great deal of pressure in attempting satisfactorily to meet the demand for services. The Department of Justice and Law Reform has recognised the extremely difficult predicament the Board is facing and the Board acknowledges and appreciates the support it has provided. It is, though, difficult to reconcile a hugely increasing demand for service and a staff reduction of some 10 per cent in the past year.

I am convinced that, to quote Michael Mansfield QC, legal aid performs a critical role and should lie at the heart of any responsible social democracy. A great number of our clients are among groups most at risk in society and we have consequently a particular societal responsibility to them.

We in the Legal Aid Board have become increasingly aware in recent years that we need to be conscious of both the nature of the problems presented to us and the appropriateness of the service offered to clients to

resolve them. We are aware that problems can be multi-faceted – a family problem, for example, can also have dimensions in other areas such as debt, housing etc. – and we need to take account of this fact when engaging with clients. We are also very conscious of the potential adverse impact of clients being directed exclusively towards a court-based resolution of problems. At the time of publishing this report we are engaged with both the Family Mediation Service and the Courts Service with a view to directing people in suitable cases to a mediated solution. This approach complements the emphasis that the Board has placed in recent years on promoting alternative methods of dispute resolution in family law.

Looking to the future, the Board is very pleased that the Minister proposes to give us responsibility for the administration of Criminal Legal Aid. This is consistent with the practice in other jurisdictions and is, in the Board's view, strategically logical and also appropriate in the context of good governance practice. It will also entail a challenge for the organisation, but it is one I believe we can meet with the necessary support.

The Board is committed to ensuring that effective governance arrangements are in place and followed. During the year, following the publication of the Revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the Board agreed a revised Governance Manual which covers all aspects of the Board's and the executive's responsibilities and we also initiated what I expect will be an annual review of our performance as a Board. I would like to express my gratitude to all of the Board members for their active contribution and support during the year. I am extremely conscious that, due to the nature of the work of the Board notably in relation to appeals, the workload on members is considerably greater than many other Boards. Members have fulfilled their role with commitment, diligence and integrity.

I would also like to express my thanks to the Minister for Justice and Law Reform, Dermot Ahern, TD, who continued, at a time when there were considerable financial and other pressures, to show a real interest in and support for legal aid and for our operation. The Secretary General and his staff have also been extremely supportive of the Board.

Finally, I would like to thank the Chief Executive and the staff in the many locations from which the Board provides service. There is a real commitment right across the organisation to providing an efficient and quality legal service to an ever-increasing client base. We also continue to see innovation in how we provide our service at a time of constrained resources. I look forward to the ongoing commitment of the Board and staff to our extremely important role and function.



**Anne Colley**  
Chairperson

# The Board

AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2009



**Anne Colley**  
*Chairperson*



**Bob Browne**  
*Assistant Secretary,  
Department of Justice  
Equality and Law Reform*



**Dr Michael Buckley**  
*Retired Consultant  
Physician*



**Dara Foynes**  
*Barrister at law*



**Kate Hayes**  
*Business Person*



**Margaret  
Heneghan\***  
*Senior Counsel*



**Séamus Keelan**  
*Retired Accountant / Local  
Representative*



**Breege Leonard**  
*Regional Manager  
(Retired), Department of  
Social and Family Affairs*



**Niamh Moran**  
*Solicitor*



**Jerry O'Connor**  
*Solicitor*



**Jim O'Farrell**  
*Principal Officer,  
Department of Finance*



**Eamonn Purcell**  
*Staff Representative*



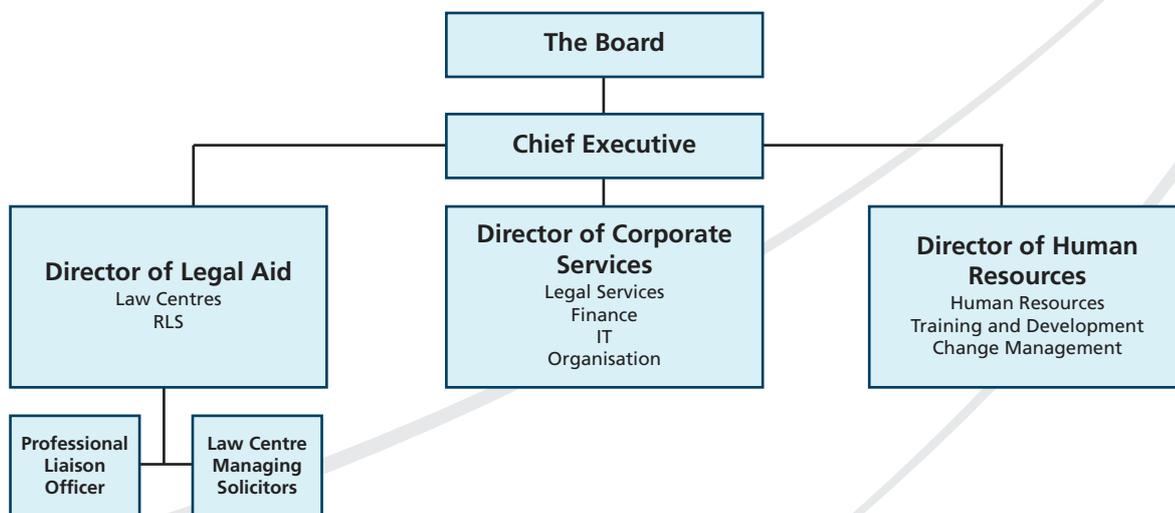
**Fergal Rooney**  
*Staff Representative –  
Solicitor*

\* Margaret Heneghan was appointed on 26 January 2009. She subsequently resigned in January 2010 following her appointment as a Judge of the Circuit Court.

# Head Office Executive Staff

<b>Chief Executive Officer:</b>	Moling Ryan	<b>Solicitors:</b>	Mason Hayes and Curran
<b>Director of Legal Aid:</b>	Frank Brady	<b>Head Office:</b>	Quay St. Cahirciveen Co. Kerry Phone: 066 947100 LoCall 1890 615200 Fax: 066 9471035
<b>Director of Human Resources:</b>	Pat Fitzsimons	<b>Dublin Office:</b>	47 Upper Mount St. Dublin 2 Phone: 01 6441900 Fax: 01 6623661
<b>Director of Corporate Services:</b>	Eileen Bowden	<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.legalaidboard.ie">www.legalaidboard.ie</a>
<b>Professional Liaison Officer:</b>	John McDaid		
<b>Financial Controller:</b>	Joan Enright		
<b>Secretary to the Board:</b>	Clare Kelly		
<b>Auditors:</b>	Comptroller and Auditor General		

## Structure



# Introduction

## by the CEO



As the Foreword from the Chairperson points out, there has been quite a dramatic increase in the demand for legal services from the Legal Aid Board notably over the past three years. The increase in demand of nearly 50 per cent in that period has put considerable pressure on our capacity to deliver a timely service in some of our centres.

That only four centres had waiting times in excess of our targeted four months at a time of constrained staffing resources is testament to the huge commitment of staff not just in providing the range of legal services but also in being innovative and flexible in their approach. Nevertheless, responding to the increase in demand will continue to be a challenge for the foreseeable future.

The international experience of significant increases in demand for certain types of legal services at times of economic downturn has also held true in this jurisdiction and this is very evident from the 2009 figures for the Board. There was an increase in applications to our law centres of 18% over 2008 which, in turn, was 17% up on 2007 and there appears no sign of an abatement coming into 2010. Legal advice sought in relation to divorce was up 23% on the previous year with a 22% increase in relation to legal separation. There was a very significant increase in legal advice sought on debt and employment matters; 181% and 38% respectively. Interestingly, consistent with the experience reported in the Courts Service Annual Report, actual legal aid for representation in court in divorce, separation and nullity cases declined by 5% on 2008. Child care cases increased by 12% on the previous year and this area is one which is particularly challenging to the Board in providing a timely service as many of the cases require representation at very short notice. In 2010 consideration will be given to the possibility of having a solicitor dedicated solely to childcare matters in the Dublin area, to be located close to the family law courts in Dolphin House.

The changing demographic makeup of Irish society is also reflected in some aspects of the Board's work in 2009. The Legal Aid Board provided representation in 113 cases involving the recognition or enforcement of foreign orders. While this number is not a substantial one, it does show a significant increase on previous years.

Managing the significant increase in the demand for legal services with a static or reduced solicitor staffing level is particularly challenging. Our own staff have taken on a significantly greater number of new cases themselves; an increase of 12% in 2009 over the 2008 figures. We have an excellent relationship with solicitors in private practice who are on our panels and to whom we assigned over 4,000 cases last year. This mixed method of service delivery is one that other jurisdictions are now moving towards and one which reinforces the fact that the Board as an organisation is focused on the interests of the clients and not by any sense of self interest or protectionism.

The Board and staff are also conscious in this environment that significant delay in providing service is inimical to any concept of effective service delivery, notably in an environment such as the Board's. This was the driving force behind the introduction of a service which offers short legal advice sessions to clients waiting more than 3 months for an interview with a solicitor. This service will be developed further in 2010.

It is quite clear, too, from our report that the number of asylum seekers has continued to reduce and, with it, the demand for legal services. We will be looking in 2010 at the most effective use of resources, particularly at the scope for the integration of all legal aid services.

Continued review of our operations and processes and an innovative response to issues faced are critical if we are going to be able to continue to provide a professional service in the face of ever-increasing demand and where increased staffing is not available. We placed considerable emphasis in 2009 on a risk analysis of all aspects of our operations and on implementing the recommendations. We also embarked on planning a new legal case management system spanning all of our 30 law centres which is hoped to be fully operational in mid-2011 and which has the capacity to enhance the throughput of cases, to provide ongoing, immediate and relevant management information and to ensure consistency of practice throughout the country.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the staff at all levels in the organisation who continue to rise to the range of challenges outlined above. I am confident that their commitment and their awareness of the critical personal and social importance of legal aid work will ensure continued high performance.



**Moling Ryan**  
*Chief Executive Officer*

# Key Achievements and

The Board's law centre network dealt with an **18% increase in applications** in 2009. This followed a similar rate of increase in 2008, meaning a 38% higher number of applications in 2009 compared to 2007.

**Exchequer funding** for the civil legal aid service fell by 2.5% to €26.31 million. For the Refugee Legal Service, the Exchequer funding provision fell by 6% to €8.33 million. Overall, staffing levels fell by about 8% over the course of the year.

The number of **cases processed** during the year by the law centre network increased by 8% to over 16,000. A substantial rise in the number of cases involving the provision of legal advice was the main factor in this.

The number of new clients registering with the Board's **Refugee Legal Service** fell by over 28%, in line with the reduction in recent years of the number of persons seeking asylum in this country. Notwithstanding this, there was a 59% increase in cases involving applications for subsidiary protection under the EU Qualifications Directive.

# Developments in 2009

Waiting times for an appointment with a solicitor came under increasing pressure in 2009. Despite this, the Board's objective of providing initial appointments within a period of four months was being met in most law centres by the end of the year. In addition, the Board continued to provide an immediate or near immediate service to about 15% of its (non-asylum related) clients on account of the nature of the problems experienced by those clients.

The Board continued to make use of private practitioners to help reduce the numbers of clients waiting for legal services. In addition, the Board also introduced an 'advice only' service, which aims to provide clients with a preliminary appointment within four months.

An implementation plan was drawn up to put into action the recommendations of the external consultants commissioned by the Board to undertake a risk assessment of the Board's delivery of legal services. A new law centre was established in Dublin, drawing on these recommendations, with a view to creating a 'model' law centre to be used as a template for the development of the other law centres.

The Board held a successful family law conference in Cork in September. Speakers, both from the Board and externally, contributed on a wide range of topics in the general family law area.

## Service Provided in 2009

The mission of the Legal Aid Board is to provide a professional, efficient, cost-effective and accessible legal aid and advice service to persons of modest means i.e., persons who cannot afford to retain a solicitor. Clients access the Board's services primarily through the nationwide law centre network. The Board refers some clients to private solicitors from the panels it maintains to assist in managing the demand for its services.

Whilst the Board provides legal services across most areas of civil law, family law has always accounted for the majority of cases processed, as is the experience in other jurisdictions. This was the case again in 2009. A significant number of persons also sought services in relation to claims for asylum through the Board's Refugee Legal Service in 2009, though it is notable that this number declined in comparison to the previous year, a decline that was consistent with the fall in numbers seeking asylum in the country.

As highlighted in the introduction to this report, the Board experienced a challenging year in 2009. The increase in demand, coupled with a reduction in the resources available made for a very testing operating environment. Unfortunately, it has meant that the Board's target that every applicant gets to see a solicitor within a four month period has not been met in a number of law centres, as outlined below in Table 10. Measures taken by the Board to address this situation are described later in the report.

In all, the total number of cases in which legal services were provided by the Board in 2009 was in the region of 22,500. This was an increase of about 1,200 on 2008. The number of cases dealt with in the law centres and the number of family law cases referred to private solicitors on the Board's panels showed an increase on the previous year while the number of asylum cases declined.

### Demand for the service

The increasing demand for the services provided by the Board is set out in Table 1 below, which shows the numbers applying for services.

**TABLE 1 – NUMBER OF APPLICANTS**

Year	2009	2008	2007
Law centres	12,715	10,774	9,248
Dublin District Court centre	1,358	1,114	916
Refugee Legal Service	2,298	3,219	2,650
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,371</b>	<b>15,107</b>	<b>12,814</b>

Overall, the increase in 2009 was just over 8% on the number of applications in 2008. Within this, there was a very significant increase of approximately 18% in the number of applications at law centres, including the Dublin District Court centre<sup>1</sup>. This followed a corresponding 17% increase in 2008.

In 2009, the number of new clients registering with the Refugee Legal Service fell 29% to 2,298. This was consistent with the sustained fall-off in applications for asylum which has occurred in recent years (see section on Asylum below).

It should be noted that not every applicant is provided with legal services. A significant number do not pursue their application when they are offered an appointment with a solicitor. It is likely that some of these will have found another means of resolving their difficulties while others, particularly those with family problems, may take the view that pursuing a legal remedy at that point in time is not the best

<sup>1</sup> This centre acts as a referral point for clients attending the Dublin District Court

option. In respect of those clients who are provided with services by the Board, Table 2 below sets out the number of initial appointments with a solicitor given to clients in 2009 by reference to the relevant legal issue. It should be noted that this includes cases that were referred to private solicitors for the provision of a service.

**TABLE 2 – INITIAL APPOINTMENTS BY SUBJECT MATTER 2009**

Subject matter	Number of new clients
General family law matters	6,573
Divorce / separation / nullity	2,606
Cases involving possible State care of children	567
Asylum and related matters	2,298
Other civil matters	1,415
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,459</b>

## Law centres

Legal aid and advice was provided through the Board's general law centres in 16,170 cases in 2009. Comparative information for the two previous years and a breakdown between aid and advice cases are set out below.

**TABLE 3 – CASES HANDLED IN LAW CENTRES**

Year	2009	2008	2007
Advice only	7,138	5,900	4,525
Court proceedings	9,032	9,017	9,380
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,170</b>	<b>14,917</b>	<b>13,905</b>

As can be seen, the number of cases dealt with by the Board in its law centres increased by over 8% in 2009 compared to the previous year, to over 16,000. Whilst the number of cases involving court proceedings (legal aid cases) has remained relatively static, there has been a significant rise in the number of legal advice cases, both in 2008 and

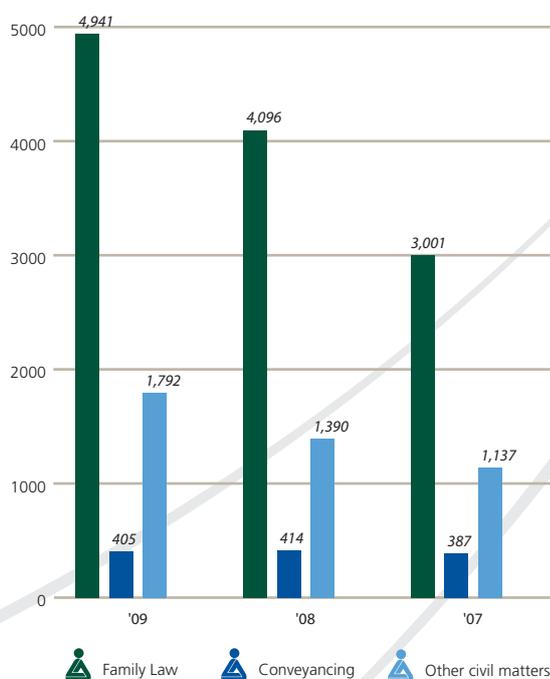
2009. It is likely that the increase in demand brought about by the economic downturn has manifested itself, up to 2009 at any rate, in a large increase in the need for legal advice in the first instance. It would not be surprising, therefore, to see this increase translate into a corresponding rise in legal aid cases in 2010 and subsequent years. Such a development would put further strain on the Board's resources, both human and financial, as legal aid cases are more time consuming and more costly.

## Legal advice cases

Of the legal advice cases handled in 2009, almost 70% were in the family law area, as can be seen in Chart 1 below. Legal advice cases are those where advice has been provided to the client but legal aid, i.e. representation in court, has not. Some of the persons who received advice in 2009 will subsequently be granted legal aid, depending on the circumstances of the case.

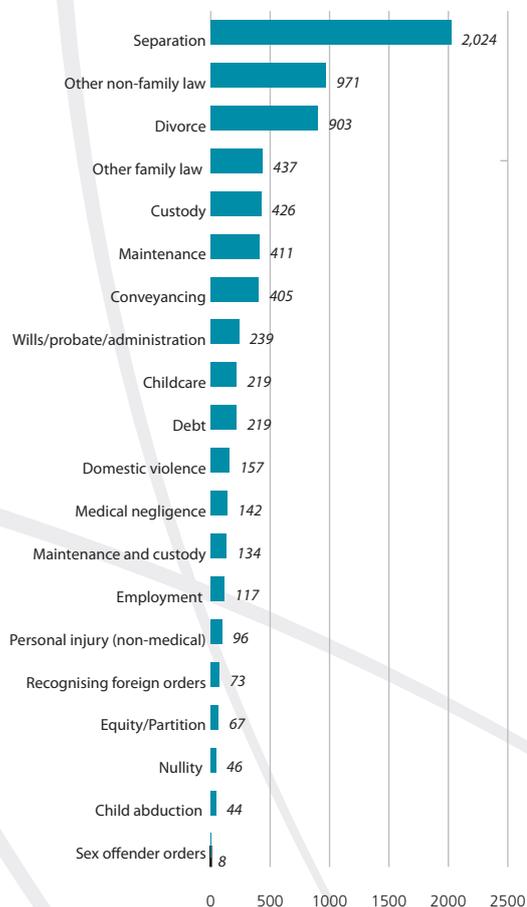
Overall, the number of advice cases dealt with by the Board in 2009 was up by almost 21% on the 2008 figure.

**Chart 1: Legal Advice Cases 2007-2009**



A more detailed breakdown of the issues captured in Chart 1 is provided below in Chart 1a. Advice may have been given on more than one issue in some cases. For example, advice cases in the area of divorce and separation will often have included advice in respect of maintenance, domestic violence or child welfare. Such additional advices are not separately recorded here. The increase in advice cases processed in 2009 was mostly attributable to the family law area, such as separation (+23%) and divorce (+22%). However, it is not surprising that there were also significantly more advice cases handled in respect of debt (+181%) and employment (+38%), though these were from a much lower base.

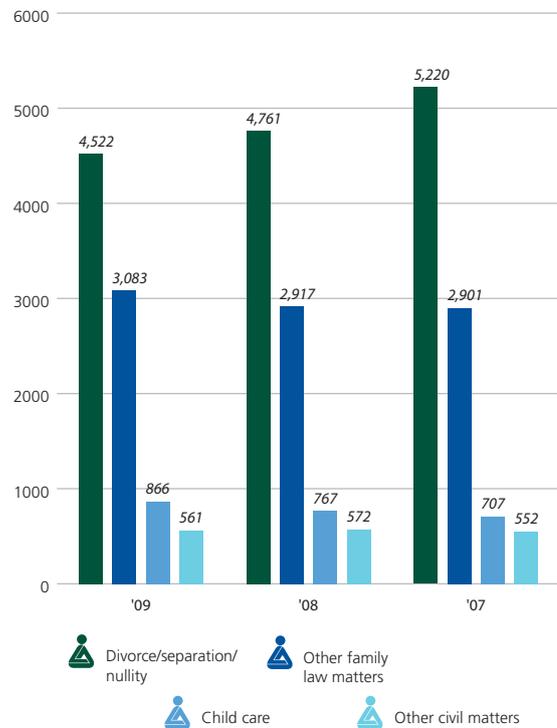
**Chart 1a: Advice Proceedings by Subject Matter 2009**



### Legal aid cases

The issues in relation to which the Board's law centre solicitors provided court representation in 2009 and the comparative information for the two previous years are set out in chart 2 below.

**Chart 2: Legal Aid Cases 2007-2009**



In 2009, the number of legal aid cases handled remained almost identical to the previous year. Within this, there was a 5% drop in the number of divorce, separation and nullity cases dealt with. The number of other family law matters handled (primarily matters that were heard in the District Court) grew by 5%. The number of child care cases handled showed a 12% increase while there was a slight fall in the number of other civil matters.

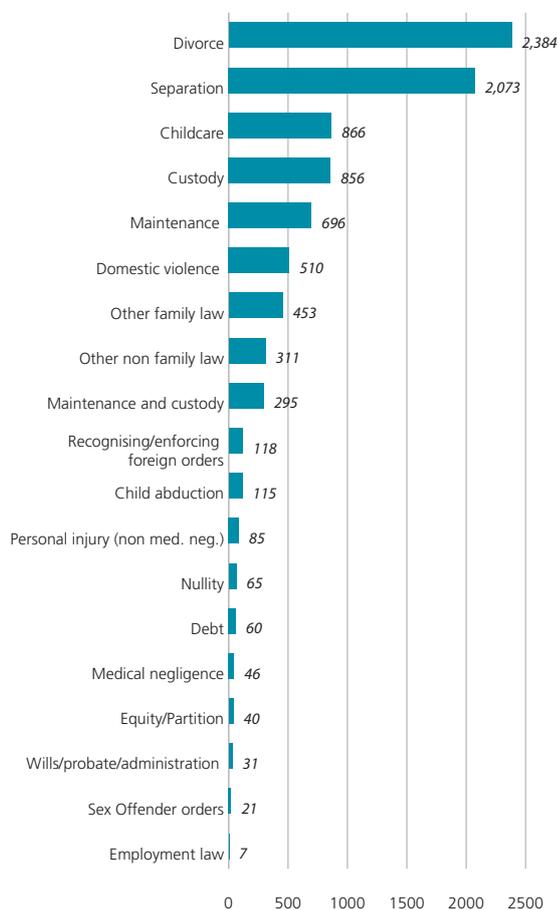
A more comprehensive breakdown of the issues in respect of which legal aid was provided in 2009 is provided below. Again, the case is only recorded with reference to the main issue at stake.

Whilst the overall number of court proceedings handled remained relatively static compared to the previous years, it is notable that there was decreased activity in the main categories of divorce and separation. The decline in these cases was consistent with the overall trend in 2009, as reported by the Courts Service, which saw a 15% drop in applications for divorce and separation in 2009. Against this, the Board handled a greater number of cases in the areas of custody and maintenance.

The number of cases involving the recognition of foreign orders, whilst relatively small, has seen a significant percentage increase on the 2008 figure

which is indicative of a client base which reflects the more multinational make-up of Irish society.

**Chart 2a: Court Proceedings by Subject Matter 2009**



### Case turnover

In view of the increasing demand for the Board's services, the need to maximise the turnover of cases becomes ever more important. It can be seen from Table 4 below that there was a significant increase in the number of new cases taken on in the law centre network (almost 12%) in 2009.

**TABLE 4 – NEW CASES IN LAW CENTRES**

Year	2009	2008	2007
New cases	7,240	6,479	5,743

The Board is always seeking ways to try and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Some of the main developments aimed at achieving this objective are outlined in the next section of this report. The aim is to ensure that cases on hand are dealt with as efficiently as possible. However, there are a number of factors that influence the time taken to complete a case and some of these, such as the availability of court dates and the scheduling of cases, are outside of the Board's control.

### Duration of court cases

Table 5 below provides an age profile of cases in which legal aid was provided in 2009, by court. The year is indicative of when the file was opened.

**TABLE 5 – LEGAL AID CASES HANDLED IN 2009; YEAR FILE OPENED**

Year	2009	2008	2007	Pre-2007	Total
District	1,550	921	299	186	2,956
Circuit	1,265	1,414	1,089	1,648	5,416
High	211	185	102	152	650
Supreme	2	0	4	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,028</b>	<b>2,520</b>	<b>1,494</b>	<b>1,990</b>	<b>9,032</b>

As has been evident in previous years, the rate of progress of cases in the Circuit Court (where divorce and separation cases are heard) tends to be significantly slower than in the District Court. Of the Circuit Court cases dealt with by the Board in 2009, approximately 30% commenced prior to 2007, compared to 22% overall. These are similar to the corresponding ratios in 2008.

Of the 9,032 legal aid cases handled in the law centres in 2009, 3,746 (41%) were completed by the end of the year while the remaining 5,286 were still active on the 31st December. The number of completed court cases was up by almost 13% on 2008. Table 6 below gives an age profile of those cases involving court proceedings completed in 2009 by subject matter.

**TABLE 6 – LEGAL AID CASES COMPLETED IN 2009; YEAR FILE OPENED**

Year	2009	2008	2007	Pre-2007	Total
Divorce / separation / nullity	86	354	325	599	1,364
Child care	118	133	57	53	361
Other family law matters	812	684	208	113	1,817
Non-family law matters	58	60	24	62	204
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,074</b>	<b>1,231</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>3,746</b>

It can be seen from this table that divorce, separation and nullity cases generally take longer to reach completion than most other family law matters. Approximately 44% of divorce, separation and nullity cases completed in 2009 had been ongoing since before 2007. Again, this is similar to the corresponding percentage in 2008.

### Cases on hand

Table 7 below gives the status of all of the Board's active legal aid cases as of the 31st December 2009.

**TABLE 7 – LEGAL AID CASES ACTIVE AS AT 31/12/2009**

Status	No. of Cases
Legal aid certificate granted	590
Counsel briefed	606
Proceedings issued	845
At hearing	1,776
Final Orders made	1,360
Re-entry / under appeal	109
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,286</b>

### Private practitioners in family law matters

Private practitioners (PPs) are engaged by the Board to provide legal aid services to complement the service provided by law centres. This assists the Board in seeking to achieve its objective of providing legal services within a maximum waiting time of four months. The PP service currently operates for certain family law matters in the District Court (domestic violence, maintenance, guardianship and custody/access cases) as well as for divorce and separation cases in the Circuit Court.

A breakdown is given in Table 8 of the number of legal aid certificates granted to enable representation to be provided in the District and Circuit Courts by solicitors in private practice who are on the Board's panels.

**TABLE 8 – PP CERTIFICATES GRANTED**

Year	2009	2008	2007
District Court	3,921	2,815	1,977
Circuit Court	91	168	329
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,012</b>	<b>2,983</b>	<b>2,306</b>

As can be seen, the number of legal aid certificates issued to private practitioners for divorce and separation cases, handled in the Circuit Court, dropped significantly again in 2009. This followed a substantial decrease in 2008. The main factor in this was the difficult funding situation in 2009 and the likelihood of that situation continuing in 2010 and subsequent years. There tends to be a significant time lag between the granting of the legal aid certificate for a divorce and separation case and the claim for payment. Thus, certificates granted in a particular year will, in general, give rise to a payment to the private practitioner in or about two years later.

The time lag between the issuing of legal aid certificates granted in respect of District Court matters and the payment to the private practitioner tends to be much shorter (two to five months). In addition, fees paid to private practitioners for District Court cases are only 10-15% of the fee payable for Circuit Court cases.

In 2009, there was another substantial increase (39%) in the number of District Court cases referred to private practitioners, which assisted in trying to meet the increase in demand for the Board's services. In terms of adopting this approach the Board was also mindful that there is often more of an immediate need for District Court remedies, such as for barring orders, maintenance and access.

### Timeliness of the service

There was significant pressure on waiting times caused by the increase in demand for the Board's services. The following table sets out the number of persons waiting on December 31st in each of the past three years for a first appointment with a solicitor.

**TABLE 9 – NUMBERS ON WAITING LIST AS AT 31st DECEMBER**

Year	2009	2008	2007
Number waiting	2,228	1,681	1,163

At the end of 2009, despite the significant increase in demand seen over the previous two years, waiting times remained within the Board's 4-month target at approximately two-thirds of law centres.

The maximum waiting time in months, as of the 31st December 2009, is set out for the various law centres in Table 10 below. It must be emphasised that this table gives a snapshot of waiting times at a particular point in time. Waiting times will vary depending on demand and on the capacity of each law centre to offer appointments to new clients.

**TABLE 10 – WAITING TIMES IN MONTHS**

Law centre	Waiting time	Law centre	Waiting time
Athlone	4	Kilkenny	3
Castlebar	3	Letterkenny	1
Cavan	4	Limerick	2
<i>Cork</i>		Longford	4
Popes Quay	2	Monaghan	4
South Mall	5	Navan	3
<i>Dublin</i>		Nenagh	7
Blanchardstown	4	Newbridge	6
Clondalkin	6	Portlaoise	3
Finglas	3	Sligo	5
Gardiner St.	6	Tralee	5
Nth. Brunswick St.	5	Tullamore	3
Tallaght	3	Waterford	3
Dundalk	0	Wexford	9
Ennis	3	Wicklow	8
Galway	4		

## Priority service

The Board continued to provide a priority service where it considered that an immediate, or near immediate, service was needed. A priority service was given in 15% of law centre cases. These included cases of domestic violence, child abduction, cases involving applications by the State to take children into care, and cases that had statutory time limits close to expiry.

In addition to the cases given priority in the law centres, most of the cases referred out to solicitors on the Board's private practitioner panels were so referred shortly after the person had applied for legal aid.

## Appeal committee

In 2009, the Appeal Committee of the Board met on 16 occasions. This is a statutory sub-committee of the Board and it rules on cases where a person makes an appeal against a decision of the executive. Most of the cases that come before it relate to decisions to refuse legal aid.

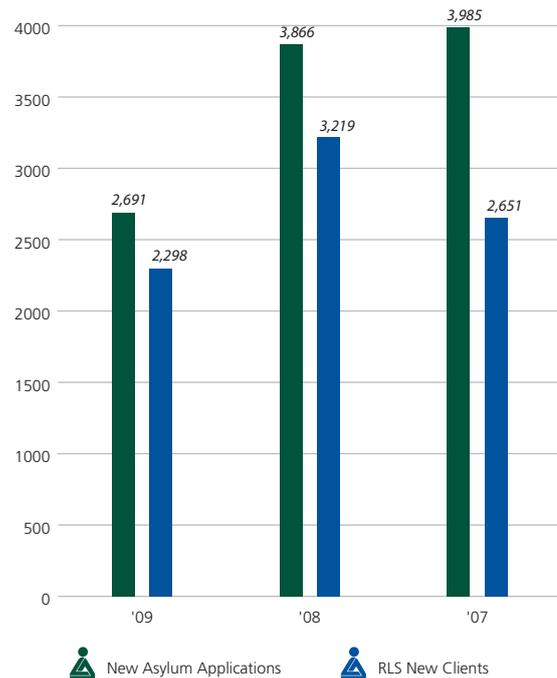
There were 139 appeals heard in 2009, up by just under 15% on 2008 and a 67% increase since 2007. The increased number of appeals heard is consistent with the growth in demand for the Board's services. Of the appeals heard in 2009, the decision of the executive was upheld in 98 cases. There were 36 appeals where the original decision was overturned. Table 11 below provides an outline of the position.

TABLE 11 – APPEAL COMMITTEE			
Year	2009	2008	2007
Number of decisions upheld	98	85	63
- <i>Financial criteria</i>	24	24	18
- <i>Merits criteria</i>	74	61	45
Number of decisions overturned	36	29	17
Number of appeals on hands	2	4	2
Withdrawn/resolved	3	3	1
Number of appeals	139	121	83

## Asylum

The Refugee Legal Service (RLS) provides legal services at all stages of the asylum process and, in appropriate cases, on immigration and deportation matters. In 2009 it continued to provide services through 3 full-time law centres in Dublin, Cork and Galway.

**Chart 3: Asylum Applications and RLS New Clients 2007-2009**



In addition, an extensive clinic service was provided in 2009 to clients in Tralee, Killarney, Sligo, and Limerick. The RLS also undertook over 50 visits to prisons to take instructions from detained asylum seekers.

### RLS: new client registrations

There were 2,298 new clients registered in 2009. This is a decrease of 29% from the previous year and corresponds to the decline in the number of new asylum seekers registering in the state. The RLS registrations represent the equivalent of 85% of all asylum applicants registered with the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) in the year, up from 83% in 2008 and 67% in 2007.

Of the new clients that registered with the service in 2009, approximately 65% of them required services for the first stage of the asylum process, while the remainder required services for appeals or other related issues.

### Minors

The RLS has a dedicated Children's Unit located in Dublin to handle asylum applications by unaccompanied minors. Staff in the unit have received specialised training in handling such cases. In 2009, a total of 364 minors applied for legal aid in asylum cases. This was down on the comparable figure for 2008, which was 435.

### Legal aid certificates

The Board granted 2,009 legal aid certificates last year to enable representation before the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT). The RAT decides appeals of those asylum seekers whose application for refugee status has not been recommended by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner. The following table shows the breakdown between the numbers of certificates in which representation was provided by RLS solicitors and by private solicitors/barristers, acting on behalf of the RLS.

TABLE 12 – RLS CERTIFICATES GRANTED			
Year	2009	2008	2007
RLS solicitors	876	859	726
Private solicitors on RLS Panels	601	496	432
Barristers instructed by the RLS	532	703	634
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,009</b>	<b>2,058</b>	<b>1,792</b>

The 2009 figure represents a decrease of 2% on 2008. For the in-house solicitors, the number increased by 2%. The use of private solicitors by the RLS in asylum matters is confined to appeals to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

### Subsidiary protection

In 2009, there was again a considerable increase in cases involving applications for subsidiary protection under the EU Qualifications Directive. Such applications can be made in cases where a person does not qualify for refugee status but may, nevertheless, be at real risk of suffering serious harm in his/her country of origin. These have only been possible under Irish law since October 2006, when the EU Directive was transposed into Irish law.

TABLE 13 – APPLICATIONS FOR SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION

Year	2009	2008	2007
Number of applications	1,822	1,147	809

### Judicial review

The Board instituted judicial review proceedings in 27 asylum cases in 2009.

Proceedings instituted in 2009, in common with previous years, were mostly in relation to decisions of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (19 cases). Four cases were instituted against the Minister of Justice and Law Reform and a further four against the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC).

The largest number of judicial review cases taken by clients of the Board tend to be against rulings by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT). One reason for this is the fact that there is no appeal from its decisions. Accordingly, defects in the decision making process can be dealt with generally only by way of judicial review.

The Board has had a high level of positive outcomes in relation to the judicial review cases taken and of those which have been finalised or settled. Cases that are settled are generally on terms that are no less advantageous to the asylum seeker than if they were successfully litigated in court.

## Trafficking

In late 2009 the Legal Aid Board commenced providing legal services on certain matters to persons identified by the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) as potential victims of human trafficking under the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008.

There is no merits or means testing involved and a potential victim of human trafficking is not required to make a financial contribution to the Legal Aid Board. The service is provided by Board employees who have received specialised training in human trafficking issues.

The service provides initial advice to persons identified as potential victims of human trafficking on their legal rights. It also provides legal services to suspected victims of human trafficking who may be acting as witnesses in prosecutions taken under specified provisions of the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008.

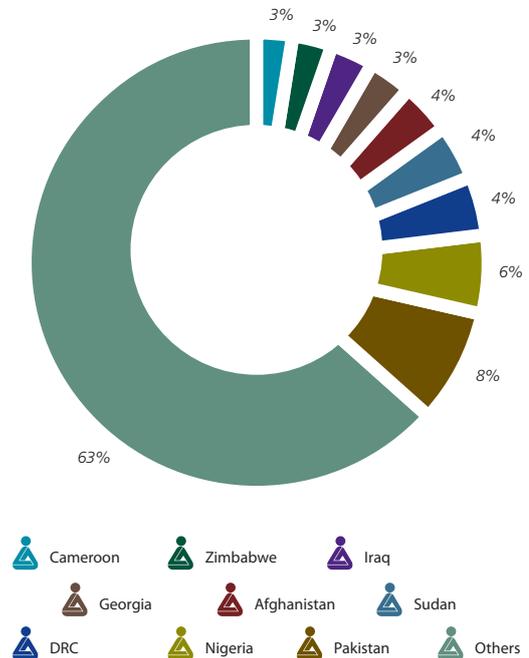
A total of 10 cases of potential victims of trafficking had been notified by the GNIB under the administrative arrangements put in place by the Board as of 31st December 2009. All but three of the cases related to trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes.

## The Refugee Documentation Centre

The Refugee Documentation Centre (RDC) is an independent service operating under the aegis of the Legal Aid Board. The main role of the Centre is to provide an objective research and query service for key organisations involved in the asylum process, with a particular focus on providing Country of Origin Information (COI). Members of the public and other agencies may also use the Documentation Centre to conduct their own research.

In 2009, the RDC Query Service provided querists with a total of 2,277 query responses. This represented a decrease of 6% on 2008. On average, about 82% of queries related to Country of Origin Information, with the remaining 18% split between legal/quasi-legal and library queries. The country which gave rise to the largest single number of queries in 2009 was Pakistan. The main countries subject to COI queries are set out in Chart 4 below.

Chart 4: RDC Query Statistics 2009



A brief sample of the type of information sought in the queries received is set out below:

- Pakistan: Information on the treatment of owners of music, DVD, or video shops by the Taliban or other extremist groups.
- Nigeria: Information on the Islamic sect, Boko Haram.
- South Africa: Information on residency laws in South Africa.
- China: Information on the treatment of children born outside marriage in China.
- Iraq: Information on the treatment of people working for American Forces.
- Uganda: Information on the practice and prevalence of ritual killings.

The RDC continued to work closely with ORAC in 2009, with a view to strengthening co-operation and meeting that organisation's expanding COI needs.

There were three editions of the RDC's periodical *The Researcher* published in 2009, which was made available internally and to relevant external agencies. To complement this, three RDC Library Bulletins were also produced in 2009 giving updates on new acquisitions to the library, book reviews, case law summaries and other information.

Training activities took place throughout 2009 in the areas of COI and also on the use of the E-Library. COI Network project work in the area of training continued in 2009. Blended learning courses were provided domestically and internationally to groups of Irish and international asylum agencies.

## Sample Cases

### Recognition of a foreign divorce

A client who was terminally ill sought assistance at a law centre for the purpose of clarifying his marital status. He wanted to marry his partner of a number of years but there were concerns over whether a divorce from a previous partner obtained in another EU country was entitled to be recognised in Ireland. The client had married his non-European wife in the USA before returning to an EU country, where the divorce was granted. The client then returned to Ireland and his ex-wife had also relocated to this jurisdiction subsequently.

The Law Centre solicitor advised the client that it would be necessary to make an application to the Circuit Court for a declaration in relation to the client's marital status before the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages would permit the client to marry his partner. On account of the client's poor health the solicitor sought a legal aid certificate and proceedings were instituted as a matter of urgency. The Circuit Court had to be satisfied that at the time of the divorce the client's ex-wife was domiciled in the EU country in which the divorce was granted. It was clear that the client himself was not domiciled there at the time. The Judge found that even though the client's ex-wife had relocated to Ireland relatively shortly after the divorce was granted, this had not been her intention at the time of the divorce. Her intention at the time had been to remain in the other EU country. It was accepted in establishing the domicile, that she had no intention of returning to her country of origin (of which she remained a citizen). Accordingly the divorce previously obtained was deemed to be valid.

The consequence was that the client was immediately free to marry his partner. The proposed marriage had very significant consequences for the client's partner as her succession entitlements as a spouse were significantly greater than they would have been had she remained a legal stranger to the client.

### Defence of personal injury claim

A client had been served with High Court proceedings in relation to a 'trip and fall' incident that had occurred a number of years previously when the client operated a small business premises. The client had no insurance in relation to the particular incident. He was very concerned at the potential consequences of a judgement for a large sum of money being awarded against him. When the proceedings were served the client no longer operated the business and was not working.

A full defence was filed on the client's behalf, as there was a considerable number of uncertainties in relation to the case, including whether the claim might have been statute barred, what medical treatment the plaintiff sought at the time of the incident, and whether the plaintiff's medical problems, which were clearly serious, were related to the incident and if so to what extent. There were also issues in relation to whether, even if the plaintiff was successful, responsibility should rest with the client or with another defendant. Expert reports were obtained in support of the client's case. These reports examined both the issue of liability and also of the level of compensation that might be payable if the plaintiff was successful.

The matter was due to take a considerable number of days in the High Court. While waiting for a Judge to become available to hear the matter, settlement discussions took place and ultimately the case settled for a relatively small sum. The client made a contribution to the settlement amount which he was able to borrow. The client was very relieved that a judgement was not given against him for a significantly greater amount, which had been a real possibility.

## Representing victims

The client was a complainant in relation to sexual assault proceedings which were listed for hearing before a regional Circuit Criminal Court. The accused's legal team indicated that they intended seeking leave of the Court to cross-examine the client in relation to her prior sexual history. She applied for and was granted legal aid on the day the case was listed for hearing. A consultation took place that day. The client was concerned and fearful about what the criminal trial process would involve. The solicitor and barrister explained that her lawyer's role was to make representations to the Judge as to whether, or the extent to which, the defence would be entitled to raise issues about her prior sexual history and that there would be legal argument as to what evidence in this regard should go to the jury. They explained that it was their job to ensure that the defendant's legal advisors would only be permitted to ask questions that were relevant to the proceedings and that they would not be allowed to ask questions solely on the basis that they might paint the client in a negative light in the eyes of the jury. They also explained to the client her role in the whole process, the fact that she was a witness, and the fact that the jury would need to be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the defendant was guilty before they could convict him. They explained that the jury could have a preference for her version of what happened but still find the defendant not guilty. The client was considerably more re-assured after the consultation.

Legal argument took place throughout that day. The following day, the Judge ruled that the legislation in relation to the prior sexual history of a complainant was framed in such a way as to prevent baseless cross examination of a complainant and to prevent the trial becoming a trial of the complainant. He also stated that he had to give effect to the law and respect the dignity of the complainant and not to add to her trauma. In this particular case, in light of the material opened on behalf of the accused, there was no alternative but to allow the cross examination as it might make a difference to a jury in coming to a decision. The Judge also indicated that he was reserving his right to interfere with the cross-examination if it exceeded the limits of propriety as envisaged by the legislators.

## Recognition of a 'by-proxy' foreign marriage

A client from a Middle Eastern country had been granted refugee status in Ireland. He wanted his wife, who was resident in his country of nationality, to join him but the application for permission was refused on the basis that the marriage was not valid. He had married by proxy as he was living in Ireland and could not return to his native country. He had appointed a lawyer in the country to be his proxy. The wife and proxy attended the marriage ceremony together.

The client sought legal assistance from a law centre. After careful consideration by the solicitor it was determined that an application should be made to the Circuit Court to have the marriage recognised. The Attorney General was joined as a notice party to the proceedings. An affidavit of laws (a document setting out what the law was in the Middle Eastern country) was obtained from an independent lawyer in the country. The lawyer set out that marrying by proxy was permissible under the national law of that country. The Circuit Court Judge found that having considered the affidavit and applying domestic and international law, the marriage was a valid and subsisting one and was entitled to be recognised in this country. The outcome from the client's perspective was that he was able to proceed with his application to be reunited with his wife in this country.

### Asylum – forced prostitution

The client was a non-practising Muslim from a Middle Eastern State. She registered with the Refugee Legal Service in January 2008 shortly after she had applied for asylum in the State and before she submitted her questionnaire to the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC). She was provided with detailed advice in relation to the asylum process by her RLS caseworker. The client's case was that shortly after her marriage her husband forced her into prostitution and threatened her so that she would not leave. She worked as a prostitute in her home country under the control of her husband for just over two years and was able to keep some money for herself although the majority of her earnings went to her husband. She eventually fled her home country with another woman who was working with her as a prostitute. This other woman was of another faith and the client developed an interest in this religion.

The client's RLS caseworker ensured that an interpreter with knowledge of the particular dialect of the client's language was made available for her ORAC interview. However, ORAC turned down the client's asylum claim in June 2008. She met with her RLS solicitor to assist in drafting her appeal to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT). A detailed Notice of Appeal was drafted by her solicitor and submitted to the RAT in July 2008. The RLS solicitor met with the client in advance of the hearing of her appeal and ensured she was fully familiar with the procedure in her appeal and was aware of the absolute importance of presenting her case fully and truthfully. The RAT accepted that the client's demeanour strongly suggested she was telling the truth. While the RAT further stated that there may also have been a religious element to the case, given the client's interest in another faith, it did not consider it necessary to determine this point in order to reach a positive decision. The positive decision, recognising the client as a refugee, issued shortly before the end of 2009.

### Asylum – female circumcision

The client registered with the RLS at the first stage possible in the asylum process shortly after she had made her application for asylum at ORAC. She claimed that she fled her home country, in Central Africa, because she was being forced to marry her step-father's older brother, who was a Muslim, and that a condition of that marriage would be her circumcision. She was not able to furnish any supporting documents or medical evidence. She was given advice in relation to completion of her questionnaire by a caseworker specially trained in providing assistance to minor asylum seekers.

The client claimed to be 17 years. Her assigned RLS caseworker met with her for over an hour to prepare her interview at ORAC. ORAC did not accept her stated age and treated her as an adult for the purposes of her asylum application. In order to assist her claim to be a minor, the RLS sought a supportive medical report. Country of Origin information was noted by ORAC, in particular a US State Department report on human rights practices in her country and, also, a 2007 human rights report which also supported the client's claim.

ORAC accepted that it would not be reasonable for client to seek State protection or to relocate within her home country and recommended that client be recognised as a refugee.

## Developing the Service

In 2009, the Board adopted a new Corporate Plan for the period 2009-2011. Despite the demanding operating environment which faced the organisation, the Plan set a number of challenging targets for the period in question. Whilst aware of the fact that financial and human resources would be greatly constrained over the duration of the new Corporate Plan, the Board decided that the Plan should, nevertheless, be ambitious in terms of its objectives.

The operating environment has become more difficult since the Plan was drawn up but the Board has continued to make progress on the five high-level goals it set out. These strategic objectives aim to develop and improve the civil legal aid service, whilst also taking steps to meet the increased demand for the Board's services. The main areas of progress in 2009 are described in this section, with reference to the corresponding high-level goal.

### To provide a professional quality service

A significant development in this area was the risk assessment study of the Board's legal service delivery, which was commissioned in late 2008. This assessment was undertaken in view of the significantly increased focus which had been placed on risk management in the legal area generally, as well as the Professional Indemnity Insurance Regulations that issued in 2007. The consultant reported her findings in 2009 and made a number of recommendations about how the Board goes about its business. The Board accepted all of the recommendations and drew up an implementation plan. The main areas of progress in 2009 included the establishment of a new 'model' law centre in Dublin. This centre will pilot new processes and procedures with a view to incorporating those that are found to be effective into the general law centre network. In addition, much of the work in developing a new legal case management system (see below) was informed by the risk assessment, which included a dedicated report on how an improved IT system could assist in managing risk and improving case throughput.

The Board continued to take steps to assure the quality of the services provided to its clients, primarily through the conduct of case file reviews. The files were again reviewed on the basis of checklists benchmarked against best practice guidelines for the core services provided by the Board. As well as internal case file reviews, reviews were also carried out on private practitioners engaged by the Board.

### To put in place an effective public information, education and communication process

As in previous years, in 2009 the Board's main tool for communicating with its stakeholders was the External Consultative Panel. The group has representatives from a range of organisations whose members or clients use the services provided by the Board, as well as the representative bodies of the legal profession. The Panel met four times last year to discuss the services provided by the Board. It also received a number of presentations from member organisations to better inform the Board of the issues faced by persons they represent.

In September 2009, the Board hosted a successful family law conference in Cork. A range of interesting topics were covered with contributors both from the Board and elsewhere. It is intended that such conferences will be organised on a regular basis.

### To achieve the best use of the financial and operational resources allocated to the Board and to ensure value for money

In order to maximise accessibility to its services, in view of the recruitment moratorium, the Board has taken a proactive approach in terms of managing its human resources. It was obliged to achieve certain savings, however it has attempted to do so with the minimum impact on service delivery by looking for the staff savings from non front line positions.

In general, over recent years, the Board has focused on reducing non-pay administrative costs and it has been very successful in this regard. This has freed up funds for use on expenditure areas more directly related to service provision, such as the use of private practitioners and barristers in appropriate cases. It is estimated that procurement initiatives and value-for-money exercises saved over €400,000 on an annual basis in the three years up to 2009. In view of the more difficult funding situation in 2009, this has been a particularly welcome.

### To ensure that the Board is innovative, flexible and responsive in its approach to effective service delivery

As outlined earlier in this report, increased demand and reduced resources meant that waiting times came under pressure. In November 2009, the Board piloted an 'advice only' service in all of its law centres where the waiting time was in excess of three months. The objective of this service is to ensure that every eligible applicant gets to see a solicitor within a four month period. The service operates on the basis that if a person is unlikely to be given a full appointment with a solicitor within four months, s/he should be offered a short half-hour appointment for the purpose of being advised in relation to the legal matter in question. It is anticipated that, as a result of this appointment, a number of applicants will be equipped to either deal with the problem without legal assistance or to make significant progress in dealing with the problem whilst awaiting a full appointment with a solicitor.

During the course of 2009 the Board prepared and launched an Administrative Procedures Handbook which will act as a blueprint for the operation of its law centres. It should considerably assist in the standardisation of processes and procedures in the law centre network and lead to a greater consistency of approach. In addition, the Board

revised its Guidelines in relation to the provision of legal services, again with the objective of ensuring a consistency of approach.

The Board continued to promote non court-based dispute resolution which it regards as generally appropriate in the first instance in many family law problems. In terms of the appraisal of law centre and solicitor performance, a focus continues to be put on their capacity to offer meaningful non court-based dispute resolution options.

### To develop the capacity of the Board to deliver a quality professional service

The Board produced a new ICT Strategy in 2009. The key project in this strategy, on which significant progress was made in 2009, is the development of a comprehensive legal case management system for use across its law centre network. The benefits that an enterprise-wide case management system would bring to the Board include greater flexibility and effectiveness in the use of its staff resources and would, in particular, enable the Board to move to a situation where solicitors were engaged to a significantly greater extent than at present, in higher value legal work. It is intended that the new system will go live in 2011.

The Board also completed a review of its head office functions in 2009. One of the main objectives is to ensure that head office provides the most effective possible support to the provision of legal services and recommendations arising out of the review aimed at achieving this were implemented.

# Supporting Service Delivery

By virtue of its business model, the Legal Aid Board relies on a central support structure to facilitate and manage the delivery of services through its law centre network and other means. This central support structure is based in the Board's Head Office in Cahirciveen and a support office in Dublin.

The challenge that was evident for the front-line service delivery element of the Board was also there for the support services in 2009. Essentially, this was to do more with less. This was largely achieved. Some of the main achievements and developments by the support areas are outlined in this section.

## Legal services

The Legal Services section in head office carried out the executive function of granting or refusing applications for legal aid. In 2009, there were 2,878 legal aid certificates granted on foot of applications from law centre clients. There were a further 1,376 amendment certificates granted. The latter allow for the provision of extra services in certain cases, such as the use of a barrister or expert witnesses. In addition, there were 430 cases where legal aid was formally refused, whether on the grounds of the means test, merits test or that the matter did not come within the Board's remit. These refusals led to appeals in 139 cases (see table 11 above).

## Legal aid (management and development)

Much of the focus in the area of management and development of legal aid in 2009 was on the implementation of the aforementioned recommendations carried out by external consultants. Following receipt of the consultant's findings, an implementation plan was drawn up and the management of this will be a significant focus in this area for the foreseeable future.

## Human resources

One of the most challenging tasks undertaken in 2009 was the implementation of the measures decided by the Government to reduce public service pay costs. This included implementing the moratorium on public service recruitment and the new schemes introduced with a view to reducing public service pay and staffing numbers (i.e. the incentivised career break scheme, the incentivised early retirement scheme and the shorter working year).

The net effect of all these measures was a reduction in the Board's staffing levels in the year of approximately 8%, which had a considerable impact upon the Board's capacity to provide services. The current fiscal climate, which necessitates a reduction in public service numbers, highlights the importance of continuing to develop the strategic role of HR to ensure that the organisation is achieving the maximum value from the more effective deployment of the reduced staffing resources available to it. In this regard, considerable progress was made in 2009 through a combination of ongoing reviews, redeployment of staffing resources within the organisation as appropriate and managing absenteeism and performance.

The industrial relations arena was also testing in 2009 as unions reacted to the imposition of the pension levy and the public service pay cuts by participating in the public service-wide industrial action.

Activities carried out by the HR section were underpinned by the Board's new HR Strategy, which was developed for the period 2009-2011. The main emphasis in the new Strategy is to address the important HR challenges that are being driven primarily by the necessity to provide services with less staffing resources. In developing the Strategy in

2009, it was also recognised that the transformation agenda would involve ongoing commitment to adaptability and flexibility in the provision of services and the overriding requirement to maximise the value added from HR Section.

Considerable progress was made during 2009 in relation to the strategic role of HR. Measures undertaken included a particular focus on the implementation of a new Absenteeism Policy. This has resulted in a reduction in levels of sick leave by almost one-third by more active management of absenteeism through a variety of measures. The HR section also successfully rolled out a new time recording system for the Board.

The Board also developed a new 2009-2011 Learning and Development Strategy. The main thrust of the Learning and Development Strategy is to reduce reliance on external providers for learning and development initiatives and to provide courses and programmes "in-house" to a greater extent where this is more cost effective than external provision. Further progress was also made on the implementation of the Board's model for a more systematic evaluation of the impact of learning and development initiatives. Some of the other main Learning and Development highlights achieved in the Board in 2009 included the provision of 796 training days and the completion of the first year of a Professional Legal Studies course by a number of the Board's staff.

### Information and communications technology (ICT)

The ICT Strategy 2009 to 2011 was finalised and published in 2009. While the main focus of the previous strategy was building a resilient and robust infrastructure and technical architecture which forms a foundation on which to build for the future, the new strategy focuses on application development and enhancement.

The goals under this ICT Strategic plan are to manage the planning, development, delivery and ongoing support of IT services in the Board by:

- Improving case management and case tracking systems in the Board
- Further enhancing the staff's desktop experience
- Supporting the infrastructure and systems of the Board, and
- Meeting the targets in the IT Service Level Agreement.

The development of a new legal case management system, as outlined earlier in this report, is the pivotal project in this strategy. This project will deliver a single interface for application & legal case management data. It will include standard workflows, letters and precedents. It will incorporate time management, financial management, central calendars diaries and a reminder system. It will provide a view of the full client case file from first application to closure of file. Significant work was undertaken in the planning and analysis of requirements for this system in 2009. A market exercise will be undertaken in 2010 to procure a suitable system.

Some of the other achievements during 2009 included the application of further enhancements to strengthen data protection, including the introduction of secure/encrypted email. Enhancements and upgrades were applied to the Refugee Documentation Centre's systems. Hardware and software upgrades were implemented and email archiving technology was installed.

The Board continued the work to enhance the accessibility of its web site, in consultation with the National Disability Authority during 2009.

### Financial management

The Board's Finance Unit handled the payments processing and payroll function in 2009. Among the main developments was the upgrade of its accounting package to allow for more efficient operation of the function. The Unit also successfully facilitated the annual audit carried out on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

### Organisational support

Much of the focus of the Board's Organisation Unit in 2009 continued to be on minimising administrative costs to free up resources for service delivery. All non-pay administrative costs were kept under ongoing review in order to seek better value for money, whether through the use of tendering, drawing down from central government contract or re-negotiating existing contracts.

In respect of the Board's accommodation needs, a report was drawn up which took a strategic look at the Board's property portfolio. This identified issues which the Board will need to address over the coming years. Amongst the most significant of these will be the compliance of the Board's law centres with disability legislation.

A good deal of progress was made during the year in implementing the Board's scheme under the Official Languages Act. The Board has nominated Galway Law Centre as its designated centre for facilitating clients who wish to access legal services through Irish.

### Internal audit

The Internal Audit function again focused on delivering on the annual audit plan and reporting on this to the Board's Audit and Risk Management Committee. As in previous years, much of the work centred on auditing the financial procedures in the Board's law centres. Certain elements of head office expenditure were also audited. Additionally, in 2009, the Board's Corporate Risk Register was revised to reflect the findings of the legal service delivery risk assessment.

# Finance

THE BOARD'S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2009 ARE SHOWN AT APPENDIX 1.

## Income

The following are some comments on the sources of the Board's income.

### (a) Grant-in-aid

As in previous years, most of the Board's income consists of a grant-in-aid received from the Department of Justice and Law Reform. Funding provided by the Government in 2009 was €26.310 million, as compared with €26.988 million in 2008.

### (b) Refugee Legal Service (RLS)

Exchequer funding for the RLS in 2009 was €8.330 million, compared to €8.897 million in 2008. This level of funding was adequate to cover the full year cost of the provision of legal aid services by the Refugee Legal Service.

### (c) Contributions

Persons who are provided with legal services pay a contribution related to their income and, in some cases, their capital resources. The minimum contribution is €10 for legal advice and €50 for representation in court. This minimum contribution can be waived in cases of hardship.

### (d) Recovery of costs

The Board may recover the cost of providing legal services from:

- i. the other party to a dispute, either as a result of a court order or as part of an agreement to settle a dispute, or
- ii. from the legally aided person out of monies/property received by the person as a result of the provision of legal services.

The amount of costs recovered can vary significantly from year to year, especially if a legally aided person obtains an award for costs in a case in which the other party is in a position to meet the costs. This does not generally arise in family law cases, which form the bulk of the Board's caseload.

Costs recovered in 2009 (€1,274,562) were 53% higher than in 2008 (€833,906).

## Expenditure

The following are comments on the major items of expenditure shown in the 2009 financial statements:

### 1) Salaries

Salary and related costs fell by just under €1 million in 2009. This was largely down to the lower level of staff in 2009, as a result of the moratorium on public sector recruitment.

### 2) Accommodation and establishment costs

Expenditure in this area decreased again in 2009. This was largely down to lower costs associated with the maintenance of premises and equipment. Energy costs also fell while costs for rent and cleaning were largely static.

### 3) Legal fees and expenses

There are a number of differing elements covered in this heading - see Note 9 to the accounts - and comment is provided on each of the various headings comprising the total as follows:

*(i) Counsel fees*

Expenditure on counsel fees increased by €1.139 million (29%) when compared with 2008. An increased level of expenditure in respect of the RLS was the main factor in this, as a result of a backlog of cases having been cleared. The expenditure on the legal aid side also increased, albeit to a lesser extent. Counsel fee rates paid by the Board were decreased by 8% in 2009, in line with a Government decision. However, as there is a time lag between the authorisation of expenditure and presentation for payment of counsel fee notes, the effect of this reduction will not be felt until 2010 and beyond.

The accrual for counsel fees, where work has been undertaken but not yet presented for payment at December 31st 2009, stands at €5.355 million, 4.4% higher than at the end of 2008.

The following table shows the trend in expenditure on counsel fees in respect of legal aid and advice over the past seven years.

TABLE 14 - COUNSEL FEES	
Year	Counsel Fees
2003	€3,978,000
2004	€2,995,000
2005	€5,376,000
2006	€6,847,000
2007	€4,903,000
2008	€3,986,500
<b>2009</b>	<b>€5,125,472</b>

*(ii) Legal fees (Expert witnesses etc.)*

These case-related expenses are the additional expenses incurred by the Board, over and above counsel fees, in providing a civil legal aid and advice service to members of the public. The expenditure amount under this heading is derived from the requirements of the cases handled by the Board in any particular year.

There was an increase of 13% in such expenses in 2009, which was largely reflective of the increased activity of the Board. Professional fees paid by the Board were reduced by 8% in 2009, in line with a Government decision.

*(iii) Private practitioner scheme*

Expenditure on the private practitioner scheme was up 28% to €3.663 million in 2009. As had been the case in 2008, the increase was largely down to a higher number of referrals in respect of the District Court scheme. At December 31st 2009, the accrual for private practitioner fees, where work has been incurred but not yet presented for payment, stood at €2.829 million.

*(iv) Other professional fees*

Costs under this heading relate to the engagement by the Board of professionals to provide independent legal advice and other professional services to the Board. Expenditure in 2009 was 63% lower than in 2008. This partially reflects a lower level of expenditure on research, but also in respect of legal fees and other professional advice.

*(v) Other expenses*

This category saw a 16% drop in expenditure in 2009. This was largely down to reduced spending in the area of training and education.

**4) General administration**

Costs under this heading were 20% lower in 2009 at €1.966 million. The main factor in this was significantly lower expenditure on travel and subsistence, following a reduction in rates in March 2009. Efficiencies and better value for money in office expenses also played a significant part in this.

The following graph shows a breakdown of expenditure by the Board over the last five years.

Chart 5: Expenditure 2006-2009

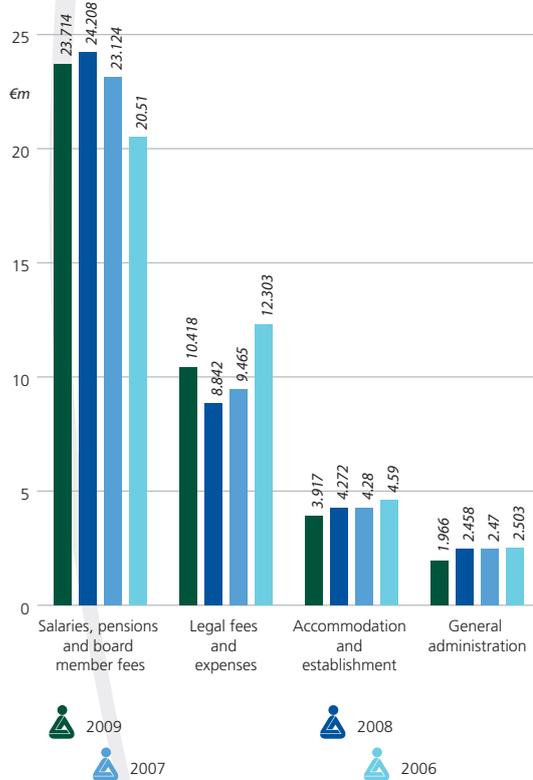
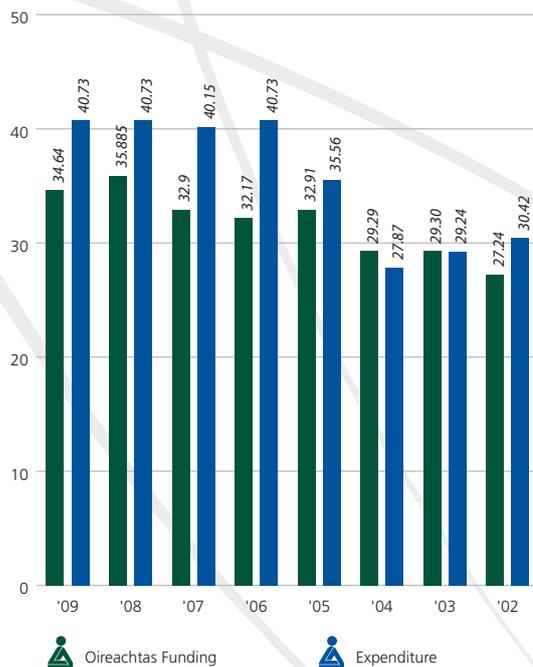


Chart 6 below shows the relationship between Oireachtas funding and the actual expenditure over the last ten years.

Chart 6: Funding vs. Expenditure 2002-2009



### Cash at bank and on hand

The Balance Sheet shows that the Board had over €4.55 million on hand at the end of 2009. This included €0.95 million held on behalf of clients. It can be seen from Note 14 to the accounts that the throughput of client funds in 2008 was €8.85 million. This arises from cases where, as a result of legal advice or representation in court, clients received moneys either from the other party or from the disposal of property. All such moneys are initially lodged to the Legal Aid Client Fund Account before being returned to clients less, in some cases, an amount in respect of costs incurred by the Board in providing legal services. The cash at bank figure, apart from client funds, is similar to the level of expenditure incurred by the Board each month and is considered to be a reasonable level of funding to have on hands at any one time.

### Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997

Section 4 of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997 requires the Board to pay for the supply of goods or services by the prescribed payment date. This date is currently 30 days after the receipt of an invoice, or a lesser period as may be specified in a written contract. If the Board fails to make payment by the prescribed payment date, interest is payable to the supplier. Procedures ensure that the Board complies in all material respects with the requirements of the Act. The total amount of late payment interest paid to suppliers of goods and services during 2009 amounted to €0.

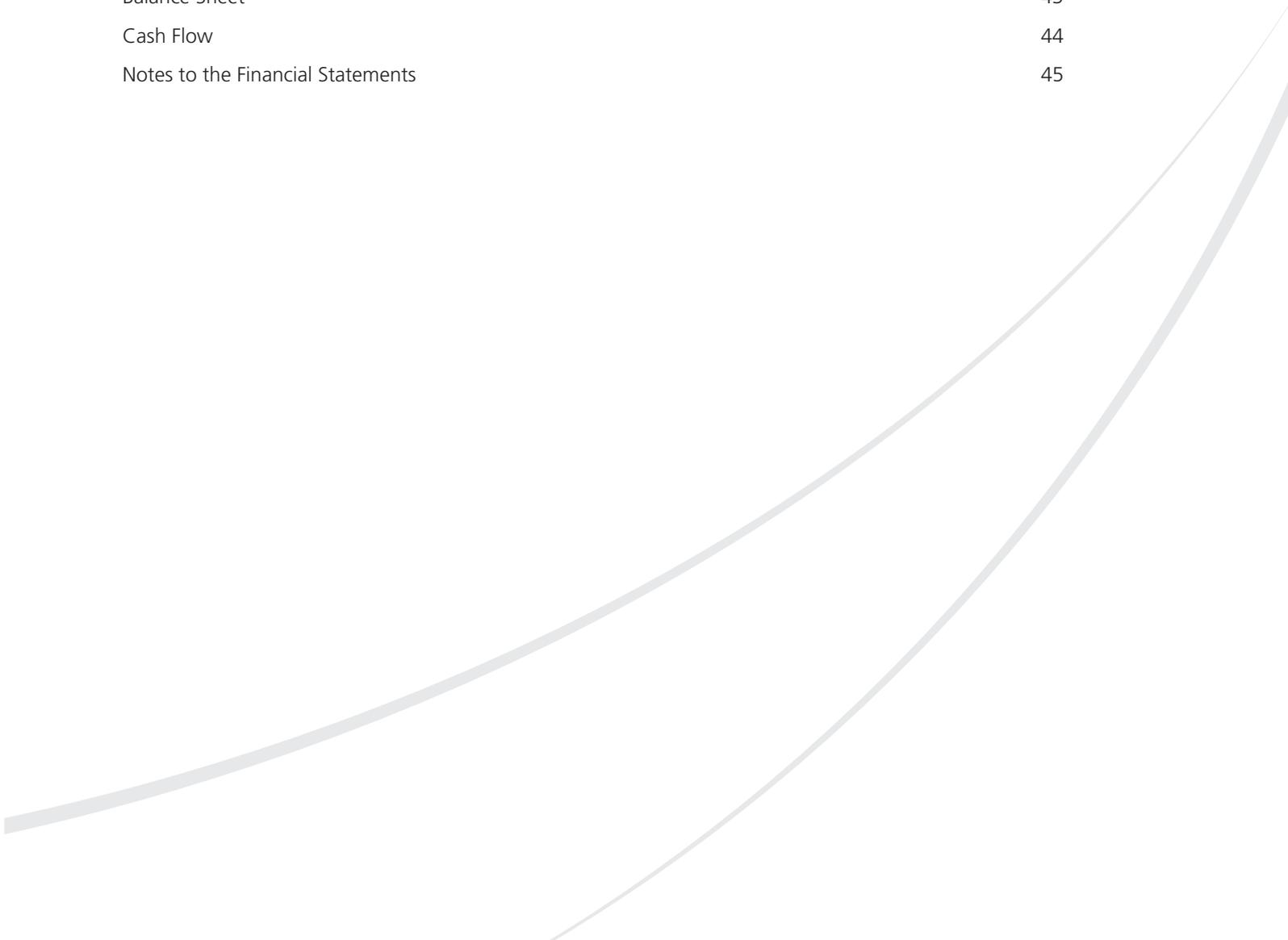
# Appendix 1

## Financial Statements

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2009

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## Statement of Board Responsibilities

Section 20 of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995 requires the Board to keep, in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Justice and Law Reform, with the consent of the Minister for Finance, all proper and usual accounts of any moneys received or expended by it. In preparing those financial statements, the Board is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then 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 the Fund 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 proper books of account which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Fund and which enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 20 of the Act. The Board is also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Fund and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.



**ANNE COLLEY**  
*Chairperson*



**JERRY O'CONNOR**  
*Board Member*

10 November 2010

# Statement on Internal Financial Control

- 1 On behalf of the Board of the Legal Aid Board, I acknowledge that the Board is responsible for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated for the organisation.
- 2 Any such system can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material error. In considering the effectiveness of internal financial controls the Board has regard, among other things, to the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.
- 3 The key procedures that have been put in place by the Board, designed to provide effective internal financial control, include
  - Control Environment: the management and executive functions of the Board are delegated to the Chief Executive and senior management of the organisation by resolutions of the statutory Board, which monitors and reviews the work of senior management, who report to it at its monthly meetings and through its various committees. A Corporate Governance Manual was developed in 2006 to provide a clear and comprehensive summary of the principal aspects of corporate governance for the Board and senior management. The current Board was appointed in November 2006 and was fully briefed on Board roles and responsibilities. A full briefing has also been provided to any new Board members that have been appointed to the Board since November 2006. Last year, actions were taken by the Board to ensure compliance with the revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, published in June 2009. These actions included the amending of the Board's own Corporate Governance Manual to take account of the 2009 Code of Practice and the revised Corporate Governance Manual was formally approved by the Board at its meeting in November 2009. A revised Code of Business Conduct for Board Members was also approved by the Board in October 2009. As required under the 2009 Code of Practice, the Board developed and implemented a Travel Policy during 2009 which sets out how the Board complies with the current Department of Finance regulations and guidelines on travel and subsistence. A financial fraud prevention policy for the Board was approved and implemented during 2008 which includes, inter alia, procedures whereby employees of the Board may in confidence, raise concerns about possible irregularities in financial reporting and other matters and ensure that such matters are followed up in a meaningful way. The Board has also developed a Corporate Procurement Plan.
  - Budget Information Systems: the Board has a comprehensive budgeting system that includes approval by the statutory Board of annual budgets and monitoring of monthly financial reports. Budgets are used to plan, authorise, monitor and control the way the funding of the Board is determined, allocated and spent. The arrangements for budgetary control include the provision of regular, relevant and timely financial information to monitor income and expenditure in all areas and corrective action is taken where necessary. The Finance Committee is a committee of the Board which considers the Board's finances in detail and reports to the Board on the financial affairs and policies of the Board. This includes the review of budgets and financial reports, the recommendation of approval of the Board's annual accounts to the Board and detailed consideration of financial matters in order to make appropriate recommendations to the Board and to advise management. Decisions are taken either by the Board or by management, as appropriate, having regard to the recommendations and advice of the committee. The committee met on ten occasions during 2009 and, as part of its functions, examined detailed analysis reports on income received under Costs Recovered and four key areas of expenditure: Postage, Phone & Office Supplies; Rent; Foreign Travel and Subsistence and the District Court Private Practitioner Scheme. Over the past three years, sixteen key areas of expenditure have been examined by the committee. The committee also considered a detailed in-house Property Report incorporating a short and medium term strategic view of the Board's property portfolio and suggesting options, having regard to the Board's obligations under Disability legislation and other relevant considerations. This report was noted by the Board at its meeting in June 2009. The committee also considered a Value for Money report of initiatives taken

by the Board since 2006 whereby substantial financial savings across non-pay administrative subheads have been achieved.

- **Risk Management:** the Board has adopted and implemented a clearly defined Risk Management policy and maintains a formal Risk Register that documents business risks and associated mitigations, controls and actions for all aspects of the Board's activities through the application of risk analysis techniques to its business objectives. Risk analysis principles have been systematically applied to the objectives of all Business Plans for the Board and risk management forms an integral part of the Business Planning process. One of the functions of the Audit and Risk Management Committee of the Board is to provide an independent opinion on the adequacy of the Board's risk management arrangements. In February 2009, the committee agreed to a change in its procedures and terms of reference to reflect the increasing importance of and focus on managing corporate risk. As a result of this change, the committee was re-titled the Audit and Risk Management Committee (previously Audit Committee). An external member to the Board was appointed to the committee in April 2009. The committee met on six occasions in 2009. Management carried out a further major review of the Board's risk register in 2009 to take account of the significant risk issues in all areas of the Board and having regard also to the external risk assessment reports. The committee signed off on the revised risk register in November 2009 and proposed the introduction of a formal reporting system on any potential and real risks that materialised since last reported upon. The risk incident reporting system was implemented with effect from March 2010. The Director of Legal Aid attended five of the meetings to comprehensively brief the committee on progress in relation to the implementation of the recommendations of the external risk assessment reports.
- **Procedures:** the Board has clearly defined financial instructions and procedures, including delegated spending and authorisation limits and segregation of duties, approved by resolution of the statutory Board. In addition, the statutory Board has reserved approval of expenditure on contracts with value in excess of €65,000, while the Finance Committee of the statutory Board is notified of all contracts with value in excess of €10,000 and less than €65,000. During 2009, the internal audit function of the Board carried out audits of accounts and procedures in twelve of the Board's law centres.
- **Monitoring of Internal Control:** the Board has an Internal Audit function whose annual audit programme is approved by the Audit and Risk Management Committee of the statutory Board and one of whose functions is to review all aspects of internal financial controls. The scope of the law centre audit was widened in 2009 to incorporate the financial assessment on the client file. The Audit and Risk Management Committee reviews the work and recommendations of the Internal Audit function and monitors the action taken by management to resolve any issues that have been identified. The capacity and role of the Internal Audit function is currently being reviewed and proposals will be brought to the committee for consideration. The committee also reviews all significant reports received by the Board from the external auditors, including management's responses to these and makes recommendations on the issues raised. Correspondence with the Comptroller and Auditor General, including the audit Management Letter, and any issues raised, are brought to the attention of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and the statutory Board, which ensures that issues raised are acted upon. With the exception of finalising the development of a records management policy for the Board, I can confirm that all other issues raised since the 2008 audit have been addressed and any recommendations adopted. The records management policy will be addressed in the context of the Board's new Legal Case Management system. The Audit and Risk Management Committee is required to produce a formal report within three months of the end of the calendar year, outlining its activities, together with such advice and recommendations as it deems appropriate. The report for 2009 was completed in March 2010 and was presented to the Board at its meeting on 23rd July, 2010.

4 I confirm that during the year ended 31 December 2009 the Board has conducted a review of the effectiveness of the Board's system of internal financial controls.

  
**ANNE COLLEY**  
 Chairperson

10 November 2010

# Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

FOR PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

I have audited the financial statements of the Legal Aid Fund for the year ended 31 December 2009 under the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995.

The financial statements, which have been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein, comprise the Statement of Accounting Policies, the Income and Expenditure Account, the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and losses, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes.

## Respective Responsibilities of the Members of the Board and the Comptroller and Auditor General

The Legal Aid Board is responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995 and for ensuring the regularity of transactions. The Board prepares the financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland. The accounting responsibilities of the Members of the Board are set out in the Statement of Board Responsibilities.

My responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with the relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

I report my opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland. I also report whether in my opinion proper books of account have been kept. In addition, I state whether the financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

I report any material instance where moneys have not been applied for the purposes intended or where the transactions do not conform to the authorities governing them.

I also report if I have not obtained all the information and explanations necessary for the purposes of my audit.

I review whether the Statement on Internal Financial Control reflects the Board's compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and report any material instance where it does not do so, or if the statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information of which I am aware from my audit of the financial statements. I am not required to consider whether the Statement on Internal Financial Control covers all financial risks and controls, or to form an opinion on the effectiveness of the risk and control procedures.

I read other information contained in the Annual Report, and consider whether it is consistent with the audited financial statements. I consider the implications for my report if I become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the financial statements.

### Basis of Audit Opinion

In the exercise of my function as Comptroller and Auditor General, I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Auditing Practices Board and by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures and regularity of the financial transactions included in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Board's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

I planned and performed my audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations that I considered necessary in order to provide me with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming my opinion I also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

### Opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, of the state of the Legal Aid Fund's affairs at 31 December 2009 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended.

In my opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the Board. The financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.



**John Buckley**  
Comptroller and Auditor General  
19 November 2010

# Statement of Accounting Policies

## General

The Legal Aid Fund, which is provided for under Section 19 of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995, is managed by a Legal Aid Board appointed by the Minister for Justice and Law Reform. The Fund consists of all the financial resources of the Board. In 2009, the Board operated out of 33 full-time centres and 12 part-time centres throughout the country.

## Basis of accounting

The financial statements are prepared under the accruals method of accounting, except as indicated below, and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles under the historical cost convention. Financial Reporting Standards recommended by the recognised accountancy bodies are adopted, as they become operative.

## Going Concern

The Legal Aid Board is a statutory body established under the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995. The financing of the Board's activities is predominantly met by grant-in-aid and exchequer funding from the Department of Justice and Law Reform.

During the financial year the Board carried out a comprehensive exercise for the purpose of assessing the Board's accrued liabilities figure, in particular, Counsel Fees and the Private Practitioner service.

The balance sheet at 31st December 2009 shows an excess of liabilities over assets of €3,131,646. This deficit arises from the timing difference between receipt of funding to pay liabilities for legal services when they are due for payment and the provision for these liabilities that is recognised in these accounts under the accruals method of accounting. A letter of ongoing support has been received from the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Law Reform confirming that the Board's

activities will be funded into the future.

The Board takes the view that the going concern accounting convention applies to the accounts which represent the operations of the Board as long as the provisions of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 remain in existence.

The Board knows of no review of its operations or intention to suspend its activities or merge it with other organisations. It has therefore been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis for the preparation of these financial statements.

## State grants

Income under this heading is accounted for on a cash receipts basis.

## Contributions from aided persons

Due to the nature of this income, i.e. contributions from persons of modest means, it is considered prudent to account for such income on a cash receipts basis. The estimated amount collectable at 31 December, 2009 was approximately €20,000. There were no bad debts written off in 2009.

## Costs Recovered

The Board may recover the costs of providing legal services from:

- (a) the other party to a dispute, either as a result of a court order or as part of an agreement to settle a dispute, or
- (b) from the legally aided person, out of moneys/property received by the person as a result of the provision of legal services.

## Fixed assets and depreciation

Fixed assets are shown on the Balance Sheet at cost less accumulated depreciation. Depreciation, which is calculated over the useful life of the assets using the straight line method, is charged at the following annual rates:-

- Leases, office furniture & equipment, and premises fit out 20%
- computer equipment 33%

A half year's depreciation is charged in the year of purchase and in the year of disposal.

## Clients' Funds

These funds represent the gross amounts plus interest accrued, which were held by the Board at 31 December 2009, on foot of awards or settlements made in favour of clients represented by the Board. The Board may recover therefrom the total cost of providing such legal services and the balance is paid to the persons represented.

## Capital Account

The Capital Account represents the unamortised amount of income used to purchase fixed assets.

## Pensions

The Legal Aid Board operates a defined benefit pension scheme, which is funded annually on a pay as you go basis from monies available to it, including monies provided by the Department of Justice and Law Reform and from contributions deducted from solicitors' salaries. Pension costs reflect pension benefits earned by solicitor staff in the period and are shown net of staff pension contributions which are retained by the Legal Aid Board. An amount corresponding to the pension charge is recognized as income to the extent that it is recoverable, and offset by grants received in the year to discharge pension payments.

Actuarial gains or losses arising on scheme liabilities are reflected in the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses and a corresponding adjustment is recognised in the amount recoverable from the Department of Justice and Law Reform.

Pension liabilities represent the present value of future pension payments earned by solicitor staff to date. Deferred pension funding represents the corresponding asset to be recovered in future periods from the Department of Justice and Law Reform.

## Provisions

A provision is recognised when an obligation (whether legal or constructive) arises as a result of a past event, and when it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required to settle the obligation and that it can be reliably estimated.

The Legal Aid Board estimates the value of unbilled live cases each year to arrive at the amounts disclosed within the accounts as a provision. The amount is an estimate of the expenditure required to settle any obligation at the balance sheet date.

In estimating the provision, the Board has adopted prudent measurement techniques based on the latest data available. Improved data capture methods have been utilised in the Board's estimate for the current year.

No income is anticipated for cases that may recover costs.

# Income and Expenditure Account

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2009

	Note	2009		2008	
		€	€	€	€
<b>Income</b>					
State funding	1	34,640,000		35,885,000	
Net deferred funding for pensions	2 c	3,495,456		2,974,487	
Contributions from aided persons		783,601		753,833	
Costs recovered		1,274,562		833,906	
Loss on sale of assets		(14,110)		0	
Other income	3	566,646		1,167,617	
			40,746,155		41,614,843
Transfer from Capital Account	4		478,041		221,297
			41,224,196		41,836,140
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Salaries and related expenses	5	19,917,500		20,801,943	
Pension Costs	2 a	3,479,560		2,967,771	
Fees to Board members		113,867		120,147	
Accommodation and establishment expenses	8	3,916,917		4,272,437	
Legal fees & expenses	9	10,417,600		8,842,151	
General administration	10	1,966,229		2,457,529	
Depreciation	11	693,692		931,991	
Audit fee		18,095		19,250	
			40,523,460		40,413,220
Surplus for year			700,736		1,422,920
Opening balance as at 1 January			(4,966,696)		(6,389,616)
Closing balance as at 31 December			(4,265,960)		(4,966,696)

All income and expenditure for the year 31 December 2009 relates to continuing activities.

The Statement of Accounting Policies, together with Notes 1 to 20, form part of these financial statements.



**ANNE COLLEY**  
CHAIRPERSON



**MOLING RYAN**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

10 November 2010

# Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2009

	Note	2009		2008	
		€	€	€	€
Surplus / (Deficit) for year			700,736		1,422,920
Experience losses / (gains) on pension scheme liability		2,704,544		2,567,783	
Changes in assumptions underlying the present value of pension scheme liabilities		0		0	
<b>Actuarial loss / (gain) on Pension Liabilities</b>	<b>2 b</b>		2,704,544		2,567,783
<b>Adjustment to Deferred Pension Funding</b>			(2,704,544)		(2,567,783)
<b>Total Recognised Gains / Losses</b>			700,736		1,422,920

All income and expenditure for the year 31 December 2009 relates to continuing activities.

The Statement of Accounting Policies, together with Notes 1 to 20, form part of these financial statements.

# Balance Sheet

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2009

	Note	2009		2008	
		€	€	€	€
<b>Fixed assets</b>	<b>11</b>		1,134,314		1,612,355
<b>Current assets</b>					
Cash at bank and on hand		4,550,896		4,141,691	
Debtors and prepayments	<b>12</b>	828,635		827,922	
		5,379,531		4,969,613	
<b>Less current liabilities</b>					
Creditors and accruals	<b>13</b>	8,713,712		8,900,272	
Clients' funds	<b>14</b>	931,779		1,036,037	
		9,645,491		9,936,309	
<b>Net current (liabilities)/assets</b>			(4,265,960)		(4,966,696)
<b>Total assets less current Liabilities before Pension</b>			(3,131,646)		(3,354,341)
Deferred pension funding	<b>2 c</b>		37,200,000		31,000,000
Pension liabilities	<b>2 b</b>		(37,200,000)		(31,000,000)
			0		0
<b>Total assets</b>			(3,131,646)		(3,354,341)
<b>Represented by:</b>					
Income and Expenditure Account			(4,265,960)		(4,966,696)
Capital Account	<b>4</b>		1,134,314		1,612,355
			(3,131,646)		(3,354,341)

The Statement of Accounting Policies, together with Notes 1 to 20, form part of these financial statements.



**ANNE COLLEY**  
CHAIRPERSON



**MOLING RYAN**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

10 November 2010

# Cash Flow Statement

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2009

	Note	2009 €	2008 €
Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities	<b>16</b>	527,324	696,305
Returns on investment and servicing of finance			
Interest received		122,712	82,629
Interest paid on client settlements		(25,180)	(51,066)
Investing activities			
Sale of tangible assets		15,652	0
Purchase of tangible assets		(231,303)	(718,161)
Net cash inflow/(outflow)		409,205	9,707
Increase/(Decrease) in cash	<b>17</b>	409,205	9,707

The Statement of Accounting Policies, together with Notes 1 to 20, form part of these financial statements



**ANNE COLLEY**  
CHAIRPERSON



**MOLING RYAN**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

10 November 2010

# Notes to the Financial Statements

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2009

## 1 State Funding

State Funding was received from Vote 19 - Office of the Minister for Justice and Law Reform as follows:

	2009 €	2008 €
Subhead:		
C.2 Grant-in-Aid	26,310,000	26,988,000
D.2 Asylum Seekers Taskforce - Legal Aid*	8,330,000	8,897,000
	34,640,000	35,885,000

\* This funding was provided towards the expenditure incurred on the Refugee Legal Service. See Note 18.

## 2 Pension Costs

### (a) Analysis of total pension costs charged to Expenditure

	2009 €	2008 €
Current service cost	2,300,000	2,100,000
Interest on Pension Scheme Liabilities	1,700,000	1,400,000
Employee Contributions	(520,440)	(532,229)
	3,479,560	2,967,771

### (b) Movement in Net Pension Liability during the financial year

	2009 €	2008 €
Net Pension Liability at 1 January	31,000,000	25,457,730
Current Service Cost	2,300,000	2,100,000
Interest Costs	1,700,000	1,400,000
Actuarial Loss	2,704,544	2,567,783
Pensions paid in the year	(504,544)	(525,513)
Net Pension Liability at 31 December	37,200,000	31,000,000

### (c). Deferred Funding Asset for Pensions

The Legal Aid Board recognises these amounts as an asset corresponding to the unfunded deferred liability for pensions on the basis of the set of assumptions described above and a number of past events. These events include the statutory basis for the establishment of the superannuation scheme, and the policy and practice currently in place in relation to funding public service pensions including contributions by employees and the annual estimate process. While there is no formal agreement regarding these specific amounts with the Department of Justice and Law Reform, the Board has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to meet such sums in accordance with current practice.

The Net Deferred Funding for Pensions recognised in the Income and Expenditure Account was as follows:

	2009 €	2008 €
Funding recoverable in respect of current year pension costs	4,000,000	3,500,000
State grant applied to pay pensioners	(504,544)	(525,513)
	3,495,456	2,974,487

The deferred funding asset for pensions as at 31 December 2009 amounted to €37.2 million (€31 million in 2008).

#### (d) History of defined benefit obligations

	2009 €	2008 €	2007 €
Defined Benefit obligations	37,200,000	31,000,000	25,457,730
Experience losses / (gains) on Scheme Liabilities amount	2,704,544	2,567,783	(1,149,600)
Percentage of the present value of the scheme liabilities	7%	8%	-4%

The cumulative actuarial loss recognised in the Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses amounts to €7,551,727.

#### (e) General Description of the Scheme

The pension scheme is a defined benefit final salary pension arrangement with benefits and contributions defined by reference to current "model" public sector scheme regulations. The scheme provides a pension (eightieths per year of service), a gratuity or lump sum (three eightieth per year of service) and spouse's and children's pensions. Normal Retirement Age is a member's 65th birthday, and pre 2004 members have an entitlement to retire without actuarial reduction from age 60. Pensions in payment (and deferment) normally increase in line with general public sector salary inflation.

The valuation used for FRS 17 (Revised ) disclosures has been based on a full actuarial valuation (May '10) by a qualified independent actuary taking account of the requirements of the FRS in order to assess the scheme liabilities at 31 December 2009.

The principal actuarial assumptions were as follows:

	2009	2008
Rate of increase in salaries	4.0%	4.0%
Rate of increase in pensions in payment	4.0%	4.0%
Discount Rate	5.5%	5.5%
Inflation Rate	2.0%	2.0%

The average future life expectancy according to the mortality tables used to determine the pension liabilities were as follows:

	2009	2008
Male aged 65	22	18
Female aged 65	25	22

### 3. Other Income

	2009 €	2008 €
Interest received and receivable	146,503	109,685
Sundry receipts	420,143	1,057,932
	<u>566,646</u>	<u>1,167,617</u>

### 4. Capital Account

	€	€
Balance as at 1 January		1,612,355
Transfer to Income and Expenditure Account		
- Income used to purchase fixed assets	231,303	
- Amount released on disposal of fixed assets	(15,652)	
- Income amortised in year in line with depreciation of assets	(693,692)	
		(478,041)
Balance as at 31 December		<u>1,134,314</u>

### 5. Employee Numbers and Costs

The total staff complement as approved by the Minister at 31 December, 2009 was 384. The number of staff actually employed by the Board at 31 December, 2009 was 358 (2008 - 390) The average number of employees in the Board during the year was 374 (2008 - 383). Employee and related costs were as follows:

	2009 €	2008 €
Salaries	18,537,150	19,253,876
Cost of Secondment	59,135	73,720
Employer PRSI	1,321,215	1,474,347
	<u>19,917,500</u>	<u>20,801,943</u>

€832,102 was deducted from staff by way of pension levy and was paid over to the Department of Justice and Law Reform. Two awards made against the Board are included in the 2009 Salaries figure. The Rights Commissioner awarded €4,000 for a former temporary solicitor in respect of a complaint under the Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act 2003. The Equality Tribunal awarded €15,000 in respect of a former temporary clerical officer in respect of alleged discrimination by the Board.

**6. Chief Executive Officer Salary and Benefits**

	2009 €	2008 €
CEO Salary	150,422	169,489
CEO Benefits	4,476	8,080
	<u>154,898</u>	<u>177,569</u>

The CEO received salary payments of €150,422. No bonus payments were made in 2009. The CEO also received an amount of €4,476 in respect of travel and subsistence. The CEO is a member of an unfunded defined benefit public sector scheme and his pension entitlements do not extend beyond the standard entitlements in the public sector defined benefit superannuation scheme.

**7. Board Members Fees and Expenses**

	2009 €	2008 €
Board Members Fees	113,867	120,147
Board Members Expenses	28,207	30,527
	<u>142,074</u>	<u>150,674</u>

<i>Member</i>	<i>Fees</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Fees</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Fees</i>
Anne Colley	€13,067	Kate Hayes	€8,400	Niamh Moran	€8,400
Robert Browne	€8,400	Margaret Heneghan	€8,400	Jerry O'Connor	€8,400
Michael Buckley	€8,400	Seamus Keelan	€8,400	Jim O'Farrell	€8,400
Dara Foynes	€8,400	Breege Leonard	€8,400	Eamonn Purcell	€8,400
Fergal Rooney	€8,400				

**8. Accommodation and Establishment Expenses**

	2009 €	2008 €
Rents	2,583,704	2,571,238
Cleaning	261,851	264,613
Lighting and heating	243,027	268,220
Maintenance - Premises	607,013	658,814
Maintenance - Equipment	221,322	509,552
	<u>3,916,917</u>	<u>4,272,437</u>

**9. Legal Fees and Expenses**

	2009 €	2008 €
Counsel fees	5,125,472	3,986,503
Legal fees	893,025	793,517
Private Practitioner Schemes	3,662,871	2,858,149
Other professional fees	216,219	582,407
Other expenses	520,013	621,575
	<u>10,417,600</u>	<u>8,842,151</u>

**10. General Administration**

	2009 €	2008 €
Stationery, office and training expenses	344,252	499,751
Books and printing	111,229	176,071
Postage and telephone	856,177	874,795
Insurance	188,487	151,264
Travel and subsistence	466,084	755,648
	<u>1,966,229</u>	<u>2,457,529</u>

**11. Fixed Assets**

	Leases €	Office Furniture €	Equipment & Computers €	Premises Fit Out €	Total €
<b>Cost</b>					
Balance as at 01/01/09	2,292,177	1,297,437	7,037,300	3,315,779	13,942,693
Acquisitions	0	4,697	135,724	90,882	231,303
Disposals	0	0	(309,296)	0	(309,296)
Balance as at 31/12/09	2,292,177	1,302,134	6,863,728	3,406,661	13,864,700
<b>Depreciation of fixed assets</b>					
Balance as at 01/01/09	2,088,537	1,209,429	6,254,684	2,777,688	12,330,338
Charge in year	124,200	35,669	356,338	177,485	693,692
Disposals	0	0	(293,644)	0	(293,644)
Balance as at 31/12/09	2,212,737	1,245,098	6,317,378	2,955,173	12,730,386
Net book value as at 31/12/09	79,440	57,036	546,350	451,488	1,134,314
Net book value as at 31/12/08	203,640	88,008	782,616	538,091	1,612,355

**12. Debtors and Prepayments**

	2009 €	2008 €
Debtors - deposit interest	138,236	93,417
Prepayments		
- Rent	116,991	117,482
- Insurance	21,370	159,060
- Salaries	53,213	192,249
- Other	498,825	265,714
	<u>828,635</u>	<u>827,922</u>

**13. Creditors and Accruals**

	2009 €	2008 €
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Creditors & accruals	<u>8,713,712</u>	<u>8,900,272</u>
	<u>8,713,712</u>	<u>8,900,272</u>

The Legal Aid Board estimates the value of unbilled live cases each year to arrive at the amounts disclosed within the accounts as a provision. The amount is an estimate of the expenditure required to settle any obligation at the balance sheet date.

In estimating the provision, the Board has adopted prudent measurement techniques based on the latest data available. Improved data capture methods have been utilised in the Board's estimate for the current year.

No income is anticipated for cases that may recover costs.

**14. Clients' Funds**

Client funds held at 1 January (gross)	1,036,037
Interest	(25,258)
Client funds held at 1 January (net of interest)	<u>1,010,779</u>
Add: Awards/settlements received during 2009	8,848,311
Less: Settlements paid out, including interest allowed and costs recovered	<u>(8,948,417)</u>
Client funds held at 31 December	910,673
Interest accruing on client funds held	21,106
Total due to clients	<u>931,779</u>

### 15a. Commitments under Operating Leases

The Board occupies premises at Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry and Mount Street, Dublin and operates out of 34 other centres throughout the country. The Board is committed to pay rent of € 2,536,713 during 2010 in respect of leases expiring as follows:

	€
2010	53,797
2011-2015	302,190
2016 onwards	2,180,726

### 15b. Commitments in respect of Legal Fees

Counsel Fees and Private Practitioner Schemes	Total
	€
Open case certified at 1 January 2009	15,804,666
Additional fees certified in 2009	8,620,668
2009 Payments	(8,552,555)
	15,872,779
Provided for at 31 December 2009	(8,184,134)
Outstanding commitments at 31 December 2009	<u>7,688,645</u>

At 31 December 2009, the Legal Aid Board had a number of ongoing cases where the matter of fees had not yet been settled. In accordance with its operating policy on these matters the Legal Aid Board makes partial provision against these fees based on a statistical model which recognises the average term to crystallise for such costs. This model is applied consistently across all cases handled. At 31 December 2009, the Legal Aid Board had provided for legal fees of €8,184,134 and had outstanding commitments in the amount of €7,688,645.

### 16. Reconciliation of Surplus for Year to Cash from Operating Activities

	2009 €	2008 €
(Deficit) / Surplus for year	700,736	1,422,920
Adjustment for non-operating items		
Bank interest receivable	(146,503)	(109,685)
Movement on Capital Account	(478,041)	(221,297)
Adjustment for non-cash items		
Depreciation	693,692	931,991
(Increase) / Decrease in debtors	44,106	(262,089)
Increase / (Decrease) in creditors	(286,666)	(1,065,535)
	<u>527,324</u>	<u>696,305</u>

**17. Movement of Cash**

	2009 €	2008 €
Balance at 1 January	4,141,691	4,131,984
Net cash inflow	409,205	9,707
Balance at 31 December	<u>4,550,896</u>	<u>4,141,691</u>

**18. Refugee Legal Service**

Expenditure and income relating to the Refugee Legal Service are included in the financial statements as follows:

	2009 €	2008 €
Salaries and related expenses	5,006,445	5,560,971
Accommodation expenses	1,318,103	1,340,928
Legal fees and professional fees	2,191,434	1,479,872
General administration	396,950	620,979
Fixed assets purchased	22,873	169,891
	<u>8,935,805</u>	<u>9,172,641</u>
Less contributions from legally aided persons and costs recovered	(607,856)	(257,829)
Total net expenditure in the year	<u>8,327,949</u>	<u>8,914,812</u>

**19. Comparative Figures**

Some changes have been made to the presentation of items in the financial statements and the comparative figures have been restated where necessary on a basis consistent with the current year presentation.

**20. Approval of Financial Statements**

The Financial Statements were approved by the Board on 23 July 2010.

# Appendix 2

## List of law centres

### FULL TIME LAW CENTRES

#### LAW CENTRE

MANAGING SOLICITOR

44/49 Main Street, Finglas, Dublin 11  
Tel: (01) 864 0314 Fax: (01) 864 0362

*Marie Quirke*

#### CAVAN

Newcourt Shopping Centre, Church Street, Cavan  
Tel: (049) 433 1110 Fax: (049) 433 1304

*Patricia O'Reilly*

48/49 North Brunswick Street,  
Georges Lane, Dublin 7

Tel: (01) 646 9700 Fax: (01) 646 9799

*Hugh Cunniam*

#### CLARE

Unit 6A, Merchant's Square, Ennis, Co Clare

Tel: (065) 682 1929 Fax: (065) 682 1939

*Mary Cuffe*

Unit 6-8, Business Centre, Clonsilla Road  
Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

Tel: (01) 820 0455 Fax: (01) 820 0450

*Joan Crawford*

#### CORK

North Quay House, Popes Quay, Cork

Tel: (021) 455 1686 Fax: (021) 455 1690

*Betty Dineen*

Medical Negligence Unit

7 – 11 Montague Court, Montague St Dublin 2

Tel: (01) 4776200 Fax: (01)4776241

*Margaret O'Shea-Grewcock*

1A South Mall, Cork

Tel: (021) 427 5998 Fax: (021) 427 6927

*Deirdre Kissane*

George's Lane, 48/49 North Brunswick Street,  
George's Lane, Dublin 7

Tel: (01) 6469740 Fax: (01) 646975

*Anke Hartas*

#### DONEGAL

Letterkenny Town Centre, Justice Walsh Road,  
Letterkenny, Co Donegal

Tel: (074) 912 6177 Fax: (074) 912 6086

*Ray Finucane*

Dolphin House office

East Essex Street, Dublin 2

Tel: (01) 8886

*Anke Hartas*

#### DUBLIN

45 Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin 1

Tel: (01) 874 5440 Fax: (01) 874 6896

*Shane Dooley*

#### GALWAY

9 St. Francis Street, Galway

Tel: (091) 561650 Fax: (091) 563825

*Mary Griffin*

Tower Centre, Clondalkin Village, Dublin 22

Tel: (01) 457 6011 Fax: (01) 457 6007

*Tom Nally*

#### KERRY

1 Day Place, Tralee, Co Kerry

Tel: (066) 712 6900 Fax: (066) 712 3631

*Carol Anne Coolican*

Village Green, Tallaght, Dublin 24

Tel: (01) 451 1519 Fax: (01) 451 7989

*Pauline Corcoran*

#### KILDARE

Canning Place, Newbridge, Co Kildare

Tel: (045) 435777 Fax: (045) 435766

*Edel Poole*

**KILKENNY**

87 Maudlin Street, Kilkenny  
Tel: (056) 776 1611 Fax: (056) 776 1562  
*Niall Murphy*

**LAOIS**

Unit 6A, Bridge Street, Portlaoise, Co Laois  
Tel: (057)8661366 Fax: (057) 8661362  
*Catherine Martin*

**LIMERICK**

Unit F, Lock Quay, Limerick  
Tel: (061) 314599 Fax: (061) 318330  
*Fergal Rooney*

**LONGFORD**

Credit Union Courtyard, 50A Main Street, Longford  
Tel: (043) 47590 Fax: (043) 47594  
*Edel Hamilton*

**LOUTH**

Condil House, Roden Place, Dundalk, Co Louth  
Tel: (042) 933 0448 Fax: (042) 933 0991  
*Deirdre McMichael*

**MAYO**

Humbert Mall, Main Street, Castlebar, Co Mayo  
Tel: (094) 902 4334 Fax: (094) 902 3721  
*Thomas O' Mahony*

**MEATH**

Kennedy Road, Navan, Co Meath  
Tel: (046) 907 2515 Fax: (046) 907 2519  
*Mary Pat Ahern*

**MONAGHAN**

Alma House, The Diamond, Monaghan  
Tel: (047) 84888 Fax: (047) 84879  
*Stephanie Coggans*

**OFFALY**

Harbour Street, Tullamore  
Tel: (057) 9351177 Fax: (057) 9351544  
*Orla Connolly*

**SLIGO**

Bridgewater House, Rockwood Parade, Sligo  
Tel: (071) 9161670 Fax: (071) 9161681  
*Fiona McGuire*

**TIPPERARY**

Friars Court, Abbey Street, Nenagh, Co Tipperary  
Tel: (067) 34181 Fax: (067) 34083  
*Josephine Fair*

**WATERFORD**

Canada House, Canada Street, Waterford  
Tel: (051) 855814 Fax: (051) 871237  
*Aidan Lynch*

**WESTMEATH**

Paynes Lane, Irishtown, Athlone, Co Westmeath  
Tel: (090) 647 4694 Fax: (090) 647 2160  
*Phil O'Laoide*

**WEXFORD**

Unit 8, Redmond Square, Wexford  
Tel: (053) 9122622 Fax: (053)9124927  
*Niamh Murran*

**WICKLOW**

Bridge Street, Wicklow  
Tel: (0404) 66166 Fax: (0404) 66197  
*Barbara Smyth*

**REFUGEE LEGAL SERVICE**

48/49 North Brunswick Street,  
George's Lane, Dublin 7  
Tel: (01) 646 9600 Fax: (01) 671 0200  
*Frank Caffrey*  
*Gráinne Brophy*

Seville House, New Dock Road, Galway  
Tel: (091) 562480 Fax: (091)562599  
*Cormac Faherty*

**Registration Office**

Timberlay House  
79/83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 631 0800 Fax: (01) 661 5011

**PART TIME LAW CENTRES****Location and telephone**

Open

Law Centre

**CARLOW**

St. Catherine's Citizens Info. Bureau,  
St. Joseph's Road, Carlow.  
Tel: (059) 9138700

Twice a month

Kilkenny

**CORK**

Citizens Info. Bureau,  
Wolf Tone Square, Bantry  
(021) 455168

Once a month

Cork (Popes Quay)

**DONEGAL**

The Courthouse, Donegal Town  
Tel: (074) 9126177

Once a month

Letterkenny

**KERRY**

52 High Street, Killarney  
Tel: (066) 7126900

Every Friday morning

Tralee

**LEITRIM**

The Health Centre,  
Leitrim Road, Carrick-on-Shannon  
Tel: (043) 47590

Once a month

Longford

**LOUTH**

Drogheda Community Services Centre,  
Scarlett Crescent, Drogheda  
Tel: (041) 9836084/9833490

Twice a month

Monaghan

**MAYO**

The Pastoral Centre (Cathedral Grounds)  
Ballina, Co. Mayo  
Tel: (094) 9024334

Once a month

Castlebar

Health Centre,  
Knock Road, Ballyhaunis  
Tel: (094) 9024334

Fourth Tuesday of every month

Castlebar

**ROSCOMMON**

Citizens Information Centre,  
7 Elphin Street, Boyle  
Tel: (071) 9161670

Once every 2 months

Sligo

**TIPPERARY**

Thurles Community Social Services,  
Rossa Street, Thurles  
Tel: (0504) 22169

Second Tuesday of every month

Nenagh

Citizens' Information Centre,  
14 Wellington Street, Clonmel.  
Tel: (052) 22267

Four times a month

Nenagh

**WESTMEATH**

Enterprise Centre,  
Bishopgate Street, Mullingar  
Tel: (090) 6474694

Once a month

Athlone

### REFUGEE LEGAL SERVICE INFORMATION CLINICS

It should be noted that locations dates and times of these clinics may change depending on demand for the service.

#### **Doras Clinic (Limerick)**

Mount St. Vincent,  
O'Connell Avenue,  
Limerick  
Contact: Ella / Sr. Teresa (087) 7754160 / (061) 310328  
Every Friday.

#### **Sligo Clinic**

The Family Resource Centre,  
The Mall,  
Sligo  
Contact: Elizabeth/Cathy (071) 9146315; [sligofrc@eircom.net](mailto:sligofrc@eircom.net)  
Every second Tuesday.