**EMBARGO 0.00 29th May 2024**

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**The Legal Aid Board Opens New Law and Family Mediation Centre in Ballymun**

* Officially opened today by Minister for Justice Helen McEntee, the Legal Aid Board’s new Law and Family Mediation Centre is located in the Lidl North Quarter of Ballymun.
* As the Legal Aid Board’s 34th centre, it will provide access to civil legal aid and advice for the people of Ballymun and nearby areas who otherwise wouldn’t be able to afford it.
  + The services at this new Centre include supported decision-making under the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015, and the Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service.
  + The Family Mediation Service at the Legal Aid Board, a free family mediation service for all families who are divorcing, separating or living apart, is co-located at this new Centre.
* The Legal Aid Board estimates that the new Centre will help 2,800 people in its first year.

**29th May 2024:** The Legal Aid Board today launched its new Law and Family Mediation Centre in Ballymun. Officially opened by Minister for Justice Helen McEntee, the new Centre is located in the Lidl North Quarter of Ballymun.

As the Legal Aid Board’s 34th national centre, it will provide access to civil legal aid and advice to the people of Ballymun and nearby areas who otherwise wouldn’t be able to afford it. As a state body, the services at this new Centre include supported decision-making under the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015, and the Minceir/Traveller Legal Support Service. The Family Mediation Service at the Legal Aid Board, a free family mediation service for all families who are divorcing, separating or living apart is co-located at this Centre. This service includes child-inclusive and child-centered mediation. The Legal Aid Board estimates that the new Centre will help 2,800 people in its first year.

Speaking at today’s launch, the Legal Aid Board’s CEO Joan Crawford spoke about the importance of the day:

*“Today is an important day for the Legal Aid Board and for the Ballymun community. Our new Law and Family Meditation Centre in Ballymun embodies* *our mission to empower communities through accessible civil legal aid and family mediation services. We tirelessly work to break down barriers, ensuring that people, regardless of socio-economic background, have access to the civil legal aid and family mediation services that they need.*

*Through our community-driven engagement in Ballymun, we empower people to navigate legal challenges and family changes, contributing to the resilience of communities.”*

Going on to highlight a specific example of the Legal Aid Board’s impact at today’s launch, Ms Crawford continued:

*“The heart of our impact lies in the stories of those we serve. Each case resolved, each person supported, signifies the importance of access to justice and support. This is why, as part of today’s launch of the new Law and Family Mediation Centre, we heard from Adam\*, a member of the Traveller community. He shared the following about his experience with the Legal Aid Board:*

*‘I believe with services like this, it is shaping a better, more inclusive future for my own kids and the whole traveller community…. I appreciate the understanding, passion and helpfulness of all involved in the Legal Aid Board in helping those who face discrimination…. Their expertise and advice are second to none.’*

*I’d like to thank Adam\* for sharing his story today.* *It is great to see our national agency with such a local impact.*

*Lastly, I would also like to especially thank Minister McEntee for joining us in marking this important day.”*

Minister Helen McEntee added the following at today’s launch:

*“The Legal Aid Board plays a vital role in ensuring access to justice as a basic human right in Ireland and helps to ensure that modest means or income is not a barrier to people engaging with the legal system.*

*The Legal Aid Board is an invaluable organisation that has worked to improve the lives of thousands of people in difficult circumstances. This new centre in Ballymun is the Legal Aid Board’s 34th centre in Ireland, and will no doubt support many people living in the surrounding areas with access to civil legal aid, advice and family mediation services.”*

If you require civil legal aid or family mediation services, you can visit the new Ballymun Law and Family Mediation Centre at Unit 2, 2nd Floor, Lidl North Quarter, Ballymun*,* Dublin 11, D11 WRN8.

**ENDS//**

Legal Aid Board CEO Joan Crawford is available for interview.

Please contact Dawn Lonergan, [dawnlonergan@legalaidboard.ie](mailto:dawnlonergan@legalaidboard.ie)/ 087 490 9352

\*This name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual involved.

Photos will be syndicated by Fennel Photography.

**About the Legal Aid Board**

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 the State, family mediation and vulnerable witness related services and for the administration of a number of ad hoc legal aid schemes in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 and the Civil Legal Aid Regulations 1996 to 2017.

Civil legal aid and advice are provided by the Legal Aid Board primarily through a network of 34 full-time law centres with 3 part-time centres by solicitors employed by the Board. Specific law centres in Dublin, Cork and Galway include an international protection specialty and there are also dedicated units in Dublin dealing with medical negligence/personal injury cases and cases involving children at risk. The Legal Aid Board also provides a Family Mediation Service to couples who are separating or divorcing. This service is administered through twenty family mediation offices, some of which are co-located with law centres. The Board also operates a specialised, independent and professional research and library service for all of the main bodies involved in the international protection process. The Board also engages private solicitors in certain areas of law

in: District Court family law matters; Circuit Court judicial separation and divorce cases; and international protection cases.

**Estimation of Clients**

The Legal Aid Board estimates that the new Centre will help 2,800 people in its first year.

This figure based is based average amount of people (2,792) that used the Legal Aid Board’s services from 01/01/2021- 31/12/2023 in the areas of Dublin 3, 5, 9, 11, 13 or 17 or north County Dublin, rounded up to the nearest ten.