



Citizens **Information** Board
information · advice · advocacy

**Submission to
the LSRA
Annual Report
2025 on
Admissions
Policies of the
Legal
Professions**

Citizens Information Board
January 2026

1. Introduction

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) - as a member of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority - welcomes this opportunity to provide input to the Authority's 2025 Annual Report. Access to justice and legal services continues to be a core element of the work that CIB funded services provide to clients. These services include:

- the Citizens Information Services (CIS),
- the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS),
- the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS),
- the National Advocacy Service (NAS) for people with disabilities.

CIB contributes to the funding of the Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) to provide information and advice on legal matters to the public and is a member of the External Consultative Panel of the Legal Aid Board (LAB). In addition, CIB collaborates with MABS, the Legal Aid Board (LAB) and the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) to implement the services of Abhaile, the national mortgage arrears resolution service. Abhaile also arranges legal services to those in mortgage arrears, covering a certain amount of free legal aid and advice for eligible borrowers.

2. The level of demand for the services of practising barristers and solicitors in 2025

Facilitating access to justice and legal services is an important element of the support that CIB-funded services provide to clients. Many people who seek assistance from CIB-funded services face complex issues which require legal advice and support, including issues relating to family law, employment, debt and social welfare.

The Civil Legal Aid Review 2025¹ highlighted the importance of the provision of legal information and the Review Group recognised that Citizens Information Centres (CIC) provide much of the early information people are looking for to resolve their legal issues in their provision of information, advice, and advocacy services (along with NAS in relation to advocacy). The Review Group also recognised that CIC provide information, advice and advocacy (not legal representation) to those engaging with non-court bodies/ quasi-judicial fora who are excluded from the Civil Legal Aid Scheme.

¹[DOJ Civil Legal Aid Review Majority Report.pdf](#)

The Review Group noted that research conducted as part of their Review made clear that the services funded by CIB are highly regarded but that nonetheless there remain those who have not yet been reached (i.e. those with unmet legal needs).

This is borne out in CIB data on the queries that clients of CIS present with. In 2025, for example, over 17,000 queries were recorded relating to the justice system from 14,600 callers. Forty-five per cent of these queries were about legal aid and advice, eight per cent on civil law matters, five per cent on the courts system and five per cent on the (ADM(C)A). Additionally, over 13,600 queries were recorded under the category of ‘Birth, Family and Relationships’, many of which were relevant to legal issues in separation and divorce (29%), maintenance (12%), custody and access (9%), problems in relationships and marriages (7%), and domestic violence (7%).

CIS staff routinely deal with queries from clients which need legal expertise and require a referral to legal services such as FLAC, solicitors, the Legal Aid Board and the courts service.² Feedback from CIS staff indicates that clients face long waiting lists to access legal aid. For example:

Client wishes to access legal aid. There is a very long waiting list to access this service in their county, on checking the legal aid website it stated that there is a 43 week wait with two practicing solicitors. This prevents the client from getting good quality legal advice in a timely manner. We have advised them that as soon as they get a court date, they contact the legal aid office to see if they may avail of a prompt service. The client is struggling with a family law issue, in a very high state of stress and this is further compounded by lack of access to a legal support service. We have referred them to FLAC for advice, but this will not be sufficient as they will need legal representation – CIS Feedback, 2025

There were also difficulties reported in contacting FLAC. In 2024, 446 legal telephone clinics were organised in conjunction with CIS, and 1,706 people were given an appointment at these clinics which were supported by approximately 250 volunteer FLAC lawyers. Employment law, family law, immigration law and other general areas of law made up the majority of referral queries to FLAC clinics.

Accessing solicitors in (ADM(C)A) cases

In 2025, there was an almost 30% increase (compared with 2024) in CIS queries relating to the (ADM(C)A), the majority of which were about Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA).

It is noted that the purpose of the legislative changes under the (ADM(C)A) is to enhance safeguarding and to avoid costly referral to the High Court. While the Decision Support Service

² In 2025, nearly 1 in 5 of all referrals made by CIS staff were for legal services.

(DSS) has legislative responsibility to ensure that EPAs are appropriately articulated, registered, and notified,³ a person must take their EPA to a lawyer, who will interview them to ensure they have understood the implications of making an EPA before completing the Legal Practitioner Statement. CIS clients have reported experiencing ongoing difficulties in accessing a solicitor to fulfil this legal requirement. Feedback from clients indicated that this is due to the complexity of the new system, and the administrative support required to complete the necessary documents on the MyDSS portal.

The Law Society of Ireland has issued an [updated practice note on Enduring Powers of Attorney](#) which states that “*There is no prohibition in the ADM(C)A or in DSS processes on the practitioner assisting clients in navigating the DSS portal for the creation of EPAs*”. CIB welcomes the ongoing engagement the Law Society of Ireland has had with the DSS to address operational difficulties for clients in respect of the online portal. CIB notes, however, that in the experience of clients seeking advice from CIS, there continues to be a barrier to clients accessing solicitors to assist with the creation of EPAs:

“Client has visited a number of solicitors locally to get assistance with Enduring Power of Attorney application and claims the local solicitors state it is too much bother and will not proceed with the application.” – CIS feedback, August 2025

“Caller stated that his solicitor will not help with Power of Attorney due to the changes and directed caller to go online and complete himself. Caller not confident in doing so.” – CIS feedback, April 2025

This can cause delays for clients, not least when the person the EPA is required for has diminishing capacity. Those who cannot afford a solicitor or cannot find somebody to take them on are left to navigate the portal themselves. This can cause difficulties for people with limited access to equipment or low levels of digital literacy.⁴

CIB notes that [the DSS published guidance for legal practitioners](#) on creating an emergency EPA in 2025, which was welcomed by the Law Society, who had previously raised concerns about the lack of clear process for these cases.

CIB also notes that there is likely to be increased demand in access to solicitors through the Legal Aid Board arising from the implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact in June 2026. This

³ Minister Anne Rabbitte, TD. Dail Debate, 28 February 2024. <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2024-02-28/99/>

⁴ CIS has implemented a Digital Help Service to support clients to access and complete online forms and processes related to government services and portals. This service will be available in all CIS offices nationwide this year.

will have implications in terms of the increased complexity of EU requirements and demand amongst asylum applicants for legal services, and in particular, legal aid.

3. The costs of legal services in 2025 and whether these were available at a reasonable cost to consumers

As stated above, CIS often acts as the first point of contact for people who need legal aid and advice. Those who present to their local CIS for legal advice often state that they cannot afford to pay for a solicitor. Clients who are unable to afford to pay for a solicitor access CIS for basic legal information and support, for example, in filling out forms, and in accessing online systems.

Eligibility for civil legal aid is complex, and income thresholds have not kept pace with inflation or changes to the social welfare code, resulting in many on low incomes not being eligible. Clients have presented to CIS who are just above the limit for legal aid but cannot afford to pay for a solicitor to represent them in court in seeking court orders.

“Client is in receipt of One Parent Family Payment (OFP) and Half Rate Carers Allowance. Client also receives some maintenance. Client is no longer eligible for legal aid. Carers Allowance is not taken into consideration in the means test but the client is over the limit with maintenance and OFP. The client would lose approximately €150 per week if she claimed only Carers Allowance. The client has a court date for a safety order due to domestic violence but is unable to represent herself or pay for a solicitor.” – CIS feedback, May 2025

Additionally, a client may qualify for legal aid but still have difficulty paying the contribution fee to the Legal Aid Board. The Review of the Civil Legal Aid Scheme recognises that for those on very low incomes, these contributions can be a barrier to people accessing the service. This is particularly difficult for clients who have exhausted all other options before seeking legal advice, for example, for whom mediation is not an option in cases of divorce, as seen in the case example below.

“Client requires Legal Aid for a divorce/separation situation. Client only works 2 days per week and applied to Legal Aid Board. Client has been asked to pay €150 for initial consultation with the Legal Aid Solicitor and must pay €1200 afterwards for a Legal Aid Certificate to have the Solicitor represent him. Client finds this a financial difficulty, he is on low income, obviously qualified for Legal Aid, but is not able to pay this larger fee for the Legal Aid Certificate/representation. Client is seeking to obtain any other financial

support. He is aware of the Mediation option, but his ex-partner will not attend and is already involved with a Solicitor privately.” – CIS feedback, October 2025

These cost barriers are for clients who manage to secure legal aid– many report long waiting lists to access legal aid in their area with attendant delays getting legal advice and representation.

There were some cases reported by CIS staff of clients who were experiencing domestic violence who could not access legal aid in situations of financial abuse where a client may not have access to or control over their finances. A client may not be eligible for a means-tested social welfare payment where there is joint assessment of means and where an abusive partner continues to live in the household. This can prove problematic where an applicant for legal aid needs to demonstrate their eligibility for the scheme.

“Client seeking separation from abusive husband - information given to IO is that partner has full control of all income that comes into household. Client seeking legal aid and received letter from legal aid to provide pay slips/social welfare payments to them. Client is unemployed and has zero access to any income. Client is unable to apply for Supplementary Welfare Allowance or Additional Needs Payment due to both payments being means tested and since they are cohabiting due to husband refusing to leave the home and he is employed, the means test will conclude that she is over the threshold.” – CIS feedback, November 2025

CIB notes that the purpose of the legislative changes under the (ADM(C)A) is to enhance safeguarding and to avoid costly referral to the High Court. However, the requirement for a person to take their EPA to a solicitor means there are significant cost implications for clients who wish to set up an EPA. The following clients considered these legal costs to be too high:

“Client's spouse is at early stage of Alzheimer's. She is attempting to navigate the Assisted Decision-Making Process online. Client is finding this extremely difficult and has visited a solicitor who acknowledges the difficulties with this system. Informs the client that this will take approx. 10 hours for them to do this on her behalf at a cost of just under €2,000. Using this online Decision-Making Process and the difficulties with it is a repeated issue for clients who wish to set up power of attorney.” – CIS feedback, July 2025

“Client's spouse is beginning to suffer from vascular dementia. He wanted to put in place a Decision-making capacity application. He went to a Solicitor who quoted him €6,000 to do the co-decision-making capacity act, stating that they would have to employ a barrister and go before the Courts. The client cannot afford the Solicitors fee.” – CIS feedback, August 2025

4. The standard of education and training for persons admitted to practise

Assisted-Decision Making (Capacity) Act

CIB has previously highlighted the need for appropriate training and guidelines for legal practitioners in communicating with people who may lack decision-making capacity.⁵ CIB welcomes the guidance and resources published by the Decision Support Service to make solicitors and legal professionals aware of best practice when working with a relevant person in the decision-making processes. An important role for the Authority lies in it ensuring that legal practitioners are trained and competent in communicating with vulnerable adults and people with an intellectual disability.

As discussed above, some clients who present to CIS are experiencing domestic violence and require legal information and assistance. Their need for appropriate support from legal professionals during these experiences is evident. A recent report by Women's Aid⁶ pointed to the continued need for education and training for legal professions on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence (DSGBV). In this regard, CIB welcomes the commitment in the 2025-26 Implementation Plan for the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence to ensure that Legal Aid Board staff working with clients who have experienced DSGBV receive the appropriate training.

⁵ [Review-of-civil-legal-aid-scheme-citizens-information-board-submission.pdf](#)

⁶ [Navigating-the-Irish-Family-Law-System-in-Guardianship-Custody-and-Access.-Executive-Summary.pdf](#)