



**Legal Aid Board**

**Corporate Plan 2009 – 2011**



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## Foreword

As Chairperson it gives me considerable pleasure to introduce the Legal Aid Board's new Corporate Plan, which includes our main objectives for the service in the three years up to the end of 2011. The Board and I are particularly conscious of the importance of civil legal aid to clients, to government and to society. Notably, it enables people who might not otherwise be in a position because of the financial costs involved to defend or vindicate their rights. This facility to access justice by the more disadvantaged and vulnerable in society is one of the hallmarks of a modern, egalitarian society and we are acutely aware of the responsibility vested in us by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Government.

I am pleased to record that we have continued to achieve our target of providing a service to clients in the form of an appointment with a solicitor within a maximum of four months. Indeed, a considerable number of our law centres offer appointments within a shorter period and more than 16 per cent of applicants get an almost immediate service because of the nature of their cases: domestic violence, child abduction, child care or cases where statutory time limits are close to expiry. We need to continue to ensure the provision of a timely service if it is to be a meaningful one.

As with other public services there will inevitably be pressure on our capacity to maintain the level of service we have been providing in recent years because of the more straitened financial and economic environment within which we must exist. In our case the pressure is even more pronounced because of the increasing demand for our services. It is unlikely that the demand will lessen over the duration of this Plan. Yet, society owes it to the less well off to ensure that their capacity to access justice is no less than their more fortunate fellow citizens. Our aspiration for the Legal Aid Board is well reflected in the vision we have crafted for the organisation: to facilitate access to justice through the provision of a civil legal aid and advice service which compares with best practice internationally.

The Board knows that there is an even greater need now to ensure that the service we provide is of the optimum efficiency and effectiveness. The financial and human resources available to the Board will be utilised in the best possible manner and we are determined to ensure there is excellent value for money in relation to all aspects of the service. The service which our solicitors provide on a national level continues to be complemented by solicitors and barristers in private practice and, in the view of the Board, reflects the very best of effective co-operation between the public and private sectors.

The Board is aware that the challenges set in this Plan in terms of the service aspired to be provided is utterly dependent on the continued commitment of our staff at all levels. To date this commitment has been very evident, not just in direct provision of legal services in the traditional manner but also in spearheading initiatives in areas of alternative dispute resolution. We wish to ensure that clients are presented in certain cases with means of resolving disputes with the minimum amount of long term damage, and with outcomes that are of mutual benefit to each of the parties and to the welfare of children.

We have set a large number of challenging targets over the next three years and are determined to ensure that the commitment and creativity shown by our staff since the inception of the Board will go a considerable distance to their achievement, despite the challenging environment in which we will be operating.

Anne Colley  
Chairperson, Legal Aid Board  
November 2008

## **Introduction**

This is the Board's fifth Corporate Plan and a perusal of previous Plans shows the considerable progress made since its establishment as a statutory Body. This Plan sets a clear direction for the Board's activities over the next three years and is informed by a wide consultation process involving the staff of the Board and other key stakeholders. It sets out the main objectives that we aim to achieve up to the end of 2011 and the commitments and actions to be implemented to achieve these objectives.

The three years covered by the previous Corporate Plan saw significant developments and achievements in the provision of civil legal aid by the Legal Aid Board. Notably, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Government acknowledged the importance of access to justice for the less well off in society by increasing our budget during that period by some 22 per cent. The Board responded to this in a very positive manner and our achievements during that period highlight the tangible return on even a modest investment in the area of civil legal aid. In terms of timely provision of legal services, almost all of our law centres now offer appointments with a solicitor within a 4 month period. Indeed, clients currently receive appointments within a two month period in 40% of our law centres. Further, some 16% of all our clients receive an immediate or near immediate service because of the urgent nature of particular cases. In addition, all clients of the Refugee Legal Service continued to receive an immediate service due to the legal requirements of this process.

Further highlights over the period of the last Corporate Plan include:

- The Board has actively promoted the use of alternative dispute resolution methods, including collaborative law, in family related disputes;
- The number of people availing of the service has continued to increase while the number of asylum seekers utilising the Refugee Legal Service has declined reflecting a continued reduction in asylum applications;
- As part of its ongoing quality assurance programme, the Board introduced structured file review procedures both for the Board's own solicitors and also for private practitioners on the Board's Circuit Court panel;
- A dedicated medical negligence unit was established by the Board;
- The Board's information technology systems were significantly improved, thus enhancing the Board's capacity to provide an efficient service;
- The revised Board website was launched in 2007 and provides comprehensive and improved information on the Board's services in an accessible and user-friendly format;
- There has been greater engagement with groups representing users of the service;
- Forms have been simplified;
- There has been an increased emphasis on ensuring that information on the Board's services is more readily available;
- There has been further investment in professional development and training;
- Our internal structures and processes were reviewed and changes recommended are being implemented;
- Governance processes have been reviewed and updated;

- Facilities have been improved in a number of centres;
- A comprehensive external communications strategy was put in place with the aim of improving the level and quality of the Board's communications with its stakeholders and the public.

The environment in which the Board operates over the period of the current Plan is likely to have changed substantially from the preceding period. There are likely to be increased financial constraints in terms of the Board's budget and this may well impact on our capacity to deliver a timely and efficient service to our clients. Such constraints arise at a time when the demand for legal services from the Board is growing at a considerable rate.

In developing the current Plan, the Board adopted the approach that we, nonetheless, should be ambitious in terms of our objectives and the quality and timeliness of the service we propose to offer to our clients. We are undertaking an extensive review of our entire operations to ensure that we are in a position to confirm that the Board is organised in the best manner to deliver the services we are mandated to provide and that the resources given to us are utilised to the optimum effect. I am fully confident that the staff of the Board will continue to give of their best and that the quality of the service provided will stand comparison with legal aid services internationally.

Moling Ryan  
Chief Executive

## **Mission Statement**

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

## **Mandate**

The Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995 which established the Legal Aid Board, provides a statutory framework whereby persons may apply for legal services in civil law matters in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Section 5(1) of the Act states:

*“The principal function of the Board shall be to provide, within the Board’s resources and subject to the other provisions of this Act, legal aid and advice in civil cases to persons who satisfy the requirements of this Act.”*

Section 5(2) makes provision for the dissemination, for the benefit of those for whom its services are made available, of information in relation to those services and their availability.

The Board makes the services of solicitors and, where necessary, barristers available to persons of modest means in relation to matters of civil law. The Board’s current statutory remit and the level of resources provided are the main determinants of the range and responsiveness of the services provided by the organisation.

## **Vision**

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

## **Values**

Since its establishment, the Board has sought to reflect a series of values that support the implementation of its Mission Statement and underpin the manner in which the Board would like to see its services operate. These include:

### For Service

- **Professionalism.** To perform all aspects of work to the highest professional standards ensuring confidence in clients in the manner in which advice and representation is provided.



- **Customer Focus.** To provide a high quality service to clients and other stakeholders which is professional, sensitive and respectful.
- **Openness to Change.** To keep our processes under constant review with a view to ensuring the best possible service is provided.
- **Consultation with stakeholders.** To engage in a structured manner and both nationally and locally with bodies and groups that have a vested or representational interest in the work of the Board.
- **Continuously improving.** Consistently seek to improve the quality and timeliness of the service provided.
- **Valuing diversity.** Being aware of, and sensitive to, the diversity in our client base.

#### For staff

- **Openness.** To seek to ensure the greatest possible sharing of all relevant information with staff and representative groups.
- **Emphasis on learning.** To seek to develop and maintain an effective learning environment in all areas of the Board.
- **Teamworking.** To foster the effectiveness of service delivery through ongoing support for a team approach
- **Partnership.** To adopt a consultative approach to the management of change in the Board
- **Communicating.** To ensure an effective culture of communication at all levels of the Board
- **Customer service.** To maintain a prevailing culture of providing a high quality service to all clients of the Board
- **High ethical standards.** To ensure the highest ethical standards in all our dealings.

#### For Government

- **Effective Leadership.** To maintain and enhance good quality leadership at all levels
- **Cost effectiveness and value for money.** To ensure that available resources are utilised to ensure the best possible service is provided without compromising quality
- **Proactiveness and Responsiveness.** To seek the most effective and creative means of ensuring our mandate is implemented
- **Accountability.** All aspects of the financial, statutory and other responsibilities to be properly and appropriately adhered to.

## Environmental Analysis

### **External Environment: Changes likely to have greatest impact on the Board during the lifetime of the Plan.**

- Continuing changes in social relationships and family models;
- Legislative and policy changes impacting on service delivery;
- The prevailing national economic situation;
- Emerging diversity of the population, reflected in the profile of the users and potential users of services;
- The extent of resources made available to the Board to conduct its business;
- Changes in the regulatory environment relating to the legal professions;
- Government policy initiatives contained in *Towards 2016* and any related agreements;
- The ongoing programme of change in the public service including those initiatives arising from the OECD Review of the Irish Public Service;
- Continuing changes in the area of governance, including both financial and political accountability;
- Increased emphasis on value for money and measurable outcomes;
- The role of the Chief Executive as Accountable Officer to the Public Accounts Committee under the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008;
- Changing structures in relation to immigration and asylum including the impact of the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2008;
- The increasing pace of innovation and change in information technology particularly in relation to its capacity to improve delivery of service;
- Increasing public expectations in terms of the manner and quality of service provided;
- Requirement to consult with and involve support and interest groups in relation to policy development and delivery of service;
- International developments in the area of civil law, including case law of the European Court of Human Rights, and the requirement for increased contact with other jurisdictions and institutions;
- The potential for increased demand for legal services and the capacity of the Board to meet this demand; and
- Increasing media interest in the Board services

### **Internal Environment: main influences in this area over the lifetime of the Plan**

- Emphasis on Partnership approach as an effective means of managing and decision making in the Board;
- Use of internal networks as a means of communication and engagement;
- Effective leadership at all levels;
- Effective management of performance through the utilisation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS);
- Continued emphasis on supporting learning and development by staff;
- The review of all aspects of the Board's service delivery and organisational structures to ensure that service is provided to clients in the most efficient and effective manner possible;
- Continued monitoring and evaluation of the Board's capacity and effectiveness in meeting strategic objectives and responding to changing demands in an innovative manner;
- The necessity for effective communication throughout the organisation;
- The development a new ICT strategy for the Board which supports the implementation of the commitments contained in this Plan;
- The need for a review of knowledge management within the Board;
- The geographically dispersed nature of the service.

## High Level Goals

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

## HLG 1 Service

To provide a professional, accessible quality service

### Outcomes

- Provision of an effective and timely service;
- Provision of an immediate or near immediate service where required and in accordance with approved arrangements;
- An effective structure of quality assurance of the Board's professional services;
- Implementation and continued review of mechanisms for monitoring throughput of cases;
- Provision of a service which is responsive to the identified legal needs of clients;
- An effective customer oriented environment and service;
- Development of robust service delivery mechanisms with a view to ensuring effective access to the service;
- Ongoing monitoring of the efficiency and effectiveness of the service provided by the Board;
- All staff conversant with intercultural and diversity issues;
- Facilities appropriate to meet the requirements of confidentiality and the physical and other needs of customers as well as organisational business;
- Premises complying with health and safety legislation;
- Mechanisms in place to provide for structured feedback from customers.

Action	Performance Indicator
Provide all eligible persons with an initial appointment with a solicitor within a maximum period of 4 months	Monthly monitoring of waiting lists and timely action where needed. Financial eligibility assessments to be offered to all potential applicants within 2 weeks of contact with centre.
Ensure continued provision of an immediate or near immediate service to persons in need of such service	Continued monitoring and review
Review and update Best Practice Guidelines	Guidelines reviewed on an ongoing basis in response to experience and change.
Continue to ensure that decision processes within the Board's remit are conducted in a timely and professional manner	Quarterly reports to management
Continue to develop and put in place improved management information processes	Ongoing
Develop criteria for determining appropriate caseloads in law centres	Criteria finalised following law centre review end 2008
Develop and introduce regular client	Client survey results analysed and appropriate

surveys and appropriate responses to outcomes	responses proposed – mid year 2009, 2010, 2011
Identify any issues or barriers to accessing the Board's legal aid and advice services as provided for in the 1995 Act and develop proposals	Proposals developed by September 2009
Develop and implement relevant recommendations emanating from the Law Centre Review	Implementation Plan completed by Q1 2009
Undertake risk assessment analysis of the process and procedures in the Board	Analysis undertaken in final quarter 2008 and implementation of outcome in 2009 and years following
Evaluate risk management processes for all sections of the Board to manage and minimise risk	Evaluation complete Q1 2009 and outcome implemented
Review efficiency and effectiveness of current support operations	Review completed Q1 2009
Continue to implement the commitments contained in the Board's Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter including: (i)The timeliness and quality of services; (ii)The extent and quality of information supplied; and (iii)The commitment to confidentiality, integrity and professional standards	Implementation of Action Plan reviewed for all units for 2009 and ongoing
Continue to provide information and training on intercultural and diversity issues across the organisation	Continued training provided as needed. Review of impact and further needs in Q2 2009
Review Board facilities following completion of audit of premises	Review undertaken in Q4 2008 and in 2009
Ensure the effective implementation of the Health and Safety Strategy for the Board	Health and Safety Strategy and appropriate organisational arrangements to be kept under review in partnership and annual reports on issues
Ensure that the provisions of the Disability Act, 2005 are complied with	Action Plan developed by Q.3 2009 using information from risk assessments and facilities audits. Review of all Board's facilities undertaken by end Q.2 2009
Develop processes to obtain, collate and analyse feedback from customers relating to the quality of the Board's facilities	New Customer Response card to be in place by end 2008. Report to be provided to the Board twice yearly on responses received
Implement and review the Board's Scheme under the Official Languages Act, 2003	Full implementation by end Q.2 2010. Monitor implementation on an ongoing basis

## HLG 2 Communications

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

### Outcomes

- Details of the Board's services published in an effective, accessible and user-friendly manner;
- Structured engagement with clients, stakeholders and the general public;
- The Board's website to complement other systems of promoting and disseminating information on services;
- A comprehensive information package in relevant formats regarding the Board's services;
- Continuing proactive engagement with community groups and other groups acting for marginalized or disadvantaged people;
- Effective working with the Board's External Consultative Panel.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
Publicise details of the Board's services in an effective, accessible and user-friendly manner	Information regarding the Board's services published in appropriate formats – review annually at mid year; Details regarding review or appeal of decisions to be included in information leaflets
Ensure that all Board publications, particularly information leaflets, are widely and appropriately disseminated	Maintain and develop existing distribution arrangements
Publish details of all Board's promotional material on its Website	Timely publication of all relevant material
Review effectiveness of the external communications strategy	Review completed mid 2009
Further enhance the Board's website to complement other systems of promoting and disseminating information on services	Review website mid 2009
Undertake feasibility study of online applications	Feasibility study completed by end 2009
Promote the comprehensive information package regarding the Board's services	Package distributed as required to media, stakeholders support groups etc.
Proactively engage with community groups and other groups acting for marginalized or disadvantaged people	Progress proposals by end 2009
Continue to engage with the Board's External Consultative Panel on relevant aspects of the Board's business	Further develop structures and communication processes with Consultative Panel
Full compliance with Freedom of Information legislation	Applications processed and reviewed within appropriate time limits. Outcomes of reviews and appeals monitored on an ongoing basis

### HLG 3 Resource Management

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

#### Outcomes

- Full compliance with the Government’s Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies;
- Robust financial management and reporting systems are in place and are reviewed on an ongoing basis;
- An effective risk management process including an ongoing review process;
- A culture of risk awareness and the necessity to manage risks throughout the Board;
- An effective performance culture throughout the organisation;
- A structured approach to the use of private practitioners in relation to service delivery;
- Delivery through specialised structures if deemed appropriate;
- Operating to the highest standards in relation to procurement;
- Awareness of staff in relation to ensuring general efficiency in respect of all areas of expenditure;
- Further development of an effective audit process covering both financial and procedural matters;
- Review of the cost effectiveness of the various means of service provision by the Board.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
Ensure full compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies as detailed in the Board’s Corporate Governance Manual	Corporate Governance addressed by the Board as a formal agenda item on a twice-yearly basis
Meet the requirements of the Comptroller and Auditor General at the annual audit	Requirements met in timely fashion
Meet all other requirements of the audit process in an effective and timely manner	All requirements complied with to ensure an effective and efficient audit process
Supply the Board and management with appropriate financial reports	Reports provided in advance of all Board meetings, Finance Committee meetings and Management Team meetings and as required
Provide regular analysis of expenditure to the Finance Committee	Analysis submitted to Finance Committee as requested
Ensure compliance with the requirements of the Departments of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Finance on Estimate and expenditure returns	Ongoing compliance as required
Review and update the Risk Register	Risk Register reviewed and updated quarterly. Active engagement with the Audit Committee
Update the Audit Committee and the Board on progress on managing Corporate Risk.	Update provided to Audit Committee for every meeting and to Board on an annual basis.



Ensure risk management principles are embedded in the Business Planning process	Included in Business Plans and monitored at least annually
Review training and development needs on procurement and provide necessary training during the course of the year	Needs identified Q1 2009 and appropriate training provided. Corporate procurement plan fully implemented by mid-2009
Continue to comply with requirements to provide regular reports to the Finance Committee on procurement exercises.	Schedule of procurement exercises to be agreed with Finance Committee in first quarter of each year.
Obtain approval for the annual audit plan	Audit Plan approval at the beginning of each year
Identify and provide any further necessary training to Internal Audit and Audit Committee members	Annual review of training needs. Requirements forwarded to Director of Human Resources in first quarter of each year
Examine the feasibility of extending the audit process to procedural matters	Feasibility study conducted by end 2009.
Engage with all staff regarding performance expectations	Included as part of PMDS process and ongoing throughout the year
Address any aspects of underperformance in a structured and decisive manner	Paper addressing underperformance to be completed Q4 2008. Structured approach in place during 2009
Determine the most effective usage of private practitioners	Analysis of current use completed Q1 2009
Maintain control on the costs associated with using private practitioners	Detailed analysis of cost, including accrued liabilities, to be available for consideration twice yearly. Usage limited to available resources
Review on an ongoing basis the extent to which specialisation in terms of the structure of service delivery might enhance delivery	Continued review
Initiate VFM exercise on Private Practitioner services	Exercise initiated by end 2009
Continue to ensure that the Board receives value-for-money for supplies and services and that public procurement rules and guidelines are followed". Continue to market test a selection of external service providers to the Board	Annual programme agreed at beginning of each year.
Minimise the cost of running all locations at which the Board is based	Detailed cost of services at all locations to be completed by mid-2009. The Board's property portfolio and rental demands to be kept under constant review. Develop initiatives aimed at containing or reducing costs in significant areas e.g. energy, travel, copying

## HLG 4 Innovation

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

### Outcomes

- Ongoing assessment of arrangements for providing legal aid services and consideration of how best to meet the needs of clients and potential clients;
- Development and implementation of new models of service delivery;
- Streamlined administrative arrangements for the provision of legal aid services;
- Further development of the research function in the Board;
- An increase in the knowledge base and capacity of the Board;
- Continued emphasis on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms; and
- Flexible and responsive organisational processes and practices to enable the Board to respond proactively to new demands or proposed extensions of services.

Action	Performance Indicator
Structured review of client needs, actual and potential, and within the current remit of the Board	Engagement with the analysis of legal needs through the Law Society Task Force on Civil Legal Aid
Undertake a full review of all aspects of the operation of law centres and service delivery	Review to be completed end 2008 with implementation plan in place for 2009
Examine the potential for other forms of service delivery	Review of scope for telephone advice service, for technology assisted service and in respect of the advice-only service undertaken in 2009
Progress initiatives aimed at a more integrated or collaborative means of service delivery	Further advance the proposals relating to service delivery in collaboration with other groups in Ballymun. Examine scope for similar developments elsewhere. Ensure front-line staff are sufficiently trained to ensure an effective means of referral to other services if needed.
Put in place a service for District Court matters in Dublin in close proximity to family law courts	Service in place in Dolphin House before end 2008
Examine and develop proposals regarding the most effective administrative arrangements for the provision of legal aid services	Review all administrative arrangements and introduce pilot project for a centralised applications facility for Dublin area by end 2009 and consider its effectiveness by end of 2010; Review forms/documentation to ensure that they are client-focused and in plain English. Relevant documentation to be made available in other languages as deemed needed.
Prepare and publish a staff handbook on administrative arrangements	Handbook published in the first quarter 2009.
Further develop the research function in the Board and identify specific areas for consideration on an annual basis.	Identify requirements and options. Develop areas meriting detailed research on an annual basis. Maintain close contact with developments in other jurisdictions.
Develop links with third level institutions	Consider scope for such links in 2009

Keep international and domestic developments in the area of civil law under review	Develop structured means of keeping developments under review
Maintain and develop relationships with legal aid service providers in other jurisdictions and with the Council of Europe, UNHCR and other appropriate agencies	Maintain appropriate relationships through annual meetings of bodies such as the Joint Consultative Committee
Further develop and enhance the availability of non-court based dispute resolution opportunities for those Board clients experiencing family law problems	Monitor the operation and impact of the ADR approach on an ongoing basis. In partnership with the legal profession further develop the collaborative law model. Continue to provide training to solicitors to ensure their negotiations skills set is maintained and enhanced
Engage as required with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in respect of requests for developing the range of the Board's services	Ensure an effective communication process with the Department and report progress to Board twice yearly

## HLG 5 Capacity Development

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

### Outcomes

- An effective and responsive strategy and practice regarding the management and development of staff of the Board;
- Implementation of a comprehensive knowledge management framework;
- An effective and comprehensive learning strategy for staff which addresses both current and emerging organisational and development needs;
- Effective evaluation mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness and appropriateness of all training and development provided;
- Ongoing identification and provision of appropriate training and information programmes for legal practitioners involved in the Private Practitioner Service;
- Continued implementation of best practice recruitment and selection policies;
- A fully operational and effective Performance Management and Development System;
- Robust, effective and responsive IT systems that meet the needs of the Board;
- Effective processes of communication within the organisation.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>
Develop and publish a revised Human Resources strategy	Strategy published by end June 2009
Review the manner in which organisational knowledge is captured, managed, shared and used and introduce new processes where deemed necessary	Each unit reviewed during 2009
Review Training and Development Strategy and prepare new strategy for 2009 - 2011	Strategy published by end March 2009
Continue to support training and learning in relation to ADR	Identify further training and development needs and provide requisite response during 2009 and beyond
Produce a twice yearly report on training and development for consideration by senior management, Partnership and the Board	Reports available in July and December
Implement structured evaluation mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness and appropriateness of training provided taking account of the work done by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance and other sources	Evaluation mechanisms in place and quarterly reports provided to Management
Undertake a full review of all aspects of the operation of head office functions.	Review to be completed by end 2008 with implementation plan in place for 2009

Develop and implement relevant recommendations emanating from the Head Office Review	Implementation Plan completed by Q1 2009; Implement during 2009
Ensure continuing engagement with staff on training and development in the organisation through the Staff Development Work Group	Twice yearly review of work plan with Work group
In consultation with the Law Society of Ireland identify and develop any relevant appropriate training and development programmes for legal practitioners involved in the Private Practitioner service	Private Practitioner training to be continued to be provided as needed
Review the internal code covering best practice selection and recruitment policies to be utilised by the Board	Review conducted each year and reported to Senior Management Team and HR Committee of the Board
Monitor the implementation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) in the Board.  Review the system to ensure it is a meaningful tool for the achievement of the Board's objectives.	Annual review with managers and Partnership.
Ensure that all time deadlines regarding completion of the various elements of PMDS are adhered to by all staff of the Board by carrying out regular audits and putting in place appropriate monitoring procedures.	Annual review by Human Resources
Maintain a structured means of responding to all training and development requests arising under PMDS.	All training requests to be collated on HRMS and quarterly reports provided to Management Team.
Implement the annual training needs analysis within the organisation	TNA conducted at beginning of each year
Ensure that the Board's IT systems are user friendly, effective and responsive to changing requirements	New IT strategy incorporating a structured review process to be completed for Q.1 2009
Further develop existing internal communications structures	Continue to develop internal communication structures. At least 3 editions of <i>LabLife</i> to be published annually

## **Implementing the Corporate Plan**

In this Corporate Plan we have set out our approach covering the next three years towards further developing and maintaining an effective system of civil legal aid in Ireland. We are conscious that the economic environment is likely to be more constrained than at any time in the past decade. This provides considerable challenges for the Board and staff in seeking to ensure that such an important and fundamental service for the more disadvantaged in our society is maintained in a meaningful manner and in a way that does not exacerbate such disadvantage. The anticipation of these challenges, however, has not reduced our commitment to set ourselves demanding and ambitious targets in terms of the quality, accessibility and timeliness of our service. Monitoring the effective implementation of the outputs and targets set in this Plan will be undertaken through a number of groupings and mechanisms, including:

### **The Statutory Board**

The Board, through its statutory responsibility under the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995, has the ultimate responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Corporate Plan. The various Board committees will continue to play an active role in overseeing progress made over the duration of the Plan. The Board itself will consider a formal report on progress which will be presented to it on a twice yearly basis and will also review any changes in the environment, financial or otherwise, which may impact on the capacity of the Board to deliver services of the appropriate quality or timeliness.

### **The Senior Management Team (SMT)**

The SMT will review progress against this Plan on a regular basis and will seek to ensure that resources are appropriately directed to achieve delivery as planned. It will also ensure that the objectives and targets are reflected in the business planning process and that managers and staff engage in a proactive manner not just with the goals and related actions but also with the organisational values adopted by the statutory Board and set out in this Plan.

### **Staff and Managers**

It would be impossible to successfully deliver such a challenging Plan without the very active engagement of all staff in the Board. Staff have already been involved in the Plan's development and will be particularly involved in its implementation. Use will be made of the various network structures to ensure effective communication with staff and to facilitate meaningful involvement in determining the best means of delivering on the Plan.

### **Partnership**

The Partnership Committee has been involved in developing this Plan and will continue to be involved in monitoring its implementation. A progress report will be considered by the Committee twice yearly as will other emerging strategic issues impacting on the Board on an ongoing basis.

### **Business Planning Process**

All unit and Directorate business plans will be developed in a manner which ensures close alignment with the objectives and targets set out in this Plan. Any relevant changes in the environment in terms of service demands or capacity will be integrated

into the Business Plans to ensure that this document remains dynamic and flexible over its timespan.