

Criminal Legal Aid

Relevant Extracts from Oireachtas Debates

Table of Contents

Criminal Legal Aid	1
Relevant Extracts from Oireachtas Debates and Recent Law Society Correspondence with Minister	1
Extracts from Oireachtas Debates and Parliamentary Questions Relating to Criminal Legal Aid (Jan. 2026 to 19 May 2026)	2
Albert Dolan TD (21.05.26)	2
Barry Ward TD (19.05.26)	3
Paula Butterly TD (14.05.26)	4
Ruairí Ó Murchú TD (14.05.26)	7
Pádraig O'Sullivan TD (06.05.26)	10
Catherine Ardagh TD (18.04.26)	13
Mairéad Farrell and Willie O'Dea TD (14.04.26)	14
Johnny Guirke TD (14.04.26)	15
Matt Carthy TD (25.03.26)	17
Barry Ward TD (24.03.26)	22
Ruairí Ó Murchú TD (20.03.26)	23
Tom Brabazon TD (18.03.26)	25
Other mentions before the Oireachtas	27
During Daíl's debate on Criminal Law, Civil Law and Defence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2026: Report and Final Stages (10.06.26)	27
Petition on Make Divorce Affordable (03.03.26)	28
Mentions before the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration	29

Select Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration debate – Hearing of Minister O’Callaghan (03.05.26)	29
Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration debate on Civil Legal Aid (17.02.26).....	29
Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration – Engagement with the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (27.01.26).....	31
Select Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration debate – Vote 24 (18/11/25).....	31
Extract from Tánaiste’s speech at the Law Society Annual Diner (14.05.26)	33

Extracts from Oireachtas Debates and Parliamentary Questions Relating to Criminal Legal Aid (Jan. 2026 to 19 May 2026)

Albert Dolan TD (21.05.26)

PQ No. 288

Question

To ask the Minister for Justice; Home Affairs and Migration the number of cases that proceeded before the District Court and which involved an accused that had the benefit of criminal legal aid; the total value of criminal legal aid provided in those cases, in 2025; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Reply

Under the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act 1962, it is the Courts, through the judiciary, that are responsible for the granting of legal aid. The Criminal Legal Aid Scheme is demand-led. Increases in the number of legal aid certificates granted have had a significant impact on criminal legal aid expenditure over recent years.

As outlined in the Programme for Government 2025, the Government has committed to reforming the operation of Criminal Legal Aid. The general scheme of the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Bill 2023 was published in July 2023. This Bill will modernise the operation of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme and is intended to:

- Update the law relating to Criminal Legal Aid;
- Transfer administrative responsibility of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme from the Department of Justice to the Legal Aid Board, and
- Strengthen oversight and governance structures for the Scheme.

I can inform the Deputy, that the table below sets out the number and cost of criminal legal aid certificates granted in the District Court from 2015 to 2025. However, it should

be noted that the expenditure in a given year does not necessarily correlate to the Legal Aid Certificates issued that year, as expenditure may relate to Legal Aid Certificates issued in previous years, for which claims for payment were made in subsequent years.

Year	Number of CLA Certificates issued in the District Court	Total Cost
2015	53,937	€19,275,214
2016	55,617	€20,191,375
2017	64,181	€22,608,214
2018	72,674	€25,043,379
2019	79,346	€26,860,269
2020	73,611	€24,475,827
2021	80,831	€29,289,855
2022	81,025	€28,364,837
2023	87,668	€30,837,699
2024	98,230	€37,786,861
2025	98,617	€40,705,809

Barry Ward TD (19.05.26)

PQ 716

Barry Ward

Question:

To ask the Minister for Justice; Home Affairs and Migration to provide a list, by county, of named solicitors who are currently on criminal legal aid panels, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Response:

Solicitors may apply to be placed on the Criminal Legal Aid panel for any county using a single application form, which is processed by a centralised courts office in Castlebar, Co. Mayo. This system, introduced in 2021, replaced the previous requirement to apply separately to individual local court offices.

My Department significantly simplified the procedures for Criminal Legal Aid panel membership both for solicitors and counsel last year by waiving the requirement to apply yearly to be retained on panels, with the commencement on 26 November 2025 of S.I. 539 of 2025.

While there is only one national Criminal Legal Aid Panel, solicitors may indicate specific counties where they are willing to provide representation however, this does not preclude the solicitor from providing representation in other counties. As the panel is considered national, information is not recorded in a manner that provides for a 'by county' breakdown.

The table below sets out the number of solicitors assigned to the Criminal Legal Aid Panel from 2021 to 2025.

Year	No of Solicitors
2021	933
2022	867
2023	672
2024	695
2025	825

Paula Butterly TD (14.05.26)

PQ No. 10

Paula Butterly

Question:

10. Deputy Paula Butterly asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to outline the proposed changes to the legal aid scheme; how these proposals are consistent with the programme for Government commitment to restore legal fees; to clarify the extent to which relevant stakeholders were consulted prior to the publication of these proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [35591/26]

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

I thank Deputy Butterly for her question. I fully recognise the crucial role played by legal practitioners in the effective administration of justice and, equally, that the criminal legal aid scheme is fundamental to upholding the constitutional and human right to a legal defence. The whole purpose of the reform of the criminal legal aid fee structure in the District Court is aimed primarily at improving efficiencies, speeding up case resolution and reducing unnecessary adjournments, while also ensuring fair remuneration for legal practitioners.

It is proposed to replace the current appearance-based sliding scale with a flat fee model. For cases in the District Court, regardless of the number of appearances, a generous set fee will be payable to solicitors. The proposed reform is intended to make the system work better for all concerned by making it more efficient, reducing unnecessary adjournments and speeding up case resolution. The new flat fee will be set at a rate that provides for full restoration of the so-called financial emergency measures in the public interest, FEMPI, cuts in line with the programme for Government commitment. I will, obviously, be reversing those cuts and restoring fees from 1 July as well.

My Department carried out a review of more than 350,000 District Court cases that took place during 2022 and 2023. A number of issues were identified during that review that I simply had to address. I am engaging extensively with relevant stakeholders, including legal professionals. Officials from my Department met with the Bar Council and the Law Society in May, July and October 2025, and again in March 2026. I offered further meetings and I will continue to engage with them.

Deputy Paula Butterly

I welcome the Minister's comments. I want to frame this as an opportunity to get reform right, to strengthen our justice system and to ensure, as the Minister said, that it works fairly for everybody. Nobody disagrees that change is needed and we all recognise that there are inefficiencies in the current system. Reform, though, must be done carefully and in a way that protects the core principles of justice. I know the Minister agrees with this point.

The move towards a flat fee model in the District Court may appear at first glance to be a practical and streamlined solution. It does promise efficiency and simplicity. If we look at it a little closer, though, we begin to see the risks that come with oversimplifying something as complex as criminal justice. Not all cases are the same. Some are straightforward and can be resolved quickly, while others are complex, sensitive and require significant preparation, repeated engagements and time in court. Treating those different cases as though they are identical does not create efficiency but an imbalance.

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

I also have to take into account that the number of criminal cases in the District Court has decreased. Notwithstanding that, however, expenditure on criminal legal aid in the District Court has nearly doubled, from €19 million in 2015 to €37 million in 2024, despite the number of cases having decreased.

The review I looked at identified a series of structural issues in the administration of justice in the criminal legal aid scheme. For example, payment per appearance incentivises additional adjournments. I think this is just clearly the case. If we compare cases in the District Court that are not funded by criminal legal aid to those that are, we can see that there are many more adjournments in the latter context. Additionally, multiple certificates granted for related cases increase costs and complexity, multiple solicitors are assigned in the same firm for related charges and a highly complex payment processing system creates a significant administrative burden. I would not introduce this scheme if I thought it was going to undermine the rights of individuals to a fair defence.

Deputy Paula Butterly

I repeat that all of us recognise the inefficiencies that do exist and that there is scope there for reform. However, let me guide the Minister toward a practical example. In County Louth, my constituency, we have the drug treatment court, which has proved to be a very effective and successful operation for those people appearing before the judges. It involves statutory and non-statutory stakeholders, and the model of flat fee-only appearances could have a detrimental effect on the drug treatment court because it is very complex. It is about reforming and giving a person another opportunity to live a very successful life, and the flat fee-only appearance rule would possibly jeopardise the situation. If we get the balance wrong, there will be consequences for the person before the courts and the hard-fought outcome hoped for may not materialise. We also risk discouraging solicitors from taking on legal aid work and creating gaps in access representation.

An Cathaoirleach Gníomhach (Deputy David Maxwell)

I thank the Deputy.

Deputy Paula Butterly

Will the Minister have further engagement with the key stakeholders and take on board their concerns before he brings forward these proposals?

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

I have had engagement with the representative associations. In fact, I wrote to them previously saying I was available to meet again if they wished to do so. I have no doubt that I will hear back from them.

In terms of what the Deputy said about the provision of legal aid, it is a very competitive business among solicitors. I believe we are not going to lose that level of competition because of the reform I am proposing.

The Deputy gave an example of what happens in the drug treatment court, but the report I considered from the Department identified that the weighted average of the number of appearances for cases with criminal legal aid is five, while the weighted average of the number of appearances for cases without criminal legal aid is just over three. Something is happening, therefore, when cases with criminal legal aid are having many more adjournments than is the case with those that do not. I think this proposal will make the system much more efficient and help the administration of justice.

Ruairí Ó Murchú TD (14.05.26)

PQ No 12

Ruairí Ó Murchú

Question:

12. Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to provide an update on his Department's engagement with the Law Society of Ireland and other stakeholders ahead of the changes to the operation of legal aid at the District Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34694/26]

Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú

Will the Minister outline his or his Department's engagement with the Law Society of Ireland and other stakeholders in advance of the changes to the legal aid system operating in the District Court?

I am told by many there is unease in relation to the possibility of an exodus of those who engage in the system. We want to see it streamlined and efficient and getting the best bang for our buck but we do not want to see backlogged courts and it causing more hassle than it needs to.

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

I thank Deputy Ó Murchú for his question. I certainly do not believe that there will be an exodus of our criminal law practitioners from the legal aid sphere as a result of the reforms I am introducing. As I said earlier, it is a very competitive sector. There are highly efficient and professional solicitors providing services to persons accused of criminal offences. I believe that will continue. I would not propose the reforms if I thought it would not.

I looked at the criminal legal aid scheme and I am fully aware of the importance of the scheme in terms of protecting the right to a fair trial and ensuring individuals accused of serious offences have adequate protection. My proposed reform in the District Court is not intended to reduce the cost to the State in providing criminal legal aid. Instead, it is about improving efficiencies and reducing unnecessary adjournments while still ensuring fair and sustainable remuneration for legal practitioners. As the Deputy knows, it is proposed to replace the current appearance-based sliding scale with a flat fee model for cases in the District Court, regardless of the number of appearances. A set generous fee higher than the fee at present will be payable to solicitors. The new flat fee will be set at a rate that provides for full restoration of the FEMPI cuts in line with the programme for Government commitment.

I have to point out that part of the reason for my reform is because of a review conducted by my Department in respect of cases conducted in the District Court. On foot of that review, it was apparent to me that reform was required. It is also apparent that if we pay somebody per appearance, it is going to incentivise additional adjournments. Research was done that established that in cases where there was criminal legal aid, there would be five appearances where there was criminal legal aid and three where there was not.

Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú

Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. I understand the argument the Minister is making. It is my understanding there are a considerable number of adjournments on the basis of the gardaí and the State itself. The fear is that we will have a number of solicitors who are not willing to engage with this system. We will obviously have those who need representation but beyond that, I am told that in many cases involving legal aid, and when the solicitor is given a sufficient amount of time, due diligence is done and this facilitates, when it makes best sense, guilty pleas or whatever, so we are not necessarily clogging up the courts more than they need to be. The Law Society and others will accept there should be nothing that gives an incentive in relation to solicitors demanding more adjournments on the basis of pay but I am told it generally happens on the basis of the State, whether that is due diligence not being done beforehand, issues in relation to evidence, etc. I ask the Minister about his engagement with the Law Society and the other stakeholders who need this to work.

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

There are obviously a variety of reasons for adjournments of a criminal trial in the District Court. What is concerning me is the fact that if we have short adjournments, they have a very negative impact on the efficiency of the system because cases are listed every two weeks, every three weeks or however long it is on a continuing basis. If we are paying a person per the number of appearances, that is going to incentivise the

adjournment. These reforms will have a positive impact because when it comes to applications for adjournments, practitioners will take into account whether or not they are going to be ready for the hearing or the next stage of the trial at the adjourned date proposed. People will be much more careful about agreeing to an adjourned date in circumstances where they do not think they will be ready on that date. There is a benefit to it.

In terms of engagement, I have had very good engagement with the Bar Council and the Law Society. I have received submissions from them and offered to meet them again. I will happily meet them again.

Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú

I welcome that the Minister will meet them again, particularly as the Law Society and many of its members, some of whom have contacted me, have stated they are incredibly worried about this. I agree with the Minister that we all want to see our courts system work as efficiently as possible. We have all seen that for too long justice has been denied. We have all seen cases which have taken an extraordinary length of time to make their way through the District and Circuit Courts. However, in a previous answer, the Minister said his Department reviewed more than 350,000 District Court cases, which took place between 2022 and 2023. I would like to know the detail and how that was done because that would seem like a significant amount of work to do. I call on the Minister to meet again with the Law Society. We all want a system that works. We do not want to see courts more backlogged than they are.

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

That is correct. There was a detailed review carried out by my Department and what it established was that there were a number of structural issues which needed to be addressed: first, payment per appearance incentives adjournments; second, multiple certificates were granted for related cases which will increase costs and complexity; third, multiple solicitors assigned in the same firm for related charges; and, fourth, a highly-complex payment processing system creating a significant administrative burden. The review found that cases with criminal legal aid take an average of 313 calendar days to complete compared to 133 days for cases without. The weighted average appearances for cases with criminal legal aid is five, while the weighted average appearances for cases without criminal legal aid is just three. While cases with criminal legal aid take significantly longer than those without, the outcomes are similar. This is a system that needs to be reformed.

Question No. 13 taken with Written Answers.

Pádraig O'Sullivan TD (06.05.26)

PQs No. 635, 636, 637, 638, 639 and 640

Question:

635. Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the rationale for deferring the restoration of the final 8% of District Court criminal legal aid fees until 1 July 2026; whether he will consider bringing forward this restoration in light of concerns raised by the Bar of Ireland regarding the impact on access to justice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32500/26]

Pádraig O'Sullivan

Question:

636. Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration whether his Department has assessed the impact that the deferral of District Court fee restoration is having on the availability of experienced barristers willing to take on criminal legal aid work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32501/26]

Pádraig O'Sullivan

Question:

637. Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the timeline for the substantive review of District Court fees announced by his Department; the terms of reference for that review; the stakeholders being consulted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32502/26]

Pádraig O'Sullivan

Question:

638. Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration whether his Department has reviewed the operation of the flat-fee model for District Court criminal legal aid; whether he is aware of concerns raised by the Bar of Ireland that the model penalises defence lawyers for procedural delay and adjournments necessitated by essential procedural steps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32503/26]

Pádraig O'Sullivan

Question:

639. Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration whether his Department has data on the number of experienced practitioners who have ceased taking on District Court criminal legal aid work over the past three

years; the steps being taken to prevent an exodus of senior practitioners from this area of practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32504/26]

Pádraig O'Sullivan

Question:

640. Deputy Pádraig O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the substantive or administrative overlap between solicitors' fees and barristers' fees in District Court legal aid matters; whether his Department intends to review this overlap as part of the broader fee review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32505/26]

Written answers

Jim O'Callaghan - [Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration](#)

I propose to take Questions Nos. 635, 636, 637, 638, 639 and 640 together.

The Government recognises the crucial role played by the legal professions in the effective administration of criminal justice.

It is important to note that the Programme for Government contains three commitments in relation to Criminal Legal Aid. The first is to reform the operation of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme. The second is to restore criminal legal aid fees, and the third is to enact the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Bill.

It is my intention to fulfil all three commitments.

The reform of the criminal legal aid fee structure in the District Court is aimed primarily at improving efficiencies, speeding up case resolution, and reducing unnecessary adjournments, while ensuring fair and sustainable remuneration for legal practitioners.

It is proposed that from 1 July 2026 a set fee will be paid for representation from the beginning to the end of a case, removing the link between payments and the number of appearances, or legal aid certificates granted.

The proposed reform is not intended to reduce the cost to the State of providing criminal legal aid. It is instead intended to make the system work better for all concerned, by making it more efficient, reducing unnecessary adjournments, simplifying administration and speeding up case resolution. The new flat fee will be set at a rate that provides for full restoration of the so-called 'FEMPI cuts' in line with the Programme for Government commitment.

This proposal is informed by a review carried out by my Department, of 350,000 District Court Cases which took place between 2022 and 2023. The review identified specific structural issues in the administration of criminal legal aid, namely:

- Payment per appearance which incentivises additional adjournments.
- Multiple certificates granted for related cases increase costs and complexity.
- Multiple solicitors assigned in the same firm for related charges.
- A highly complex payment processing system creating a significant administrative burden.

The review also found:

- Cases with criminal legal aid take an average of 313 calendar days to complete, compared to 133 days for cases without.
- The weighted average appearances for cases with Criminal Legal Aid is 5, while the weighted average appearances without Criminal Legal Aid is just over 3.
- While cases with Criminal Legal Aid take significantly longer than those without, the outcomes are similar.

My Department is engaging extensively with relevant stakeholders, including An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and Courts Service on the review and proposed changes to the scheme. Officials from my Department met with the Bar Council and Law Society together in May, July and October 2025, and both bodies were invited to make submissions on the findings of the review by November 2025. An initial submission from the Law Society was received on 14 November 2025, the details of which were considered before the report was finalised. Correspondence was also received from the Bar Council.

Further submissions were received from the Law Society and the Bar Council on 27 March and 2 April respectively. Together with my officials, I am currently considering the content of these submissions and will continue to engage with the Law Society and Bar Council in advance of the introduction of the new arrangements on 1 July, which includes the full restoration of fees on the same date.

While my Department does not hold data on the numbers of practitioners, experienced or newly qualified, who have ceased to take on Criminal Legal Aid work, I am informed that there has been an increase in the number of practitioners on Criminal Legal Aid panels over the last 3 years, as follows:

Year	No of Solicitors	No of Barristers
2023	672	740

2024 695 712

2025 825 760

I can assure the Deputy that my only objective in making these reforms is to make the system more effective and efficient while ensuring that those accused of crimes are provided with the legal representation to which they are constitutionally entitled.

Catherine Ardagh TD (18.04.26)

PQ No. 208

Question:

208. Deputy Catherine Ardagh asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the aspects of the flat fee proposal for criminal legal aid work at District Court level that had been disclosed to associations (details supplied) at the time of the initiation of his Departmental consultation with those parties in relation to a paper entitled 'Review of Criminal Legal Aid in the District Court'; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31407/26]

Answer

Jim O'Callaghan - Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

The Government recognises the crucial role played by the legal professions in the effective administration of criminal justice.

It is important to note that the Programme for Government contains three commitments in relation to Criminal Legal Aid. The first is to reform the operation of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme. The second is to restore criminal legal aid fees, and the third is to enact the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Bill. It is my intention to fulfil all three commitments.

Officials from my Department met with the Bar Council and Law Society together in May, July and October 2025. My Department also furnished both representative bodies with a paper entitled 'Review of Criminal Legal Aid in the District Court' in October 2025. Both bodies were invited to make submissions on the findings of the review by November 2025.

An initial submission from the Law Society was received on 14 November 2025 and correspondence was also received from the Bar Council. The content of the review and

submissions informed the development of the flat fee proposal which was formally relayed to both representative bodies in February 2026.

I can assure the Deputy that my officials have had ongoing engagement with the professional bodies and most recently met with the Law Society and Bar Council in early March.

Following this meeting, further submissions were received from the Law Society and from the Bar Council on the 27 March and 2 April respectively, concerning proposals for a flat fee in the District Court. My Department is currently considering the content of these submissions and will continue to engage with the Law Society and Bar Council in advance of the introduction of the new arrangements on 1 July.

Mairéad Farrell and Willie O’Dea TD (14.04.26)

PQ No 1969 and 2066

Mairéad Farrell

Question:

1969. Deputy Mairéad Farrell asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration if an opportunity will be given to solicitors to provide feedback on his proposed plan to simplify the criminal legal aid payment in the District Courts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24016/26]

Willie O’Dea

Question:

2066. Deputy Willie O’Dea asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration his plans to meet in person with the Law Society representatives to discuss a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25214/26]

Written answers

Jim O’Callaghan - [Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration](#)

I propose to take Questions Nos. 1969 and 2066 together.

The Government recognises the crucial role played by the legal professions in the effective administration of criminal justice.

It is important to note that the Programme for Government contains three commitments in relation to Criminal Legal Aid. The first is to reform the operation of the Criminal Legal

Aid Scheme. The second is to restore criminal legal aid fees, and the third is to enact the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Bill. It is my intention to fulfil all three commitments.

It is proposed from 1 July 2026 to pay a set fee for representation from the beginning to the end of a case, removing the link between payments and the number of appearances, or legal aid certificates granted. This proposal is informed by a review carried out by my Department, of 350,000 District Court Cases which took place between 2022 and 2023.

The proposed reform aims to address structural issues identified during this review, such as additional adjournments resulting from the payment per appearance model and to speed up case resolution. The fee would be payable regardless of number of appearances, if there are multiple certificates for cases heard together, or number of accused represented. The proposal fulfils the Programme for Government commitment to reform criminal legal aid and fully restore fees.

My Department has been engaging extensively with relevant stakeholders, including An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and Courts Service on the review and proposed changes to the scheme. Officials from my Department also met with the Bar Council and Law Society together in May, July and October 2025, and both bodies were invited to make submissions on the findings of the review by November 2025. An initial submission from the Law Society was received on 14 November 2025, the details of which were considered before the report was finalised. Correspondence was also received from the Bar Council.

I can assure the Deputy that my officials have had ongoing engagement with the professional bodies and most recently met with the Law Society and the Bar Council in early March. Further submissions have been received from the Law Society and from the Bar Council on the 27 March and 2 April respectively. My Department is currently considering the content of these submissions and will continue to engage with the Law Society and Bar Council in advance of the introduction of the new arrangements on 1 July.

Johnny Guirke TD (14.04.26)

PQ No 2083

Johnny Guirke

Question:

2083. Deputy Johnny Guirke asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the average and median amounts paid to a barristers in County Meath providing

criminal legal aid services for the years 2020 to 2025, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25349/26]

Written answers

Jim O’Callaghan - Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

Barristers who wish to be added to the Criminal Legal Aid Panel do this by notifying the Bar Council of their willingness to accept instructions who then in turn inform my Department. My Department significantly simplified the procedures for Criminal Legal Aid panel membership both for solicitors and counsel last year by waiving the requirement to apply yearly to be retained on panels, with the commencement on 26 November 2025 of S.I. 539 of 2025.

The panel of Barristers is considered national, therefore the information is not recorded by my Department in a manner that provides for a ‘by county’ breakdown. However, the table below sets out the number of barristers assigned to the Criminal Legal Aid Panel and the total, inclusive of VAT, paid to barristers from 2020 to 2025. Not all barristers who are panel members will undertake work under the Scheme in any given year. This along with the significant difference in level of legal services provided by an individual barrister means that average or median payments are not recorded by my Department.

Year	No of Barristers	Amount Paid
2020	812	€23,237,807.00
2021	812	€27,907,123.94
2022	760	€30,679,526.77
2023	740	€37,764,655.04
2024	712	€36,013,956.69

Matt Carthy TD (25.03.26)**PQs No. 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211 and 212**

Matt Carthy

Question:

200. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the changes he proposes to bring to the criminal legal aid scheme, including all elements of the revised fee structure, whether any changes will require amendments to legislation or be enacted by regulation; the proposed timeframe for implementation of each change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22917/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

201. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration whether, as part of the proposed changes to the criminal legal aid scheme, it is intended to introduce a flat-fee model for District Court criminal legal aid work; and if so, the proposed level of that fee and the work it is intended to cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22918/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

202. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration whether, under the proposed changes to the criminal legal aid scheme, fees payable to solicitors will vary based on case complexity, number of charges, number of accused persons or duration of proceedings, or any other consideration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22919/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

203. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration if he will publish the analysis and evidence underpinning the proposed changes to the

criminal legal aid scheme, including any review of District Court cases used to inform the proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22920/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

204. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the evidence he has received which supports the assertion that the current criminal legal aid scheme incentivises unnecessary adjournments or inefficiencies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22921/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

205. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the projected annual savings arising from the proposed changes to the criminal legal aid scheme; the details of any cost-benefit analysis undertaken, including potential downstream costs such as delays, appeals or retrials; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22923/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

206. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration whether the proposed fee structure under the revised criminal legal aid scheme represents an increase or decrease in effective remuneration for solicitors undertaking criminal legal aid work, including any modelling carried out in that regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22924/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

207. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the assessments that have been carried out on the potential impact of the proposed changes to the criminal legal aid scheme on access to legal representation and the constitutional right to a fair trial; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22925/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

208. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration whether any assessment has been made of the risk that the proposed changes to the criminal legal aid scheme could result in reduced participation by solicitors in criminal

legal aid work; the implications of any such reduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22926/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

209. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the number of solicitors currently participating in the criminal legal aid scheme, the trends in participation in recent years; the workforce impact assessment conducted in relation to the proposed changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22927/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

210. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the consultation process undertaken in relation to the proposed changes to the criminal legal aid scheme; the stakeholders consulted; the nature of that consultation and the way in which feedback has informed the proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22932/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

211. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the way in which the proposed changes to the criminal legal aid scheme align with commitments in the Programme for Government to restore criminal legal aid fees; the basis for any assertion that the proposals constitute a restoration rather than a reduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22933/26]

Matt Carthy

Question:

212. Deputy Matt Carthy asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the meetings that he or his officials held with the Law Society in respect of the criminal legal aid scheme since he took office and prior to the announcement of proposed changes to the fee structure under the scheme; whether any proposed meetings were cancelled or postponed by his Department; whether there are further meetings planned in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22934/26]

Written answers

Jim O'Callaghan - Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

I propose to take Questions Nos. 200 to 212, inclusive, together.

I fully recognise the crucial role played by the legal professions in the effective administration of criminal justice, and equally that the Criminal Legal Aid scheme is fundamental to upholding the constitutional and human right to a legal defence.

It is important to note that the Programme for Government contains three commitments in relation to Criminal Legal Aid. The first is to reform the operation of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme. The second is to restore criminal legal aid fees, and the third is to enact the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Bill. It is my intention to fulfil all three commitments.

In considering the need for reform, it is worth recalling that while criminal case volumes in the District Court have decreased, expenditure on criminal legal aid in the District Court has nearly doubled, from €19 million in 2015 to €37 million in 2024.

As part of the review, my Department reviewed more than 350,000 District Court cases which took place during 2022 and 2023. The review identified specific structural issues in the administration of criminal legal aid, namely:

- Payment per appearance which incentivises additional adjournments.
- Multiple certificates granted for related cases increase costs and complexity.
- Multiple solicitors assigned in the same firm for related charges.
- A highly complex payment processing system creating a significant administrative burden.

The review also found:

- Cases with criminal legal aid take an average of 313 calendar days to complete, compared to 133 days for cases without.
- The weighted average appearances for cases with Criminal Legal Aid is 5, while the weighted average appearances without Criminal Legal Aid is just over 3.
- While cases with Criminal Legal Aid take significantly longer than those without, the outcomes are similar.

As the Deputy will appreciate, while the findings of the Review have been shared with the professional bodies, the data analysed contains personal information and therefore the Department is not in a position to publish it.

It is important to state that this proposed reform will not affect the ability of legal professionals to engage in criminal legal aid work. Neither is it intended to reduce the cost to the State of providing criminal legal aid. Rather, it will improve efficiencies, reduce unnecessary adjournments, simplify the administration of criminal legal aid, speed up case resolution and enable faster payments to practitioners. Furthermore, the

new flat fee will be set at a rate that provides for full restoration of the so-called FEMPI cuts in line with the Programme for Government commitment.

For cases in the District Court, regardless of the number of appearances, a set fee will be payable to solicitors, replacing the current appearance-based sliding scale. The new structure will also provide for a full separate set fee for each defendant in court on a given day. This reform will be a major improvement on the current fee structure.

As the Deputy is aware, “complexity” of cases is not a factor in the existing fee structure, as the current appearance fees do not vary based on the complexity of the charges. However, as each adjournment attracts a fee, the fee structure itself has the potential to incentivise adjournments.

My Department has been engaging extensively with relevant stakeholders, including An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service and Courts Service on the review and proposed changes to the scheme. Officials from my Department also met with the Bar Council and Law Society together in May, July and October 2025, and both bodies were invited to make submissions on the findings of the review by November 2025. An initial submission from the Law Society was received on 14 November 2025, the details of which were considered before the report was finalised. Correspondence was also received from the Bar Council.

A meeting which was scheduled to take place in December with both the Bar Council and Law Society was postponed, however I can assure the Deputy that my officials have had ongoing engagement with the professional bodies and most recently met with the Law Society and the Bar Council in early March. Further submissions from both bodies are awaited, and my Department will continue this engagement in advance of the introduction of the new arrangements on 1 July.

I can further advise the Deputy that the table below sets out the number of solicitors and barristers assigned to the Criminal Legal Aid Panel from the years 2021 to 2025.

Year	Number of Solicitors	Number of Barristers
2021	933	812
2022	867	760
2023	672	740
2024	695	712
2025	825	760

Finally, the changes to the fee structure for Criminal Legal Aid will be made by Regulation.

Question No. 201 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 202 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 203 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 204 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 205 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 206 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 207 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 208 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 209 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 210 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 211 answered with Question No. 200.

Question No. 212 answered with Question No. 200.

Barry Ward TD (24.03.26)

PQs No. 713, 715, 716, 717 and 718

Barry Ward

Question:

713. Deputy Barry Ward asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the number of solicitors providing criminal legal aid services in each of the years from 2021 to 2025 on a per county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22135/26]

Barry Ward

Question:

715. Deputy Barry Ward asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the number of solicitors providing criminal legal aid services in each of the years from 2021 to 2025, on a per county basis, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22150/26]

Barry Ward

Question:

716. Deputy Barry Ward asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the number of barristers registered to receive criminal legal aid payments for the provision of criminal legal aid services in each of the years from 2021 to 2025; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22151/26]

Barry Ward

Question:

717. Deputy Barry Ward asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the number of barristers who received a criminal legal aid payment for the provision of criminal legal aid services in each of the years from 2021 to 2025; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22152/26]

Barry Ward

Question:

718. Deputy Barry Ward asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the average and median amounts paid to a barrister providing criminal legal aid services in each of the years from 2021 to 2025; whether the figure includes VAT; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22153/26]

Written answers

Jim O'Callaghan - Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

I propose to take Questions Nos. 713, 715, 716, 717 and 718 together.

It has not been possible to collate the information requested by the Deputy in the time available. I will write to the Deputy directly once the information is to hand.

NB: we have a copy of the letter sent to Deputy Ward by the Minister.

Ruairí Ó Murchú TD (20.03.26)

PQ No. 21

Ruairí Ó Murchú

Question:

21. Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to provide an update on his Department's engagement with the Law Society of Ireland and other stakeholders ahead of the changes to legal aid at the District Court; when it is

proposed the changes will take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
[20824/26]

Written answers

Jim O'Callaghan - Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

It is important to recall that the Programme for Government contains three commitments in relation to criminal legal aid. The first is to reform the operation of the criminal legal aid scheme. The second is to restore the fees. And the third is to enact the Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Bill.

It is my intention to fulfil all three commitments.

I want to say clearly that I fully recognise the crucial role played by the legal professions in the effective administration of criminal justice, and equally that the Criminal Legal Aid scheme is fundamental to upholding the constitutional and human right to a legal defence.

The reform of the criminal legal aid fee structure in the District Court is aimed primarily at improving efficiencies, speeding up case resolution, and reducing unnecessary adjournments, while ensuring fair and sustainable remuneration for legal practitioners.

It is proposed to replace the current appearance-based sliding scale with a flat fee model. For cases in the District Court, regardless of the number of appearances, a set fee will be payable to solicitors.

The proposed reform is not intended to reduce the cost to the State of providing criminal legal aid. It is instead intended to make the system work better for all concerned, by making it more efficient, reducing unnecessary adjournments, simplifying administration and speeding up case resolution. The new flat fee will be set at a rate that provides for full restoration of the so-called FEMPI cuts in line with the Programme for Government commitment.

In considering the need for reform, it is important to note that, while criminal case volumes in the District Court have decreased, expenditure on criminal legal aid in the District Court has nearly doubled, from €19 million in 2015 to €37 million in 2024. My Department reviewed more than 350,000 District Court cases which took place during 2022 and 2023. The reforms aim to address structural issues identified during this review, such as unnecessary adjournments resulting from the payment per appearance model.

My Department has been engaging extensively with relevant stakeholders, including legal professionals and their representative bodies, on the proposed changes to the scheme. Officials from my Department met with the Bar Council and Law Society in

May, July and October 2025, and again this month. My Department will continue this engagement in advance of the introduction of the new arrangements on 1 July.

Tom Brabazon TD (18.03.26)

PQs No. 1280 and 1281

Tom Brabazon

Question:

1280. Deputy Tom Brabazon asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration for the cost of each murder case to the State for the past ten years. [18920/26]

Tom Brabazon

Question:

1281. Deputy Tom Brabazon asked the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration the cost of each murder case to the State for the past ten years, excluding the DPP's costs. [18924/26]

Written answers

Jim O'Callaghan - Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

I propose to take Questions Nos. 1280 and 1281 together.

Costs associated with the investigation, prosecution and trial of those accused of murder are borne across a number of State bodies and agencies, including An Garda Síochána, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Forensic Science Ireland, the Courts Service, the Office of the State Pathologist and, in cases where the defendant is remanded in custody, the Irish Prison Service. Costs associated with criminal legal aid and other administrative costs would also be applicable.

Given the unique and often complex circumstances that arise, as well as the range of stakeholders and the range of costs associated with such investigations, prosecutions and trials, the information sought by the Deputy is not available. Furthermore it should be noted that a significant element of the costs arising would relate to salary or pay. In this regard, the individuals concerned from the various State agencies and bodies involved, will, at any point in time, have responsibility for several areas of work and it is not possible to account for the specific hours that an individual may have been involved in a particular investigation, prosecution or trial.

Question No. 1281 answered with Question No. 1280.

Other mentions before the Oireachtas

During Daíl's debate on Criminal Law, Civil Law and Defence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2026: Report and Final Stages (10.06.26)

Deputy Pa Daly

On the family law section, I want to raise one issue with the Minister. I was the beneficiary of the criminal legal aid scheme for many years. Concerns have been expressed by people who are on the scheme. As the Minister knows, a flat fee payment is coming in from 1 July and people will only be paid at the very end, when a case finishes in court. If people appear once or if they appear 20 times, they will only be paid at the very end. There are scenarios, particularly for vulnerable people, children, and people who do not have English as a first language, where the cases go on and on, sometimes appearing 12, 15 or 20 times, and those representing them are only paid once. We saw with the family law courts, in Kerry, for example, that there are only three or four solicitors left on the scheme after the introduction of a flat fee. Will the Minister review where people appear more than five or six times, because there could be a scenario where someone represents someone eight, nine or even ten times, then the client changes solicitor, and the new solicitor could get paid for one appearance and the person who has been there eight or nine times is not paid at all? There will be learnings from it. From the family law courts, just learn that the number of people representing has gone down. Just like in family law, where it is important that people receive representation and there is access to justice, it is the same with criminal law cases.

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

In fairness to Deputy Daly, it would be a bit rich of me if I objected to him raising a matter that is outside the scope of the Bill, since the Bill is so broad in any event.

Deputy Matt Carthy

It must be the only thing that is outside the scope of the Bill.

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

I hear what Deputy Daly says. The scheme that is being brought in on 1 July is designed to improve efficiencies in the criminal legal aid scheme and the District Court. I fully appreciate the important role played by solicitors under that scheme. I have met the Law Society and Bar Council in respect of it. The system would be greatly improved and there will still be proper payment for solicitors in the very significant work that is done in the District Court. I will take into account what the Deputy said.

Deputy Gary Gannon

On what basis is the Minister making the assumption that the scheme would be improved? Nobody else but the Minister seems to believe it. The Law Society and the Bar Council do not believe it. I have not seen any research that points to it. In fact, the evidence that those in the system would have says that we will have to develop another two-tier criminal system where those who can afford to pay will get better treatment, and because the system is no longer not only profitable but also, realistically, workable, people will be lost from the criminal justice system.

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

I am conscious that we have many amendments to get through.

Deputy Mark Ward

Do not guillotine it.

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

If Deputy Gannon wants to table it as a Topical Issue matter, I am happy to come in. The scheme that operates at present means that people get €260 for the first appearance and €60 for every appearance after that. That incentivises inefficiencies. Research has been completed in the Department that shows that the hearing of criminal cases in the District Court which are governed by the criminal legal aid scheme moves much more slowly than those which do not have the benefit of the criminal legal aid scheme. There are a number of anomalies, as I am sure the Deputy is aware, with certificates being granted for a whole series of offences in respect of the same person or indeed for a whole group of defendants who are effectively accused of the same type of offences and the same issue. I can assure Deputy Gannon that it needs to be reformed, but I am happy to come back to discuss it with him if he wants to table it as a Topical Issue matter.

Petition on Make Divorce Affordable (03.03.26)

The flat-fee proposal is mentioned as an example of fee structure to curtail “inefficiencies of case progression” and to prove that “remuneration models are not fixed or untouchable”.

https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_public_petitions_and_the_ombudsmen/2026-03-03/3/?highlight%5B0%5D=criminal+legal+aid (ctrl + F for “criminal legal aid”)

Mentions before the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration

Select Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration debate – Hearing of Minister O’Callaghan (03.05.26)

Deputy Paula Butterly

I have received a number of representations in regard to the Minister's solution for the criminal legal aid issue and how it will be dealt with. I see the Minister is smiling. As he knows, solicitors in particular have been very opposed to his new proposals. Will he rethink it or will he drive on with that solution?

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

Some of this has come into the public domain. I had a report prepared in the Department in respect of the criminal legal aid system in the District Court. It was a very persuasive report, I have to say. My primary objective is to ensure we improve efficiencies in the District Court. If criminal cases are consistently being adjourned, that is not good for efficiency in the system. There is a benefit in looking at having a very generous single fee for District Court cases. According to the report that was prepared, there are anomalies in the system in terms of the amount paid out and the number of criminal cases coming before the District Court that are covered by criminal legal aid; they are not correlating. There is a decline in the number of criminal cases but the costs are going up. I have to do something to ensure the system is more efficient and that we have a fair payment system for everyone concerned.

Deputy Paula Butterly

I appreciate that but it is also very fair that young barristers, who rely on District Court cases in their first number of years to earn a living and gain experience, would also be paid fairly. It would appear that the system as proposed will not entitle them to fair pay.

Deputy Jim O'Callaghan

I disagree. I am in discussions with the Law Society and the Bar Council and I think a fair fee will be provided. In terms of this report, it would be negligent of me not to act on foot of it.

Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration debate on Civil Legal Aid (17.02.26)

An Cathaoirleach

Criminal legal aid fees have been restored. It is clear why they have and civil legal aid fees have not. The crisis that would emerge in the criminal legal system, were legal aid not provided, would be visible, whereas the crisis happening in civil legal aid with delays and backlogs is invisible. Is it a case that the representative organisations have not been shouting loud enough about this issue?

Mr. Keith Walsh

I have been involved with the Law Society for more than 25 years and we have been shouting about legal aid for a long time. We certainly have not been silent and neither has the Bar. One of the Deputy's predecessors was a Deputy called Eileen Lemass in the 1970s and she said that without legal aid there is no bill of rights. The problem is that it is a silent problem. It does not emerge hugely on legislators' desks or it certainly does not seem to be an issue that it appeals to governments to give funding to. Every one of the Legal Aid Board's reports for the past 20 or so years-----

(...)

Senator Lynn Ruane

May I ask in the last second-----an ideological question that goes back to the Cathaoirleach's question about why fees have gone down. Is there an ideological issue? I am probably making connections where I do not need to make them, but I am wondering how civil cases can often challenge the State where criminal cases often do not challenging power to some degree. If we look at the environmental factors, employers and State bodies, is there ideological suppression?

An Cathaoirleach

I have many hands up to answer that question. I will call Ms Barry first and then the rest.

Ms Eilis Barry

There is an ideological element. We have been told by senior civil servants at international human rights committees that legal aid is just money for lawyers and it is not going to happen. That is a very strong ideological element because there is a constitutional element to criminal legal aid. There are strong EU requirements in legal aid on the civil side. It is perceived as money for lawyers and you do not get beyond that, even though the Government and State-----

Mr. Seán Guerin

First, criminal legal aid fees have not yet been fully restored, but hopefully that will happen by 1 July this year. (...)

Regarding Senator Ruane's question, there is a disturbing trend in public policy outcomes going back over several decades, starting with personal injury reform in 2003

and 2004; the reform in the structures of the employment rights institutions; the whole area of family law and everything that is funded by the civil legal aid system; and most recently, the proposed attack on right of access to the courts in environmental cases. That trend is to disempower ordinary citizens by depriving them of access to the best legal advice. For people who are in a situation where they are weaker on economic, financial or other grounds and whose rights are in jeopardy, the best form of protection for those individuals and the best way of equalising the playing field, so to speak, is to give them access to fearless, independent legal advice and advocacy. That is what the Bar does with our colleagues in the Law Society.

This is the important point, and I will go back to what Ms Barry said. Attacks on civil legal aid are not attacks on lawyers; they are attacks on the people who need the services of lawyers.

Joint Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration – Engagement with the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (27.01.26)

[Deputy Jim O'Callaghan](#)

Another point I was going to mention is that the review of the criminal justice we are doing is focused on speeding up the prosecution of indictable offences in the Circuit Court and in the District Court. I recently got a really interesting report from the Department in respect of criminal legal aid cases in the District Court. When you compare the speed of cases in the District Court where the defendant does not have criminal legal aid with cases where he or she does-----

[Senator Michael McDowell](#)

Surprise, surprise.

[Deputy Jim O'Callaghan](#)

-----you can see that those cases where legal aid is involved take considerably longer. The reason for that is the fee structure. I am going to bring forward proposals to change that.

Select Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration debate – Vote 24 (18/11/25)

[Deputy Jim O'Callaghan](#)

May I say as well, and this may answer the Cathaoirleach's specific question, in terms of how many cases have been appealed due to interpretation issues, I am informed the Courts Service has no other record of issues with the quality of interpretation that would impinge on the conduct of a fair trial in the Circuit Court. The interpreter in the appealed case has not been used since 2023. The Courts Service is not aware of any further appeal made as a result of interpretation by this interpreter.

[An Cathaoirleach](#)

The problem is a potential systemic issue. I take it from the Minister's response that there are no concerns there may be other appeals coming on foot of this decision, which is good to hear. I was a member of the European Parliament, where a lot depends on interpretation and translation. There are very strict criteria and standardised accreditation systems in place. I would have thought we would have that in a courts system, regardless of what perspective we are coming from, be it the legal service itself, victims or defendants, with a standardised system and manner in which to accredit people. Does the Minister think it is something he will look at in the time ahead?

[Deputy Jim O'Callaghan](#)

I am very satisfied the people who are accused of serious criminal offences have good representation. They have good legal representation because of the criminal legal aid scheme that operates here. We are not like other countries, where people could be concerned about the quality of the lawyer representing an individual. Any lawyer worth their salt is going to ensure the interpretation being provided is satisfactory, because obviously the lawyer will have to consult with the client also.

Extract from Tánaiste's speech at the Law Society Annual Diner (14.05.26)

“This building [Blackhall Place] has witnessed generations of lawyers entering a profession where the highest purpose is to stand between the individual and the misuse of power. To stand up for what is right. I believe the law has a crucial role to play in our democracy. It acts as a restraint on power. It provides a shield for the vulnerable.”

" I truly believe - and it is a point that is not widely appreciated - that the integrity of Irish legal practitioners is a cornerstone of our economic proposition. It is an invisible national asset, as essential to our growth as any road we build or any cable in our energy network.”

“Because at its core, the law is a human endeavour. To see only the commercial side of the law is to miss the soul of the profession. (...) For some of you, that work is rarely glamorous but always essential I am speaking of those who spend their days in the District Courts, family courts, the WRC, in small town practices, fighting the daily battles for individual rights that might never make the headlines. These are the practitioners who represent the worker facing an unfair dismissal, the victim of discrimination seeking a voice, and the individual standing alone against the vast machinery of a large corporation or, indeed, the State itself. To defend a difficult case, one where public opinion is hostile and the political winds are cold, requires a particular kind of courage. (...) This unglamorous side of the law, the rough and tumble of the coalface, is where our values are truly tested. When you stand with the underdog, you are doing more than representing a client; you are upholding the integrity of the Irish State. You are ensuring that our Republic is a place where everyone has a fair chance.”

“Government reforms, however well-intentioned or carefully designed, must also work in practice. They must operate effectively not just in departmental briefing papers or legislative drafting, but in the lived reality of our courts, our professions and the people who rely on them every day. And it is precisely because reform must work in practice that we will remain closely engaged with President Loftus, with the Chair of your Criminal Law Committee Dr Shane McCarthy, with Director General Mark Garrett, and with Dr Brian Hunt. Because that engagement is not a courtesy. It is a necessity. The Law Society has consistently demonstrated that its contribution to legal reform is grounded not simply in advocacy for the profession, but in a deep understanding of how policy decisions translate into the lived reality of our courts system. And ultimately, that is why conversations like this matter.”