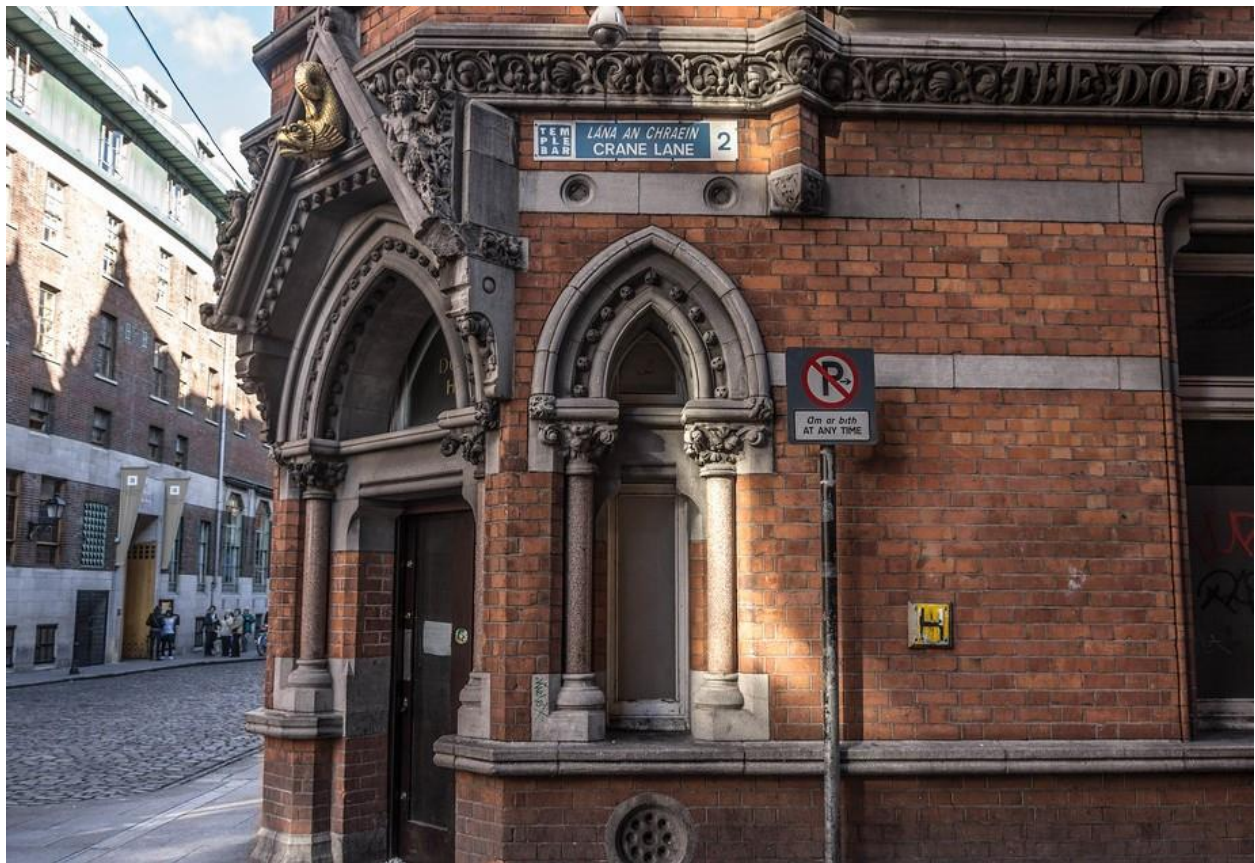




Supporting a #Right2Justice

A FLAC Manifesto for General Election 2020



Why candidates should support a #Right2Justice

Backing Legal Aid is the only thing that will ensure access to justice

Access to justice depends on an adequately resourced civil legal aid system

FLAC is an independent law centre that operates a telephone legal information and referral line and runs a network of 71 legal advice clinics where volunteer lawyers provide basic free legal advice. FLAC engages in litigation in the public interest seeking to achieve outcomes which will have benefit beyond the individual, and which may test and possibly bring about change in law and practice. It also operates PILA, the Public Interest Law Alliance, which helps NGOs and community groups, to get legal assistance from private practitioners through the Pro Bono Referral scheme.

Demand for our services remain as strong as ever. In 2018, we received over 25,000 requests for legal information and advice on our telephone information and referral line and in our network of legal advice clinics at 71 locations around the country. Housing and discrimination were the predominant areas of work in the 108 casefiles FLAC worked on in 2018. In one case, FLAC secured one of the highest awards given by the RTB to date in a case concerning an unauthorised eviction by a landlord against a couple and their three children where the landlord was ordered to pay €13,766.15 to the family. In 2018, 115 Social justice organisations received legal assistance from members of the PILA Pro Bono Register.

Many of the challenges that FLAC is contacted about on a daily basis involve individuals trying to navigate the court system without legal representation, and those who struggle with inaccessible court forms, procedures and language. Due to the limitations on the availability of legal aid, the door to justice is shut in front of these people.





We engage in this work to support the most marginalised and vulnerable people access legal information and advice when they are faced with a legal problem. We provide legal advice to people on housing, discrimination and social welfare issues because they cannot afford to pay for it privately. We provide legal information to ordinary people who could not otherwise afford to access a lawyer and yet do not qualify for legal aid, because the current system is under-resourced, stretched to capacity and excludes a number of critical areas of law.

What is needed

In order to ensure that there is access to justice for everybody, we need a root and branch reform of the legal aid system. We desperately need an overhaul of the means test, which has been changed since 2003. Many people on low incomes, or with very low disposable income due to indebtedness are refused because of how it is calculated, despite the cost of living having increased significantly since then.

Even when a person qualifies for civil legal aid, there can be waiting lists of up to 58 weeks to see a solicitor. We want to see this reduced to no more than 2 months for non-urgent cases and adequate prioritisation for urgent cases. We want to ensure legal aid for people facing evictions, or for homeless people attempting to secure housing or emergency accommodation or social welfare services.

Victims of sexual harassment, racial harassment or discrimination at work, or those who have other complex employment cases cannot get legal aid to have a solicitor represent them in work related claims.

There is no legal aid for people who have been discriminated against in relation to housing or for children with disabilities who have been discriminated against by educational services. All of this needs to change.

Access to justice includes being able to access the courts. The allocation of required funding for the establishment of dedicated and integrated Family and Children's Courts in Hammond Lane, Dublin and around the country must be prioritised.

Supporting a #Right2Justice

As part of this, we are asking general election candidates to sign our pledge to say they are backing legal aid if they are elected to the Dáil.

If I'm elected I'll be supporting a #Right2Justice by;

- Working to ensure adequate resources are given to provide civil legal aid, and seeking a root and branch review of the system.
- Recognising that a properly functioning and accessible courts system, including properly resourced family law courts, is essential to providing access to justice.

What you can do:

- Ask your local candidates if they will be supporting a **#Right2Justice**
- Tweet to say why the **#Right2Justice** matters to you

For more information, contact us at: **FLAC, 85/86 Lower Dorset Street, Dublin 1 01-8873600 | info@flac.ie | www.flac.ie | fb.me/flacireland | [@flacireland](https://twitter.com/flacireland)**