

Detailed Programme of Events

First session - Perspectives from the UK – 10am

As we look forward to reform of the Irish courts system, we can draw valuable guidance from the recent experience in the UK. We are delighted to be joined by Lord Briggs of Westbourne of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, who undertook a major review of the structure of the civil courts in England and Wales culminating in the publication of the Briggs Report in July 2016. Andrea Coomber is Executive Director of Justice, an organisation that has played an important role in campaigning for reform of the justice system in the UK.

Second session - Current Challenges – 11am

In the second session, we explore two quite different topics, both of which are, however, important features of the current landscape for access to justice. Pro bono practice has always played an important role in the legal system but has become increasingly prominent in recent years. David Hillard, Pro Bono Partner with Clayton Utz, will offer his reflections on pro bono practice as part of the professional responsibility of the lawyer. Lay litigants are an increasingly familiar feature of our legal systems, as access to legal advice and representation becomes ever more difficult to secure for so many within our communities. Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner of the NIHRC, will share the insights from Northern Ireland on important research that has been carried out on barriers to legal participation by litigants in person. Making proper provision for lay litigants and embedding pro bono in the legal profession does not however diminish the need for comprehensive legal aid and so should not be seen as a solution to its deficiencies.

Irish Perspective in Detail - Breakout Sessions – 12pm

After the first two sessions, the delegates will then breakoff in to smaller groups to take part in an active discussion on the relevant topics below. Please indicate via email to flacmedia@flac.ie which breakout session you would be most interested in attending so that we can get an idea of numbers attending each.

A. Legal services for specific disadvantaged groups and individuals

Chaired by Sinead Lucey, Managing Solicitor, FLAC, with guest speaker Caroline Keane, Solicitor, CLM Limerick

This session will examine whether particular groups or individuals are effectively excluded from access to legal services, the impacts of such exclusion and possible approaches and models for ensuring that legal services can address the needs of such groups or individuals.

B. Legal services for people in mortgage arrears facing repossession

Chaired by Paul Joyce, Senior Policy Analyst, FLAC, with guest speaker John McDaid, Chief Executive of the Legal Aid Board

This session will explore the relevant legal services for people in long-term mortgage arrears including the Abhaile scheme and, in particular, the likely effect of the forthcoming Land and Conveyancing Law Reform (Amendment) Bill 2019, in terms of access to civil legal aid.

C. The legal needs of people experiencing domestic violence

Chaired by **Stephanie Lord, Legal and Policy Officer, FLAC**

This session will explore the range of issues involved in seeking access to justice for people experiencing domestic violence. FLAC was recently involved in a successful campaign to abolish the financial contribution to civil legal aid for victims of domestic violence in the district court.

D. Developing a pro bono culture

Chaired by **PILA, Public Interest Law Alliance with Guest Speakers**

Eithne Lynch, Pro Bono Associate, A&L Goodbody, and

Sonja O'Connor, Coordinator of the Voluntary Assistance Scheme (VAS)

This session will look at the role of the Irish pro bono movement in providing access to justice and explore how lawyers can effectively engage in pro bono work within their own practice.

Third Session - Access to Justice: Future Perspectives – 13.45pm

In the first contribution, David Fennelly will explore the increasing role and potential of the ECHR and, in particular, EU law in relation to access to justice. One field which has witnessed major innovation has been that of environmental law. Dr Áine Ryall will examine the lessons that can be learnt from the special regime for access to justice in the environmental field.

Plenary Panel - Looking to the Future – 14.45pm

An anniversary is a time for reflection, a time to look back and to take stock. But it is also a time to look forward. In this panel, FLAC has brought together a number of leading experts and stakeholders in the legal system to consider the future for access to justice in Ireland. How can we ensure equal access to justice for all? What are the key challenges? What are the opportunities? What is the role of the State? What is the role of the legal profession?

Panel members

- Philip O'Leary, Chair of the Legal Aid Board
- Patrick Dorgan, President of the Law Society of Ireland
- Mícheál P O Higgins SC, Chair, Council of the Bar of Ireland
- Professor Gerard Whyte, School of Law, Trinity College Dublin
- Her Honour Judge Rosemary Horgan, President of the District Court
- Angela Black, Chief Executive of Citizens Information Board

Closing Comments – 16.00pm