



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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### **Minister Launches Innovative New Website For Northside Law Centre & Praises Its Campaigning Work Over Three Decades**

The Minister for Social Affairs, Seamus Brennan T.D., today officially launched the new website of the Northside Community Law Centre in Coolock, North Dublin which has been providing legal advice, support and services in the area for more than three decades.

The Law Centre, which is this year receiving funding of €360,000 from the Department of Social and Family Affairs, has been delivering a comprehensive legal and social advice service to large numbers of people in the communities of Dublin North East and North Central for more than 30 years.

Minister Brennan said the new website is a significant addition to the services offered by the Centre and was a mine of information on the history and structure of the Law Centre, as well as a valuable source for details of the valued legal services it provides to members of the community.

“More importantly, this website will make the services of the Law Centre more accessible to the people of this area and indeed the whole country, enabling more people to gain an understanding of the important work being done here”, the Minister said.

He said that of particular interest, and what made the website fairly unique, is the Social Welfare “Casebase”, an innovative database of decisions made in social welfare appeals cases taken by clients of the law centre.

The Minister said that if any citizen disagrees with a decision of a Deciding Officer within his Department about their entitlements, they have a right to appeal to the Social Welfare Appeals Office free of charge. This Office is an independent office of the Department, and deals with approximately 14,000 appeal cases annually. Currently, the Appeals Office has published 70 such cases for public viewing on its website which was launched last December.



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Minister Brennan added: "The "Casebase" on the Law Centre's website will complement the information already available in this area on the website of the Social Welfare Appeals Office. In addition, "Casebase" will allow people in the community to access information about the social welfare system and give them an insight into the workings of social welfare decision-making procedures. It will help people to better understand their rights and entitlements and also to get a more comprehensive and balanced view of how the independent appeals system works."

Minister Brennan said the increased Government funding - this years funding of €360,000 is a four fold increase on support levels since 1989 - has enabled the Law Centre to develop over the years, and to continue its important work of providing support and encouragement for a great many people who found themselves in difficulties and did not have the financial resources to meet the legal costs. The Government support has also given the Law Centre financial security and has allowed it to recruit the staff it requires, move to more appropriate premises and continue to develop its services such as the website.

**Ends**