

Limerick has highest rate of personal injury claims

by Alan Good

LIMERICK has the highest rate of personal injury claims per head of population in Ireland, according to figures published yesterday.

According to the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB), Limerick accounts for 7.35% of claims received, despite comprising less than 4.5% of the population.

Cork had the second highest rate of claims per head of population, accounting for almost 15% of claims from a population figure of 11.43%.

Leitrim had the lowest rate of claims — 0.65% — while Dublin's figure of 27.48% show that claims are broadly in line with population base.

Figures also show that 49% of claims are a result of motor liability, 21% employer liability and 30% public liability.

With the majority of awards under €50,000, personal injury accidents in Ireland are of low to medium severity, according to the PIAB.

The PIAB was set up in July 2004 as part of an overall Government reform of insurance claims.

It followed the PIAB Act of December 2003, which stated that all claims for personal injury, excluding medical negligence, must be submitted to the group.

PIAB chief executive Patricia Byron said the implementation of the board has resulted in a "dramatic cultural change" in how personal injury claims are dealt with.

"The new system has proven that personal injury claims can be resolved significantly faster than the old system of litigation," she said.

"While the PIAB delivers the same level of compensation to victims, we also significantly reduce the

cost of delivering compensation from one party to another."

Ms Byron added that the PIAB system is proving to be consistently more than four times cheaper and three times faster than litigation.

It has reduced the cost of a compensation claim from 46% to 10%, and cut processing time from an average of three years to just nine months.

In 2005 alone the PIAB awarded over €11 million in compensation and saved over €4m in delivery costs.

"As more awards are made during 2006 savings will continue to grow," said Ms Byron.

"The PIAB has also benefited insurance policyholders who have already experienced cuts in their premium charges in recent times.

"The public demanded a new system and have worked, along with the board, to deliver a solution which benefits society at large."