

Limerick tops compo table as €11m paid out

Anne-Marie Walsh

LIMERICK is the compensation capital of Ireland, it has been revealed.

People in the south-western county made the highest number of personal injury claims per head of the population last year.

The Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB), which processes all personal injury claims, revealed that Limerick topped the poll in an analysis of its figures for 2005. The number of claims per head of the population in Longford, Louth and Cork were also above the national average.

As expected, Dublin had the highest number of claims overall but, per head of the population, the number of claims made was below average.

The lowest number of personal injury claims made was in Leitrim, whose per head of the population figure was also below the national average.

A spokesperson for the board said that since the PIAB was set up to take cases out of the expensive court system, the cost of making a claim had dropped dramatically.

She said that the majority of awards made by the PIAB during 2005 were under €50,000, and the time to process claims dived from three years to around one year.

The board awarded over €11m in compensation and saved over €4m in the legal

costs associated with delivering compensation during the year.

"It is difficult to say why claims might be higher in one county than another," a spokesperson said.

"The situation in Limerick is not extraordinarily out of line. If the roads were bad in Mayo, you might have more road traffic accidents, which would drive the numbers up there."

Expensive

PIAB chief executive Patricia Byron said that the board experienced a dramatic cultural shift in how personal injury cases in Ireland are dealt with by those pursuing claims, and by those responding to claims during 2005.

She said since the new PIAB system was set up to take cases out of the expensive court system, claims could now be resolved significantly faster than before.

She said the board had significantly reduced the cost of delivering compensation from one party to another.

"It is very rewarding to see how the vast majority of people simply wish to have their claims resolved in a fair, transparent and efficient manner," she said.

"In addition, it is reassuring to see the high level of acceptance of awards by claimants who access the same PIAB service and level of compensation whether they deal directly with PIAB for a fee of €50 or indirectly through a solicitor or other agent."