

Work of injuries board being impeded

STEVEN CARROLL

A SMALL minority of legal professionals are hampering the work of a body designed to reduce the costs and timelines involved in awarding compensation claims to the public, an Oireachtas committee heard yesterday.

Representatives of Injuriesboard.ie, formerly known as the Personal Injuries Assessment Board, said some clients who take their claims through a solicitor, which is not essential, are missing medical examinations necessary to best resolve their cases in the assigned nine month period.

Dorothea Dowling, chairwoman of Injuriesboard.ie, said 99 per cent of legal professionals are getting on with their own interests, but that six firms are causing the body some difficulty.

The Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment heard claimants who approach the board seeking compensation undergo a medical to help the board determine the extent of their injury and the amount of compensation warranted.

If a claimant does not undergo the examination the board is

forced to make a decision based on less evidence, which may be rejected by the claimant and the case is then taken through the courts. A higher number of clients using these firms were missing medicals and more likely to reject awards made by the board.

Patricia Byron, Injuriesboard.ie chief executive, said it may be unfortunate that these clients do not attend the medicals, but that when claimants reject awards and proceed to the courts the process involves greater legal costs.

When questioned about bogus claims by Labour Party Senator Brendan Ryan, Ms Dowling said the board has not become complacent and that it treated the exaggeration of any part of a case very seriously.

Those found to be exaggerating claims can be fined some €100,000 or imprisoned for up to five years.

The committee heard, that since its establishment in 2004, the board has reduced delivery costs from 46 per cent of compensation awarded annually to less than 10 per cent, saving the exchequer some €100 million.