Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Periodic Critical Review of the Citizens Information Board

May 2022

Prepared by the Department of Social Protection

Executive Summary

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) 2016 *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* requires that non-commercial public bodies be subject to a Periodic Critical Review (PCR) no later than every five years. The PCR considers performance against the original mandate and the changing external environment to identify scope for improvement.

The PCR process is also tasked with assessing the extent to which the governance structure of the public body and the Department's oversight of the body is consistent with its legislative underpinning and is strongly aligned to the business needs of the body.

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is a non-commercial statutory body with an information, advice, and advocacy role in relation to a wide range of public and social services. CIB lies under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection, which provides annual Exchequer funding to CIB to deliver on its statutory functions. With an annual expenditure exceeding €50million, CIB is the largest agency under the aegis of the Department.

Purpose and Scope of the Review

The aims of the CIB PCR process were to provide a robust challenge to, and assurance on;

- whether CIB's current portfolio of services and other related roles are in accordance with its statutory mandate,

- the extent to which CIB is fulfilling its statutory mandate and if the legislative framework remains fit for purpose,

- the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing CIB structures to deliver its mandate and, if appropriate, to identify areas for improvement and rationalisation. This included a consideration of the impact of the COVID pandemic and associated lessons,

- the governance structure, having regard to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, DPER circulars, and the Oversight Agreement and Performance Development Agreement between the Board of CIB and DSP, and,

- CIB's performance framework and the ability of CIB to capture and provide key performance information and to demonstrate output and outcome achievements.

Review Process and Governance

The review was undertaken by officials in the Department of Social Protection. A project Working Group was established to inform and oversee the practical conduct of the review. The Working Group consisted of representatives from the Department of Social Protection, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, CIB Board, and CIB Executive.

The review team conducted a survey and interviews with representatives of the CIB Board, Executive, and the DSP line section. An extensive number of documents were also reviewed to inform the PCR.

Structure of the Report

Section 2 of the report provides background information on the CIB, its legislative origins, evolution, and current services. Sections 3 to 7 each examine a different aspect of the CIB functioning as follows:

Section 1: Introduction

This section sets out the role of CIB, what the review process entails and the manner, in which the review was conducted. It also sets out the structure of the report.

Section 2: CIB in Context

This section sets out the context of CIB, summarising its legislative origins, evolution and current structure and services. The impact of Covid on operations is also outlined.

Section 3: Statutory Mandate and Legislation

Overall, the review concluded that the CIB is fulfilling its statutory mandate. Despite some decline in users of in-person services during the pandemic, the CIB still demonstrated the ability to provide information to a substantial cohort of the Irish public. It is noted that the information provision needs of the public and the operating context are continuously evolving, and the CIB will need to adapt to continue to meet

those needs. In particular, consideration is needed on the role and the level of the in-person services provided and a review of engagement trends is suggested.

Both CIS and MABS are actively engaging in advocacy as per the statutory mandate, however it would be important to clarify whether some of the services provided have extended into representation and negotiation services and take the necessary action.

Section 4: Delivery and Operations

Now that the impact of Covid on the operation of CIB and its companies is beginning to recede, it is imperative that CIB take stock and consider the most appropriate operating model to meet the varied needs of the Irish public. As the majority of the public move towards and have become accustomed to an online service and remote engagement, there has been a subsequent decline in the demand for in-person services. This is not a situation unique to CIB, however, CIB will need to balance the needs of the majority with those of the most vulnerable who cannot access an online service.

This challenge is further compounded by the impact of Covid in terms of the delivery of CIC services including the use of volunteers. As they engage strategically with this issue, it is likely to result in a streamlining of some in-person services with a possibility of co-location and potential changes to the volunteer structure. Any further structural change should be informed by lessons from the previous restructuring process.

As the CIB moves forward and evolves in response to the changing operating context it is imperative it has metrics and evidence to demonstrate the outcomes of its operations.

Section 5: Oversight of Service Delivery Companies

DSP and CIB are in agreement that the CIB oversight of the Service Delivery Companies needs to be strengthened and it is recognised that DSP and CIB have already taken a number of steps to address this. SLAs play a key role in oversight and should reflect this. Finally, the legislative validity of the current operating practice of providing funds without a competitive procurement process should be examined to ensure that it falls within the financial management aspect of the governance procedures.

Section 6: Governance

The review team found that the CIB Board are committed to their role and to the work of CIB. In fulfilling their role, and as is the case with all public bodies, it is important that the Board has a full understanding of the Code of Practice and their responsibilities as the Board of a state agency. Regular reviews of the Board's understanding and adherence to the Code of Practice should be introduced as well as specific measures for new Board members to ensure they are aware and understand their obligations as a member of the Board of CIB.

The broad features of the Code of Practice are in place; there is a Strategy, Oversight Agreement, and Performance Development Agreement. However, the manner in which the strategy and these agreements dovetail with the business planning process may need to be made more explicit. Similarly, the development of better metrics, which focus on outcomes as well as outputs will underpin these and enable CIB and DSP reach a common understanding in relation to the performance of CIB.

Section 7: Future Considerations

An additional factor particularly relevant for CIB is the changing landscape of information provision. There has been sustained investment by many government departments, agencies, and service providers to strengthen their own information provision services.

While the CIB website currently excels at providing a one-stop-shop for accessible independent information, over time it will be important that the CIB is not overtaken by people going directly to source, e.g., GOV.ie, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission. Additional challenges that the CIB will need to contend with is the steady rise of misinformation and cyberattacks as a standalone website or system.

Section 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

There are 25 recommendations included throughout the document in highlighted text boxes. In Section 8 all the recommendations are collated and categorised based on the expected timeframe for action.

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Acronyms

AI	Approved Intermediary
CIB	Citizens Information Board
CIC	Citizens Information Centre
CIPS	Citizens Information Phone Service
CIS	Citizens Information Service
CLG	Company Limited by Guarantee
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DRN	Debt Relief Notice
DSP	Department of Social Protection
DSS	Decision Support Service
ISI	Insolvency Service of Ireland
MABS	Money Advice and Budgeting Service
NAS	National Advocacy Service
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NT MABS	National Traveller MABS
PCR	Periodic Critical Review
RISLI	Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters
SDC	Service Delivery Company
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLIS	Sign Language Interpreting Service
WTE	Whole-Time Equivalent

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is a non-commercial statutory body with an information, advice, and advocacy role in relation to a wide range of public and social services. CIB lies under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection, which provides annual Exchequer funding to CIB to deliver on its statutory functions. With an annual expenditure exceeding €50million, CIB is the largest agency under the aegis of the Department.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) 2016 *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* requires that non-commercial public bodies be subject to a Periodic Critical Review (PCR) no later than every five years. The PCR considers performance against the original mandate and the changing external environment in order to identify scope for improvement.

The PCR process is also tasked with assessing the extent to which the governance structure of the public body and the Department's oversight of the body is consistent with its legislative underpinning and is strongly aligned to the business needs of the body.

Given that it is five years since the introduction of the DPER guidelines, it is considered appropriate to conduct a PCR of CIB.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of Review

The overarching objective of the review process (as per the DPER guidelines) is to secure improvements in accountability, efficiency and effectiveness while also scrutinising objectively the case for rationalisation and consolidation of public bodies, in the light of changing requirements, demands and priorities.

The aims of the CIB PCR process were to provide a robust challenge to, and assurance on;

- whether CIB's current portfolio of services and other related roles are in accordance with its statutory mandate,

- the extent to which CIB is fulfilling its statutory mandate and if the legislative framework remains fit for purpose,

- the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing CIB structures to deliver its mandate and, if appropriate, to identify areas for improvement and rationalisation. This included a consideration of the impact of the COVID pandemic, and associated lessons,

- the governance structure, having regard to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, DPER circulars, and the Oversight Agreement and Performance Development Agreement between the Board of CIB and DSP, and

- CIB's performance framework and the ability of CIB to capture and provide key performance information and to demonstrate output and outcome achievements.

It was considered out of the scope of the review to comment on Government policy in this area or conduct detailed analysis or recommendations regarding staffing and HR management.

1.3 Review Process and Governance

The review was conducted by a team of officials in the Department of Social Protection between May 2021 and February 2022. A project Working Group was established to inform

and oversee the practical conduct of the review. The Working Group consisted of representatives from the CIB Board, CIB Executive, DPER and the DSP line section, which monitors and liaises with CIB. The Working Group was chaired by the lead official of the review team.

The review team conducted a survey, interviews, and reviewed documents to inform the PCR. A key part of the process involved the issue of an online survey to the relevant DSP officials, senior members of the CIB Executive, and the Board of CIB. In advance of the issue of the survey, a presentation was made to the Board of CIB to outline the process involved and gather views. The survey consisted of questions concerning the following:

- Statutory Alignment,

- Accountability & Efficiency,

- Performance & Effectiveness,

- Governance,

- Engagement between the DSP & CIB,

- Covid-19 Response,

- Key Achievements & Future of Service.

The survey was analysed to identify areas of consensus and where there were marked differences in responses received from the three parties concerned. Subsequent follow-up interviews were held with DSP officials, representatives of the CIB Board and senior executives of CIB including the CEO to explore these areas in more detail.

An extensive number of documents were also reviewed as part of the process. The report findings were validated through consultation with key stakeholders and the Working Group. An overview of the process timeline is included in Appendix C.

1.4 Structure of the Report

Section 2 of the report provides background information on the CIB, its legislative origins, evolution, and current services. Sections 3 to 7 each examine a different aspect of the CIB functioning as follows:

- Section 3: Statutory Mandate and Legislation
- Section 4: Delivery and Operations
- Section 5: Oversight of Service Delivery Companies
- Section 6: Governance
- Section 7: Future Considerations

Recommendations are included throughout the document in highlighted text boxes. In Section 8 all the recommendations are collated and categorised based on the expected timeframe for action.

2. CIB in Context

This section sets out the context of CIB, summarising its legislative origins, evolution and current structure and services. The impact of Covid on operations is also outlined.

2.1 Legislative Origins and Mandate

CIB was established in 2000 as a non-commercial statutory body. Its name, structure and mandate has evolved through multiple legislative amendments.

Comhairle Act 2000

The organisation was established under the name "Comhairle" by the Comhairle Act 2000. The new organisation combined the functions of the existing National Social Services Board and certain disability support functions of the National Rehabilitation Board. The role of Comhairle was to ensure that "individuals have access to accurate, comprehensive and clear information, advice and advocacy services on the full range of social services[1]". Section 7 of the Comhairle Act outlined the services expected from the new body, which can be summarised as:

- To ensure that individuals have access to accurate, comprehensive, and clear information relating to social services,
- To assist and support individuals, in particular those with disabilities, in identifying and understanding their needs and options,
- To promote greater accessibility, coordination, and public awareness of social services,
- To support, promote and develop the provision of information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services, and to highlight issues that are of concern to users of those services,
- To promote and support the development of voluntary bodies providing social services.

[1] Comhairle Bill, 1999, Second stage speech. Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs (Mr. D. Ahern)

Citizens Information Act, 2007

The Comhairle Act was amended by the Citizens Information Act 2007, which changed the name of the organisation to the Citizens Information Board and sought to “enhance the functions of the statutory body in supporting the development of advocacy services, in particular for people with disabilities”. Specifically, the Bill provided for the introduction of a Personal Advocacy Service to support people with disabilities who would otherwise have difficulty obtaining access to services. However, Section 5 of the Act was not commenced and hence the Personal Advocacy Service, as envisaged in the 2007 Act, was not established.

2008 Social Welfare Act

In 2008 the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act extended existing legislation to give the Citizens Information Board responsibility for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), which previously sat within the Department of Social Protection. The purpose of MABS was to “provide advice to individuals for the purpose of the management, avoidance, reduction and discharge of personal debt and in relation to money management”.

2011 Social Welfare Act

An amendment in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 amended the rules relating to membership of the CIB Board to apply standard provisions disqualifying people who have been nominated for or elected to the Oireachtas, the European Parliament or to a local authority.

Irish Sign Language Act 2017

The Irish Sign Language Act 2017 introduced the obligation for an accreditation scheme funded by the then Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Responsibility for the establishment of this scheme was given to the existing Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS), through CIB and subsequently led to the establishment of the Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (RISLI).

Personal Insolvency Act 2012

The Personal Insolvency Act 2012 legislated for the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) to authorise a person, or class of persons as an “Approved Intermediary” (AI). An Approved Intermediary facilitates individuals meeting specified condition to apply to for a Debt Relief Notice (DRN) from the ISI. The ISI maintains a public register of Approved Intermediaries on their website. The regional MABS comprise the majority of providers, representing eight of the ten AI currently authorised by the ISI.

2.2 CIB Operations and Governance

CIB delivers many of its functions through external voluntary bodies, referred to as Service Delivery Companies (SDCs). The SDCs are independent Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLG) who receive funding from CIB to deliver services through formal Service Level Agreements (SLAs). It also provides non-financial support, through shared services, training and technical advice as mandated in Comhairle Act (amended), Section 7(e).

This operating model dates back to the establishment of Comhairle, which inherited a network of 85 independent Citizens Information Centres (CICs) from the National Social Services Board. When MABS was incorporated into the CIB structure, the existing company model was used to meet the obligations, as set out in the legislation.

Restructuring of SDCs

In 2017, the Board of CIB decided to restructure the network of 42 Citizens Information Services and 51 Money Advice and Budgeting Services into 16 regional companies. Six other companies remained as set out in section 2.3. The aim of the change was to improve the effectiveness of the control environment, financial management and governance of the CIS and MABS networks. In moving to the new structure, CIB was informed by the findings and recommendations of a 2014 feasibilty study commissioned by CIB and a 2017 Cost-Benefit Analysis of the proposed structure. This phase of restructuring was completed in October 2018.

2.3 CIB Today

Today CIB delivers much of its mandate through the following 22 independent Service Delivery Companies (SDCs):

- Eight Citizens Information Service (CIS) regional companies,
- Eight Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) regional companies,
- National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS),
- Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS),
- MABS Support CLG,
- National Traveller MABS (NT MABS),
- Sign Language Interpreting Services (SLIS),
- Regulatory Centre for Irish Sign Language Interpreters Ireland (RISLI).

In addition, CIB directly hosts the *citzensinformation.ie* and *MABS.ie* websites. The services provided by each company are summarised below.

Citizens Information Services (CISs)

The CIB funds eight regional Citizens Information Services (CISs). The regional CISs in turn operate a national network of Citizens Information Centres (CICs) which provide free, impartial, and confidential in-person information, advice, and advocacy services to members of the public from 102 offices and 71 outreaches. While the CISs maintain their own staff, they rely heavily on volunteers at a local level to provide advice in the Citizen Information Centres.

Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS)

CIPS was established in 2001 as a national telephone-based service to provide comprehensive and confidential information to people throughout the country. This national service is based in Cork and is available to the public Monday to Friday, from 9.00am to 8.00pm.

CIPS also processes queries received via Live Advisor (Webchat) for people with hearing and speech difficulties. The Live Advisor service is available from 9am to 5pm weekdays.

Money Advice and Budgeting Services (MABS)

The CIB funds eight regional MABS companies which offer free, confidential, and independent assistance for people in debt or in danger of getting into debt. MABS also provides communities with education on budgeting and money management. MABS operates from over 60 offices nationwide. MABS also operates the *Abhaile* project which is a state-funded service for borrowers in home mortgage arrears. Abhaile is jointly coordinated by the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Justice. As this project is due for independent review it is not extensively considered within the PCR.

The eight MABS regional companies are supported by two additional companies, MABS Support Company and National Traveller (NT) MABS. These two companies do not directly interact with the public, but provide technical advice, training, and other support to MABS companies. NT MABS is specifically focused on promoting financial inclusion for Travellers, addressing unique circumstances experienced by this community such as mobile housing.

National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS)

NAS provides a free and confidential representative advocacy services to adults with a disability in vulnerable situations. NAS was established by the Citizens Information Board in 2011. From 2011 to 2014, it was managed on a regional basis within the Citizens Information Service network. A separate NAS company was established in 2013 under the independent company model and all regional staff transferred to the new National Advocacy Service in 2014, following the appointment of a National Manager.

Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS)

Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) is the national Sign Language Interpreting Service for Ireland. SLIS provides Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreting services to ensure that the Deaf Community have access to public and social service and can exercise their rights and entitlements under the Equal Status & Disability Acts and the Irish Sign Language Act.

Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters

The Regulatory Centre for Irish Sign Language Interpreters Ireland CLG has been established for the purpose of maintaining the Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (RISLI), a voluntary, national, professional register. The registration system is referenced in the 2017 Irish Sign Language Act. SLIS provide administrative support to the registration panel through the Quality Development Officer (QDO). The aim of RISLI is to establish and maintain a standards-based registration system for ISL interpreters to ensure quality services for the Deaf Community and service providers.

2.4 Impact of Covid on CIB Operations

As was the case for many public service organisations, the nationwide lockdowns instigated during the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a shift in CIB operations. Citizens Information Centres across the country were closed to maintain the safety of volunteers and staff. With an increasing need for up-to-date information CIB focused its efforts on maintaining and expanding online and phone services. The *citizensinformation.ie* website created 77 new Covid related pages with over 8,500 updates as the pandemic evolved. CIB also increased capacity of CIPS phone service through the use of staff from the CICs who worked remotely answering phones. A 'Request a Call Back' service was introduced, providing Citizens Information customers with an opportunity to complete a web form to receive a follow-up call from an Information Officer within two working days. In addition, a new MABS Messenger service was launched in April 2020 as a response to Covid-19. This enabled MABS to respond to customers' questions, comments, and queries on Facebook and WhatsApp.

As the initial phases of the pandemic passed and some restrictions were lifted, CICs and MABS offices which were able to comply with public health guidelines began to reopen.

3. Statutory Mandate and Legislation

The review sought to establish whether CIB's current portfolio of services and other related roles are in accordance with its statutory mandate; the extent to which CIB is fulfilling its statutory mandate and is positioned to do so into the future, and if the legislative framework remains fit for purpose.

Based on the legislation (Appendix A), the mandate of CIB has been considered under six categories:

1. Information provision,
2. Money and budgetary advice,
3. Personal advocacy,
4. Social policy,
5. Voluntary body support,
6. Promoting accessibility, coordination, and awareness of social services and,
7. Other duties as assigned by the Minister.

CIB's fulfilment of each mandate is discussed separately.

3.1 Information Provision

The review found evidence that the CIB is extensively engaging in information provision through a multi-channel strategy of in-person, online and phone services. The CIB provides funding for over 167 fixed Citizen Information Centres (CICs), operates the citizensinformation.ie website and funds the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS).

The CICs have traditionally been a cornerstone for the CIB's personal information provision. Members of the general public could call into one of centres and meet with a CIC Information Provider to get information advice. In March 2020, and in line with public health advice due to Covid-19, the CICs closed their offices and ceased in-person consultations, which subsequently led to an increased usage on the website and phone service. To meet additional demands on the phone services, CIB and CIPS upgraded telephony systems, seconded additional staff from CICs, and obtained approval from DSP for additional Information Officers.

Figure 1 shows the impact of Covid on the in-person calls and use of phone services. There was 46% decline in the use of in-person CIC services between 2019 and 2021, which would reflect the closure of offices during the pandemic while the number of calls answered by CIPS increased by 14% over the same two-year period.

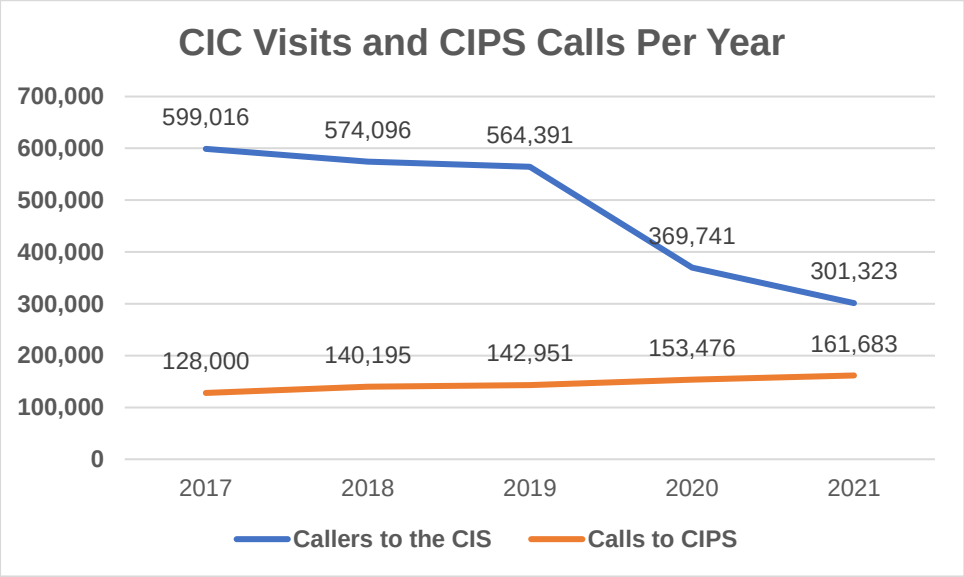

Figure 1: CIC visits and CIPS calls per year

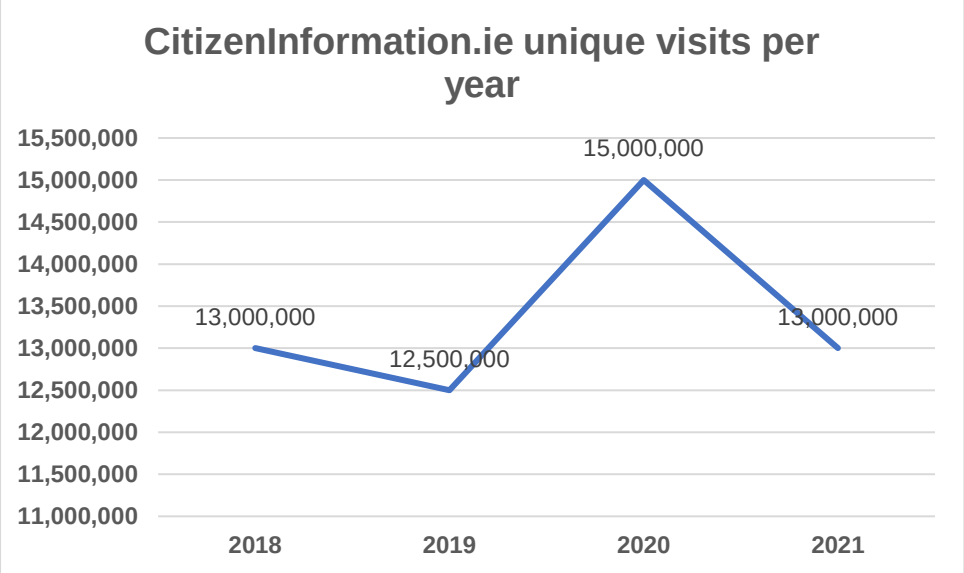

Figure 2: CitizenInformation.ie users per year

During 2020 the CIB staff went to extra lengths to ensure the website was kept updated in a constantly changing environment. Figure 2 shows the number of website users per year and illustrates a marked increase in website users in 2020, with over 2.5million additional users in comparison with 2019. The number of users

falls off slightly in 2021. This could in part be influenced by a change in how users were counted. In 2020 the Data Protection Commissioner enforced the use of cookie notices on the basis of active acceptance. Subsequently from October 2020 any user of the website who did not actively accept cookies was not recorded in the analytics.

Overall, it is clear that Covid-19 led to disruption and challenges in the provision of information. Nonetheless, CIB continued to provide information to a substantial cohort of Irish citizens in the absence of face-to face-contact, primarily through the phone service and the website. However, it was noted by members of CIB Board and Executive that there was a possibility that some vulnerable or marginalised citizens may not have had access to online or phone services. This possibility should be examined and explored in detail before any strong conclusions in terms of service delivery are finalised.

In addition, while the disruption caused by Covid-19 makes it difficult to establish definitive trends, both the in-person services and website users appear to have been declining in usage prior to Covid. This warrants further examination.

Recommendation 1:
As online and telephone services continue to develop, the role of CICs in the provision of face-to-face information should be reviewed. Decisions in this area would benefit from a review of the impact of the CIC closures during the pandemic on access to information amongst vulnerable and marginalised groups. This review should encompass the trend in terms of the year on year fall in office visits that preceded the pandemic, as set out in Figure 1 above.

3.2 Money and Budgetary Advice

The CIB is mandated to *"support the provision of a service … to provide advice to individuals for the purpose of the management, avoidance, reduction and discharge of personal debt and in relation to money management".* This is primarily achieved through over 60 MABS offices, which provide advice to clients in a face-to-face environment. Similar to the CICs, MABS services were severely affected by Covid-19, as their public offices were closed in light of public health advice. In response there was an increased emphasis on remote support via phone and emails, including the launch of the MABS Messenger, which enabled members of the public to reach MABS advisors via Facebook and WhatsApp.

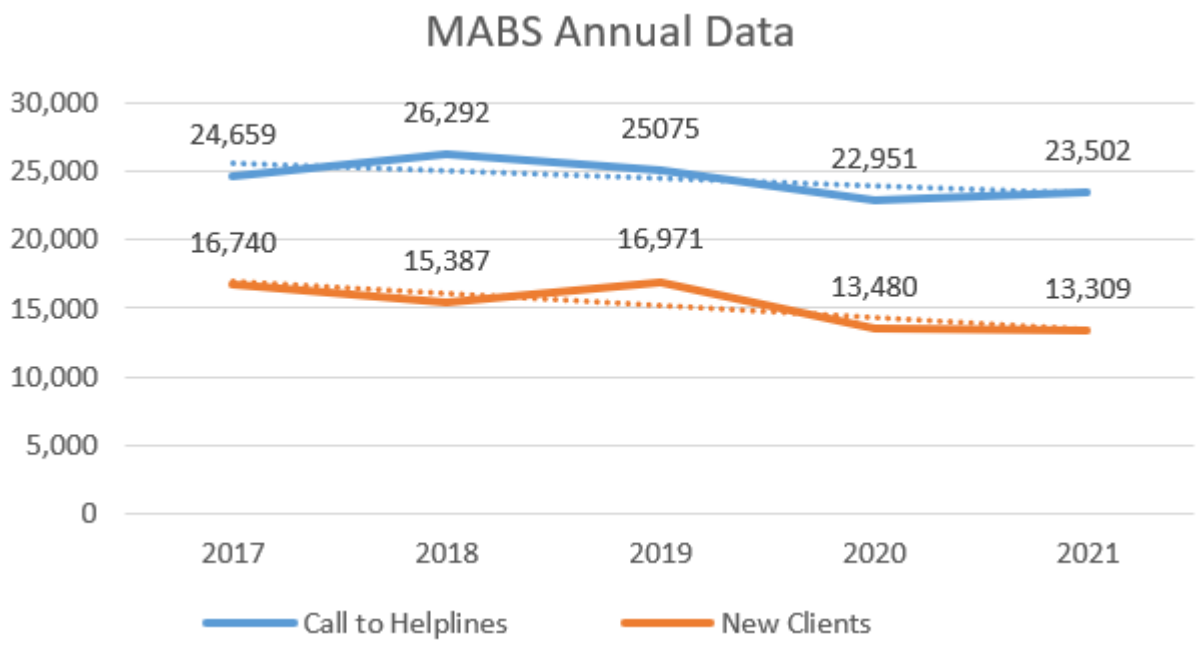

Figure 3: MABS Annual Data on New Clients and Call to Helplines

Figure 3 illustrates the annual number of calls to the MABS helpline and new clients since 2017. The graph shows a clear reduction in use of MABS services in 2020, with approximately 8% less calls to the helpline and a 20% reduction in new users. The data provided does not delineate between services provided remotely versus in-person, hence it is challenging to see the impact of the closure of MABS offices on client engagement. It should be also noted that during 2020 and 2021 a number of actions were taken by the Government of Ireland and the financial sector to protect individual finances, most notably the introduction of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment and the Covid-19 Mortgage break. It is therefore difficult to determine whether the reduced uptake in services represents a period of reduced need, or an inability for clients to access services. Overall, it can be concluded that MABS continued to provide advice and support in accordance with their mandate throughout the pandemic. Further examination of the factors affecting service uptake, and the impact of the closure of offices would be beneficial. In addition, future metrics should clearly distinguish between in-person and remote service provision.

Recommendation 2:
Trends in the use of MABS services should be examined in more detail, including a review of the role and location of in-person MABS offices after almost two years of remote service provision.

3.3 Advocacy Services

The 2007 Citizens Information Act mandated CIB to provide and/or support advocacy services to individuals, in particular people with a disability. Section 4 of the Act assigned the following responsibility to the CIB:

> *(b) to support the provision of or, where the Board considers it appropriate, to provide directly, advocacy services to individuals, in particular those with a disability, that would assist them in identifying and understanding their needs and options and in securing their entitlements to social services,*

Section 5 of the Act mandated the establishment of a dedicated Personal Advocacy Service for people with a disability. Section 5 details specific roles, criteria, and processes central to the operation of this service. However, Section 5 was never commenced, and hence the Personal Advocacy Service, as envisaged in the 2007 Act, was not established.

When questioned on the merit of commencing Section 5 respondents noted that that the disability context has changed significantly since the 2007 Act. Most notably, the Act was developed from a "medical" or "best interests" perspective, rather than the person-centred rights-based approach that is generally adopted today. It was also noted that there is potential overlap in some functions described in Section 5 with those to be provided by the Decision Support Service (DSS) as outlined in the Assisted Decision-Making Act 2015. The DSS is a public body established within the Mental Health Commission and is a service for all adults who have difficulty with their decision-making capacity. The DSS is not yet operational but according to the DSS website it is expected to commence in mid-2022. In light of these changes, respondents saw little merit in commencing Section 5.

While the Personal Advocacy Service as outlined in Section 5 was not commenced. CIB has sought to fulfil Section 4 obligations for the provision of advocacy services, through the establishment of the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities (NAS). NAS was established in 2011 and provides full representative advocacy casework to over 1000 people with disabilities each year. Clients receive information, support for themselves and their families, and/or guidance with correspondence or meetings. Similar to other services, NAS was affected by Covid-19, which created challenges directly interacting with clients. While NAS scaled up its remote support it was challenging to connect with clients through phone calls or online due to their specific needs. During the review CIB respondents proposed granting statutory powers to NAS to compel access to people, services, and documents. CIB cited experiences of resistance by some service providers to the practice of independent advocacy. NAS is an independent Company Limited by

Guarantee, hence, the implications of legislating for such statutory powers should be examined in detail prior to any consideration of further progressing this matter.

Recommendation 3:
The DSP and CIB should consider the impact of recent legislation and the role of the Decision Support Service to ensure coherent and effective support to people with disability.

Advocacy Provided through the Regional CIS

The CIC network also provides advocacy support to its customers to access social services. In 2020, the eight regional CISs worked on 4,016 advocacy cases, requiring over 11,130 hours of work. Typical activities included completing forms on an individual's behalf and accompanying an individual to a hearing or other formal process. The areas of advocacy are client-led. Most (69%) of advocacy cases related to social welfare, primarily working with, or on behalf of, clients to submit a social welfare appeal. In this context, it might be worthwhile examining the added value of this by developing metrics, which measure the extent to which the service assisted e.g., in achieving a successful outcome in relation to the appeal.

Employment advocacy was the second-highest category at 15%. Specific actions undertaken under this area included direct negotiations with employers and attendance at Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) hearings. While the advocacy provided is customer-led it should be noted that the legislation focuses on provision of advocacy to support individual to secure entitlements to social services. It does not appear that engagement with bodies such as the WRC is within the intended legislative remit. In addition, legislation provides for advocacy support, and it would be important to clarify whether some of the services provided by the CIC network have extended beyond advocacy, into representation and negotiation services.

Recommendation 4:
Review and formalise scope of advocacy and representation services provided through the Regional CISs . Develop metrics, which demonstrate the added value of the representation, in particular in relation to the appeals process.

Advocacy and Other Services Provided by MABS

MABS also provides additional advocacy and support services. MABS SDCs are registered "Approved Intermediaries" by the Insolvency Service of Ireland under the Personal Insolvency Act 2012, which enables them to process Debt Relief Notices. A service agreement signed by clients engaging MABS services notes that "MABS will deal with your creditors or lenders to negotiate an affordable and sustainable solution for you to manage your debt". This would imply that MABS is also providing representation and negotiation services.

Similarly, under the Residential Tenancies Act 2020, MABS began receiving referrals from the Residential Tenancies Board. Between August and December 2020 MABS worked with 33 referred tenants to assess their current rent arrears situation and explore options to help sustain the tenancy. If agreed by all parties, support provided can include engaging with the landlord and the tenant with a view to reaching an agreement in respect of rent arrears. This activity would similarly be considered a representation and negotiation service, rather than advocacy.

Overall, the evidence indicates that some of the activities undertaken by MABS are related to representation and negotiation services. While it is appreciated that these services are client-led, they do not have a legislative basis within the current legislation.

Recommendation 5:
Review and formalise the scope of the representation and negotiation services offered by MABS. If necessary, adjust services to align with current legislative mandate or amend legislation to provide for these services.

Patient Advocacy Service

NAS also provides the Patient Advocacy Service, which supports citizens to make a complaint about care received in a Public Acute Hospital or HSE-operated nursing home. This a separate service provided by NAS which is not funded by CIB. NAS commenced the Patient Advocacy Service after successfully winning the contract for the service through a competitive procurement process initiated by the Department of Health. The Department of Health funds the Patient Advocacy Service, while CIB provides organisational support and funding for activities conducted by NAS aligned with the CIB statutory remit. The current contract for the Patient Advocacy Service ends in 2022. A new competitive procurement process has commenced for the

future delivery of the service, and it is understood that NAS have tendered again for this service.

For transparency and to ensure an equitable procurement process for the Patient Advocacy Service it would be important to ensure that CIB is not contributing to staffing or other overheads for the Patient Advocacy Service and that shared services such as accommodation, have a clear apportioned audit trail.

Recommendation 6:
Ensure that there is a clear delineation of functions and funds between CIB-supported NAS activities and the Patient Advocacy Service.

3.4 Social Policy Role

Sections 7 (1)(d) and (f) of the Comhairle Act, 2000 provide a mandate for CIB to support social policy through the following functions:

d) to support, promote and develop the provision of information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services and to highlight issues which are of concern to users of those services,

f) to furnish advice, information, and assistance to the Minister in relation to the development of any aspect of social services,

To fulfil this role, CIB has in place a Social Policy & Research team consisting of a Social Policy & Research Manager, three Social Policy and Research Executives and an Administrator, with an annual budget of just over €150k. This team works closely with the CICs to gather regular social policy returns and analyse the data to gain insights on the issues of concern to users. The team also commissions research on social policy issues and the CIB website features a number of published reports. Notwithstanding the work of the Social Policy & Research team, the review found that there was scope to strengthen delivery of the social policy mandate.

Social Policy Returns

CICs share information with CIB on the issues raised through the centres. This information is then used to produce bi-monthly Social Policy Updates, which are distributed among the public sector and community & voluntary sector. These updates contain a wealth of grass-roots information; however, it was unclear if and how they are used to inform public policy or social services.

A potential avenue to share social policy information is through the regular DSP and CIB meetings. A review of the 2020 meeting minutes found minimal reference to social policy. A revised meeting agenda adopted in 2021 gives more prominence to social policy and there are examples of CIB sharing information regarding challenges experienced by customers and DSP committing to follow-up with the relevant business area. This is a positive step, however while it is understood that the agreed actions were completed, this is not documented in later minutes. This process could be further strengthened by ensuring agreed actions are noted as completed, and any subsequent outcomes documented. More broadly, clear communication channels between CIB and DSP for sharing and responding to social policy information would benefit meeting this mandate.

Recommendation 7:
Consider avenues for greater utilisation of social policy return information to inform and improve social policy and services, including documenting actions agreed on the basis of CIB information and any resulting outcomes.

CIB-funded Research

Published research reports vary from high-level national issues (e.g. Employment Rights) to localised issues, e.g. Accessibility of online services to older people in Co. Wicklow. The social policy research agenda undertaken by CIB is agreed through the CIB Social Policy & Research sub-committee of the Board. While it is acknowledged that much of the CIB research agenda is driven by customer concerns, there was no indication that the research programme fell within an overall research strategy approved by the Board, and it is not clear that the Board has full oversight of the research process. While not the norm, it can happen that the sub-committee would approve a research paper and not necessarily bring it to the attention of the Board for discussion before publication. Given the potential for research to garner media attention and be regarded as a CIB statement on the issue, it would be important that the Board signs off on research and that the communications protocol between the Department and CIB is observed. In addition, a coherent research strategy with clearly defined objectives would support the effective use of resources.

Conducting thorough research can be a time-consuming task. During the review it was noted that this could create challenges for the research recommendations, as the context could already have changed by the time the report was published. In addition, while long reports may enable the nuance of a topic to be explored, it was

perceived by some as a barrier to officials engaging with the research. Some CIB representatives expressed frustration that social policy advice was not being listened to, while Department Officials noted some research could have benefited from greater consultation with relevant Departments and Agencies, in advance of research commencement, to ensure a holistic approach to the research topic and ensure these bodies were aware at the outset that the research was being conducted.

The review team was not made aware of any consultation with the Department regarding the research topics. While it is recognised that it is important that the research agenda reflect community concerns, there may be merit in jointly reviewing proposed research. Within the legislation there is the mandate for the Minister to seek advice, so it is also possible for the Minister via the Department to request particular research areas for consideration within the CIB research portfolio for the Minister to seek advice, so it is also possible for the Minister via the Department to request particular research areas for consideration within the CIB research portfolio in a model similar to the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). Such research topics could be aligned to ongoing policy development areas with the aim of providing useful citizen-centred insights to inform government policy. Ideally DSP would play a role supporting the utilisation of the research through facilitating its dissemination within the Department and referring to other Government Departments as appropriate.

Recommendation 8:
The Board should oversee to a greater extent the development of a research strategy which contributes to established objectives and is signed off by the board. The strategy should be costed and include a clear dissemination process. This strategy could incorporate CIB and DSP collaboration on jointly agreed research areas, where appropriate.

3.5 Voluntary Body/SDC Support

Within CIB's legislative mandate is the requirement to support designated "voluntary bodies". The definition of a voluntary body in the legislation includes a specific reference to MABS, CIS and CICs. The review did not interview representatives of voluntary bodies to assess the support provided, however there is evidence of CIB's commitment to fulfil this aspect of the mandate.

CIB's commitments for non-financial support are detailed in the Service Level Agreement. CIB is a shared service provider for the companies, providing IT infrastructure and support for all companies under its remit. They also provide training and support services to companies on a range of operational and technical areas. CIB also facilitates support between companies, for example, the Peer Support Service is a direct link between CIPS and the Citizens Information Centres. In addition, when the CIPS experienced a surge in calls during the pandemic, the CIC network provided staff to scale up CIPS response. It was noted during the review while the SDCs are separate independent companies there is the perception that they operate within the single CIB "framework". It is important to recognise the achievement of maintaining this culture of cooperation and cohesion through a restructuring process. Overall, the review concluded that CIB is adhering to its legislative mandate to support the voluntary bodies.

3.6 Promoting Accessibility, Coordination, and Awareness of Social Services

The Comhairle Act 7(c)(i) mandates CIB to "to support, promote and develop…. greater accessibility, co-ordination and public awareness of social services". This function does not feature prominently in CIB or DSP documentation and could be considered an outcome of the other functions of the CIB. Most notably CIB's information provision role contributes to public awareness of social services, while the social policy and advocacy services can be considered to support greater accessibility and coordination of social services. However, there may be benefit in further consideration of this function in order to strengthen its delivery. For example, CIB could utilise existing information provision channels to specifically develop public awareness of various social services. Similarly, social policy returns could be reviewed from the perspective of accessibility and coordination.

Recommendation 9:
Consider how existing CIB services can be further utilised to support, promote, and develop, greater accessibility, coordination, and public awareness of social services.

3.7 Other Assigned Functions

The Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS) function was assigned to CIB by the Minister as provided for under Section 7(j) of the Comhairle Act. The remit of SLIS

has expanded substantially since its inception, most notably in 2017 when it was tasked under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy to provide a quality-assurance and registration scheme for interpreters, and to provide on-going professional training and development. This subsequently led to the establishment of a separate company, the Register of Irish Sign Language Interpreters (RISLI).

The review found that this expanded remit had presented challenges for CIB. It was noted by CIB Executive and Board that quality assurance and responsibility for professional training and development was outside the core expertise of the staff. There was a discomfort with the responsibility for oversight of a de-facto regulatory body outside of the scope of their expertise. It was suggested that other agencies or Departments may be a more suitable home for this function.

Recommendation 10:
The Department and CIB to engage to consider the oversight and support role CIB currently fulfils over SLIS and RISLI in the context of how these companies have developed and review how best the governance of these two important service companies might be overseen.

3.8 Legislation

The general sense from those interviewed under the review was that the legislation had evolved on a piecemeal basis since its original enactment in 2000 and that this may have had an impact on the overall cohesion of the legislation. A review of legislation found chains of overlapping amendments. While this is not necessarily an unusual feature of Public Service legislation it was noted that over time this can lead to ambiguity.

It was also noted that there were uncommenced sections under Section 7c, specifically related to the Personal Advocacy Service. The consensus amongst respondents was that there was no pressing need for these sections to be commenced. Finally, as noted in previous section, the legislation focuses on individual advocacy in support of social services, which may be a narrower focus than the scope of representation and negotiation activities actually undertaken by MABS and the CISs.

However, overall, while there were suggestions for improving the legislation, the review found no evidence of an imminent critical need for new legislation. This position could be kept under review as the operating context continues to change and CIB continues to evolve.

3.9 Conclusions

Overall, the review concluded that the CIB is fulfilling its statutory mandate. Despite some decline in users of in-person services during the pandemic, the CIB still demonstrated the ability to provide information to a substantial cohort of the Irish public. It is noted that the information provision needs of the public and the operating context are continuously evolving, and the CIB will need to adapt to continue to meet those needs. In particular, consideration is needed on the role and the level of the in-person services provided and a review of engagement trends is suggested. The provision of monetary and budget advice was also maintained during the pandemic. Similar to the CIS, MABS would benefit from consideration of the role and level of in-person services and a review of the trend in the uptake of services.

Both CIS and MABS are actively engaging in advocacy as per the statutory mandate, however there is some ambiguity regarding the scale and scope of these services, which would benefit from clarification. The review has identified scope for improvement in the current implementation of the social policy remit to maximise utilisation of customer data and contributions to social policy formulation.

It was recognised the SLIS and RISLI have evolved since initially assigned to CIB, and the suitability of CIB to provide oversight of these companies warrants fresh consideration. As regards NAS, while all other companies are 100% funded by CIB, NAS has secured direct funding from the Department of Health to provide the Patient Advocacy Service. To ensure the integrity of the competitive procurement process it is important that the funds and responsibilities of the Patient Advocacy Service are clearly delineated from the CIB-supported activities. Finally, while there is scope for consolidating the legislation, overall, it is not considered a priority at this time. This may be reconsidered in the future.

4. Delivery and Operations

The PCR sought to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the existing CIB structures to deliver its mandate and if appropriate to identify areas for improvement and rationalisation. This included a consideration of the impact of the change to service delivery prompted by the COVID pandemic, and associated lessons for CIB in relation to the future delivery of services.

4.1 CIB Structure

The current CIB structure was established in 2016 in preparation for the restructuring process and aimed to create alignment between the CIB structure and the core pillars of the organisation. CIB is divided into four departments, each under a Senior Manager at Principal Officer Level. These are:

1 **Digital Content, Social Policy and Research, and E-Learning**, which includes the digital content team, responsible for www.citizeninformation.ie, social policy and research team, and a e-learning team providing online training for SDCs.

2 **MABS and Abhaile,** which provides oversight and support to the MABS companies and the dedicated Abhaile project.

3 **CIS and Advocacy,** which provides oversight and support to the information provision and advocacy service provide through the CIS, and also NAS. Support and oversight of SLIS and RISLI are also included within this department.

4 **Corporate Services,** which includes internal CIB services in areas such as HR, finance, IT and also provides oversight and back-office support for the SDCs on premises, finance HR and IT.

Within the review it was noted that a key challenge of this structure is that a single team or individual can have responsibility for oversight/monitoring and also support for a company or project. This dual mandate can create ambiguity in expectations and presents challenges for CIB staff trying to wear both “hats” in their interaction with the companies.

Recommendation 11:
From a governance perspective, it might be useful to consider separating the company oversight and support responsibilities within the CIB executive organisational structure

4.2 Staffing and Budget

The funding dispersed by the DSP is dependent on the programme of activity specified by CIB and demonstrated expenditure. The annual expenditure and staffing of the CIB from 2017-2020 are shown in Table 1. It indicates between 3% and 6% increase in the annual allocation year on year, substantially higher than the annual inflation rate during this period. The CIB distributes between 65% and 69% of funding received each year to the SDCs. Staffing levels show modest variation over the period.

Year	CIB Annual Expenditure	Annual funding from CIB to the SDCs	Annual number of CIB staff (WTE)
2017	€52,850,000	€35,250,568	71.4335
2018	€54,775,028	€36,070,264	73.3535
2019	€56,483,016	€36,933,337	69.84
2020	€55,992,687	€38,726,163	75.86
2021	€51,251,773[2]	See footnote 3	69.74

Table 1: CIB Staffing & Expenditure 2017-2021

In 2020 CIB reported 86 employees, equating to 75.86 Whole-Time Equivalent (WTE) employees. The review found that both CIB and the Department experienced challenges during the annual estimates process, in particular when seeking additional staffing. This may require further discussion between the Department and CIB to progress.

The Department allocates funding to CIB from its annual budget so that CIB can pay staff salaries but also pay the pensions and appropriate lump sums to staff who retire. The long-term implications are that pension payments could comprise an increasing portion of the pay bill as the number of retired staff increase over time. Annual accounts meet financial reporting standards, however, in expenditure reports submitted to the Department it is not possible to separate out the salary payments from pension payments. The requirement to allocate funds for pension payments may inflate the CIB pay bill each year without the pension liability being immediately identifiable. It could be useful for the Department to track these spending streams separately.

[2] Note, in 2021 expenditure was offset by €7.8million due to a surplus accrued by the SDCs.
[3] This information was not available at the time of the report.

Recommendation 12:
DSP and CIB to review the process for staff allocation. In addition, CIB should provide a breakdown of the annual pay bill by pensions/lump sums paid and salary to illustrate the growing pensions liability that will emerge over time.

4.3 Outcomes of SDC Restructuring

In 2018 CIB undertook an extensive restructuring of the CIS and MABS companies, streamlining from 93 independent companies to 16 on a regional basis. A 2014 feasibility study justified the restructuring on the basis of strengthening strategic direction, consistency of service, management, compliance, and oversight, and stakeholder management. A cost-benefit analysis of the restructuring was conducted in 2017 which identified expected initial cost outlays and long-term efficiencies and benefits.

Information from CIB respondents indicated that the restructuring has led to greater efficiencies and has greatly streamlined support and oversight. However, no formal review of the restructuring project outcomes against expectations has been undertaken. In 2020, a C&AG audit recommended that a review of the impact of the restructuring take place in order to determine the extent of the efficiencies that arose. This review has not as yet commenced, however a recent response to a Management Letter indicates it will be undertaken as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 13:
Implement the C&AG recommended action to undertake a post-implementation review of the restructuring project as a priority. The review should commence as soon as feasible and assess whether expected benefits and efficiencies are likely to be realised.

4.4 CIS Model and Volunteer Programme

The CIS companies rely heavily on the support of volunteers to provide a face-to-face service to their customers in the CIC office network. CIB state that the eight CIS companies have 146 workers and almost 900 volunteers (equivalent to just over 100 WTE). In 2019 the CIC network assisted almost 565,000 people and answered over

a million queries. However, in March 2020 the CICs closed their office network in consideration of the public health guidelines and the volunteer network was stood down.
While some CICs have reopened, as of February 2022, there has not been a significant return of volunteers. This is in part due to public health considerations; in particular challenges in maintaining social distancing and also a reflection of the older age profile of the volunteers who could be regarded as being in the higher risk category in terms of Covid. After two years with limited or no engagement with the CICs, there may be challenges for the companies to re-engage with their volunteers. For those who do re-engage, significant retraining may be required e.g., to reflect changes in schemes since 2019.

During the review process both CIB and DSP respondents questioned the feasibility of restarting the volunteer model, however it was noted that any move to replace the voluntary model would require significant additional manpower and would have financial implications.

Recommendation 14:
Review the volunteer programme in light of Covid-19 to assess its long-term feasibility and potential alternative approaches.

4.5 MABS Model and Metrics

The eight regional MABS companies do not operate on a volunteer model, and MABS offices are staffed by MABS employees. At the end of 2020, the number of whole-time equivalent staff in MABS regional companies was 290. In 2019 MABS received 49% of the CIB funding to SDCs, representing a substantial investment. The funding and number of clients supported by MABS is presented in Table 2 and Figure 4.

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Expenditure (€)[4]	20,005,405	20,074,107	19,617,139	20,273,899	16,485,398
New Clients	16,740	15,387	16,971	13,480	13,309
Existing Cases	16,949	14,436	13,587	11,515	10,481
Cases Closed	17,769	17,900	17,820	15,552	14,343

Table 2: MABS Annual Expenditure and Caseload

[4] Note: Approximately €3.5m funding each year was allocated to Abhaile, this is not included in the expenditure figures provided.

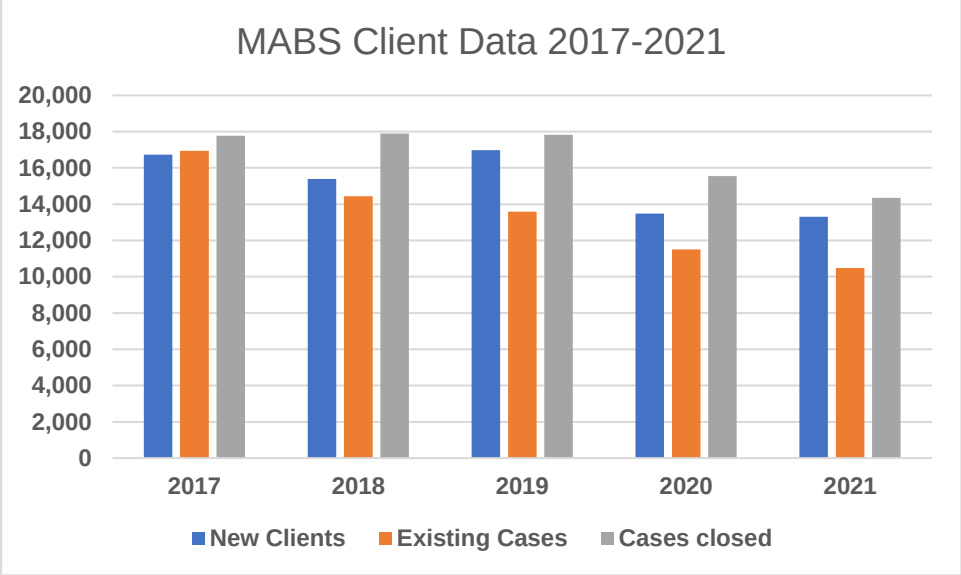

Figure 4: MABS Client Data 2017-2021

Case numbers indicate that MABS continued to maintain services throughout the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. From the table above it would appear that while 60% of cases are closed in a given year, approximately of 40% of cases take longer than a year to resolve. In addition, the review found limited metrics in regard the outcome of cases resolved, specifically regarding whether there were favourable outcomes for the client or not. This is a significant gap when assessing the effectiveness and value for money of the service.

A crude cost per client analysis indicates a typical cost of approximately €1150 per closed case. It is acknowledged that this is a very basic metric, and it is recommended that CIB and MABS would be served by investing in metrics to better measure the impact of the services and to demonstrate effectiveness, efficiency, and value for money.

Recommendation 15:
MABS to review and develop metrics to better demonstrate impact and value for money.

4.6 Demonstrating Performance and Metrics for the SDCs

The review sought to assess CIB's performance framework and the ability of CIB to capture and provide key performance information and to demonstrate output and outcome achievement.

Respondents were universal in their belief that the CIB, and the companies it funds, provides a valuable service to Irish Society. The CIB and SDCs also capture a number of metrics, many of which have been used in this report. However, while the CIB and SDCs are in a position to provide certain data metrics detailing their activities and demonstrating the scale of their activities, this is also limited in nature. It therefore would be beneficial if enhanced performance metrics were developed that focused on measuring outcomes and demonstrating the added value delivered through CIB and its SDCs activities.

While case studies illustrate individual achievements there are minimal metrics to identify whether such achievements are the exception or the norm. It is recognised that measuring outcomes is a challenging task, and particularly in protracted advocacy situations, however, it is a critical part of demonstrating CIBs contribution to the Irish public and identifying areas for improvement.

The 2020 business plan included an activity to establish baseline KPIs of quality and efficiency against which progress can be measured, reported, and analysed. This activity was initially postponed in light of Covid however, in 2021 it was reported that KPIs had been agreed with SDCs for inclusion within revised SLAs.

The review team has not seen the agreed KPIs and in any event, it is a matter for CIB and DSP to agree on these through the Oversight Agreement and Performance Development Agreement mechanisms. However, the review team consider that it would be important to confirm that the agreed KPIs of quality and efficiency go beyond process metrics and benchmarks and demonstrate the effectiveness of the work undertaken and the resulting outcomes. CIB might benefit from examining the “Annual Impact Report” produced by their UK-equivalent Citizens Advice as an example of communicating outcomes. This will enable CIB to report on these as part of their annual reporting obligations.

CIB also signalled that they propose to adopt these new metrics as part of the revised SLAs with the SDCs. It is understood that the adoption of the revised SLAs is due to be postponed until late 2022. Recognising that these KPIs are to establish a baseline, the first opportunity to demonstrate annual progress will be late 2023. Considering many metrics need 2-3 years of trend data to gain insights, there would be value in expediting the baseline process. In light of this, priority should be given to expedite the new SLAs with enhanced performance metrics and implement them as soon as possible. Finally, the review found limited evidence of routine evaluations examining the outcomes and impact of services. This could be another avenue to explore to demonstrate and strengthen the performance of CIB.

Recommendation 16:
As a priority CIB to update their SDCs SLAs with enhanced metrics as soon as possible and establish baselines where necessary.

4.7 Impact of Covid on Future Operations

As noted previously, Covid prompted significant changes to the operations of the CIB and the SDCs, most significantly in terms of the closure of face-to-face offices and an increased emphasis on phone and online interaction. While it is too early to confirm whether the online interaction will continue at its current level, what is clear is that Covid substantially accelerated a wider trend towards the use of digital technology across all public services and that the easing of restrictions will probably not result in the public reverting to the same level of pre-Covid face-to-face contact. It is important that the CIB critically consider the implications of this development on their in-person operations.

Respondents believed that while the SDCs had fulfilled a substantial part of their mandate remotely, maintaining a level of in-person services was important for the most vulnerable in society, such as those struggling with digital literacy, or with English as a second language. However, it was also noted that a greater emphasis on non-face-to-face interactions provided opportunities to expand services such as out-of-hours services. All acknowledged that there were opportunities to learn from the Covid experience and streamline services to meet the evolving needs of the Irish public.

CIB has recently undertaken a digital discovery project involving a consultation with company frontline staff service and customers regarding their experiences using digital services such as the telephone call back service, the increased use of social media, and the virtual consultation process. This project will inform the review of a digital strategy for the CIB and funded companies to further leverage digital technology to engage with Irish citizens.

In parallel with the digital expansion, it would be equally important to reflect on the ongoing dedicated need for widespread in-person services, and the most efficient and effective way of delivering these services to the public. One issue for consideration is the impact of a smaller premises footprint and the possibility of co-location for the services provided (e.g., CICs and MABS). The CIB noted that they had already adopted an approach to co-location between MABS and CICs where feasible. Such a consolidation would be beneficial from a customer service perspective, ensuring CIC and MABS services are available in a single location, it will reduce the footprint of the SDCs, and associated savings could be invested in

the development of alternative channels and delivering training to ensure consistent high quality service delivery across all locations. This consolidation process should be further accelerated, reducing the overall premises footprint of the SDCs. This could further strengthen the use of shared services.

Moving beyond the CIB structure, the majority of enquiries in CICs related to Social Welfare. The Department of Social Protection has a wide network of Intreo offices, and there is potential to further explore co-location of Intreo, CIC and MABS offices. This would enable the public to access both independent information on a service and the service itself within a single location. This approach has been successfully implemented in Coolock and was perceived by DSP to be working well.

It is recognised that office relocation requires additional upfront costs, so this will need be discussed with the Department in advance of any estimates process.

Recommendation 17:
CIB and DSP to examine the feasibility of co-location of offices, including possible co-location with Intreo offices.

4.8 Alternative Operating Models

The DPER guidelines on conducting a PCR recommend a review of similar services from other countries, to identify possible lessons or insights into the operations of similar agencies that might apply in the Irish context. The agency which is most similar to the CIB is the Citizen's Advice (CA) agency in the UK. The CA provides information and advocacy services similar to those provided by the CIB. It also delivers services through a series of independent companies staffed by volunteers. However, unlike the CIB, the CA is not a statutory agency but an independent charity, which secures funding from a variety of sources at local and national level.

While the CA does have some reliance on government funds, it secures a substantial proportion of funds independently. This would appear to provide it with the means to pursue a high-profile public campaigning role and its website cites a number of successful campaigns.

However, the CA is also in a financially volatile position when compared with the CIB; local services which cannot secure funding may be forced to reduce services or close, leaving gaps in the information network. The CA model has been adopted in a number of Commonwealth countries, including Australia and New Zealand.

There is also an EU level umbrella organisation, Citizen's Advice International, and a European Citizen Action Service, both of which are independent non-profit organisations.

Within European countries, Citizen information services were more likely to be provided as public services by local municipalities, for example, through Citizen's offices (Bürgerämter) in Germany. These offices also provide citizens with a means to complete a wide array of administrative tasks.

In conclusion, while all of the above organisations provide a similar service, there is no one model that can be easily compared to the CIB operation structure.

4.9 Conclusions

Now that the impact of Covid on the operation of CIB and its companies is beginning to recede, it is imperative that CIB take stock and consider the most appropriate operating model to meet the varied needs of the Irish public. As the majority of the public move towards and have become accustomed to an online service and remote engagement, there has been a subsequent decline in the demand for in-person services. This is not a situation unique to CIB, however, CIB will need to balance the needs of the majority with those of the most vulnerable who cannot access an online service.

This challenge is further compounded by the impact of Covid in terms of the delivery of CIC services including the use of volunteers. As they engage strategically with this issue, it is likely to result in a streamlining of some in-person services with a possibility of co-location and potential changes to the volunteer structure.

However, before embarking on substantial changes, it will be critical to ensure that a thorough review is conducted of the previous restructuring process. This is an outstanding action from the 2020 C&AG audit, which needs to be addressed as a priority.

The review also identified challenges with the current internal structure of CIB, specifically combining company oversight and support within the same roles. Alternative structures should be explored which support a separation of these functions. In addition, the inclusion of the CIB within the DSP ECF was identified as a source of tension, which needs to be examined.

As the CIB moves forward and evolves in response to the changing operating context it is imperative it has metrics and evidence to demonstrate the outcomes of its operations.

5. Oversight of Companies

CIB has a legislative mandate to provide support to its SDCs and in this context it is also responsible for the provision of funding to the companies while ensuring that the funds are utilised in line with relevant codes of practices and circulars. In particular, DPER circular 13/2014 outlines the principles and procedures for the Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds. This section examines the extent to which CIB is fulfilling these duties, and areas for improvement.

5.1 Service Level Agreements

During the review, it was recognised that the companies are independent entities, their employees are not CIB employees, and that CIB is not represented on their Boards. Consequently, the primary mechanism by which CIB provides oversight of the companies is through Service Level Agreements (SLAs), which are in place with all companies. These SLAs set out a common understanding between CIB and the SDCs regarding how the funds will be used.

Funds are allocated to the CIB on an annual basis and are in turn provided to the companies on an annual basis based on the SLA. The above-mentioned DPER circular explicitly states that the retention of public funds beyond the agreed period is not permitted without the approval of the Minister. This is reflected in the paragraph 6.9 of SLA between CIB and the SDCs which states:

> *The Company shall comply with the Principles for Grantees (clarity, governance, value for money and fairness) and the disclosure and reporting requirements of the DPER Grants Circular 13/2014: Management of & Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds as amended or superseded and* ***CIB shall be entitled to claw back or offset against future allocation any monies which have been unspent in a period****.*

C&AG Audit of Annual Accounts

A C&AG audit of the CIB accounts for 2019 identified that the SDCs had over time accrued surpluses and retained them without seeking prior approval, thus contravening DPER circular 13/2014. The scale and extent of the build-up of the surplus was analysed by DSP and CIB and the amount of the surplus was offset against the funding requirement for 2021. The PCR did not examine the surplus issue in detail, as it was being addressed through a separate process, however it was used to explore broader governance and oversight processes.

Throughout the review, CIB emphasised that revised SLAs were key to strengthening Company oversight. The 2021 PDA included an objective to *"review,*

update and monitor Service Level Agreements (SLA) with its 22 Service Delivery Companies". The objective predates widespread awareness of the surplus issue. The action was due for completion in Q2 2021, and the Q3 report indicated that progress had been made and a revised SLA template was to be submitted for CIB Board approval. The CIB Board subsequently elected to postpone the adoption of the revised SLA until late 2022.

The PCR concluded that a revised SLA, with an increased focus on governance and compliance would strengthen company oversight and should be progressed as a priority. However, it would caution against perceiving the SLA as a "magic bullet", noting that existing SLA documents do reference both the DPER circular and the retention of surpluses. Equally important to the revised documentation is the need to directly engage with SDC Boards and management to ensure clarity within the SDC regarding what adherence to the SLA means in practice, and the consequences of failing to meet requirements. It may be the case that some training in the area of governance would be of benefit to the Board and executive of the SDCs.

It is understood that this engagement has already commenced, and it would be important that it continues. It is also recognised that the dual CIB function of support and oversight can "muddy the waters", and hence clearly separating out those roles and functions between CIB teams should strengthen oversight.

The review understands that it is intended to delay implementation of the SLAs until late 2022. In light of the significant issues identified, it would be prudent to expedite this process, ensure the provisions in the SLA are utilised to their full extent, and that both CIB and SDC staff are clear on what is required.

Recommendation 18:
CIB to implement as a priority revised SLAs in all SDCs. CIB to analyse what other measures could be taken to enhance governance of SDCs.

5.2 Procurement of SDC Services

The SDCs are independent companies limited by guarantee who receive funding from CIB to deliver services as set out in the service delivery agreements. EU Directive 2014/24/EU and the Office of Government Procurement Guidelines would typically require a competitive public procurement process in this situation. However, the SDCs are also voluntary bodies. The definition of voluntary body in CIB legislation is included as Appendix B, and specifically cites MABS and the CISs. As

noted previously, under the legislation CIB is required to provide funding and support to voluntary bodies. This would appear to negate the need for a competitive procurement process however, further examination of this issue would be worthwhile to ensure adherence to all legislative requirements.

Recommendation 19:
CIB and DSP to examine the legislative requirements regarding distribution of funds to the Service Delivery Companies.

5.3 Internal Audit

The Internal Audit function was also referenced by CIB as playing a key role in the oversight of the SDCs. However, this was contingent on the terms of reference of the audit placing a focus on such controls. For example, a 2020 CIB Internal Audit report shared with the review team focused on CIB's use and controls of direct funds and assets and did not extend to the utilisation of the funds by the SDCs. It would not have identified any weaknesses in the system of internal financial controls within the SDCs.

Annual reports from the SDCs to the CIB include a section on audits of the SDCs. In this section recommendations are highlighted, and an update provided on how these were being addressed. Two audits referenced by SDCs in 2020 did not reference that a surplus had arisen. It would appear the audit was assessing against standard financial management and governance controls and did not consider the provisions of the DPER circular. While the companies are independent Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLG), they are in receipt of public funds, and in many cases are 100% funded by public funds. Hence an audit process to assess compliance needs to be viewed through this lens to ensure that they are in compliance with the existing provisions of the SLA as regards DPER Circular 13/2014.

Recommendation 20:
CIB and the SDCs to ensure that the provisions of DPER Circular 13/2014 are incorporated into the annual internal audit of SDCs. This should be supported by training for staff in CIB and the SDCs.

5.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

There was universal agreement among respondents that the CIB oversight of companies needed to be strengthened, and it is recognised that DSP and CIB have already taken a number of steps to address this. SLAs play a key role in oversight and should be strengthened as soon as feasible. Audits also play a critical role in oversight; however current audit processes are not sufficiently tailored to public sector funding to identify non-compliance. Finally, the legislative validity of the current operating practice of providing funds without a competitive procurement process should be examined.

6. Governance

The PCR sought to provide a robust challenge to, and assurance on the governance structure, having regard to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, DPER circulars, and the Oversight Agreement and Performance Development Agreement between the Board of CIB and DSP.

6.1 Board Recruitment and Composition

The composition of the Board is set down in the 2000 Act, which established Comhairle (now CIB). At the time, the Board, comprising 20 members, was to include one officer of the Minister and five representatives of people with disabilities. The Citizens Information Act 2007 subsequently reduced the size of the Board to 15 and the reduced the representatives of people with disabilities to three. Since then, a number of other public bodies have seen their Boards reduced further e.g., the Pensions Authority.

Recruitment to the Board is organised through PAS, in line with the current procedures for appointments to State Boards. The term of office of each member is set down and the PAS process is used to fill the ensuing vacancy. The review confirmed that when a Board member's term of office expired that the vacancy was filled on this basis. Heretofore, the focus placed on Board membership tended to be placed on areas or issues that the Board considered relevant, in terms of the function of the Board such as finance. In the light of recent experience, it is considered that some knowledge or expertise should be placed on the role of the Board and in particular the role that governance plays in relation to its functions. Consequently, the Board should consider recruiting a member with a strong background in the area of governance of State bodies.

Recommendation 21:
The Board should consider recruiting a member with a strong background in the area of governance of State bodies.

6.2 Board Function

In fulfilling its functions, the Board meets at least 6 times each year as is required under the legislation and also has set up a number of sub-committees to help in the running of CIB. However, in examining the minutes of the Board and also the sub-committees, it was not always apparent as to the extent of Board involvement or

awareness in relation to issues that arose or decisions that were made. For example, the issue of the recent surplus that arose in the SDCs was discussed at Board level, but the minutes do not appear to clearly record the manner in which the Board dealt with the matter. It is important that there is a clear audit trail in relation to the decisions made and clear and concise minutes of Board and sub-committee meetings, which reflect such decision making, will ensure that this is the case.

The Board emphasised that the restructuring process had been the main focus of Board strategy and activity over the past 4 years and that the impact of the pandemic and the restrictions on CIB/SDC activity that applied over the last 2 years had also had a knock-on effect on the running of the organisation. This appeared to have impacted on the timelines for putting in place the Oversight Agreement and Performance Development Agreements between DSP and CIB

Recommendation 22:
The minutes of the meetings should clearly record the decisions and actions arising from each agenda item.

6.3 Role of Sub-Committees

Section 12 of the Comhairle Act 200 provides that the Board may establish committees to advise it on matters relating to its functions. Currently the Board has established three such committees namely, the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee, the Social Policy & Research Committee, and the Strategy & Governance Committee.

As stated above, the purpose of these committees is to advise the Board but on examination of the minutes and in discussions with the Board, it appears that on some occasions, these committees may have arrived at conclusions or decisions, which were accepted by the Board with little or no record in the minutes of the Board of the Board discussions and decisions on the matter at hand.

For example, it appears that the Social Policy & Research Committee may have signed off on reports for publication without a full discussion on the report happening at Board level. This is important, particularly where the report may be stress testing or challenging existing policy. Similarly, the issue of the SDC surplus was considered and discussed at the Finance, Audit & Risk committee with actions taken before the full Board discussion took place

Recommendation 23:
The Board should review the role and function of the sub-committees in the context of the provisions contained in section 12 of the Comhairle Act.

6.4 Function of the Oversight Agreement and Performance Development Agreement

The Code of Practice for the governance of State Bodies provides a framework for the application of best practice in corporate governance by State Bodies. The starting point for clarity of accountabilities is the Oversight Agreement between the relevant parent Department and the State Body. Following on from this, the Performance Development Agreement acts as a performance contract between DSP and CIB sets out the outputs to be delivered. The agreement should be aligned to the specific objectives in the DSP Statement of Strategy and consistent with the CIB legal mandate.

A review of processes found that the CIB undertakes an extensive work planning process each year, which culminates in an annual business plan which is typically signed off by the Board in December. The review found that agreement of the PDA agreement typically takes place after the business plan is agreed. Consideration should be given to aligning the timing of these processes so the PDA can be incorporated in the CIB annual planning process.

The review found that CIB has in place a strategic plan for the period 2019-2021 and that a new plan is required for 2022 onwards. Work has commenced on this plan, which will inform the oversight and performance development agreements between DSP and CIB that will follow and will allow for a common understanding of the performance achieved. It will also assist in the development of annual business plans and will, through the agreed metrics contained in these agreements, enable CIB to illustrate in its annual reports how targets have been met and the outcomes that have been achieved.

Recommendation 24:
Consideration should be given to aligning the timing of processes so the PDA can be incorporated in the CIB annual planning process

Recommendation 25:
CIB should agree its Statement of Strategy as soon as possible. The revised Statement of Strategy should provide direction for the Oversight and Performance Development Agreements.

6.5 Conclusions

The review team found that the CIB Board are committed to their role and to the work of CIB. In fulfilling their role, and as per any other public body, it is important to ensure that the Board has a full understanding of the Code of Practice and their responsibilities as the Board of a state agency. Regular reviews of the Board's understanding and adherence to the Code of Practice should be introduced and specific measures for new Board members to ensure they are aware and understand their obligations as a member of the Board of CIB.

The broad features of the Code of Practice are in place; there is a Strategy, Oversight Agreement, and Performance Development Agreement. However, the manner in which the strategy and these agreements dovetail with the business planning process may need to be made more explicit. Similarly, the development of better metrics, which focus on outcomes as well as outputs will underpin these and enable CIB and DSP reach a common understanding in relation to the performance of CIB.

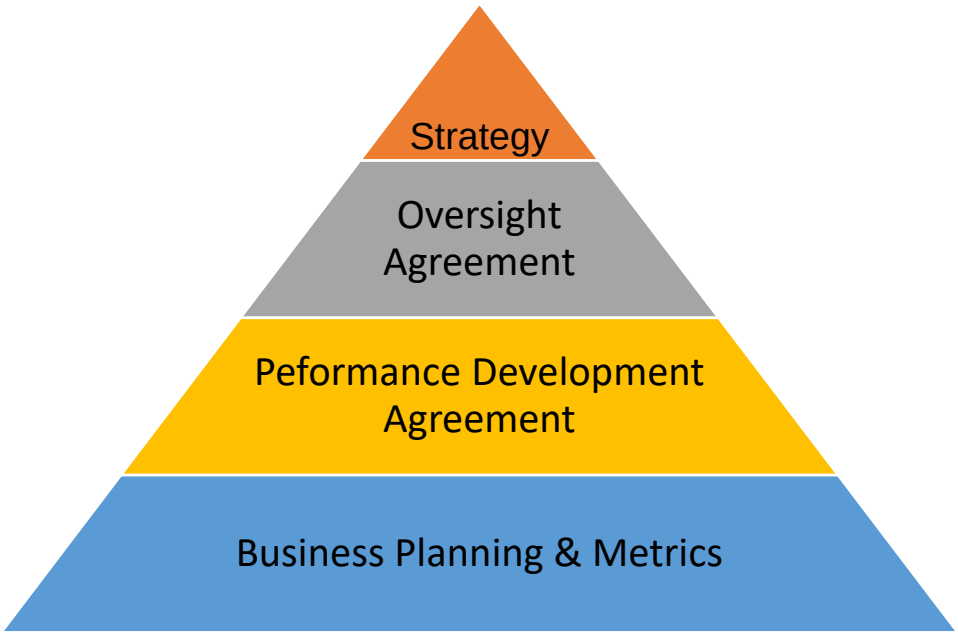

Figure 5: Relationship between key Governance Documentation

7. Future Considerations

The review explored additional external factors, which could influence the future direction of CIB. Many of these, such as the trend towards greater online engagement, and the change in the disability support landscape, have already been addressed in the report.

7.1 Expansion of Information Provision Services

An additional factor particularly relevant for the CIB is the changing landscape of information provision. There has been sustained investment by many government departments, agencies, and service providers to strengthen their own information provision services. While the CIB website currently excels at providing a one-stop-shop for accessible independent information, over time it will be important that the CIB is not overtaken by people going directly to source, e.g., GOV.ie, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission. Additional challenges that the CIB will need to contend with is the steady rise of misinformation and cyberattacks as a standalone website or system.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The PCR concluded that the CIB continues to provide a needed role in Irish Society and is fulfilling its statutory mandate. The review sought to identify improvements in accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness. Specific recommendations in these areas have been identified throughout the report. These are collated in the following tables in line with the expected timeframe for delivery. “Short-term” actions would expect to be initiated within three months, “medium-term” actions within 3-9 months and “long-term” actions are expected to take longer than nine months.

Short-Term Recommendations: To be initiated within 3 months	Responsible
Recommendation 4: Review and formalise scope of advocacy and representation services provided through the Regional CIS. Develop metrics, which demonstrate the added value of the representation, in particular in relation to the appeals process.	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 5: Review and formalise the scope of the representational and negotiation services offered by MABS. If necessary, adjust services to align with the current legislative mandate or amend the legislation to provide for these services.	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 6: Ensure that there is a clear delineation of functions and funds between CIB-supported NAS activities and the Patient Advocacy Service.	CIB
Recommendation 12: DSP and CIB to review the process for staff allocation. Similarly, the identification of funding specifically for CIB pensions may need to be considered in terms of the growing pensions liability that will emerge over time.	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 13: Implement the C&AG recommended action to undertake a post-implementation review of the restructuring project as a priority. The review should assess whether expected benefits and efficiencies are likely to be realised.	CIB
Recommendation 15: MABS to review and develop metrics to better demonstrate impact and value for money.	CIB

Recommendation 16: As a priority CIB to update their SDCs SLAs with enhanced metrics as soon as possible and establish baselines where necessary.	CIB
Recommendation 18: CIB to implement as a priority revised SLAs in all SDCs. CIB to analysis what other measures could be taken to enhance governance of SDCs.	CIB
Recommendation 19: CIB and DSP to examine the legislative requirements regarding distribution of funds to the Service Delivery Companies.	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 20: CIB and the SDCs to ensure that the provisions of DPER Circular 13/2014 are incorporated into the annual internal audit of SDCs. This should be supported by training for staff in CIB and the SDCs.	CIB
Recommendation 22: The minutes of the meetings should clearly record the decisions and actions arising from each agenda item.	CIB
Recommendation 23: The Board should review the role and function of the sub-committees in the context of the provisions contained in section 12 of the Comhairle Act	CIB

Medium-Term Recommendations: To be initiated within 3 to 9 months	**Responsible**
Recommendation 1: As online and telephone services continue to develop, the role of CICs in the provision of face-to-face information should be reviewed. Decisions in this area would benefit from a review of the impact of the CIC closures during the pandemic on access to information amongst vulnerable and marginalised groups. This review should encompass the trend in terms of the year on year fall in office visits preceding the pandemic.	CIB
Recommendation 2: Trends in the use of MABS services should be examined in more detail, including a review of the role and location of in-person MABS offices after almost two years of remote service provision.	CIB

Recommendation 3: The DSP and CIB should consider the impact of recent legislation and the role of the Decision Support Service to ensure coherent and effective support to people with disability.	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 7: Consider avenues for greater utilisation of social policy return information to inform and improve social policy and services, including documenting actions agreed on the basis of CIB information and any resulting outcomes.	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 8: The Board should oversee to a greater extent the development of a research strategy which contributes to established objectives and is signed off by the board. The strategy should be costed and include a clear dissemination process. This strategy could incorporate CIB and DSP collaboration on jointly agreed research areas, where appropriate.	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 9: Consider how existing CIB services can be further utilised to support, promote, and develop, greater accessibility, coordination, and public awareness of social services.	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 11: From a governance perspective, it might be useful to consider separating the company oversight and support responsibilities within the CIB executive organisational structure	CIB
Recommendation 14: Review the volunteer programme in light of Covid-19 to assess its long-term feasibility and potential alternative approaches.	CIB
Recommendation 17: CIB and DSP to examine the feasibility of co-location of offices, including possible co-location with Intreo offices.	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 21: The Board should consider recruiting a member with a strong background in the area of governance of State bodies.	CIB
Recommendation 24: Consideration should be given to aligning the timing of processes so the PDA can be incorporated in the CIB annual planning process	CIB & DSP
Recommendation 25: CIB should agree its Statement of Strategy as soon as possible. The revised Statement of Strategy should provide direction for the Oversight and Performance Development Agreements.	CIB & DSP

Long-Term Recommendations: Greater than 9 months	Responsible
Recommendation 10: The Department and CIB to engage to consider the oversight and support role CIB currently fulfils over SLIS and RISLI in the context of how these companies have developed and review how best the governance of these two important service companies might be overseen.	CIB & DSP

Appendix A: Extracts from the Comhairle Act 2000 (as amended)

7.— (1) The functions of the Board shall be—

(a) to support the provision of or, where the Board considers it appropriate, to provide directly, independent information, advice, and advocacy services so as to ensure that individuals have access to accurate, comprehensive, and clear information relating to social services and are referred to the relevant services,

F4 [(b) to support the provision of or, where the Board considers it appropriate, to provide directly, advocacy services to individuals, in particular those with a disability, that would assist them in identifying and understanding their needs and options and in securing their entitlements to social services],

F4 [(c) to support, promote and develop —

(i) greater accessibility, co-ordination, and public awareness of social services, and

(ii) the provision and dissemination of integrated information in relation to such services by statutory bodies and voluntary bodies,]

F5 [(ca) to support the provision of a service to be known, in the English language, as the Money Advice and Budgeting Service or, in the Irish language, as An tSeirbhís Buiséadaithe agus Comhairle Airgid, to provide advice to individuals for the purpose of the management, avoidance, reduction and discharge of personal debt and in relation to money management,

(cb) to promote and develop the provision of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and to provide information in respect of such provision,

(cc) to provide, subject to the consent of the Minister, and in accordance with subsection (1A), financial assistance to a voluntary body in respect of any matter related to the functions referred to in paragraphs (ca), (cb), (cd), (ce), (cf) and (cg),

(cd) to promote and develop education in respect of money management,

(ce) to compile and publish data relating to the provision of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service,

(cf) to promote and disseminate awareness and information to the public relating to the provision of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service,

(cg) to undertake, or commission, research relating to the functions referred to in paragraphs (ca), (cb) and (cd) and on any matter, as the Minister may, from time to time, request, in relation to the functions referred to in paragraphs (ca), (cb) and (cd) to (cf),

(ch) to provide advice, information, and assistance to the Minister in respect of the functions referred to in paragraphs (ca) to (cg) and such advice, information, and assistance in relation to those functions as the Minister may, from time to time, request],

(d) to support, promote and develop the provision of information on the effectiveness of current social policy and services and to highlight issues which are of concern to users of those services,

(e) to promote and support the development of voluntary bodies providing social services including, where the Board considers it appropriate, the provision of financial or other resources such as integrated information, training, and development services,

f) to furnish advice, information, and assistance to the Minister in relation to the development of any aspect of social services,

(g) whenever the Minister so requests, to design schemes relating to social services to address needs identified by the Minister concerning such services, and, where the Board considers it appropriate to do so, to provide such services directly,

(h) to promote, develop, encourage, and assist, through the provision of financial or other resources, the work in relation to social services of such bodies as the Minister may specify,

(i) to prepare strategic plans in accordance with section 8, and

(j) to perform any additional functions assigned to the Board under subsection (2).

F6 [(1A) The Board shall, subject to the approval of the Minister, determine the terms on which and the conditions subject to which it may —

(a) support the provision of information, advice, or advocacy services under F7 [subsection (1)],

F5 [(aa) support the provision, promotion and development of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service under subsections (1) (ca) and (1) (cb) and the functions referred to in subsections (1)(cd) to (1)(cg)],

(b) provide financial or other resources to a voluntary body under subsection (1)(e) or to a body specified by the Minister under F7 [subsection (1)(h)] and

F5 [(ba) provide financial assistance to a voluntary body under subsection (1)(cc)],

and different terms and conditions F7 [may apply under paragraphs (a), (aa), (b) and (ba)] and in relation to different types of bodies.

(1B) The Board shall, in determining the terms and conditions under subsection (1A), have regard to the objective of it promoting the provision of an integrated, reliable, and comprehensive information service of the highest quality.

(1C) The Board may, for the purpose of providing the support referred to in F7 [paragraphs (a) and (aa) of subsection (1A)] or the financial or other resources referred to in F7 [paragraphs (b) and (ba) of that subsection] , request the body or person concerned to furnish it with information in such form and at such times as it may require.

(1D) The Board may refuse to provide the support referred to in F7 [paragraphs (a) and (aa) of subsection (1A)] , or the financial or other resources referred to in F7 [paragraphs (b) and (ba) of that subsection] , if the body or person concerned does not comply with the terms and conditions determined under that subsection or if it fails or refuses to furnish the Board with any information requested of the body or person concerned under subsection (1C) .

(1E) The Board, in performing the functions conferred on it by or under this section, shall have regard to the need for it to co-operate with statutory bodies and voluntary bodies.

F5 [(1F) The Board, in performing the functions conferred on it under subsections (1)(ca) to (1)(ch), shall have regard to —

(a) the provision, in particular, of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service to persons on low income who are, or are at risk of becoming, over indebted, and

(b) Government policy, in particular social inclusion policy].

(2) The Minister may, with the consent of the Minister for Finance, by order-

(a) confer on the Board such additional functions relating to social services and connected with the functions conferred on the Board by subsection (1) or an order made under this subsection, as the Minister considers appropriate,

(b) make such provision as he or she considers necessary or expedient in relation to matters ancillary to or arising out of the conferral on the Board of functions so conferred.

24A. — The Minister may give to the Board such general policy directions (including directions to undertake campaigns to disseminate information relating to a particular social service or services) with regard to the performance of its functions as he or she considers appropriate, and the Board shall comply with any such directions.

Appendix B: Definition of Voluntary Body in Comhairle Act 2000 (as amended)

‘voluntary body’ means -

(*a*) a body corporate, or

(*b*) an unincorporated body of persons, other than a statutory body, and includes a body commonly known as a money advice and budgeting service, and Citizen Information Service or a Citizen Information Centre;”

Appendix C: PCR Process Timeline

May 2021	• PO nominated as Project Lead for PCR, and project team identified
June 2021	• ToR for PCR developed
July 2021	• Project Lead presented overview of PCR purpose and process to CIB Board and request nomination of CIB Board representative to PCR Working Group
August 2021	• Composition of Working Group finalised, with nominated representatives from the CIB Board, CIB Executive, DPER, and DSP
September 2021	• Project team conducted orientation with Working Group members, with detailed review of ToR, expected roles and next steps in the process • Project site established, and gathering of relevant documentation commences • Survey developed and issued to all members of the CIB Board, CIB executive and DSP line section
October 2021	• Analysis of survey responses
November 2021	• Presentation of survey analysis to working group
December 2021	• Interviews with representatives of CIB Board, CIB Executive and DSP line section
January/February 2022	• Analysis of interviews and documentation • Draft report prepared
March 2022	• Draft report shared with Working Group for clarifications and correction
April 2022	• Final report brought to Management Board for sign-off