

Growth in Debt Strikes Northside

Debt has emerged as the second most common reason for northside Dublin residents to visit the areas local Civic Centre, it has emerged this week. According to a report from the Northside Civic Centre, debt (11%) was the second most common query brought to the Centre. Family Law was the most common, with almost a third of queries relating to this area. Launching the Northside Community Law Centre's 2006 Annual Report at the Northside Civic Centre in Coolock, Minister Sean Haughey T.D. said that the statistics contained in the report were a timely reminder of the difficulties people can get into with financial debt.

"January can be a particularly difficult time for many families, with many having to shoulder significant financial pressures in the wake of the Christmas season, but the statistics contained in this Annual

Report clearly show that people are struggling with financial debt twelve months of the year," said Minister Haughey. "This can have a massive impact on many areas of life and can place a destructive strain on relationships and family units." Haughey said he is "not surprised" that Family Law and debt are the two areas that the Law Centre deals with most frequently, and he expects that the two issues are intertwined in many cases. "Another notable point is that for whatever reason, more than three times the number of women than men are seeking help from the Centre. This I feel needs to be addressed and I hope that going forward efforts will be made to encourage men to avail of the services on offer," he said. In 2007, Minister Haughey was one of many supporters of the Centre, then facing closure due to funding shortage. It was subsequently saved when the then relevant Minister, FFs Seamus Brennan, secured an increase in the Centre's Government funding from €360,000 to €410,000. "As Minister for Lifelong Learning, I am especially interested in the Community Education schemes being developed at the Centre and I will certainly be continuing my close contacts with them to further expand this aspect of the Centre's work. The Northside Community Law Centre provides a vital support to people in disadvantaged areas and I am proud to see it doing so well. It is a tribute to Tom Brennan, Colin Daly and all the staff working there," concluded Minister Haughey.