

# Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) - Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers (SNSIAP) Accreditation

## Peer Reviewer Role Specification

### Overview of the SNSIAP Peer Review process

Advice agencies who wish to be accredited at Type II and III in any of the three areas covered by the SNSIAP (housing, welfare benefits, money/debt) must first complete a peer review of their case-files. An agency has to successfully complete peer review before they can proceed to audit and accreditation. The overall purpose of the peer review process is to help the agency to continuously improve the advice service that they provide to the public.

The peer review is carried out remotely either through direct access to the agency's electronic case management system or by agencies uploading a selection of their casefiles onto a file-sharing platform (NextCloud). Reviewers read and assess the casefiles online with no access to paper files so candidates must be confident about working in this way.

The reviewers assess 15 case-files per Topic (eg 15 housing cases) against assessment criteria based on the SNSIAP technical and generic competences and write a report. The report records the marks awarded and identifies the strengths/weaknesses in the agency's advice provision.

The assessment criteria includes three separate components - Diagnosis, Information & Advice and Support & Action. The peer reviewer decides whether each case complies or not based on a system of Red, Amber or Green scores awarded to each component. The reviewer is required to describe and justify why each decision was reached with evidence linked to either a technical competence or a generic competence.

The peer review reports are submitted to a Moderation Committee, who make the final decision on the outcome of an agency's peer review. If the Moderation Committee disagrees with any of the marks awarded they may moderate the mark, before coming to a decision about the overall mark to be awarded.

Agencies receive copies of all the peer review reports along with a decision letter from the Moderation Committee setting out the decision of the Committee and any specific Committee comments, which they must submit with their application for accreditation.

### Time commitment

We estimate that one peer review takes approximately 2/3 days to complete (including report writing). Reviewers are given access to the case-files 3 weeks before the deadline for submitting the report. Reviewers are asked to complete

between one and two peer reviews each month, although this may vary subject to the reviewer's availability and demand for reviews.

Peer reviewers will be offered a one-year contract for services - they will not be employees of SLAB.

## **Remuneration**

Peer reviewers will be compensated directly for their time. Payment will include all activities undertaken whilst active in the role as a Peer Reviewer, including any training or related activities. Payment will be £390 per peer review. Peer reviewers will also be required to attend compulsory training and updating sessions (approximately 2 days a year) and attendance at training sessions will be paid at a rate of £195 per day. We will also pay reasonable travel and subsistence expenses where applicable.

## **The Requirement for Confidentiality**

It is of the utmost importance that peer reviewers preserve the confidentiality of the peer review process. All peer reviewers will be required to sign a data protection agreement with SLAB setting out their data-processing responsibilities during their peer reviewing contract.

## **Role Specification**

The essential and desirable requirements for the role are set out below.

### **Essential requirements:**

1. At least five years' experience of delivering advice, supervising advice or providing training in housing, welfare benefits or debt casework.
2. Currently delivering, supervising or providing training in housing, welfare benefits or debt casework in the not-for-profit advice sector.
3. Up-to-date in-depth knowledge of housing, welfare benefits or debt law.
4. Experience of conducting assessments of other advisers' work and providing constructive feedback in any area of social welfare law.

In addition, applicants will have to demonstrate that they can meet the key competences of the post, set out below. Applicants will be offered an opportunity to demonstrate this at interview.

## **Key competences**

### **Assessment skills**

- Able to provide objective written assessments of case-files using the SNSIAP assessment process.

- Able to describe and justify in writing why each decision was reached and link decisions to evidence.
- Able to identify strengths in someone else's work and phrase criticism in a constructive way.

### **Mindset**

- Able to acknowledge different ways of working and approaches to delivering advice.
- Able to follow and apply guidance on how to conduct peer reviews.
- Open and responsive to constructive feedback about performance.

### **Self-management skills and administration**

- Able to fit peer review around other work commitments.
- Able to work under time pressure to meet deadlines.
- Able to work remotely.

### **Decision-making skills**

- Able to make and justify difficult decisions with confidence after considering alternatives.

### **Attention to detail**

- Able to check own work and pick up any possible errors.

### **Communication**

- Able to produce concise written reports using plain English in Microsoft Word.
- Able to review case files using objective language.

### **Confidentiality**

- Committed to holding in confidence all information obtained during the accreditation process, including information from discussions with other peer reviewers or SLAB staff and from case-files submitted for peer review.

### **Motivational**

- Motivated to engage with the peer review process and to contribute to its development by offering constructive criticism about the process and identifying ways in which it can be improved.

### **Equalities**

- Committed to the promotion of equality and diversity.