

**1. How would you describe your experience as a SLAB Board Member? Was it what you expected?**

- I very much enjoyed the experience of being a Board Member at SLAB.
- I had been a Board Member on other public sector bodies and the responsibilities were as I expected them to be. Members were engaged in considering the Scottish Government's strategy for legal aid and its implications for the Board's implementation of the scheme, and the consequences for the legal firms which deliver legal aid services and for applicants and recipients of legal aid.
- I would describe the experience as challenging but rewarding. As a lay member with no legal training, I found the role demanding, especially at first. However, I soon realised that many of the issues we dealt with were common to the governance of most organisations and I began to feel more confident about my ability to contribute.

**2. Did you acquire any new skills in your time as a SLAB Board Member?**

- I had a number of skills when I came to the Board which served me well: the skills of analysis, constructive challenge, having the confidence to put my point across in a positive but determined way, raising any concerns, understanding the relationship between the Board and Government, and between the Board and profession and stakeholders.
- In terms of skills, I learned to apply my experience and understanding of organisations in a completely new context. In addition, having developed through my career a tendency to skim-read, I re-learned the ability to slow down and read complex material carefully in order to understand it properly and to identify the core issues.
- I certainly acquired a lot of new knowledge, not only about the legal system but also about public policy more widely and the operation of Scottish Government.

**3. Did you consider the work that you were overseeing to be of value?**

- I consider the work of the Board Members to be of a high value. They bring an independent mind and constructive challenge to the organisation - asking why things are done as they are and whether there are more efficient and effective ways of proceeding.
- I'm proud to have been involved in the oversight of legal aid in Scotland. I think supporting access to justice is a key feature of a fair society; ensuring that it's done well and sustainably is very important, and I am pleased to think I may have contributed to that in a small way.

#### **4. What advice would you give to people considering applying for a Board Member position?**

- I advise anyone considering applying to be a Board Member of SLAB not to underestimate the amount of time you need to allow for reading and preparation in advance of meetings.
- A lay member would need to be prepared for an initial period of rapid learning, which could be daunting. But having overcome those hurdles, a Board Member has the privilege of working with an interesting and able group of people, and addressing issues that are important to everyone who needs, or works for, the justice system in Scotland.
- It would be a misconception to think that you could only be an effective Board Member if you are a lawyer or have long and deep experience of the Courts and Justice System in Scotland.