

Terms of engagement

1. About the Solicitor Contact Line (SCL)

This section gives background information about our office and the rules we follow.

We are a team of publicly funded criminal defence lawyers, with support and administrative staff, who provide advice and representation to people arrested at police stations. Our duty is to provide the best possible legal advice by telephone or in person and to take any reasonable steps to protect the welfare and wellbeing of any person in police custody.

Our role is to provide telephone advice to anyone arrested in police custody and to arrange, if requested, a solicitor to attend prior to and during any police interview.

We can't provide legal advice or assistance after the police release you from custody. You should contact a local solicitor if you need legal advice or assistance. Details on how to find a solicitor are available from the Law Society of Scotland website at www.lawscot.org.uk/find-a-solicitor/

1.2 The Solicitor Contact Line and the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB)

All SCL staff and solicitors are employed by the Scottish Legal Aid Board under part V, section 28A of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986. The Director of the SCL reports to SLAB's Chief Executive on administrative issues. In all other ways, the SCL operates entirely independently and it is the responsibility of the Director to determine the way the office operates and to make decisions on individual cases.

SCL Solicitors are paid an annual salary rather than making claims on the legal aid fund on a case by case basis. We have no financial interest in the outcome of your case. SCL cannot charge you a fee. We only do work under legal aid. Our solicitors will not ask you to pay any contribution for telephone advice or attendance by one of our solicitors at a police station.

1.3 Codes of conduct

Solicitors working in the SCL are members of the Law Society of Scotland and are bound by the same rules and codes of conduct as any other solicitor in Scotland. These include:

- [The Solicitors \(Scotland\)\(Standards of Conduct\) Practice rules 2008.](#)
- [The Code of Conduct for Criminal Work](#)

You can ask for copies of these from the Law Society of Scotland:

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The Law Society of Scotland, Atria One, 144 Morrison St, Edinburgh
EH3 8EX



Tel: 0131 226 7411

All solicitors working in the SCL are also registered with SLAB to provide criminal legal assistance (legal aid in a criminal case). This means that they must abide by the *Code of Practice for Criminal Legal Assistance*. This is [available on SLAB's website](#) or you can contact us at the address in section 5 of this document.

2. Taking your instructions

2.1 Confidentiality

Any communication that you have with any member of our staff is confidential. This means anything that you tell us in person, over the phone or in writing, will never be passed on to someone outside of the SCL unless you agree to it. We cannot be forced by the court or the police to say what you have told us.

2.2 What we need from you

It is very important that you tell us in as much detail as possible all about your case and what you remember. The more you tell us, the better job we can do.

2.3 Withdrawal

If we find out we have represented someone else involved in your case at a police interview, we will not be able to continue to act for you.

We will not tolerate any abuse, either verbal or physical, harassment or intimidation of any member of our staff. If this happens, we will immediately stop acting for you.

3. Equality

We are committed to ensuring there are no barriers to accessing our service.

We will not discriminate against you on the basis of your age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, belief, or any aspect of your social status.

4. Privacy Notice

The SCL Privacy Notice lets you know how we will use your data. It is available on the [SLAB website](#) or you can contact us at the address in section 5 of this document.

5. Guide to Complaints

The Scottish Legal Aid Board is committed to providing high-quality customer service.

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We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us.

We will always listen to your concerns and we hope that we will be able to resolve any problems between us.

If you do want to make a complaint then contact the Solicitor Contact Line Manager, Alistair Matheson. We would prefer that the complaint is made in writing so that we have a clear record of your complaint. You can send your complaint to:

Email: MathesonAl@slab.org.uk

Post:

Alistair Matheson
Solicitor Contact Line Manager
Scottish Legal Aid Board
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5EH

If your complaint cannot be resolved this way then you can make a complaint to **The Scottish Legal Complaints Commission**. This is an independent body set up by The Scottish Government to investigate all complaints about the service of the legal profession. More information about the Commission can be found online at <http://www.scottishlegalcomplaints.com/>

The Commission can be contacted at:

The Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
The Stamp Office
10-14 Waterloo Place Edinburgh
EH1 3EG
Tel: 0131 528 5111

Email: enquiries@scottishlegalcomplaints.org.uk

If you are unhappy or dissatisfied with how the SCL, or any member of our staff, has conducted themselves when dealing with you:

We will always listen to your complaint, and we will deal with it sympathetically. The complaint should be made to the Manager (details as above).

If you are unhappy with how the complaint is dealt at this stage then the matter can be raised with the Director of Operations, Marie-Louise Fox. SLAB prefers to



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have these complaints in writing. More information can be found on SLAB's website www.slab.org.uk and Marie-Louise Fox can be contacted in writing or by telephone.

The contact details are:

Marie-Louise Fox, Director of Operations

Email: foxma@slab.org.uk

Post:

Scottish Legal Aid Board

Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace

Edinburgh

EH12 5HE

Timescale for dealing with your complaint

We will always try to deal with your complaint within 28 calendar days of having received it.