**Scottish Legal Aid Board’s Children’s Quality Assurance Committee**

**Non Solicitor Members**

**Background**

The Scottish Legal Aid Board manages legal aid in Scotland. This is state funded legal help and representation to those who cannot afford to pay for a solicitor themselves. We are a non-departmental public body responsible to the Scottish Government. We currently operate a Quality Assurance Scheme for solicitors who provide children’s legal assistance to ensure that solicitors are providing a good level of service to their clients. This scheme is operated by SLAB in co-operation with the Law Society of Scotland.

Children’s legal assistance is available to both children and adults who attend children’s panel hearings, associated court proceedings and where the police seek various orders, such a search order, for a child. Where someone qualifies for this legal assistance, SLAB will pay a solicitor to act for them.

All solicitors who have registered with us (SLAB) to provide children’s legal assistance are subject to peer review. A peer review consists of an examination of a range of a solicitor’s files by one or more of a panel of peer reviewers who are suitably experienced and currently provide children’s legal assistance work to their clients. The purpose of the review is to examine the quality of the work carried out by the solicitor on behalf of their client, based on the evidence contained within the case files.

Files are assessed against set peer review criteria where children’s legal assistance is being provided to a client. The criteria cover issues such as initial client contact and explaining to the client any legal remedies they may have, ensuring that the correct type of legal assistance/funding is available to them, taking the client’s instructions forward timeously, preparing for both children’s and court hearings, communicating the outcome of the hearing to the client, advising them of any further options they have and whether further legal aid is available to them. The criteria that is applied when assessing a solicitor’s case files have been developed in consultation with the Law Society of Scotland, and with the peer reviewers themselves.

A central part of this scheme is the involvement of non-solicitors as members of the Children’s Quality Assurance Committee who monitor and supervise the scheme on behalf of SLAB. To undertake this role, lay members will be enthusiastic people with a successful background in the public, private or voluntary sectors.

Members of the judiciary, practising advocates and solicitors are not eligible for appointment as lay members of the Committee.

The Children’s Quality Assurance Committee consists of:

* three representatives from the Scottish Legal Aid Board, one of which will chair the Committee;
* three representatives from the Law Society of Scotland;
* three lay (non solicitor) members;
* One independent expert on quality assurance schemes for solicitors.

**The role of a Quality Assurance Committee lay member**

The role of a non-solicitor member is:

* to participate in the oversight and consideration of peer review reports presented to the Committee about individual solicitors helping to decide if a solicitor should pass such a review
* to contribute to the development of the Children’s Quality Assurance Scheme by bringing forward ideas as the scheme progresses and adapts to current circumstances.

The role of non-solicitor members is essentially similar to that of SLAB and Law Society Members. The Committee will consider the outcome of peer reviews of solicitor’s case files and decide whether the solicitor has demonstrated an appropriate level of professional competence in respect of that particular case.

**Tasks**

* Prepare for, attend and contribute to the Children’s Quality Assurance Committee meetings (approximately six per year)
* Read the peer reviewers’ reports and consider their recommendations made to pass or take other steps to ensure standards improve and attend such training as may be necessary.

**Remuneration**

The work is unpaid, but all reasonable travel and out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed.

**Commitment**

The appointment will be for a three year period and training will be provided (one full day).

The time commitment to this post is one half day every two months plus preparation time and other meetings from time to time as required.

**Location of Meetings**

The Committee meetings will either take place either remotely using Microsoft Teams or at SLAB’s Offices near Haymarket train station in Edinburgh.

**The Requirement for Confidentiality**

It is of the utmost importance that Committee members preserve the confidentiality of the peer review process. This includes taking responsibility for the handling of Peer Review reports so that they are not seen by persons who are not members of the Committee.

**Person Specification**

The following table sets out in detail the skills, knowledge and personal qualities which are either essential or desirable for lay members of the Children’s Quality Assurance Committee.

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| **Skills** | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
| Strong analytical skills with the ability to exercise sound judgement in relation to the handling of complex and sensitive issues. | Yes |  |
| Good interpersonal skills with the ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of people. | Yes |  |
| The ability to work constructively as part of a team in a board committee environment, with the confidence and independence of thought to challenge and test proposals on decisions made by the committee. | Yes |  |
| The ability to interpret and evaluate substantial volumes of (often complex) information effectively with the ability to devise pragmatic solutions. | Yes |  |
| **Knowledge** | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
| A basic comprehension of the Children’s Hearings System, associated court proceedings and the legal profession in Scotland. |  | Yes |
| A good understanding of the requirements of professional competence. |  | Yes |
| An understanding of quality assurance and peer review schemes and the ability to evaluate professional standards. |  | Yes |
| **Personal Qualities** | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
| Committed to the ethos of public service. | Yes |  |
| Committed to diversity in public service. | Yes |  |
| Positive, open minded and forward-thinking. | Yes |  |

**Further information**

Can be found on our website:

[**www.slab.org.uk/solicitors/quality-assurance-scheme/childrens-qa/**](https://www.slab.org.uk/solicitors/quality-assurance-scheme/childrens-qa/)