

Office for Legal Complaints

Non-Lay Member Candidate Pack

 LEGAL OMBUDSMAN



LEGAL SERVICES
BOARD



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Welcome from the Chair of the Legal Services Board

I'm delighted that you are considering applying to be a member of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC), the body responsible for ensuring an independent ombudsman service to consider complaints about legal services in England and Wales.

The Legal Services Board, OLC and the Ministry of Justice share an ambition to dramatically improve customers' experience of the ombudsman service. As in any sector, consumer confidence is profoundly affected by how we respond when something goes wrong, by our ability to put things right, and by our processes for learning from mistakes. An independent and accessible complaints and redress system is vital to ensuring public trust in legal services.

Over the last three years, the Legal Ombudsman has been on a journey of transformation to reduce significant backlogs and increase the timeliness of dealing with complaints. The Covid-19 pandemic naturally hampered operational efforts and the OLC has had to navigate some complex challenges. When consumer demand for legal services is rising in some areas, I'm pleased that the OLC has delivered some significant improvements. The focus now is to build on this and sustain the progress.

If you share our ambition, we'd love to hear from you. We're looking for a practising legal professional or legally qualified professional. It is essential that the OLC reflects the diverse range of individuals and groups in society. We are actively seeking applications from all sectors and sections of the community.

This is an exciting and important time to be involved in the work of the OLC, and I very much hope you will consider applying to become a member.

Best wishes,

Alan Kershaw

Chair, Legal Services Board



Welcome from the Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Member of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC).

The OLC is responsible for administering the independent ombudsman service – the Legal Ombudsman. Independent and impartial, its role is to resolve complaints from consumers of legal services while at the same time driving improvements in the legal sector by providing feedback to the profession.

The OLC is the Board of the Legal Ombudsman, and the Legal Services Board (LSB) is responsible for appointing its Chair and Members. The LSB also holds the OLC to account for its performance.

As we embark on the next stage of our progression as an organisation, let me share some reflections on the journey the OLC has been on in the last few years.

When I became Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) in April 2020, I set myself three priorities centred on rebuilding confidence in the Legal Ombudsman (LeO). Just over four years later, the outlook for the Legal Ombudsman has now fundamentally shifted as has the role of the OLC Board.

The last four years have seen incredible Board development and renewal, with each arrival of new Board Members helping to recalibrate the Board's focus. The OLC's recent External Board Effectiveness Review highlighted that the Board has made considerable progress, successfully navigating a difficult improvement journey together with the Executive team in relation to the Legal Ombudsman scheme, as well as within the Board itself. There has been a transformative turnaround process led by the Board, who have been unwaveringly committed to improving the organisation's performance. Board changes have felt gradual and seamless, creating a more team-oriented leadership culture.

Despite the successful turnaround of the organisation, there is not an ounce of complacency within the OLC. The organisation is much steadier than it was before, but as a Board, we fully acknowledge the importance of not losing sight of the journey we have undertaken and the desire for continued growth. This is an exciting time for the OLC as it enters the next phase of progression.

We have recently published our Strategy for LeO for 2024-27 which is centred on elevating LeO's strategic impact while prioritising exceptional customer experience. This is a pivotal juncture as we reposition key relationships and boldly confront external challenges and opportunities head on. Read more about our priorities for LeO here:

<https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/who-we-are/corporate-publications/olc-strategy-2024-27-2024-25-business-plan/>

We are seeking a Non-Lay Member (**a legal professional or legally qualified individual**) to join the OLC Board. The OLC celebrates diversity and is constantly seeking fresh perspectives. We must reflect the diverse range of individuals and groups whose lives the Ombudsman service touches. This is a rare opportunity to become involved in the work of the OLC, as we embark on an ambitious new chapter you will help steer the Legal Ombudsman's strategic direction, provide robust governance, and safeguard the Ombudsman's independence on legal services complaints. Your expertise will be invaluable as we embrace this new era of strategic focus and organisational excellence.

If you feel you have the skills required, alongside the right values match and motivation, then I do hope you will apply.

Best wishes,

Elisabeth Davies
Chair OLC



About the Office for Legal Complaints

Those who use legal services do so at some of life's most significant milestones, whether embarking on a fresh chapter in a newly purchased home, ending relationships, or seeking redress for a personal injury. The Office for Legal Complaints (OLC), an arm's length body of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), overseen by the Legal Services Board (LSB), administers an independent ombudsman scheme to resolve complaints by consumers about legal services - the scheme is known as the Legal Ombudsman (LeO). Something somewhere has gone wrong when people contact the Legal Ombudsman. The people who use the scheme have experienced disappointment and possibly distress when accessing legal services and attempts to resolve the matter with the legal services provider have failed. It is incumbent on the Legal Ombudsman to apply effort, energy, and focus to deliver the highest-quality service, in reasonable timeframes, professionally and with transparency.

The Legal Ombudsman is independent and impartial. The service is free to consumers and costs are recovered from legal service providers.

LeO's Vision, Mission, and Values

Mission - To be an independent and impartial ombudsman service providing reassurance and redress while constructively challenging the legal sector to improve.

Vision - Our work builds genuine trust and public confidence in legal services in England & Wales.

Values - The Legal Ombudsman is committed to delivering high quality customer service in a timely and flexible way that meets the needs of individuals and ensures a fair investigation and resolution of disputes.

Our customer service principles reflect our core values. They apply to our work with complainants and service providers and our work in the wider legal sector, as well as how staff work together.

Open, Fair, Independent, Effective.

Commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

The OLC and the Legal Ombudsman are committed to increasing diversity and inclusion within the organisation as well as using its voice and platform to help make legal services more inclusive. This means reflecting critically on issues of diversity and inclusion within all that the Legal Ombudsman does, identifying and taking appropriate actions to reduce inequality.

The LSB and the OLC welcome applications from anyone regardless of disability, ethnicity, heritage, gender, sexuality, religion, socio-economic background, geographic diversity, and other characteristics. Some of the actions to support inclusive working practices that will be applied to support diversity and inclusion during the application process include:

- Making any reasonable adjustments - for example ensuring we have sign language interpreters organised in advance if you'd like them.
- Providing this document in a Word document format readily available to download.
- Being a proud member of the Disability Confident Scheme

We welcome applications from candidates from across England and Wales.

Size, Structure and Relationships of the OLC

The Legal Service Board (LSB) and the OLC were established under the Legal Services Act 2007. The relationship between OLC, LSB and MoJ is a complex one in public sector governance terms. The Board of the OLC (Chair and Members) is appointed by and accountable to the LSB, which can set performance targets, and which approves its annual budget. There are further accountabilities to the MoJ.

The OLC currently comprises five lay and two non-lay members and a lay Chair. The Legal Ombudsman service has over 250 staff and a budget of £17.95m for 2024/25. The OLC's costs are met by a combination of a levy paid by approved regulators and case fees charged to legal services providers.

Working with the approved regulators - and with the OLC - the LSB is responsible for ensuring that the highest standards of competence, conduct and service in the legal profession are maintained for the benefit of individual consumers and the public generally.

Responsibilities of the OLC

Key responsibilities of the OLC include:

- Administering the Legal Ombudsman scheme, which considers complaints about lawyers. This includes developing Scheme Rules, which set out the detailed jurisdiction of the scheme, how complaints should be made, what will be considered in determining the complaint and when respondents will be charged a case fee, amongst many other things. Scheme Rules must be approved by the LSB and, for case fees, the Lord Chancellor also.
- Ensuring that the performance of the scheme meets statutory and other performance related objectives.
- Establishing any sub-committees deemed necessary to assist with the effective discharge of its functions.
- Entering into appropriate arrangements with the LSB and MoJ to ensure co-operation between the three organisations.
- Reporting to the LSB on the performance of the scheme, including against any performance measures set by the LSB.
- Submitting a projected budget at the start of each financial year to the LSB for approval.
- Establishing reciprocal relationships with approved regulators with regard to information sharing.
- Appointing Ombudsmen - the OLC Board appoints the Chief Ombudsman, and other Ombudsmen, with the consent of the Chief Ombudsman; there is currently a team of 15 Ombudsmen (including the Chief Ombudsman). The OLC determines the terms of appointment and remuneration of Ombudsmen and staff of the service.
- Employing other staff necessary to carry out the functions of the scheme.

The Legal Ombudsman carries out its responsibilities by:

- Investigating complaints about the service consumers have received from their service provider and working to resolve the situation.
- Sharing learning from investigations so that providers understand good service and how to resolve complaints themselves.

Role of an OLC Board Member

As a Member reporting to the Chair of the OLC Board, you will work with the Chair and other members of the OLC Board to set the strategic direction of the Legal Ombudsman scheme and drive performance, provide strong governance, and safeguard the independence of the scheme in relation to decisions on complaints about legal services.

You will help the Legal Ombudsman scheme improve performance and provide the valuable information it holds to regulators, consumers, and legal services providers in ways they find most helpful. This reflects the important role that the Legal Ombudsman scheme plays in underpinning consumer confidence.

You will also need to be aware of the opportunities and challenges of the changing market for legal services – and the implications of the changing nature of regulation.

As a Member of the OLC Board, you will have an individual and collective responsibility to:

- Ensure high performance and an excellent level of service in the administration of the Legal Ombudsman scheme, having regard to the generally accepted principles of good practice in the administration of such schemes;
- Ensure high performance and an excellent level of service in the handling of complaints;
- Support the OLC Chair in providing strategic direction to the Legal Ombudsman scheme;
- Ensure that the OLC and the Legal Ombudsman scheme are organised and managed in a way that is as far as practicable compatible with the regulatory objectives set out in the Legal Services Act 2007;
- Work effectively with the Chief Ombudsman to ensure adherence to the principles of good governance and that proper accounts are kept;
- Ensure compliance with relevant general guidelines laid down by the government relating to all non-departmental government bodies; and,
- Ensure positive relationships are maintained with OLC's stakeholders.

Person Specification

The OLC is looking to recruit a **Non-Lay Board Member** to support the diversity of skills on its Board.

To be a Non-Lay Member you must be or have been at any time an authorised person in relation to an activity which is a reserved legal activity under the Legal Services Act 2007.

Typically, this would mean a: barrister; solicitor; public notary; licensed conveyancer; chartered legal executive; registered patent attorney; registered trademark attorney; costs lawyer; or someone granted a right of audience or right to conduct litigation¹ A Non-Lay Member can be non-practicing.

Essential Criteria

- Experience as a legally qualified practitioner.
- A commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, with demonstrable evidence of championing EDI.
- An understanding of real or perceived barriers to accessing public services; awareness of different accessibility needs.
- A strong consumer focus.
- An understanding of the public sector landscape, specifically the role and limitations of regulators.
- An understanding of the role of a Board Member in a public sector organisation.
- A supportive team player with an approachable style, and excellent communication, influencing and relationship management skills.
- Ability to constructively challenge and the ability to establish collaborative relationships.
- A personal commitment to the continuous improvement of professional standards.
- A commitment to high ethical standards of integrity and honesty and the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Desirable Criteria

Prior Board Governance experience is desirable but not essential.

¹By virtue of section 27(2) or section 28(2)(a) of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 (c.41) (rights of audience and rights to conduct litigation)

Additional Information

Term of office: OLC Board Members are appointed for an initial term which is between 2 and 4 years. (The period for which a member is appointed must not exceed 5 years). As Board Members can be re-appointed only once, the maximum number of years a Member can serve is 10 years.

OLC Board members are subject to an annual appraisal which is conducted by the Chair.

Time Commitment: The time commitment for an OLC Board Member is estimated at a minimum of 2 days a month across the period of appointment.

Location: The Legal Ombudsman has offices in Birmingham and Cardiff. Board meetings are held mostly in person at the Birmingham office, but the OLC does offer flexible meeting options.

Remuneration: The annual remuneration is £10,000. The appointee will be eligible for travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on OLC business at rates set centrally by the LSB. As the LSB employs and pays OLC Members its expenses policy applies to claims by the OLC Chair and Members.

Conflicts of Interest: All candidates will be asked to disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest, including political activity, and these will be discussed with the candidate to establish whether and what action is needed to avoid a conflict or the perception of a conflict.

Standards in public life: Each Board Member must ensure that during the period of their tenure they are committed to and conduct themselves in accordance with Nolan's seven principles of public life.

Provisional Timetable

Dates	Activities
17/06/2024 – 17:00	Application Deadline
08/07/2024	Panel Longlist Meeting
16/07/2024	Fireside Chats with Shortlisted Candidates (Optional)
22/07/2024	Panel Interviews (Virtual)
22-29 th September 2024	Appointment Decided
Mid-September 2024	Appointment Announced

Appointment Panel

The Appointment Panel will comprise of:

- Dr Gary Kildare (Chair of Recruiting Panel, LSB Board Member)
- Elisabeth Davies (Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints)
- Cindy Butts (Independent Member)

Application Process

The Whitehall and Industry Group are supporting OLC with the recruitment process. To apply for this position please provide:

- A detailed CV setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements.
- A covering letter (maximum two sides) highlighting your suitability for the role and how you meet the essential criteria in the person specification.
- Details of any perceived or potential conflicts of interest and how you would propose to mitigate them.
- Details of two professional referees together with a brief statement of their relationship to you and over what period of time they have known you (referees will not be contacted without your prior consent).
- The selected candidate will be subjected to a Post-Appointment vetting process which will be administered by the Ministry of Justice.
- Diversity monitoring form – A hard copy can be downloaded from the vacancy page: [Non-Lay Member \(wig.co.uk\)](#) and can be submitted alongside your CV and Cover Letter via email to talent@wig.co.uk. If you are applying via The Whitehall & Industry Group's website, you do not need to download and complete the attached diversity monitoring form (you will be prompted to complete an online form). Your data will be stored separately from your application and will at no time be connected to you or your application.
- We are committed to ensuring that all candidates can participate in the application process fairly. Should you require any reasonable adjustments or arrangements, please include this information in your application. Alternatively, please contact talent@wig.co.uk for further information on how we can support you throughout the recruitment process.

Please submit your application via The Whitehall & Industry Group's external vacancies page, which you can find [here](#), or via email to Talent@wig.co.uk

If you would value a private and confidential discussion about the role or the recruitment process, please contact The Whitehall & Industry Group via email at talent@wig.co.uk or call 0203 179 4760