



LEGAL SERVICES
BOARD

LEGAL
OMBUDSMAN

Appointment of

Chair, Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)

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Saxton Bampfylde

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Welcome from the Chair of the Legal Services Board

A new Chair for the Office for Legal Complaints

I am delighted that you want to know more about being the next Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC) – the board responsible for ensuring that there is an independent ombudsman service to consider complaints about legal services in England and Wales. The OLC plays a vital role in making sure users of legal services can have confidence in the sector, a confidence which underpins the rule of law.

The establishment of the Legal Ombudsman in 2010 was one of the three main elements of Parliament's legal services reform programme for England and Wales. Independent and impartial, its role is to resolve complaints from consumers of legal services, and to drive improvements in the legal sector by providing feedback to the profession.

In recent years, the Legal Ombudsman has enjoyed some significant successes. It has developed innovative new approaches to casework assessment and early intervention. Almost half the people who raise a complaint to LeO are now dealt with in less than three months.

However, challenges remain. While LeO has made some progress in reducing the historic backlog of cases awaiting investigation, an increase in demand for its services has slowed progress. Too many people are still waiting too long for an outcome to their complaint.

The priority now is for the organisation to use its significantly increased resources not just to investigate more complaints more promptly, but to support the legal sector in reducing the volume of complaints that require the input of the Ombudsman.

The LSB is looking for an outstanding individual with a proven track record of supporting consumer facing organisations to change and increase their impact. You will have experience as a non-executive director and chair, and the ability to build strong and influential relationships with the LSB, the Ministry of Justice, and across the legal sector as a whole.

You will be an innovator – able to support new approaches to feeding back learning to support the profession in avoiding complaints in the first instance. You will need to be effective in working with the executive team to support and challenge the organisation.

You will want to ensure that the customer experience of the OLC is second to none, and that its decision making combines probity and rigour with dynamism and transparency. You will want to lead, alongside the Chief Ombudsman, a cost-effective organisation that listens, learns, and shares best practice and which uses technology effectively to do so.

We want to identify an exceptional Chair who is able to ensure that the organization reflects and engages the diverse range of individuals and groups whose lives the Ombudsman service touches.

This is a hugely exciting time to be leading the OLC, and I very much hope you will seriously consider applying to be Chair.

With best wishes,

Catherine Brown

Interim Chair, Legal Services Board

About the Office for Legal Complaints

The context

The Legal Services Act 2007 required the Legal Services Board to establish the OLC to administer an independent ombudsman scheme to resolve complaints by consumers about legal services. The scheme is known as the Legal Ombudsman.

As at 1 April 2024, the legal profession in England and Wales comprised about 165,000 solicitors, 17,500 barristers, 7,500 chartered legal executives and 7,000 other individuals operating in other areas of the legal profession such as conveyancing and intellectual property. The UK legal sector's turnover was £44 billion per annum (2022) which is up 45% in cash terms since 2013.

The OLC is independent from government and the legal profession and is an arm's length body of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The relationship between OLC, LSB and MoJ is a complex one in public sector governance terms. The Board of the OLC 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 relationship between the OLC, the MoJ and the LSB – and the financial relationship and accountabilities which exist between the MoJ and the OLC – are set out in a recently agreed [Tripartite Operating Protocol](#) and also in the OLC's [framework document](#). The OLC and LSB have also agreed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#).

The OLC's costs are met by a combination of a levy paid by approved regulators and case fees charged to legal services providers.

The LSB was also established under the Legal Services Act 2007. 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.

Looking ahead, the LSB is keen to see the OLC build a distinct public profile based on the wealth of useful information that the organisation holds about users' experiences of legal services. To do this well, OLC will need confidence that its technology is fully operational and supports the business, that its staff are well-motivated and that performance is evaluated by a robust balanced scorecard.

Based in central Birmingham, the OLC currently comprises five lay and two non-lay members and a lay Chair. The Legal Ombudsman service has over 300 staff and a budget of circa £20m for 2025/26. Information about the Legal Ombudsman including its most recent annual report and statistics on performance and complaints resolved can be found on its website at www.legalombudsman.org.uk.

The appointment is made by the LSB with the agreement of the Lord Chancellor and is subject to a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing by the Justice Select Committee. The preferred candidate will be offered support in advance of the pre-appointment scrutiny hearing.

Following a period of significant and positive change at the Legal Ombudsman, its Chief Ombudsman, Paul McFadden, has been appointed as the next Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Paul will leave his current role in mid-October 2025. The OLC will appoint an interim Chief Ombudsman to be in place by the time Paul leaves the organisation, giving the incoming Chair of the OLC the opportunity to appoint its new, permanent, leader.

Responsibilities of the OLC

These 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 ombudsman scheme meets statutory and other performance related objectives.
- Appointing ombudsmen – the OLC 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 OLC and the ombudsman scheme.
- 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 ombudsman 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.

Location

The Legal Ombudsman is based in central Birmingham which is where the OLC holds its meetings. Whilst the role of Chair is classed as 'home-based' significant attendance at the Legal Ombudsman office and elsewhere is required.

The Role of Chair

As Chair of the OLC, you will report to the Chair of the LSB and through the LSB to Parliament via an annual report laid before Parliament by the Lord Chancellor. The latest annual report, for the period 2023/ 24 is available [here](#). As an arm's length body of the Ministry of Justice, the OLC also has its own Accounting Officer and its own direct relationship with the Department and Ministers.

Overall objectives:

- To lead the OLC Board in the effective administration of the Ombudsman scheme for complaints about legal service in England and Wales. You will have a key role in developing approaches to ensure that complaints are dealt with efficiently and effectively.

On-going responsibilities:

As Chair of the OLC Board, you will have responsibility for:

- the strategic direction of the OLC and ensuring that the organisation is fulfilling its statutory duty as an ombudsman scheme against a background of good governance, evidence-based decision-making, proportionate interventions, cost-effective use of resources and the successful performance of the ombudsman scheme against agreed performance targets;
- leading liaison with the Chair of LSB and the Ministry of Justice with regard to setting performance standards, monitoring and reporting protocols, ensuring effectiveness and efficiency and agreeing on-going reporting arrangements as required;
- ensuring the independence of the Ombudsman in relation to the decisions taken;
- appointing the Chief Ombudsman and any other Ombudsman, as appropriate;
- setting the right culture for the organisation;
- keeping under review and proposing any changes to the rules and policy statements governing the way the ombudsman scheme operates;
- following the procedures governing the relationship between the OLC and the approved regulators and licensing authorities;
- maintaining trust and confidence in the OLC with key stakeholders;
- acting as an ambassador for the OLC and the ombudsman scheme, promoting and publicising its role by representing it externally in delivering speeches and contributing to debates at conferences and in committees;
- ensuring compliance with the general guidelines laid down by government relating to public bodies and ensuring that OLC fulfils any statutory or administrative requirements relating to financial accountability;
- working effectively with the Chief Ombudsman, non-executive members and staff team to provide strong leadership to the OLC to ensure it adheres to the principles of good governance and to ensure proper accounts are kept.

Person Specification and Eligibility Criteria

Your application will be assessed on the basis of the evidence you provide. This evidence should include specific examples of proven experience against the selection criteria listed under **Experience and knowledge**. These responses will be further developed and discussed with those applicants invited for interview, together with the criteria listed under **Skills and abilities**.

Experience and knowledge

Collectively, the OLC Board needs to be able to cover a wide range of experience.

For the role as Chair, the appointment panel will be looking for evidence of an outstanding track record of transformational Board level leadership within a substantial operational organisation. This may have been gained in the private, public or third sectors and enabled experience to be acquired in the following areas:

- ☐ Knowledge: a clear understanding of the purposes of the OLC, its opportunities and challenges;
- ☐ Experience: a strong track record of setting an organisation's strategy, and of challenging, guiding, supporting and holding to account an executive team for its performance.
- ☐ Relationship building: ability to build constructive relationships and productive partnerships with a wide variety of key stakeholders, including with government, regulators and other influential institutions.
- ☐ Communication: excellent communication, influencing, and relationship management skills, including the ability to motivate people; experienced in representing an organisation to a wide range of external audiences and being publicly accountable for its activities.
- ☐ Judgment: strong intellect and sound judgment, with effective decision-making skills.

Expertise in a range of areas relevant to the OLC's work, including consumer affairs, customer operations, legal services provision, complaints handling or ombudsman schemes would also be valuable.

Skills and abilities

The following criteria will be explored further at interview. They need not be directly addressed in your written application:

- Demonstrable commitment to diversity and equality of opportunity.
- Experience in improving an organisation's performance through the application of technology.
- Commitment to people and creating a culture of positive productivity.
- Sound understanding of corporate governance, including experience of financial management.
- Political acumen..
- Innovation
- High level of credibility, probity and integrity.
- Working style and suitability for non-executive work.

Diversity and equality of opportunity

Diversity and equality of opportunity is something both the LSB and OLC care passionately about. The LSB and OLC encourage applications from all sections of the community and from people of diverse ages, experience and backgrounds, people with disabilities. We want to explore the widest possible pool of talent for this important appointment.

Eligibility

The Chair of the OLC must be a lay person in accordance with the Legal Services Act 2007. As part of the application process, you will be asked to confirm that you meet the lay requirements.

A lay person is a person who is not and has never been:

1. An authorised person in relation to an activity which is a reserved legal activity. For these purposes the following are authorised people:
 - a barrister;
 - a solicitor;
 - a public notary;
 - a licensed conveyancer;
 - a person granted a certificate issued by the Institute of Legal Executives authorising the person to practise as a legal executive;
 - a registered patent attorney, within the meaning given by section 275(1) of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (c. 48);
 - a registered trade mark attorney, within the meaning of the Trade Marks Act 1994 (c. 26); or
 - a person granted a right of audience or a right to conduct litigation in relation to any proceedings by virtue of section 27(2) (a) or section 28(2)(a) of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 (c.41) (rights of audience and rights of litigation);
2. an authorised person (within the meaning given in section 31 of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (authorised persons)) in relation to regulated claims management activity (within the meaning given by section 417(1) of that Act (definitions));
 - an advocate in Scotland;
 - a solicitor in Scotland;
 - a member of the Bar of Northern Ireland;
 - a solicitor of the Court of Judicature of Northern Ireland.

Members of the Office for Legal Complaints

The Board has seven members. Biographies of the seven members can be found:

<https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/who-we-are/corporate-publications/reports-and-plans/>

Conditions of Appointment

Terms and conditions

The main terms and conditions of appointment are as follows:

Time commitment and remuneration

The time commitment for the Chair of the OLC is estimated at a minimum of 60 days' work a year across the period of appointment. The annual remuneration will be £52,500.

Candidates should satisfy themselves, before applying, and be able to satisfy the panel, that they would be able to make the necessary time commitment.

The fee paid is taxable. PAYE deductions in respect of income tax and National Insurance will be made at source.

Expenses and allowances

The appointee will be eligible for travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on OLC business at rates set centrally by the LSB. The LSB employs and pays the OLC Chair and members and its expenses policy applies to claims by the OLC Chair and members.

Pensions

The appointment is not pensionable.

Period of appointment

The appointment will be for a period of between three and five years. In considering re-appointment, the Chair's regular appraisal by the Chair of the Legal Services Board will be taken into account.

Resignation or dismissal

The Chair of the OLC may at any time resign his/her post by giving notice to the LSB. He/she can be removed from office only with the consent of the Lord Chancellor. The LSB may not remove any member of the OLC, unless they are satisfied that the individual:

- has failed without reasonable excuse to discharge the functions of the office for a continuous period of at least 6 months;
- has been convicted of an offence;
- is an undischarged bankrupt; or
- is otherwise unfit to hold the office or unable to discharge its functions.

Conflict of interest

The Chair of the OLC **must ensure** that during the period of his/her tenure he/she is committed to and conducts him/herself in accordance with the seven principles of public life – attached at Appendix 1.

The Chair of the OLC **must not**, in any capacity, engage in any activity that might undermine, or be reasonably thought to undermine his/her independence and impartiality.

The Chair **must not** undertake any tasks or activity that may in any way limit his/her ability to discharge his/her duties in full.
The Chair must conduct his/her private affairs in a way that minimises the possibility of conflict or embarrassment.

Political or other activities

The OLC is covered by the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975, which disqualifies members of the OLC from being members of the House of Commons. A member of the OLC who is adopted as a prospective candidate or decides to stand, should resign from the OLC. He/she should be on his/her guard against circumstances arising in which his/her involvement in any outside activity might be seen to cast doubt on his/her impartiality or conflict with his/her statutory office.

Other information

For the successful candidate, final confirmation will be subject to full clearance checks, covering confirmation of identity and right to work in the UK plus a criminal records check.

The position is also subject to a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing in front of the Justice Select Committee and the preferred candidate will need to make themselves available for briefing for this hearing.

Process Timetable

Closing date:	Noon, Tuesday 26 August 2025
Longlisting:	w/c 1 st September
Preliminary interviews (to be held virtually)	w/c 8 th & 15 th September
Shortlisting meeting (candidates not required)	w/c 22 nd September
Final panel interviews	w/c 29 th October
Select Committee hearing	TBC

- The selection panel will consist of:
- Catherine Brown, interim Chair
 - Flora Page, non-lay LSB Board member
 - Kate Briscoe, lay LSB Board member
 - Rommel Pereira, Independent Panel Member

How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Legal Services Board on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **QABANB**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload the following:

- an up to date copy of your CV (maximum of 4 pages);
- the online equal opportunities monitoring;
- a supporting statement (maximum 2 pages) explaining how you meet each of the criteria set out under 'Experience and knowledge' in the person specification. Please provide specific and detailed examples to demonstrate how your knowledge and skills matches each of the criteria.
- Please include the names and contact details of two referees. Please note referees will be contacted if you are shortlisted for interview. We will seek your permission prior to approaching referees.

The closing date for applications is **noon on Tuesday 26 August 2025**.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

As a Disability Confident employer, we will guarantee an interview for people with disabilities who meet all the essential criteria and so if you would like to be considered under this scheme then please let us know.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

Due diligence

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.

Appendix 1

The seven principles of public life

All candidates for public appointments are expected to demonstrate a commitment to, and an understanding of, the value and importance of the principles of public service. The seven principles of public life are:

Selflessness Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.

Honesty Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

