

Scottish Legal Complaints Commission
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Mr Gordon Jackson QC
Vice Dean
The Faculty of Advocates
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31 March 2014

Dear Mr Jackson

Consultation on the Operating Plan and 2014/15 Budget for the SLCC

Thank you for your letter of 17 March in response to the consultation on the SLCC's operating plan and budget for 2014/15. As you point out, Richard Keen raised similar concerns as Dean of the Faculty during last year's consultation. In my reply to him of 25 February 2013, I suggested that using a cost per service complaint is a misleading measure and I set out what the levy pays for.

Our responsibilities are broader than service complaints. I explained that our functions also encompass oversight of the complaint handling processes used by the Faculty of Advocates and our work in improving standards of complaint handling through trends, guidance and training. I'm pleased that the Faculty have worked with us on a number of training sessions for members of the Faculty over the past two years.

Undoubtedly there are fewer complaints made to us about advocates than about other members of the legal profession. Whilst they are not commonplace, there are occasions when the service provided by individual advocates, or their conduct, may be open to question. The SLCC provides public reassurance as an independent and impartial body that complaints are dealt with appropriately and I take this opportunity to recognise the Dean's recent swift and decisive action in raising cases with us.

Our budget recognises that the volume of complaints about members of the Faculty is low-advocates pay less than half as much as solicitors on an individual basis. Across the legal profession we have frozen the levy for this year, despite the pressures of inflation. For advocates, we have reduced, rather than simply frozen, the levy due for 2014/15.

In our operating plan, we recognise that there should be further work to investigate how risks associated with different parts of the profession might be recognised in the structure of the budget and the levy for 2015/16. I look forward to working with you on this.

I was in discussion with James Wolffe when he was Vice Dean about a systemic review of the complaint handling procedures at the Faculty of Advocates which we will be carrying out. This is one of the functions of the SLCC under the Legal Profession and Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 2007, although we have not conducted such a review until now. It will provide us with more information to consider how the levy relates to risk in the future and this is one

of a number of areas where I hope you and I can work constructively together to improve complaint handling in the interests of the public and the profession alike.

I look forward to meeting you on 16 April and wish you every success as Vice Dean.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Vickers
Chief Executive Officer