

Minutes

Consumer Panel Meeting

Tuesday 3 March 2026 (via Teams)

Present

Gillian Fyfe (GF), Citizens Advice Scotland (Chair)
Carly Elliott-Scott (CES), Together
Chris Gill (CG), University of Glasgow
Louise Johnson (LJ), Scottish Women's Aid

Vicky Crichton (VC), Director of Public Policy, SLCC
[Redacted name] Best Practice Adviser, SLCC
[Redacted names] SLCC SET representative – item 4
[Redacted name] Observer from SLCC

Introduction

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members and noted apologies from Tracey Reilly (Consumer Scotland) and Brendan McGinty (Competition and Markets Authority).

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were necessary.

3. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of 2 December 2025 were approved.

Discussion

4. Update from Service Experience Team (SET)

The SET representative summarised the top 5 themes from the recent feedback. In this quarter, there was high practitioner engagement. There had been praise for staff empathy and professionalism, but also a few criticisms that reports failed to address key evidence and arguments, as well as continuing concerns about time scales and perceptions of bias. All these highlighted challenges around trust and consumer expectations. SET was continuing to address clarity of communications, including revision of template wording. One of the points was that sometimes reviewers would score all questions positively, yet also leave negative free-text comments, which skewed the information.

Members commented that they found the information useful, but asked that headings be included in the next set of graphs. They also suggested the addition of another column to

highlight discrepancies between numerical and verbal feedback.

CES asked if the SLCC was able to identify complaints from young adults. VC confirmed that diversity and monitoring information, if completed, was stored separately and it suggests that few young people were bringing complaints on their own. She also confirmed, in answer to another question, that critical comments could only be checked for accuracy if reviewers had opted to include their case reference. Panel members discussed the continuing perceptions of bias and concerns around the SLCC funding model (a situation similar to other regulators) and highlighted inaccurate expectations about outcomes. VC confirmed that the website was being updated to try to address these issues. Members were concerned with one comment about compensation not being paid, and VC explained that the SLCC would attempt to assist with recovery for complainers, but had limits on what it could do.

CG asked whether in future the Panel would be able to access data across all complaints, including those dealt with by the professional regulators, as this would give a broader picture of the consumer experience across the whole market. Members agreed this might need more discussion at a future date.

5. Feedback from Lord President's roundtable discussion and future meetings

VC reported that VC, TR, and the CEO of the SLCC had attended a roundtable discussion convened by the Lord President's Office (LPPO), which gave all regulatory authorities, Scottish Government and the Consumer Panel a chance to share information on progress, to ensure that the Scottish Government could properly plan for implementation of the new legislation. It was gratifying to see the Panel clearly recognised as a key partner in this. Lord Erich, chairing the meeting in his role as Regulatory Judge appointed by the Lord President to lead on this work, had already expressed an interest in understanding more about the role of the Panel and meeting members. TR had been able to highlight the Panel's concerns and stress the importance of paying due regard to the consumer interest. It was anticipated that probably two more meetings would take place before autumn. GF said she would attend the June meeting and report back. She also thought that although the Panel had originally planned to invite the LPPO to address the Panel, their own actions in setting up meetings meant that it would probably be more appropriate to postpone the Panel's invitation until later in the year.

CG asked if the last meeting had outlined any particular expectations for the Panel, either in terms of identifying what was still needed, or any areas where the Panel could support others in understanding the consumer view. VC replied that while there were no specific requests, the discussion around implementation priorities had been helpful, particularly as TR had been able to emphasise that widening access to justice was a key priority, and could be tackled in various ways, including broadening the types of business structures to deliver legal services.

[GF/VC report after June meeting]

6. Implementation plans

VC noted that some sections of the Regulation of Legal Services (Scotland) Act, 2025 dealing with the Panel's remit would come into operation on 1 July. These were largely governance-related, including the section setting out the SLCC's duty to ensure funding and support for the Panel. She said the Minister would be visiting the SLCC later in the week, and GF was also due to attend. The SLCC had consulted on its strategic plan and budget for 2026/27 and had informed Scottish Government of its plans to ensure its own readiness to implement changes to the complaints process from 1 July 2027, although this might be affected by other stakeholders' preparedness. The Governance Sub-committee of the SLCC Board would shortly be considering the Panel's governance and funding arrangements, with a view to signing off in April. This would then allow more specific discussion on transition of existing members, recruitment of new members, logistics and remuneration for the new Panel structure. Funding was available for research and engagement in the next year. There was already increased external interest in the Panel's role.

[VC: update to next meeting]

7. Panel workplan 2025/26 and 2026/7

VC noted that a new staff member had been appointed to the SLCC, in part to give extra support to the Panel. Once the Board had approved the Panel's financial arrangements, the Panel would be able to start implementing its proposed workplan that was discussed in December 2025. The Panel would now need to consider prioritising the four main points on the workplan. GF suggested that more detailed discussion be postponed to a separate meeting, hopefully in person, to get input from all members. In the meantime, she asked that Panel members consider their own expectations, needs and time that they were able to commit, to feed into the discussion, as also what they thought would be useful for induction of new Panel members. This could potentially include the summary previously sent to members about the changes in the broader regulatory landscape.

Members thought it would be useful for the Terms of Reference to be updated, and perhaps also to include more detail on the Panel members' role, even if this did revise over time. They noted that engagement would include raising the profile of the Panel, as well as deciding upon whether to focus on a particular sector or topic. Members asked if the Panel would have a website and identity distinct from the SLCC, given that the new legislation described it as "an independent advisory panel". VC noted that discussions were ongoing about an overhaul of the SLCC website. It would be possible for the SLCC to look into how other regulatory systems dealt with the division of functions, as well as the costs of the various website options.

Members agreed to postpone further discussion on the scope and format for the proposed review of the consumer experience at the upcoming meeting. The SLCC would meantime try to find a suitable date from early May for a further meeting.

[Action point: SLCC poll for suitable dates]

8. SLCC strategy, budget and operating plan consultation

The draft response from the Panel on the SLCC's consultation had been circulated. LJ noted a small under-spend in relation to staff training. She suggested that the Panel may wish to emphasise the importance of allocating and spending sufficient money for continuing learning, and potentially more staff, as the new systems were put in place.

CG suggested specifically highlighting the consumer principles also, into the paragraph on policy considerations. He offered to provide a draft.

GF suggested that the Panel view be expanded to "strongly support" the SLCC's efforts to address the non-compliance by solicitors, as this clearly affected perceptions about the efficacy of the process.

Members agreed on these proposals, and were happy that GF finalise the response.

[GF to finalise]

Administration & AOB

9. Future meetings

The next quarterly meeting was set for Tuesday 2 June 2026, 2pm, MS Teams.

GF asked members to also provisionally block out time to attend meetings from 2pm on Tuesday 8 September and Tuesday 9 December 2026, and 9 March and 8 June 2027. These would be confirmed later.