

Minutes

Consumer Panel Meeting

Tuesday 2 December 2025 (via Teams)

Present

Gillian Fyfe (GF), Citizens Advice Scotland (Chair)
Tracey Reilly (TR), Consumer Scotland
Brendan McGinty (BM), Competition and Markets Authority
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 name] SLCC SET representative – item 4.
[Redacted name] Observer from SLCC

Introduction

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members. There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were necessary.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of 2 September 2025 were approved.

Discussion

4. Update from Service Experience Team (SET)

A member of SET tabled the Q1 feedback, which was in a slightly different format, without the full dataset and transcript of all free-text comments. She noted that SET is currently drafting a policy around responding to feedback left on Trustpilot. SET had compared how other ombuds were responding to complaints of bias, which were a common theme across all sectors, and had also looked at how they were responding on review sites on that point. The SLCC website, particularly in relation to its funding, had been updated, and the information there could also be repeated in Trustpilot responses, where appropriate. Other parts of the website, and the templates for correspondence, were also in the process of being re-written to try to manage expectations of complainers. The use of plain English remained a major focus across the whole organisation. SET recognised that some

consumers would always be unhappy, but it was attempting to minimise confusion and increase its transparency as best as possible.

The SET report outlined that Q1 feedback had generally been more positive, compared to the same period in the previous year, both for ongoing and closed complaints. Several responses expressed high praise for the standard of professionalism. Consumers particularly focused on the range of communications options offered, clear language and good explanations from investigators. There were also positive statements about the compassion, helpfulness and respect shown by investigators. Opinions differed on the efficiency of the process and timescales. In this quarter, 16 responses directly cited outcomes, with equal balance between those satisfied and dissatisfied. Some complainers mentioned a perception of bias and confirmed that they had expected this from the start. The SLCC would continue to try to address this with website, template and case study updates that made its position clearer. A new theme emerging this quarter related to the different process being trialled at the eligibility stage, with mixed views expressed by both solicitors and complainers.

Members were pleased to note more positive feedback. They were concerned at comments about the use of legal jargon. VC explained that sometimes this related not to the language used in reports, but to the names given to legal processes, but the plain language principles included giving explanations where possible. The website now emphasised that the complaints process was free for consumers to use, and that the SLCC was not taxpayer-funded. Members felt the SLCC could emphasise these points more strongly.

Members agreed that they would prefer to revert to receiving more detailed information on feedback. They had found it helpful to see full comments, which sometimes highlighted smaller issues worthy of more detailed discussion, and to see numerical comparisons. They asked if the SLCC had easier guidelines, not only geared to children, but other groups who may need them. They also asked how the SLCC might simplify its processes. GF agreed that sometimes it was impossible to avoid using legal terminology, and it would be useful to have examples of what consumers did not understand, so that the Panel could potentially do more to encourage the sector on clear and accessible communication.

VC highlighted that although the new Act, once operational, would allow the SLCC some more flexibility, it currently had to follow certain wording to comply with the existing legislation. The SLCC did not currently have easy-read guides, but would assess the level of language necessary, including the necessity for translations or accessibility requirements, on a case-by-case basis. It was aware of its continuing responsibility to ensure it used the plainest language and explanations possible.

Members requested that the next quarterly feedback report should revert to the fuller format used previously.

[Action point: SLCC]

5. Implementation plans Legal Services (Scotland) Act.

VC confirmed that the SLCC and the Consumer Panel had responded to the Scottish Government's targeted consultation on the first commencement order. Scottish Government confirmed that it did not intend to publish individual responses from those consulted but would report in general on the points raised and the decision of the Minister. The upcoming election meant there would be a tight timeline for parliamentary approval. A few Panel members confirmed that the organisations they represented had also given input.

6. Input to the Lord President roundtable discussion

GF noted that the Lord President had proposed that organisations impacted by the Act participated in a round table discussion. The Lord President had indicated that he would like all regulatory authorities to work together and therefore asked that they indicate their priorities and likely timescales, to allow Scottish Government to work on a comprehensive implementation plan. GF said that while the Panel did not have the same duties on implementation, it would be useful to have a Panel representative present, if possible. Members also agreed that it would be helpful for the Panel to present a summary reminding other organisations of the extended remit of the Panel, and to summarise the Panel's priorities. TR confirmed that she would be able to attend, and CG might also be available.

[TR/CG: attendance]

7. Panel Workplan

GF confirmed that the Panel's recent strategy meeting had agreed the workplan in principle. She asked Members to agree a short summary, for inclusion in the SLCC's budget consultation document, to support the proposed budget allocation to the Panel. Members discussed and agreed the final wording to present to the Board, in preparation for the final consultation in January 2026.

8. SLCC Draft Regulatory Statement

VC explained that since the SLCC was named as a regulatory authority, it must take account of the regulatory objectives, The SLCC has drafted a regulatory statement considering their application to its work and is consulting widely across the sector, with a closing date of 3 February – prior to the next Panel meeting. Several issues would be of interest to the Panel, and she invited members provide input, and agreed on a final consultation response.

Members indicated that they would like to have more time to study the SLCC's consultation document and agreed that they would rather respond in the first place by email. VC asked that all comments be submitted by 26 January to allow for collation into the Panel's final document.

Action: SLCC – circulate statement; Panel members – respond by 26/1/2026

9. Request for support for petition

The Panel had received a request, via the SLCC Enquiries line, to support a petition lodged with the Scottish Parliament, highlighting several general concerns about the accessibility of

the court system. Members agreed that although the Panel would in future have an expanded remit extended to broader access to justice, and had some sympathy with the points raised, these points did not focus on the provision of legal services and therefore fell outside the present remit of the Panel. The Panel had no particular expertise to offer in relation to the petitioner's points and therefore would be unable to offer useful input if called upon to give evidence. Panel members suggested that the Panel should respond by explaining its remit and could direct the petitioner to other resources for assistance and potential support.

SLCC: response on behalf of Panel

Administration & AOB

10. Updates for information

VC confirmed that she would keep the Panel updated after the meeting with the Office of the Lord President.

11. AOB

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 3 March 2026, 2pm, MS Teams

Future meeting date: Tuesday 2 June 2026, 2pm, MS Teams