

Neil Stevenson
Chief Executive
Scottish Legal Complaints Commission

By Email only

19 March 2026

Dear Neil,

SLCC 2026-27 draft Budget and Operating Plan Consultation

I am writing to share the SLCC Consumer Panel's response to the consultation on the SLCC's 2026-27 draft Budget and Operating Plan. We welcome the opportunity to share our views. We have only responded on those aspects where we have specific comments to make.

Strategy 2026-2030

After a period of significant uncertainty, it is good to see the SLCC set out a four-year strategy. This will help provide focus for the SLCC's work and certainty for stakeholders about its approach.

We agree that the strategy's focus is rightly on the implementation of the Regulation of Legal Services Scotland Act 2025, but we are also pleased to see an ongoing commitment to a high level of customer service and continuous improvement in the delivery of the SLCC's existing duties.

We recognise the key enablers and barriers the strategy identifies. We look forward to working with the SLCC over the coming four years to deliver these changes. We are clear that after a decade of debate we want to see swift implementation so that consumers can benefit from them.

We welcome the updated SLCC values which chime with consumer priorities and concerns we see raised in the SLCC's customer feedback. We hope to see these reflected in the improvements the SLCC plans to deliver to its service over the coming years.

We also welcome the SLCC's commitment to build in consideration of factors such as equalities, human rights, digital exclusion and accessibility in developing new processes and systems to implement the 2025 Act, as well as the ambition to build better connections to groups with lived experience. This will be important to ensure that consumer insight is built into the new system and that the latter fully conforms to the Consumer Principles.

Budget and levies

The SLCC needs to ensure it has sufficient income to deliver its statutory duties. That is particularly pressing when complaint numbers are rising. We make no comment on the overall budget and levies beyond the need to satisfy that requirement.

We also note that savings are expected in the staff training budget this year. We believe that during a period of significant change there is a clear need for staff training and development so we would expect to see investment in this area.

We welcome the specific commitments in the budget to dedicated and extended funding for the Consumer Panel to allow it to deliver its expanded remit. During the legislative debate we made the case that the Panel must be adequately resourced and supported to be able to fulfil the expectations Parliament is placing on it.

We welcomed the SLCC's support for this, and we appreciate its commitment, made clear and visible in this budget, to meeting that requirement.

Operating plan

We welcome the continued focus on identifying and testing ways to improve customer experience within the system. We also welcome projects focused on improving the clarity and accessibility of public communications and information.

The Panel has set out its own proposed workplan within the SLCC's operating plan and will develop this further over the coming months. This includes providing an ongoing consultation and challenge role as the organisation delivers its existing statutory duties and implements the legislative changes. We also look forward to contributing to the sector's understanding of consumer experience of using legal services and the principles that underpin consumer-focussed regulation.

There is a significant workstream underway to transform the Panel's governance, resources and working arrangements in advance of it assuming its new remit and duties in July 2026. We will work with the SLCC to deliver this.

We continue to be very concerned by the high levels of non-compliance with requests for files by solicitors. This has a significant impact on individual complaints and consumers, and on wider consumer confidence in legal services and their regulation. It is vital that consumers who bring complaints to the SLCC are able to have those investigated without unnecessary delay. We strongly support the SLCC's continued efforts to challenge and address this issue.

Policy considerations

The Panel welcomes the SLCC's commitment to a thorough consideration of the impact of its strategic decisions on human rights, equality and diversity issues and its work to ensure compliance with the statutory consumer duty.

While not specified in the consultation document, we would also expect to see consideration of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 and the role it plays in facilitating access to justice for children at the domestic level.

I hope this is helpful, and we look forward to working together over the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Fyfe

Chair

SLCC Consumer Panel

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<https://www.scottishlegalcomplaints.org.uk/about-us/consumer-panel/>