

Justice Committee

Appointment of the Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints

Eighth Report of Session 2024–26

HC 1748

Justice Committee

The Justice Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Justice (including the work of staff provided for the administrative work of courts and tribunals, but excluding consideration of individual cases and appointments, and excluding the work of the Scotland and Wales Offices and of the Advocate General for Scotland); and administration and expenditure of the Attorney General's Office, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office (but excluding individual cases and appointments and advice given within government by Law Officers) and its associated public bodies.

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Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

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1 Background to the hearing

Pre-appointment hearings

1. Pre-appointment scrutiny hearings by select committees for certain public appointments have been conducted since 2008 and are provided for in the Cabinet Office Governance Code on Public Appointments 2024.¹
2. There are ten ministerial appointments in relation to which the Justice Committee undertakes formal pre-appointment scrutiny to assess the suitability of the candidate and whether they are appointable to the role. Nine of these are appointments by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice:
 - Chair of the Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements;
 - Chair of the Judicial Appointments Commission;
 - Chair of the Legal Services Board;
 - Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints;
 - HM Chief Inspector of Prisons;
 - HM Chief Inspector of Probation;
 - Prisons and Probation Ombudsman;
 - Standing Advocate; and
 - Chair of the Criminal Cases Review Commission.²

The tenth is an appointment by the Attorney General: HM Chief Inspector of HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate.

1 Cabinet Office, [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#), February 2024, para 10.1

2 The Lord Chancellor confirmed in June 2025 that the Chair of the Criminal Cases Review Commission CCRC Chair should be added to the list of roles subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by the Justice Select Committee. See [Letter from the Lord Chancellor to the Chair](#) dated 2 June 2025

3. On 7 July 2025, the Interim Chair of the Legal Services Board (LSB), Catherine Brown, wrote to the Chair to advise of the planned campaign to recruit for the role of Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC).³ In brief, the OLC, overseen by the LSB, administers the Legal Ombudsman (LeO), an independent ombudsman scheme to resolve complaints by consumers about legal services. The OLC, which has seven members in addition to the Chair, is in effect the board of the LeO.
4. This Report follows the fifth pre-appointment hearing which the Justice Committee has held with a preferred candidate for Chair of the OLC since the post was established. We express our appreciation for the work of the outgoing Chair, Elisabeth Davies.

The Office for Legal Complaints and the Legal Ombudsman

5. The Legal Services Act 2007 introduced wide-ranging reforms to the provision and regulation of legal services in England and Wales. The Act established the LSB to oversee the regulation of the legal profession in England and Wales. It also established the OLC to establish, administer and govern the LeO scheme.
6. The OLC is an Arm's Length Body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and independent of the Government and the legal profession. 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 fairly complex 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 Protocol⁴ and also in the OLC's framework document.⁵ The OLC and LSB have also agreed a Memorandum of Understanding.⁶
7. The OLC's responsibilities include administering the LeO; ensuring that the performance of the LeO meets statutory and other performance related objectives; appointing ombudsmen and other staff; reporting to the LSB

3 [Letter from the Interim Chair of the Legal Services Board, Catherine Brown, to the Chair](#), dated 7 July 2025: Recruitment of Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints

4 Ministry of Justice, Legal Services Board and Legal Ombudsman, [Tripartite Operating Protocol](#), January 2023

5 OLC, [Office for Legal Complaints Operating Framework](#)

6 Legal Services Board and Office for Legal Complaints, [Memorandum of Understanding between Legal Services Board \(LSB\) and Office for Legal Complaints \(OLC\)](#)

on the LeO's performance; submitting a projected budget to the LSB for approval; and establishing reciprocal information sharing relationships with approved regulators (see Appendix 2 for a full list of responsibilities).

The Legal Ombudsman

8. The LeO was established in 2010, replacing the previous complaint-handling bodies. The LeO has two core roles: to resolve complaints about legal service providers in England and Wales that have not been resolved to customers' satisfaction; and share learning and insight from the complaints to promote better complaint handling, prevent future complaints and drive higher standards in legal services.
9. The LeO offers a free, independent and impartial service to all members of the public, very small businesses, charities, clubs and trusts who have experienced different types of service problems during, for example, the conveyancing process, making a personal injury claim or litigation. It covers the majority of legal services provided in England and Wales. The LeO has the power to award a wide range of remedies, including practical remedies, such as completing or re-doing the work, apologising or awarding compensation of up to £50,000 (for both financial loss and emotional impact).
10. In 2024–25, the LeO received 10,447 complaints for investigation and resolved 8,270 cases, 4.4% more than the previous year.⁷ The areas of law which received the most complaints were residential conveyancing, wills and probate, personal injury, family law and litigation, and the issues most complained about were poor communication, delay and failure to progress and failure to advise. Where assessed, the LeO found evidence of poor service in 69.5% of cases and found that legal providers' own handling processes were not reasonable in 48.7% of cases.
11. The OLC's Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 describes the LeO as "performing at the upper end of its commitments" against "a challenging backdrop" where "historically stable demand has given way to a sustained increase over recent years".⁸ Indeed, in 2024/25, LeO received 11.8% more cases for early resolution or in-depth investigation than it took on the previous year and the number of complex cases needing in-depth investigation rose by 18.8%. Quarterly complaints data, published on 6 February 2026, revealed that, between October and December 2025, the LeO received 3,496 new complaints, up 37% on the same quarter in

7 OLC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2024–25](#), July 2025

8 OLC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2024–25](#), July 2025

2024/25 and more than any previous quarter on record.⁹ The commentary accompanying the data release described a “sustained and accelerating demand for [LeO’s] help, putting a significant strain on its service”.

12. The OLC’s and LeO’s costs are met by a levy paid by approved regulators and case fees charged to legal services providers.¹⁰ In 2024/25, this amounted to £16,739,000 and £905,000 respectively. Together, they have around 300 staff, including a team of 15 ombudsmen, and a budget of circa £20 million for 2025/26. The LeO’s office is in central Birmingham, which is where the OLC holds its meetings, with additional hubs in Cardiff and Leeds.

The role of Chair

13. The Chair of the OLC leads the OLC Board in the administration of the LeO scheme, working to ensure that the service is dealing with consumers’ complaints efficiently and effectively. The Chair’s responsibilities include ensuring that the LeO is fulfilling its statutory duty as an ombudsman scheme; protecting the LeO’s independence; acting as an ambassador for the OLC and the LeO; and working effectively with the Chief Ombudsman, non-executive members and staff team to provide strong leadership to the OLC. The OLC Chair reports to the Chair of the LSB and through the LSB to Parliament via an annual report laid before Parliament by the Lord Chancellor. The Chair’s responsibilities are set out in full in the candidate information pack (see Appendix 2).

9 LeO, [2025/26 - Quarter 1 complaints data](#), February 2026

10 OLC, [Annual Report and Accounts 2024–25](#), July 2025

2 The recruitment process

14. On 7 July 2025, the Interim Chair of the LSB, Catherine Brown, wrote to the Chair to advise of the planned campaign to recruit to the role of Chair of the OLC.¹¹ She set out an “indicative timetable” for recruitment of the OLC Chair, as follows:
- Advert launch – End of July
 - Close – Early September
 - Sift – September
 - Interviews – October
 - Pre-appointment scrutiny hearing – December
 - Appointment – January 2026
15. The Committee confirmed that it would accommodate a December hearing but, at the MoJ’s request, this was scheduled for 20 January 2026. In late December, the MoJ requested that the hearing be scheduled in March 2026.
16. The letter from the Interim Chair of the LSB, Catherine Brown, to the Chair of the Committee dated 13 February 2026 provides an overview of the recruitment process (see Appendix 1). In brief, the recruitment exercise commenced on 30 July 2025 accompanied by a press release from the LSB announcing the opening of the competition. The following websites carried advertisements for the post: Saxton Bampfylde; womenonboards.com; Empowering People of Colour; The Times; and Institute of Regulation. The LSB engaged the services of recruitment consultants, Saxton Bampfylde, to assist with the process and to undertake search activity to supplement advertising.
17. A total of 19 applications were received by the time the advertisement closed on 26 August 2025. Long listing took place on 1 September 2025, and the panel selected 13 candidates to proceed to the next stage of the process. Saxton Bampfylde conducted preliminary interviews with all 13 candidates and shortlisting from this field of eight took place on 22 September 2025. The panel selected six candidates for interview and these were held on 28 and 29 October 2025. The panel’s unanimous conclusion was that one of the candidates was well above the appointable standard.

11 [Letter from the Interim Chair of the Legal Services Board, Catherine Brown, to the Chair, dated 7 July 2025: Recruitment of Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints](#)

18. The letter dated 13 February 2026 from the Interim Chair of the LSB also informed the Committee that Richard Blakeway was the preferred candidate to take up the post of Chair of the OLC. The Committee accordingly invited him to attend a pre-appointment hearing on 11 March 2026.

3 Appointment of Richard Blakeway as Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints

The preferred candidate: Richard Blakeway

19. On 13 February 2026, the LSB's Interim Chair, Catherine Brown, confirmed that Richard Blakeway was the preferred candidate and that he:
- gave a strong and impressive performance, demonstrating that he had thoroughly researched and understood the role. He showed strong motivation, highly relevant experience, and a clear capacity for leading change. His confident and knowledgeable approach indicated an ability to manage the scale and complexity of the role effectively. The panel were impressed by his strategic thinking, and strong stakeholder communication skills, which position him as someone capable of driving momentum and delivering organisational objectives.
- The panel noted his ambition, professionalism, and adaptability in response to feedback. He showed a thorough understanding of the organisational landscape and its challenges, reinforcing his suitability for a leadership position.¹²
20. On 17 February 2026, the Committee Secretariat sent Mr Blakeway a questionnaire requesting, among other things, further information on conflicts of interest and independence, motivation for applying, experience and expertise and priorities once in post. Mr Blakeway's response was received on 27 February 2026 and is set out in Appendix 6.
21. Mr Blakeway's curriculum vitae is appended to this Report (Appendix 3). He has declared that he has no relevant interests and has not conducted any relevant political activity in the last five years (see Appendices 4 and 5). In response to a question in the questionnaire about political activity undertaken outside that five-year window, he said:

12 Letter from the Interim Chair of the Legal Services Board to the Chair, dated 13 February 2026: [Pre-appointment scrutiny for the appointment of Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints \(OLC\)](#)

I am not politically active nor a member of a political party. I have been appointed to positions by the Prime Minister, Ministers, and the Mayor of London, but these have been subject to political restrictions. I have demonstrated the ability to work independently and effectively with Ministers and elected representatives across the political spectrum, as well as with a wide range of stakeholders.

22. The appointment would be made for a period of between three and five years with annual remuneration of £52,500. The role is non-pensionable.

The Committee's views on the suitability of the preferred candidate

23. The pre-appointment hearing took place on Wednesday 11 March.
24. During the pre-appointment hearing, we tested Mr Blakeway's suitability for the position by asking him questions about various aspects of the role. We asked him about his relevant experience and expertise, and about his understanding of the legal services sector and legal services regulation and how he would approach engagement with the various bodies within it. We asked him about the LeO's 2026/27 budget, which is soon to be agreed, and what role he would take in finalising it. We also asked him about the role played by the LeO in facilitating access to justice and its work on improving standards among legal services providers. We then turned to how, as Chair, he would support the LeO to cope with its increasingly large and complex workload and adapt the services it provides accordingly. We also asked whether he had relevant experience that he could draw upon in undertaking service transformation work. Finally, we asked Mr Blakeway for his reflections on the current approach to legal services complaints handling and how he would judge whether his performance as Chair had been a success.
25. Mr Blakeway's experience prepares him well for this new role and this was evident in the responses he gave to our questions. He has significant relevant experience from his time as Housing Ombudsman, having there been required to manage high levels of demand and service transformation, and from his roles on boards, including as Chair of the Ombudsman Association.

26. **CONCLUSION**

The Committee endorses the appointment of Richard Blakeway as Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints.

Appendix 1: Correspondence from Catherine Brown, Interim Chair of the Legal Services Board, to Andy Slaughter, Chair of the Justice Committee, dated 13 February 2026

Pre-appointment scrutiny for the appointment of Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints

As you are aware, schedule 15 to the Legal Services Act 2007 requires the Legal Services Board (LSB) to appoint the Chair of the OLC, with the approval of the Lord Chancellor. Further to my letter dated 07 July 2025, the Lord Chancellor and the LSB are pleased to confirm that the process has concluded and that Richard Blakeway is the preferred candidate.

This letter provides an overview of the process and Richard Blakeway's CV and declaration of interests in preparation for pre-appointment scrutiny by your Committee.

At **Annex A**, you will find the candidate information pack, which contains the role and person specification recruited to and information about the OLC. At **Annex B** you will find a copy of the advertisement for the role. Richard Blakeway's curriculum vitae and declarations of interest are at **Annex C and D respectively**.

The recruitment exercise commenced on 30 July 2025 accompanied by a press release by the LSB announcing the opening of the competition. The following websites carried advertisements for the post:

- Saxton Bampfylde
- womenonboards.com

- Empowering People of Colour
- The Times
- Institute of Regulation

The LSB engaged the services of recruitment consultants, Saxon Bampfylde, to assist with the process and to undertake search activity to supplement advertising. Saxon Bampfylde, were briefed to approach a wide range of individuals and to encourage applications from as able and diverse a field as possible.

It is a requirement of the Act that the OLC Chair be a lay person.

A total of 19 applications were received by the time the advertisement closed on 26 August 2025 Diversity and monitoring information was provided by 15 of the applicants:

- 6 male and 9 female
- 10 White British, 4 were Asian or Asian British and 1 was Black or Black British
- In age range
 - 45 to 49 – 2
 - 50 to 54 – 2
 - 55 to 59 – 3
 - 60 to 64 – 3
 - 65+ – 2
 - Preferred not to say – 2
- 4 declared a disability, 8 declared no disability and 3 preferred not to say.

As a public appointment, albeit not a Ministerial one regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the process followed the principles of the Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice. This included making sure that the recruitment followed the principles of openness and fairness, that appointments be made on merit; and that at least one independent person sat on the appointment panel. The panel comprised:

- Catherine Brown (Chair), Interim Chair of the LSB
- Flora Page, LSB non-lay member
- Christine Nwaokolo, LSB non-lay member

- Joe Montgomery (independent panel member)

Long listing took place on 1 September 2025, and the panel selected 13 candidates to proceed to the next stage of the process. Saxon Bampfylde conducted preliminary interviews with all 13 candidates and shortlisting from this field of eight took place on 22 September 2025. The panel selected six candidates for interview and these were held on 28 and 29 October 2025.

Interviews were competency based, focusing on the essential criteria for the role. The candidates started the interview with a short presentation on the topic:

“What do you see as the challenges and opportunities facing the OLC and how would you tackle them if you were appointed as chair?”

Questions then covered each area of the essential criteria and any conflicts of interest (political activity declarations and conflicts of interest declarations were completed by each candidate).

The panel’s unanimous conclusion was that one of the candidates, Richard Blakeway, was well above the appointable standard. The preferred candidate gave a strong and impressive performance, demonstrating that he had thoroughly researched and understood the role. He showed strong motivation, highly relevant experience, and a clear capacity for leading change. His confident and knowledgeable approach indicated an ability to manage the scale and complexity of the role effectively. The panel were impressed by his strategic thinking, and strong stakeholder communication skills, which position him as someone capable of driving momentum and delivering organisational objectives.

The panel noted his ambition, professionalism, and adaptability in response to feedback. He showed a thorough understanding of the organisational landscape and its challenges, reinforcing his suitability for a leadership position.

The LSB considered the report of the appointment panel and confirmed that Mr Blakeway was their preferred candidate for the role of OLC Chair. This decision was conveyed to the Lord Chancellor for approval.

Minister Sackman, on behalf of the Lord Chancellor has indicated his approval of the appointment of Mr Blakeway, stating that he was pleased to note that the appointments process had followed the Commissioner for Public Appointments’ Code of Practice.

I hope that this is of assistance, but please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Brown, Interim Chair

Annex A: OLC Chair candidate information pack

Annex B: Richard Blakeway's CV

Annex C: Conflict of interests' declaration

Appendix 2: Candidate information pack

Appointment of Chair, Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)

July 2025

Contents

1. Foreword from the Chair of the Legal Services Board
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6. Conditions of appointment
7. Timetable and how to apply

1. 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

2. 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 OL—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 <https://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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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/>

6. 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 reappointment, 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.

7. Process timetable

Closing date	26 August
Longlisting	w/c 1 September
Preliminary interviews (to be held virtually)	w/c 8 and 15 September
Shortlisting meeting (candidates not required)	w/c 22 September
Final panel interviews	w/c 29 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 **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.

Appendix 3: Curriculum vitae

– Richard Blakeway

EMPLOYMENT

Housing Ombudsman/Chair/Accounting Officer, Housing Ombudsman Service (2019/pre-sent)

- The Housing Ombudsman is a public appointment by the government, following a parliamentary hearing. I was appointed in 2019, reappointed in 2022 and was extended by the current government. I am also the chair of its Advisory Board and Accounting Officer.
- The Ombudsman provides independent and impartial dispute resolution to tenants and leaseholders of around 2,000 landlord members, including councils, housing associations and some large private landlords.
- I have led a transformation of the service, implementing a new strategy following the Grenfell Tower fire. This has secured a new budget, new statutory powers and a new relationship with regulators. A new operating model was introduced to improve access, customer experience and impact, supported by a significant growth plan with colleagues increasing from around 50 people when I started to more than 500 in 2025/26. This has involved creating a new leadership team and introducing a new governance model, with an Advisory Board of independent members to over-see development and scrutinise performance.
- The service has become more visible, proactive and transparent, publishing all our casework and adopting stretching KPIs to manage an unprecedented 300% increase in demand for formal investigations, with the service receiving an enquiry every 25 seconds. This has seen us increase productivity, with more than 700 formal investigations being completed each month, alongside a model to resolve more cases through earlier resolution.
- I led negotiations with officials and Ministers to secure and implement significant new statutory powers, including a code of practice, systemic powers and a legal memorandum with two regulators through the Building Safety Act and Social Housing (Regulation) Act.

The new government has indicated its preference for the Ombudsman to provide mandatory redress in the private rented sector through the Renters Rights Bill.

- The service has had considerable impact to improve outcomes. It made 22,000 remedies in 2024/25 compared to 4,500 between 2021/22. It has innovated to share insights and learning through a new Centre for Learning, which offers CPD-accredited training and support. More than 12,000 professionals are active on the centre, with more than 10,000 learning modules completed in the last financial year. The service has also overseen self-assessments by almost every member landlord of the statutory Complaint Handling Code, which set universal complaint standards for social landlords for the first time (and was extended to wider council functions by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman). More than 90% of landlord staff surveyed state these tools have helped them improve services locally.
- Our systemic work has seen us do groundbreaking systemic investigations into around 20 land- lords with high failure rates, as well as share thematic insights through a series of Spotlight reports, including on damp and mould, repairs and maintenance, noise nuisance and vulnerabilities. These reports receive high downloads (c1,000 per month) and recommendations have been widely adopted. Our systemic work has led to board engagement, landlords introducing change initiatives and, in some cases, further regulatory action. I have also initiated an Annual Com- plaints Review with individual landlord performance reports, as part of moving to an open data model. Or work has influenced government policy, including the introduction of Awaab's Law to improve handling of housing health hazards and a new Decent Homes Standard.
- A new vision and values have also been adopted to strengthen the culture during this change. This has supported rapid onboarding, including 200 colleagues in one year, and is adopting a new induction and training model. Our pulse surveys show high satisfaction and we have encouraged
- EDI, including through recruitment (with more than 30% of applicants from a minority background) and a new and active EDI and well-being groups. These initiatives started under my leadership.
- The service created its first Resident Panel, of 1,600 residents and we introduced open 'town hall' forums with residents and landlords across regions to be held to account for our services. This is part of extensive stakeholder engagement, with a meet regularly with a wide range of stakeholders, including professional bodies and presenting monthly to the boards of landlords. I have also developed our

relationships with civil servants and MPs, hosting the first drop-in with parliamentarians at the House of Commons and have participated in select committee inquiries, giving evidence to both the committee and also parliamentary bill committees.

- I regularly speak at conferences and the media, being interviewed by the FT, Times and Guardian and frequent appearances on BBC Today, Breakfast and a regular phone-in on LBC.

Chair, BexleyCo Ltd (2017/19)

- I helped the council establish a new regeneration company to support this growth plan including developing their assets and attracting inward investment. This included building the board and appointing the CEO.
- Led the development, and secured agreement of the council, of a £600m business plan for 2500 homes. Oversaw planning work on first phase of sites, including planning applications.

Director, Tudor Blakeway Consultants Ltd (2016/19)

- Provided strategic advice and counsel at board and senior leadership level to a range of private sector clients including JLL and EcoWorld.

Policy Adviser, No10 Policy Unit, 10 Downing Street (2016)

- I was an adviser to the Prime Minister on planning and devolution until EU Referendum. This included working closely with Ministers and civil servants on the strategic review of the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England), draft legislation for homelessness reduction and devolution deals through Mayoral Combined Authorities.

Greater London Authority: Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property (2012/16) and housing director (2008/12)

- I led the housing and regeneration programmes following the devolution deal in the Localism Act, overseeing on behalf of the Mayor the transfer of functions from 3 agencies, including the Homes and Communities Agency London region to the GLA. I chaired the housing investment committee which approved the commissioning strategy, funding agreements and appointment of development partners, as well as monitoring delivery. I also chaired the Homes for London board with London Councils to support the strategic plan.
- This saw the GLA take responsibility of a £3 billion investment programme and one of the largest and most diverse public land portfolios in the UK, within a new directorate.

- I led the development of London's first statutory housing strategy, which doubled the capital's housing target.
- Notable achievements include:
 - delivering 100,000 affordable homes;
 - securing outcomes for the authority's surplus land (c630 hectares) for the delivery of 50,000 and 1.5m sqm of commercial space;
 - implemented Housing Zones in 30 areas;
 - secured new investment and partners to redevelop strategically significant projects at Greenwich Peninsula, Barking Riverside and the Royal Docks totalling more than 320 hectares of regeneration and £10 billion of development value.
 - launched London Housing Bank of development loans and expanded Build for Rent market;
 - introduction of the First Steps home ownership initiative helping 52,000 people;
 - launching the first London Rental Standard accreditation scheme to raise standards in the private rented sector and Housing Moves schemes for social tenants;
 - led the London Delivery Board to coordinate boroughs, providers and agencies around a single rough sleeping strategy, and commissioned £10m of homelessness services per annum including ground-breaking No Second Night Out scheme, Housing First pilot and Social Impact Bond.
 - led the early adoption of new space and energy standards.
- The roles involved significant stakeholder engagement, including London Councils, developers, housing associations and architects. I spoke frequently at conferences, both in the UK and internationally, including MIT, the UN and European Parliament, as well as giving evidence to parliamentary select committees. I also made frequent media appearances including the Times, FT, BBC World at One and regional BBC and ITV.
- I supported several trade missions with London government and the private sector, including to Malaysia and China.

Founder and Commissioning Editor, iDM: The International Development Magazine (2004/07)

- Launched the first specialist magazine on international development; 10,000 circulation.

Researcher to International Development Committee Chair, House of Commons (2001/08)

- Provided briefings, speaking notes and research for chair of parliamentary select committee on international development.

BOARD AND VOLUNTARY

- Board member, The British Library (2022/present), including audit and risk committee and capital project committee
- Member, Administrative Justice Council (2021/present)
- Chair and board member, Ombudsman Association (2020/24 – chair from 2021)
- Board member, Homes England (2017/19), including risk committee and programmes committee
- Board member, Chartered Institute of Housing (2011/16)
- Board member, Royal Docks Management Authority (2012/16)
- Board member, Barking Riverside Ltd (2013/16)
- Commissioner, Crossrail 2 Growth Commission (2015/16)
- Election Observer, Somaliland (2005) and Ukraine (2006)
- Young Ambassador, Samaritans (2005/08)

EDUCATION

- BA Hons British Politics & Legislative Studies, University of Hull (1997/2001)

Appendix 4: Conflicts of interest and previous conduct

Please give details of any business or other interests or any personal connections which, if you are appointed, could be misconstrued or cause embarrassment.

Any particular conflicts of interest detailed here will not prevent you going forward to interview but may, if appropriate, be explored with you during your interview to establish how you would address the issue(s) should you be successful in your application.

Please also confirm if you have ever been convicted of, or cautioned for, any criminal offence or have been found guilty of professional misconduct, or if any such proceedings are pending (Please give details, including dates and amount of any fine or other penalty imposed) (NB successful candidates' final confirmation will be subject to basic clearance checks, covering confirmation of identity and right to work in the UK plus a criminal record check)

I confirm I have read and understood the sections in the candidate pack on 'Standards in public life' and 'Political activity'	X
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(Please tick the above box)

Public appointments currently held

Please say below if you currently hold any other public appointment posts:

Body	Period of Appointment	Government Department
Housing Ombudsman	September 2019 (3 year terms extended until July 2026)	MHCLG
Board Member, The British Library	July 2022 (4 year term with potential 2nd term)	DCMS

Appendix 5: Political Activity Declaration

All applicants should complete the question below. Please indicate which of the following activities you have undertaken during the past five years by ticking the appropriate box and providing details of your involvement. Name the party or body for which you have been active. If you have been or are an Independent or have sought or obtained office as a representative of a particular interest group, you should state this. You should tick all relevant categories.

Obtained office as a Local Councillor, MP, Devolved offices, MEP etc	
Stood as a candidate for one of the above offices	
Spoken on behalf of a party or candidate	

Acted as a political agent	
Held office such as Chair, Treasurer or Secretary of a local branch of a party	
Canvassed on behalf of a party or helped at election	
Undertaken any political activity which you consider relevant	

Made a recordable donation to a political party	
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None of the above activities apply.	X
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Name of Party for which activity undertaken:

Details of your involvement (please continue a separate sheet if necessary):

Note: this form is for monitoring purposes only and therefore will be detached from your application and will only be seen by the selection panel if selected for interview. However, it is appreciated that such activities may

have given you relevant skills, including experience gained from committee work, collective decision making, resolving conflict and public speaking. If, therefore, you have had such experience and you consider it relevant to your application for this post, you should include it separately in the main body of your application form.

Appendix 6: Questionnaire response

Questionnaire from the Justice Committee for Richard Blakeway, the Government's preferred candidate for Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints

Ahead of your Pre-Appointment Hearing before the Justice Committee, please complete and return the following questionnaire. There is no specific word count. The Committee will publish your answers to this questionnaire as written evidence or appended to the final report. All documents should be provided in PDF format.

Please provide these documents by close of play on Tuesday 3 March 2026 to JUSTICECOM@parliament.uk

Personal questions

- 1. Do you have any business or financial connections, or other commitments, that potentially give rise to a conflict or perceived conflict of interest in carrying out your duties as the Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints (“OLC”)?**

No.

- Is any risk of a conflict of interest emerging in the future?**

No.

- 2. Have you ever held any post or undertaken any activity that might cast doubt on your political impartiality? If so, how will you demonstrate your political impartiality in the role if appointed?**

I am not politically active nor a member of a political party. I have been appointed to positions by the Prime Minister, Ministers, and the Mayor of London, but these have been subject to political restrictions. I have demonstrated the ability to work independently and effectively with Ministers and elected representatives across the political spectrum, as well as with a wide range of stakeholders.

- Do you have any plans to engage in political activity in the future?**

No.

- 3. If you are appointed, do you have any plans to continue, or take on, any professional or voluntary work commitments alongside the role of Chair of the OLC?**

Yes. I am a trustee of The British Library.

- **[If relevant] How will you manage these in conjunction with your role?**

I am very conscious of the importance of avoiding any conflicts of interest. I would ensure I can commit the required time to each role.

- 4. The candidate information pack states that, while the role of OLC Chair is home-based, “significant attendance at the Legal Ombudsman office and elsewhere is required”. If you are appointed, how often will you attend the office?**

I expect to spend a significant proportion of time at LeO’s hubs in Birmingham, Cardiff, and Leeds, and to meet stakeholders. I also intend to continue the practice of in-person board meetings.

- 5. Do you intend to serve the full term for which you have been appointed?**

Yes.

- 6. With reference to specific examples, how will your career and experience to date inform your approach to, and suitability for, the role of Chair of the OLC?**

I will have served almost 7 years as the Housing Ombudsman and 3 years as chair of the Ombudsman Association. This gives me considerable experience of how redress schemes function. In particular, I have led significant change at the Housing Ombudsman to respond to increased demand for redress as part of wider regulatory reform, working closely with regulators. I also have significant experience in public sector leadership and chair and board experience, including at three arms length bodies.

Role specific questions

- 7. What motivated you to apply for the role of Chair of the OLC?**

I have a strong interest in the public being able to exercise their right to redress and the power of complaints to improve services. The opportunity to ensure legal services perform well is vital to the rule of law, and the opportunity to support this was irresistible.

8. If appointed, what will your main priorities as Chair of the OLC be?

Working with the board and LeO, I have 3 priorities:

Resilience: ensuring LeO innovates to respond to demand and provides a high-quality, timely service.

Relevance: ensuring its work has an impact on improving first-tier complaint handling and preventing it by addressing root causes.

Relationships: building both internal relationships, especially with fellow board members and within LeO, and externally to ensure LeO's work informs regulators by sharing insight and information to strengthen legal services.

In addition, I would prioritise shaping the development of the 2027–2030 Strategy to ensure LeO maximises the value of digital transformation and AI-enabled innovation. LeO's future operating model will depend on embedding automation, AI and modern digital tools across its processes to handle rising demand more effectively, improve timeliness, and strengthen transparency and learning. These developments will ensure LeO's service remains resilient, modern and responsive to consumer expectations as demand continues to evolve.

9. What is your assessment of the OLC's and the Legal Ombudsman's performance in recent years and its public profile and reputation?

My predecessor as chair, Elisabeth Davies, has done an excellent job. OLC has provided effective oversight of LeO and developed a sound strategic plan. LeO itself has responded effectively to unprecedented demand and focused on reducing backlogs. Its requirement for additional resources and new approaches, such as publishing decisions, which is something I strongly endorse, has changed its relationship with the sector, and there is some tension there.

10. What risks do you think the OLC and the Legal Ombudsman will face during your term of office? How do you intend to manage them?

Several risks will require close attention, with three standing out as priorities. First, demand management remains a significant challenge, particularly the volatility in in depth investigations and the wider pressures on timeliness. Addressing this will require strengthening our forecasting models, ensuring that operational and digital transformation drives genuine efficiency, and reviewing scheme rules, processes and operating models so that LeO can manage demand sustainably.

Second, people related risks, including recruitment, retention, leadership resilience and workforce planning, will continue to be critical to organisational stability. My focus would be on enhancing succession planning, improving capability and development pathways, and ensuring LeO has the skills and capacity needed for the next phase of its transformation.

Thirdly, system level risks, particularly cyber resilience, data quality and digital changes such as AI, will grow in prominence. Strengthening our cyber and data controls, improving assurance around ICT systems, and ensuring we operate within a clear and responsible AI governance framework will be key to maintaining trust and safeguarding service integrity. Together, these measures will help ensure LeO remains resilient, future ready and able to respond effectively to the pressures of the coming year. Restricted: Personal

11. The Chair of the OLC is required to work closely with the legal sector and the Legal Services Board. How do you plan to engage with these stakeholders?

The role of chair requires proactive engagement with stakeholders. I would prioritise building relationships with counterparts at the LSB and officials at MoJ, through regular informal meetings. There are also formal arrangements with the LSB, notably around the annual budget, and this would be a focus for me as chair. This includes openness and transparency around the voluntary assurance process. More widely, working with the Chief Ombudsman, engagement with the SRA will be a priority, as will engagement with representative bodies, such as the Law Society, on our strategic plans. I have considerable experience in stakeholder engagement and have worked with some of the key stakeholders of the OLC.

12. The OLC and the Legal Ombudsman operate in a complex regulatory environment. What is your understanding of how the current model of legal services regulation affects their work?

I agree it is a complex environment with a large number of actors. While OLC/LeO are not regulators, we have a well-defined relationship with regulators. LeO works alongside eight regulators, each with its own regulatory requirements and different priorities for its regulated communities. Whilst complaint handling requirements are common across all, there are several nuances in how each operates. It's important that LeO has individual relationships with each regulator, as well as collective collaboration to work effectively with individual regulators, while avoiding duplication when working across multiple regulators at the same time. The relationship with SRA, as the biggest regulator, and its code of conduct is vital to

improving first tier complaint handling. They represent the biggest proportion of complaints going through to LeO, due to the size of the solicitor profession, so it's important that information sharing and collaboration with the SRA are robust.

From a governance perspective, the tripartite agreement between the OLC, LSB and MoJ also sets a clear framework for engagement.

Openness, clear communication, and sharing intelligence are integral to complex regulatory arrangements being successful, as well as to stakeholders having clarity on roles and responsibilities. The tripartite agreement includes OLC sharing insights with regulators and policymakers, and this is an area I would encourage OLC/LeO to be proactive.

I confirm that the information given in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Declaration

Signed: Richard Blakeway

Date: 24/02/2026

Formal minutes

Wednesday 11 March 2026

Members present

Andy Slaughter, in the Chair

Linsey Farnsworth

Sir Ashley Fox

Warinder Juss

Tessa Munt

Vikki Slade

Tony Vaughan KC

Appointment of the Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints

Draft Report (*Appointment of the Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints*) proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 26 read and agreed to.

Appendices agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Eighth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 2pm.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Wednesday 11 March 2026

Richard Blakeway, Government's preferred candidate for Chair, Office for Legal Complaints [Q1-42](#)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
7th	Ending the cycle of reoffending – part one: rehabilitation in prisons	HC 469
6th	Tackling the drugs crisis in our prisons	HC 557
5th	Appointment of the Standing Advocate	HC 1196
4th	Work of the County Court	HC 677
3rd	Leadership of the Criminal Cases Review Commission	HC 749
2nd	Appointment of the Chief Inspector of HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate	HC 578
1st	Appointment of the Chair of the Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements	HC 485
4th Special	Ending the cycle of reoffending – part one: rehabilitation in prisons: Government Response	HC 1639
3rd Special	Tackling the drugs crisis in our prisons: Government Response	HC 1599
2nd Special	Work of the County Court: Government Response	HC 1387
1st Special	The constitutional relationship with the Crown Dependencies: Government Response	HC 582