

Children's Law Centre

CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACK

SOLICITOR



childrenslawcentre.org.uk

children's law centre



Children's Rights Change Children's Lives

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Dear Candidate



Thank you for your interest in the Solicitor role at Children's Law Centre.

Every year, thousands of children, their parents or carers and families benefit from our direct help to access services, and many more through our efforts to influence strategic change. We are proud of what we achieve on behalf of children in Northern Ireland under the aegis of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Children's Law Centre's (CLC) Legal and Advice Team provide direct support to children and young people, their parents and carers who are seeking advice on how they access services they are entitled to. Our freephone advice line – CHALKY – is the main conduit through which contact is made and we respond to around 3000 issues every year. In most cases the advice provided will be sufficient for parents to progress their child's issue with duty bearers to a suitable remedy. In around 10% of issues where the parent or child may not have the capability or capacity to progress the issue alone, our legal and advice workers will undertake to advocate on their behalf. Where a clear breach of a child's equality and/or human rights is evident, CLC will represent the child in litigation through judicial review and at tribunals such as SENDIST and the Mental Health Review Tribunal to achieve a suitable outcome. The continuing denials of service for children

with special educational needs and disability continue to be a focus of our interventions, along with access to health and social care with particular emphasis on respite and community care support and mental health, followed by family law, justice and other general issues.

If successful you will be working with CLC's Legal and Advice Team who are passionate about children's rights and have developed knowledge on children's rights over many years. They use their knowledge and experience to represent children and negotiate their way through complex rules and regulations to provide a remedy for the child that can include access to a medical diagnosis, to educational support, or to mental health services.

Recently we have focused on support to children who are reliant on peg feeding systems due to delayed surgery; supporting refugee and asylum seeking children living in contingency and dispersal accommodation to access health and education services; supporting children with special educational needs and disability to attend school and receive the education they are entitled to; and working with colleagues in National Autistic Society NI (NAS NI) to further develop our human rights advocacy work challenging discrimination faced by children

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when accessing health services with a particular focus on disability discrimination, <https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/written-ministerial-statements/departments-of-health---children-with-disabilities---short-breaks/>.

Our Legal and Advice Team also work with our Policy and Public Affairs Team on issues that have been particularly difficult to resolve to achieve systemic change, e.g. our work with NAS NI and Minister Nesbitt to identify provision of respite for families and his confirmation of additional spending.

We continue to grow our impact, building on our excellent track record of influencing decision makers in the best interests of children, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged children who have been denied access to services to which they are entitled under equality and human rights legislation.

To be considered for this role you will need to have a relevant third level qualification, professional legal qualification as a solicitor, hold or be entitled to hold a Solicitor's Practising Certificate in Northern Ireland and at least two years post qualifying experience; and have knowledge of domestic law and international standards relating to children, including relevant human rights and equality legislation. Full details of the requirements

for this role are contained within the person specification in this candidate information pack.

If you are passionate about children's rights and enabling young people to access those rights and want to work with a committed staff team, then please consider applying for this role.

Good luck and we look forward to hearing from you.



Paddy Kelly
Director

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Vision Mission Values

Vision

Children's rights are guaranteed without discrimination.

Mission

Ensuring children's rights are respected, realised and vindicated through participation, partnership and representation.

Values

- We are child centred
- We have integrity
- We are accountable
- We are rights based
- We are independent
- We promote equality



Who We Are



At the Children's Law Centre (CLC) we have always believed that children's rights change children's lives.

Founded on the principles laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), we were established in 1997 to provide legal advice to children and young people. We have since developed into the leading children's rights legal charity in Northern Ireland, helping thousands of children vindicate their rights each year, ensuring their access to services and equality of treatment.

We provide access to free legal information through the REE Rights Responder Chatbot which is accessible through our website (www.childrenslawcentre.org) – over 11,000 users accessed this last year. For those

who need more support they can contact our freephone advice line for children and young people, CHALKY, and speak directly to an adviser. Our advice line has helped and supported thousands of children and young people since its launch in 2000 and in 2023-24 we responded to almost 3000 issues. For many who contact us through our advice line we may also provide advocacy on behalf of their children in dealing with duty bearers to ensure the child has the access to services to which they are entitled. In a small number of cases, where no responses are forthcoming CLC will represent the interests of a child in litigation. There will usually be a clear link between access to services and the child's rights under either equality or human rights legislation.

CLC leads the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland through the UNCRC reporting process, having submitted the most recent NI NGO stakeholder report in December 2022. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published its Concluding Observations and Recommendations from this process in June 2023 and this reflected many of the issues identified by the original reports submitted by CLC and from Youth@CLC.

Founded on the principles laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), we were established in 1997 to provide legal advice to children and young people.

CLC was instrumental in the implementation of key aspects of the UNCRC, such as the establishment of the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2003. We have also been at the heart of key domestic achievements around children's rights, including the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015. During the Pandemic CLC led the way in protecting children and young people's rights, securing a Vulnerable Children Action Plan to ensure decisions do not adversely impact on vulnerable children and young people.

The work of CLC has been guided by our youth panel, Youth@CLC who have influenced the way in which we campaign for young people's rights. Youth@CLC has represented the interests of children from Northern Ireland at the UN Committee on the Rights of Child, meeting with a wide range of decision-makers ensuring the voices of children and young people in this jurisdiction are heard. Having contributed to the development of the Young People's Report, members from the Youth@CLC panel formed part of a delegation of young people from Northern Ireland to present findings from their report to the UN Committee in Geneva in 2023.

CLC was instrumental in the implementation of key aspects of the UNCRC, such as the establishment of the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2003

CLC continues to grow as a leading children's rights organisation. Work continues on a broad range of children's rights issues. Our belief that children's rights change children's lives continues to be the force that drives our work forward.



What We Do

Legal Services

We provide free legal information, advice and representation for children and young people. We work to ensure that public authorities, tribunals and courts recognise children as rights holders with the right to express their views and are considered as part of the decision making process. We strive to ensure that when decisions are being made:

- The decision is UNCRC and children's rights compliant;
- The voice of the child is always heard;
- The child's best interests are at the heart of decision making; and
- All children have equality of access to their legal rights, regardless of their age, background or circumstance.

Children and their parents or carers can access free legal information through the REE Rights Responder chatbot, or speak with an advisor through our freephone legal advice line, CHALKY. As issues impacting children increase in complexity, our legal advisers will work with children and parents and advocate on their behalf with duty bearers to secure a positive outcome for the child.

CLC provides support to all children in Northern Ireland including the most disadvantaged, e.g., children with disabilities, special educational needs, mental ill health, those experiencing homelessness and refugee and asylum-seeking children living in contingency and dispersal accommodation who are unable to access services.

We also provide free legal representation, particularly at SENDIST and Mental Health Review Tribunals and undertake strategic litigation following the criteria contained within our casework policy.

Policy and Public Affairs

Through our casework and by listening to Youth@CLC we identify key issues impacting children and advocate for evidence based solutions, underpinned by the children's rights framework. Our Policy and Public Affairs Team works with our team of legal experts, to develop analysis of law and policy practice to inform and influence decision makers.

Through our policy and public affairs work CLC engages with a range of young people, partner organisations, decision makers across Government(s), in Non-Departmental Public Bodies, and with elected representatives and stakeholders locally and



internationally more generally.

We ensure government is reminded of its obligations including under the UNCRC when drafting policy and legislation. The Policy and Public Affairs Team also lead CLC's engagement in the NI NGO stakeholder reporting process with the UNCRC.

Training and engagement

CLC provides a range of tailored and bespoke training programmes to health, education, legal, justice and housing professionals, to duty bearers across departments, and to the wider children's sector. This includes training on mental health capacity, special education needs, Article 21 - Children's (NI) Order 1995, UNCRC. We also provide training to and engage with children's and parent's groups and other organisations working in the sector.

Children's Law Centre has a small membership, consisting mainly of individuals and organisations working in the children's services and children's rights fields. We are currently working to develop our engagement with members and others interested in supporting our work going forward.

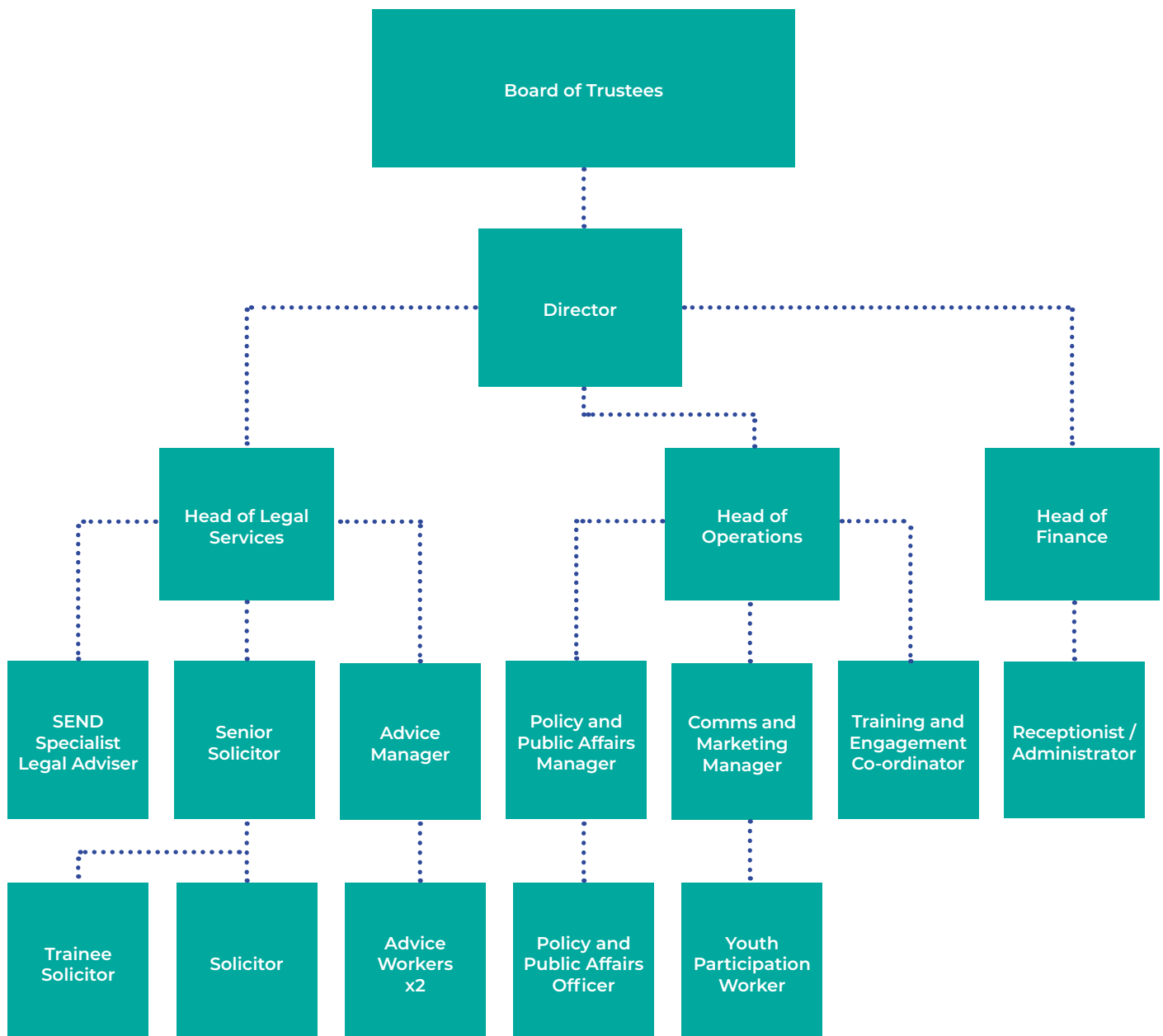
Youth@CLC

Our youth advisory panel, Youth@CLC, is a group of young people aged between 14 – 18 who act as peer advocates and campaign on the key issues affecting their lives. They seek to influence decision makers, raise awareness of children's rights and guide the work of CLC. This work has included the co-design and development of the REE Rights Responder chatbot, and most recently considerable work in the development of the 'Rights Here, Right Now' Young People's Report which formed part of the NI NGO Report submissions to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child at the end of 2022.

Young people from Youth@CLC attended Committee hearings in February and May 2023 and when the Committee published its Concluding Observations and Recommendations report in June, they concurred with many of the issues and concerns raised through our work. CLC has subsequently developed the 'Rights Here, Right Now' project which, with the support of Youth@CLC and engagement with other groups of young people, will continue to promote the interests and rights of children and young people in Northern Ireland.



How We Are Organised



Job Description

Post:	Solicitor
Reports to:	Senior Solicitor
Location:	Children's Law Centre, Rights House, 127-131 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH - hybrid working is available subject to approval
Hours:	35 hours per week
Grade/Band:	£34,314 - £36,124
Pension:	5% employer contribution in first six months moving to 7% thereafter
Holidays:	25 annual leave + 12 statutory and public holidays
Contract term:	Fixed term 36 months, initially
Probation period:	6 months

Summary of Role

To provide legal information, advice and assistance, undertake casework and provide representation for children and young people referred to the Children's Law Centre (CLC). Deliver training in respect of the law and children's rights. Undertake policy and legislative advocacy to promote children's rights and to ensure maximum legal protections for children.

Core Responsibilities

Legal Advice and Casework

- Provide legal information and advice to CLC clients through the CHALKY Advice Line and REE Rights Responder via Live Chat.
- Undertake and manage own casework and provide representation for children and young people as required, including appeal submissions and providing representation at tribunal and in court proceedings.
- Carry out legal research as required to assist colleagues with legal advice and information enquiries and ongoing casework.
- Draft legal pre-action correspondence, secure necessary legal aid cover for clients, prepare legal applications and pleadings for tribunal appeals and court proceedings for casework as required and within strict deadlines.
- Liaise with relevant authorities and third parties to obtain evidence as required to progress client's cases effectively and where appropriate, to negotiate resolution of cases in the best interests of the child.
- Advocate for and represent clients before tribunals and other courts, instructing and working with counsel in cases in the higher courts as required.
- Support children and young people to engage in their own cases and to participate in hearings should they wish to do so.
- Ensure that all case files and records are maintained (electronically and in hard copy where required) in accordance with CLC's case management procedures, Lexcel quality standards and Law Society of Northern Ireland regulations.
- Comply with Legal Services Agency regulations and guidance governing legal aid.
- Undertake administrative responsibility for recording all legal advice and casework outcomes to meet funders

monitoring and reporting requirements.

Working as a Member of CLC's Legal Team

- Participate in casework meetings and assist in identifying, initiating and conducting strategic litigation at court and tribunals in accordance with the CLC Policy.
- Contribute to the ongoing development of CLC's casework strategy.
- As part of the Legal Team, drafting and preparation of legal documents or submissions relating to casework as required.
- As part of the Legal Team, complete applications for legal aid assistance through LAMS (Legal Aid Management System) and the processing of those applications in accordance with regulations governing legal aid.
- Undertake training, supervision and development, including supporting other members of the Legal Team to develop expertise in new areas of legal practice.
- Undertake such administrative duties as may be appropriate in the performance of the main duties of the post and to assist the running of the Legal Unit.

Policy, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

- Assist with the production and revision of legal information resources to reflect changes in the law, including updating legal information on CLC's website and REE.
- Working with the Policy and Public Affairs Team assist with submissions to relevant domestic and international bodies regarding public consultation with a focus on children's rights, law and policy and provide legal input to relevant joint campaigns.

- Represent CLC at seminars and conferences, including relevant stakeholder groups.

- Work collaboratively with staff to achieve CLC policy and information communication objectives.
- Work with Youth@CLC to develop chatbot content and take part in youth participation and advocacy project work.

Other Duties and Responsibilities

- Contribute to the overall operation, advancement and strategic development of the CLC, in accordance with organisational aims and objectives.
- Development and implementation of training sessions as required.
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of areas of law relevant to the position, as well as knowledge of key developments in human rights, equality and public law.
- Comply with professional CPD regulations, including Law Society of Northern Ireland requirements.
- Build stakeholder confidence in CLC's legal services through high standards of professional accountability.
- Assist with the preparation of reports for funders and others as required.
- Adherence to safeguarding, confidentiality, data protection, health and safety, equality and other organisational policies.
- Undertake necessary administrative tasks required for the role.

Person Specification

Criteria	Essential	Desired
Qualifications / Education / Knowledge		
Relevant third level qualification	X	
Professional legal qualification as a solicitor	X	
To hold or be entitled to hold a Solicitor's Practising Certificate in Northern Ireland	X	
Knowledge of domestic law relating to children in Northern Ireland	X	
Knowledge of human rights law in Northern Ireland	X	
Knowledge of equality law in Northern Ireland		X
Knowledge of health and social care law in Northern Ireland		X
Knowledge of mental health law in Northern Ireland		X
Knowledge of education law in Northern Ireland, including special educational needs		X
Knowledge of immigration and asylum law in NI		X
Knowledge of housing law in Northern Ireland		X
Knowledge of the voluntary and community sector In Northern Ireland		X
Experience		
At least 2 years' post qualification legal practice as a solicitor	X	
Experience providing legal advice	X	
Experience of legal advocacy and representation work	X	

Experience working directly with children and young people	x	
Experience of producing information materials, legal bundles and/or training resources	x	
Experience of applications for Legal Aid	x	
Experience working in the field of children's rights or children's voluntary and community sector		x
Experience of working with a case management system		x
Experience of undertaking policy and legislative commentary		x
Experience working with young people with additional learning needs and complex issues		x
Ability / Aptitude / Skills		
Ability to work as part of a team and on own initiative	x	
Excellent planning, time management and organisational skills	x	
Excellent written and oral communication skills, including the use of ICT	x	
Willingness to travel as required to carry out duties of the post	x	
Ability to communicate and develop a rapport with children and young people	x	
Ethos		
Commitment to the ethos of the Children's Law Centre	x	
A commitment to children's rights	x	
A commitment to the principle of equal opportunities	x	
A commitment to children's participation	x	



This job description is intended to provide an overview of the core responsibilities of the post. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every activity the post holder does. Job descriptions can be subject to reasonable change as the role evolves without fundamentally changing terms and conditions. Children's Law Centre reserves the right to change and amend specific duties or tasks within reason and to ask post holders to carry out other reasonable duties as and when required to do so.

How to Apply

To apply applicants should complete an application form and return to Children's Law Centre by 5pm on Monday 10th February 2025.

It is anticipated interviews will take place in person week commencing 24th February 2025.

A copy of the application form can be downloaded at <https://childrenslawcentre.org.uk/work-with-us/>



Children's Law Centre

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Tel: 028 9024 5704
Fax: 028 9024 5679
Email: info@childrenslawcentre.org

CHALKY Freephone Advice Line:
0808 808 5678
chalky@childrenslawcentre.org

REE Rights Responder
#Ask REE at reerights.com

The Children's Law Centre is a charity and can accept donations to support our work.

If you are a UK taxpayer, Gift Aid your donation and we can claim back an extra 25p from your taxes for every £1 you donate. Donate securely online at www.cafonline.org by selecting Children's Law Centre under 'find a charity' or send your donation directly to Children's Law Centre.

Children's Law Centre is a company limited by guarantee.

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Company Registration No. NI033998 (Northern Ireland)

