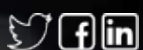


Children's Law Centre

CANDIDATE INFORMATION PACK

POLICY AND PUBLIC
AFFAIRS OFFICER



childrenslawcentre.org.uk



Children's Rights Change Children's Lives

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Dear Candidate



Thank you for your interest in the Policy and Public Affairs Officer 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.

We continue to grow, 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.

Over many years our Policy and Public Affairs Team has been instrumental in CLC's engagement with decision makers across Government, in Non-Departmental Public Bodies, and with elected representatives and stakeholders more generally, cultivating relationships that have supported our efforts to raise awareness of the diminution of rights impacting upon children's access to services across this jurisdiction.

The Policy and Public Affairs Team works with our Legal and Advice Team to gather

evidence from the issues they are responding to through our freephone advice service. This evidence base constantly informs our knowledge and understanding of how children and young people here are being failed and how we can focus our efforts to achieve change.

For many years now CLC has also led the Northern Ireland NGO sector in reporting to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in relation to how the standards of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are actually enjoyed by children and young people here in practice. Most recently CLC completed and submitted the NI NGO reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in December 2022 and attended the Committee hearings in Geneva, Switzerland in February and May 2023 supporting a delegation of young people to attend on both occasions. Our Policy and Public Affairs Team worked closely with Youth@CLC, our panel of young people who advised and supported our work in developing an additional Young People's Report to the UN Committee. When the Committee published its Concluding Observations and Recommendations to the UK in June 2023, they very much reflected the issues that had been raised through the reporting process.

We continue to grow, building on our excellent track record of influencing decision makers in the best interests of children

CLC's Policy and Public Affairs Team are engaged in a wide and varied portfolio of policy areas including our joint work with Voice of Young People In Care (VOYPIC), Include Youth and NIACRO on raising the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility; with the South Tyrone Empowerment Project on issues facing refugee and asylum seeking children in contingency and dispersal accommodation; our efforts to secure adequate respite provision for children with high support needs; and our ongoing scrutiny of children and young people's experiences of engagement with the PSNI.

To be considered for this role you will need to have a relevant third level qualification and two years' experience working in the field of legislative and policy commentary or a minimum of three years' experience in legislative and policy commentary (if a relevant third level qualification is not held), an understanding of the policy environment in which CLC operates as it relates to the promotion of children's rights and experience in a campaigning, advocacy and influencing environment in which you have contributed to and executed plans to achieve specific policy outcomes.

The successful candidate will join our Policy and Public Affairs Team working alongside our Legal and Advice Team, colleagues in

our Communications and Training functions and Youth@CLC, You will be joining an established staff team who are committed to children being able to exercise their rights and access the services and support to which they are entitled.

If you are passionate about children's rights and enabling young people to be able to access those rights working 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 advice 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

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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.

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.

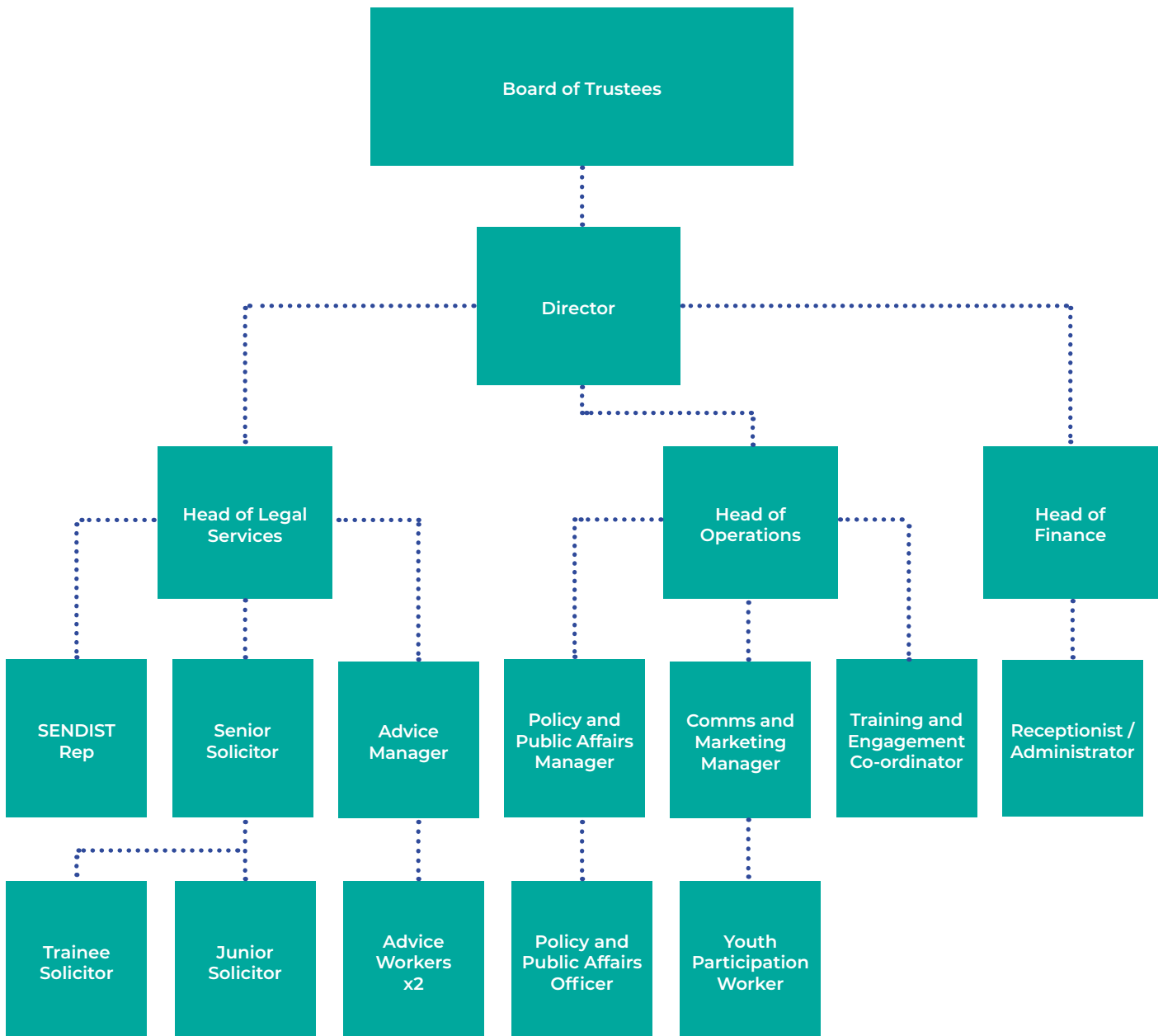
Youth@CLC

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



Youth@CLC

Job Description

Post:	Policy and Public Affairs Officer
Reports to:	Policy and Public Affairs Manager
Location:	Children's Law Centre, Rights House, 127-131 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH - hybrid working is available subject to approval
Hours:	21 hours per week
Grade/Band:	NJC Point 22-25. £31,364 - £33,945 (pro-rata)
Pension:	5% Employer contribution moving to 7% on successful completion of probationary period
Probation:	6 months
Holidays:	25 days annual leave + 12 days public/bank pro rata

Summary of Role

As an integral part of a small Policy and Public Affairs Team your role will be to contribute to the ongoing development and implementation of the Children's Law Centre's (CLC) efforts to promote children's rights and achieve policy and legislative change in Northern Ireland that comply with children's rights standards and are directly informed by the voices and views of children and young people.

Core Responsibilities

- To undertake policy research and analysis, including preparing papers, briefings and publications in order to resource and support ongoing influencing work.
- To proof policy and legislative initiatives and proposals against the standards set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other domestic and international human rights standards, including equality proofing under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- To monitor and analyse the activities of the Northern Ireland Assembly and where relevant the UK Government and Parliament, as it relates to issues impacting on children's lives and children's rights.
- To consult with Youth@CLC and individual children and young people when appropriate to inform CLC's policy positions, briefings and consultation responses.
- To draft briefings, Assembly Questions and proposed amendments to Bills and provide evidence to Assembly Committees as required.
- To monitor the external public policy environment and contribute to CLC's policy development and forward planning on targets for influencing and challenge with specific reference to the identified key areas of concern in children's rights.
- To engage with members of the NI Assembly and other elected representatives, including where relevant at Westminster, their staff and relevant stakeholders in the pursuit of CLC's policy objectives and to raise the profile of CLC within government, among political parties and elected representatives.
- To engage when appropriate at an international level including at the UN and European level.
- To give presentations on policy issues to a range of audiences, including NI Assembly members, representatives of CLC member organisations, Youth@

CLC, children and young people, and CLC colleagues.

- To support, advise and work with other CLC colleagues on key public policy issues, including those identified through CLC's legal and training functions.
- To ensure CLC's membership is kept informed of all CLC's policy work and are aware of all submissions made including updating on the CLC website.
- To respond to press and media queries regarding policy matters and act as a media spokesperson for CLC when required.
- To support CLC's Policy and Public Affairs Manager in achieving the Policy and Public Affairs Team's strategic and operational objectives.

Other Duties and Responsibilities

- Contribute to the overall operation, advancement and strategic development of the CLC, in accordance with organisational aims and objectives.
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of policy areas relevant to the position, as well as knowledge of key developments in human rights, equality and public law.
- Monitor own continuing professional development and identify training, growth and development opportunities.
- Participate in and organise training and development including with CLC colleagues as required.
- Work in compliance with all CLC's policies and practice with particular regard to safeguarding, confidentiality, data privacy, non-discriminatory work practices and health and safety.
- Work collegiately with colleagues in the Operations Team and more widely across CLC.

- Maintain up to date records of all policy and public affairs activity, including meetings, engagement with external stakeholders and, monitoring and evaluation reports and undertake necessary administrative tasks for the role.

Vetting

As this post will involve contact with children and young people the successful applicant will be subject to an enhanced Access NI check.



Person Specification

Criteria	Essential	Desired
Qualifications / Education / Knowledge		
A relevant third level qualification and 2 year's experience working in the field of legislative and policy commentary or A minimum of 3 years' experience in legislative and policy commentary (if a relevant third level qualification is not held)	X	
Knowledge of domestic and international equality and human rights standards and mechanisms	X	
An understanding of the policy environment in which CLC operates	X	
Knowledge of legislative processes, policy developments and processes in Northern Ireland	X	
Knowledge of the political context and structures in Northern Ireland	X	
Knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and of children's human rights standards		X
Knowledge of the law in Northern Ireland as it relates to children		X
Knowledge of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland		X
Knowledge of the children's rights sector in Northern Ireland		X
Knowledge of current key children's legislative and policy developments in Northern Ireland		X
Experience		
At least 2 years' experience in a campaigning, advocacy and influencing environment with experience of contributing to and executing plans to achieve specific policy outcomes	X	
Experience of giving presentations on policy issues to a range of audiences	X	
Experience of working effectively as part of a team as well as with a range of external partners and stakeholders	X	
Experience of working in the children's rights sector		X

Experience of having undertaken legislative or policy commentary from a children's rights perspective		X
Experience of working on equality issues		X
Experience of working with the media		X
Experience of working directly with children and young people		X
Ability / Aptitude / Skills		
Ability to work as part of a team and on own initiative	X	
Ability to initiate, plan and prioritise a varied workload	X	
Excellent written and oral communication skills, and an ability to handle complex situations with tact and diplomacy	X	
Excellent analytical, advocacy and presentation skills	X	
Excellent planning, time management and organisational skills	X	
Ability to communicate effectively with children and young people (or a willingness to undertake training in order to develop these skills)	X	
High level of ICT literacy	X	
Willingness to travel as required to carry out duties of the post	X	
Willingness to participate in strategic and operational planning	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	



The 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 11.59pm on Sunday 1st December 2024.

It is anticipated interviews will take place in person week commencing 9th December 2024.

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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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.

Charity Registration No. NIC101148
Company Registration No. NI033998 (Northern Ireland)

