

Children's Law Centre

# Candidate Information Pack

Trainee Solicitor



[childrenslawcentre.org.uk](http://childrenslawcentre.org.uk)



# Children's Rights Change Children's Lives

With thanks to:

The  
Legal  
Education  
Foundation

# Dear Candidate

**Thank you for your interest in joining the Children's Law Centre (CLC) as Trainee Solicitor as part of the Legal Education Foundation Justice First Fellowship.**

Every year, thousands of children, their parents/carers and families benefit from our direct help to access services, and many more through our efforts to influence and effect strategic change. We are proud of what we achieve in the interests of children 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 who are vulnerable and disadvantaged through disability, special educational needs, poor mental health, homelessness, seeking asylum or who have been denied services to which they are entitled under equality and human rights legislation.

We are delighted to once again be offering this opportunity with support from the Legal Education Foundation. This role offers the opportunity to work and learn from CLC's experienced legal, advice and policy teams, work directly with children and young people through our Youth@CLC youth panel, engage with legal, health and education professionals while building on your experience as a social justice advocate.

To be considered for the role you will need to:

- Have passed the Institute of Professional Legal Studies entrance exam and have a place at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies beginning in September 2024.



- Be able to demonstrate passion for access to justice, along with the highest level of skills and aptitude and the potential to drive innovation in future legal practice.
- Be willing and able to commit to serving a 29 month term as a Fellow commencing in April 2024.

If you are passionate about using the law to deliver social justice, and you are looking for a fantastic opportunity to complete your training and move on to the next stage in a career, advancing access to justice, then the Justice First Fellowship is for you.

Good luck and we look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paddy Kelly".

**Paddy Kelly**  
Director

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

# 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 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 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 and information for children through our freephone advice line, our online legal information bot REE Rights Responder and our online REE Live Chat service for 13-17 year olds.

**We were instrumental in the implementation of key aspects of the UNCRC, such as the introduction of the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2003**

Our advice line has helped and supported thousands of children and young people since its launch in 2000. For many who contact us through our advice line we may also provide advocacy on behalf of their children in dealing with duty holders to ensure they have 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 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 newcomer children living in contingency accommodation and unable to access services.

CLC leads the voluntary and community sector through the UNCRC reporting process, having submitted the most recent NGO stakeholder report in 2022. The concluding observations from this process were quite significant as they included a

recommendation that the NI Secretary of State withdraw the composite 2023-24 budget issued in the absence of the NI Assembly as they believed children and young people in Northern Ireland would be disproportionately impacted by the cuts to services.

We were instrumental in the implementation of key aspects of the UNCRC, such as the introduction 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. More recently, CLC has led the way in protecting children and young people's rights during COVID-19, 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 do our work in campaigning for young people's rights.

**Our belief that children's rights change children's lives continues to be the force that drives our work forward**

Youth@CLC has represented the interests of children from Northern Ireland at the UN Committee on the Rights of Child. Having contributed to the development of the 'Rights Here, Right Now' children and young people's report, members from the Youth@CLC panel recently formed part of a delegation of young people from Northern Ireland to present findings from the report to the UN Committee in Geneva.

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

**The Children's Law Centre is a unique charitable organisation in Northern Ireland. Guided by our youth panel, we work to create a society where all children and young people can access services and opportunities to enjoy their childhood and realise their full potential.**

We give a voice to children and young people, including the most disadvantaged, and provide legal advice and representation. We develop policy to inform decision makers, and support learning through provision of training programmes, seminars and conferences, including a respected annual lecture on children's rights.

## Youth@CLC

Our youth advisory panel, Youth@CLC, is a group of young people aged between 14 – 18 who 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. Youth@CLC supported the development of CLC's REE Rights Responder chatbot, having their efforts recognised as finalists in the Pearson World Changer Awards in 2020. Most recently they have been instrumental in surveying young people in Northern Ireland as part of the 2022 submission to the UN Committee

on the Rights of the Child, including members of the panel representing children from Northern Ireland at the hearings in Geneva, Switzerland, in February and May 2023.

## Legal Services

We provide a free legal advice service and legal 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 taken into account.

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.
- All children have equality of access to their legal rights, regardless of their age, background or circumstance.

We run a freephone legal advice line called



CHALKY, providing advice for thousands of young people each year. We provide accessible legal information for children and young people through REE Rights Responder and our Child Law Hub.

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

Our policy research and advocacy work informs and influences decision makers. We ensure that government is reminded of its international obligations including under the UNCRC when drafting policy and legislation. CLC also leads the NI NGO stakeholder engagement with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child through the UK reporting process. Through our casework we identify key issues impacting on children and propose evidence-based solutions, underpinned by the children's rights framework. Supported by our team of legal experts, we provide analysis of law and policy practice.

Through our policy and public affairs work

the Children's Law Centre engages with a range of young people, parents, individuals, organisations, trusts, departments and independent bodies, the NI Executive and Assembly, the UK and Irish governments, the European Union and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

## Training and Engagement

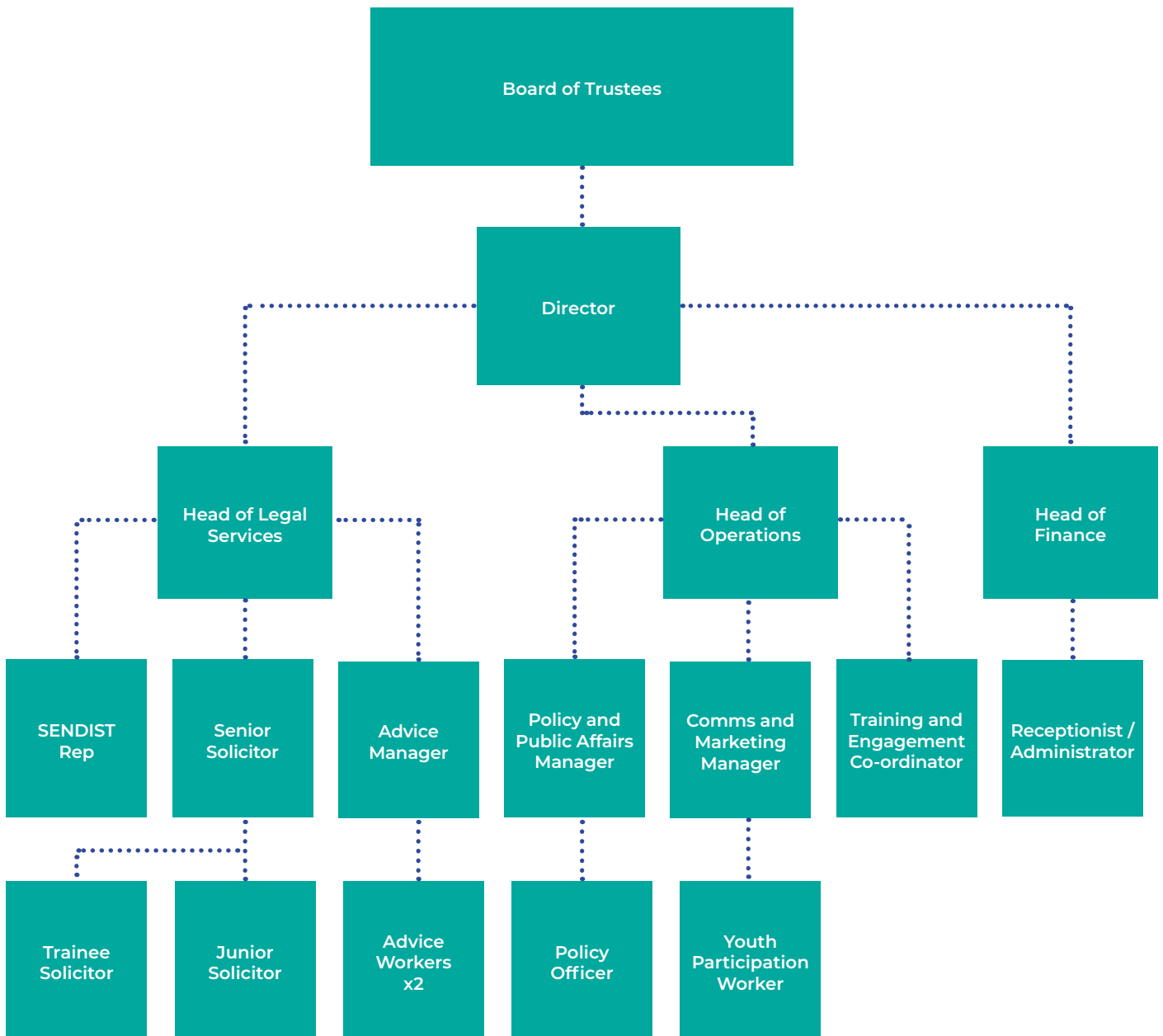
Providing training and learning is one of the best ways in which we can inform children and young people, their parents and carers of their rights. We also provide a range of tailored programmes to professionals in the children's sector and to the wider voluntary and community sector, to duty bearers in government departments and to the legal profession. Topics include mental health capacity, special educational needs, Article 21 – Children's (NI) Order 1995, the UNCRC, and these can be tailored to suit each audience.

The Children's Law Centre has a small membership to the organisation mainly individuals and organisations working in the children's services and rights field. This is an audience that we are keen to engage with more closely and have plans to expand on this in the near future.





# How We Are Organised



Youth@CLC

# Job Description

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Post:</b>       | Trainee Solicitor  |
| <b>Reports to:</b> | Senior Solicitor   |
| <b>Location:</b>   | Children's Law Centre, Rights House, 127-131 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 1SH |
| <b>Hours:</b>      | 35 hours per week  |
| <b>Salary:</b>     | £22,475.53 - £23,149.81  |
| <b>Duration:</b>   | Fixed term 29 months   |

## Objectives of the Role

This role is supported by the Legal Education Foundation's Justice First Fellowship and the successful candidate will be required to complete the LEF Justice First Fellowship Scheme ('the Scheme') and complete the recognised post graduate solicitors training through The Institute of Professional Legal Studies, Queen's University Belfast, in accordance with Law Society for Northern Ireland requirements.

This role will be based at the Children's Law Centre, undertaking legal services work including delivery of CLC's legal advice and information service, provision of legal outreach services, client casework, negotiation and representation at tribunal hearings, involvement in strategic litigation, policy and training from a children's rights perspective.

In addition, the successful candidate must also develop and implement an agreed Scheme project that will advance access to justice. The successful candidate will be supervised and supported by the CLC Senior Solicitor and will have the opportunity to attend and participate in the wider support, training and opportunities component of the Scheme organised by the Legal Education Foundation and its partners.

## What can a trainee expect by training at this organisation?

The trainee would have a 29-month solicitor traineeship, combining pre and post course

periods of in-office training with 12 months full time study at IPLS, QUB.

The period of training under the fellowship scheme would commence in April 2024 and finish at the end of August 2026.

Pre-course training will include:

- A comprehensive induction with staff.
- Familiarisation with CLC's legal policy and procedures.
- Child safeguarding.
- Data protection.
- Access to an in house legal training programme.

Detailed operational training will include:

- Advice giving and recording.
- Ongoing support and supervision.
- Shadowing CLC's legal team in client interviews and casework.
- Receiving practical training on communicating and working with child clients.

Post-course the trainees will:

- Develop their knowledge and experience of tribunal procedures and strategic casework.

- Be supported to prepare for and represent clients at SENDIST and Mental Health Tribunals.
- Receive training to develop their knowledge and experience conducting strategic litigation and judicial review procedure.
- Develop legal strategies for broader impact public interest case outcomes.
- in accordance with CLC accredited legal quality standards (Law Society of Northern Ireland, Lexcel) and any funders requirements.
- Participate in the delivery of legal outreach services and awareness raising sessions to promote CLC legal services.
- Assist in the production and revision of the Centre's legal information resources to reflect changes in the law, including updating of legal information on CLC's website, as required.

## Key Duties and Responsibilities

### Advice and Casework

- With appropriate supervision, provide CLC clients legal advice, information and appropriate representation on the law as it relates to children and young people.
- Carry out legal research as required to assist with legal advice and information enquiries and ongoing casework.
- With appropriate supervision, advise, represent and negotiate on behalf of children and young people and their parents/carers in relation to casework, including providing representation at tribunal.
- Participate in CLC casework meetings and to assist the Legal Team in identifying, initiating and conducting strategic litigation at court and tribunals in accordance with the Centre's Casework Policy.
- Assist members of the Legal Team with the drafting and preparation of legal documents or submissions relating to casework as required.
- Assist with the preparation of applications for legal aid assistance and the processing of those applications in accordance with the Regulations governing legal aid.
- Maintain accurate records of all advice, information and representation provided
- Undertake training, supervision and development relevant to the post including shadowing other members of the Legal Team.
- Work as a member of the Legal Team and contribute to the overall operation, advancement and strategic development of CLC, in accordance with organisational aims and objectives.
- Assist CLC staff and volunteers as required.
- Liaise with other agencies and working contacts (see below) as appropriate.
- 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 and Training Work

- With appropriate supervision, undertake policy research and analysis, including preparing papers, briefings and publications in order to inform and support ongoing influencing work.
- Assist the Policy and Legal Teams in preparing responses to consultation documents and policy statements.
- Assist in identifying the training needs of CLC members and others in response to changes in legislation and policy or test

cases/case law developments.

- With appropriate support and supervision, research and produce written training resources and assist in the delivery of training.
- Assist with preparation for and participate in seminars and conferences as appropriate.

**Justice First Fellowship Scheme Project**

- As a fellow of the Scheme, develop and implement an agreed Scheme project that will advance access to justice.
- Report as required on the progress of the Scheme project.
- Monitor and measure outcomes of the project by agreed methods to assist CLC in evaluating the impact of the project.

**Working Contacts**

Staff, volunteers, Board of Trustees and members of the Children's Law Centre,

youth@clc, children and young people, child and youth groups, appropriate voluntary and community organisations, relevant statutory and government agencies, political parties, MLAs, MPs, Assembly/parliamentary committees, legislators and policy makers, lawyers, academics and other professionals or special interest groups working with and for children and young people, domestic and international human rights institutions and researchers.

**Vetting**

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

Appointment to this post is conditional upon the candidate subsequently being accepted onto the Solicitors Practice Course for the period from from January – December 2025, at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, Queen's University, Belfast, in accordance with the requirements of the Law Society of Northern Ireland.



# Person Specification

| Criteria   | Essential | Desired |
|--|-----------|---------|
| <b>Qualifications / Education / Knowledge</b>  |           |         |
| Degree in Law or academic qualification that renders the candidate eligible to apply to the Solicitor's Practice Course at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, Queen's University, Belfast  | X         |         |
| Ability to demonstrate knowledge of one or more of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's rights</li> <li>• Human rights</li> <li>• Equality law</li> <li>• Child and family law</li> <li>• Education law</li> <li>• Special educational needs</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Public law</li> <li>• Social welfare</li> <li>• Mental health law</li> <li>• Community care</li> <li>• Children in need</li> <li>• Youth justice</li> <li>• Access to justice</li> </ul> | X         |         |
| Knowledge of the Human Rights Act 1998, European Convention on Human Rights and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child   | X         |         |
| Knowledge of the children's voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland   | X         |         |
| Knowledge of domestic law relating to children in Northern Ireland, including equality legislation   | X         |         |
| Knowledge of legal issues and access to justice issues affecting marginalised and disadvantaged children and young people and communities  | X         |         |
| <b>Relevant Experience</b>   |           |         |
| Experience of advocacy or representation work  |           | X       |
| Experience of having worked directly with children and young people  |           | X       |
| Experience of providing legal advice   |           | X       |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Experience of working in the children's rights or children's voluntary and community sector   |   | X |
| Experience of producing information materials and/or training resources   |   | X |
| Experience of undertaking legislative or policy commentary  |   | X |
| <b>Abilities / Aptitudes / Skills</b>   |   |   |
| Ability to work as part of a small multi-disciplinary team and work on own initiative   |   | X |
| Ability to communicate effectively with children and young people and callers or clients who are vulnerable, in distress or in crisis | X |   |
| Ability to initiate, plan and prioritise a varied and pressurised work load to meet deadlines   | X |   |
| Excellent written and oral communication skills   | X |   |
| Ability to negotiate and advocate with professionals and other third parties on behalf of clients                                     |   | X |
| Computer literacy   | X |   |
| Willingness to travel as required to carry out duties of the post   | X |   |
| Willingness from time to time to work outside normal working hours  | X |   |
| <b>Ethos</b>  |   |   |
| A 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.

# Testimonial



**Having had an interest in Children's Rights from a young age, I always admired the work and ethos of the Children's Law Centre and I am therefore honoured to have completed my traineeship there, where I continue to work as a qualified solicitor.**

Through my studies, work experience and employment, I have seen first-hand how little say young people have in some situations impacting their lives, despite the fact Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to have their voices heard in all matters concerning them.

The Children's Law Centre exhibits an environment in which children are recognised as the most important parties in the court process and one which endeavours to reduce the anxiety and stress children and their families feel as much as possible.

The Justice First Fellowship scheme, through the Legal Education Foundation, has not only allowed me to live out my dream career but it has also welcomed me into a circle of like-minded people, all of whom I would probably never have met otherwise, and some of whom I now have the pleasure of calling friends.

I feel so lucky to be part of such an amazing programme and being able to carry out the work I do on a daily basis. I represent vulnerable children and young people and advocate for their rights to ensure that all children are valued, have their rights protected and can participate without discrimination.

The work we do at CLC allows me to give a voice to those children who don't have a voice or feel like they aren't being heard.

I feel privileged to be part of an organisation that contributes to desperately needed changes in law that will change the lives of children for the better.

The ability to complete a training contract at CLC is a unique opportunity that enables you to use law as a tool to support social change and make a difference.

**Emma-Rose Duffy**  
Solicitor and Justice First Fellow

## How to Apply

To apply applicants should complete an online application form on the Legal Education Foundation website, available at <https://jff.thelegaleducationfoundation.org/how-to-apply/eligibility/application-form/>

The application deadline is 5pm on Friday 8th December 2023. Interviews will take place on Tuesday 23rd and Wednesday 24th January 2024

Further information on CLC's recruitment of an Trainee Solicitor is available at <https://jff.thelegaleducationfoundation.org/host/childrens-law-centre-2023/>

# Children's Law Centre

Rights House  
2nd Floor  
127 - 131 Ormeau Road  
Belfast, BT7 1SH

Tel: 028 9024 5704  
Fax: 028 9024 5679  
Email: [info@childrenslawcentre.org](mailto:info@childrenslawcentre.org)

**CHALKY Freephone Advice Line:**  
0808 808 5678  
[chalky@childrenslawcentre.org](mailto:chalky@childrenslawcentre.org)

**REE Rights Responder**  
#Ask REE at [reerights.com](http://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](http://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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