



CONSTITUTION

1. Name

The name of the Association will be the Association of Lawyers for Children ('the Association').

2. Objects

- 2.1. The overarching objects of the Association are:
- (a) to promote justice for children and young people ('children'), primarily in the family justice system;
 - (b) to influence the development of the law of the jurisdiction of England and Wales relating to children so as to ensure that the law evolves and progresses in a manner consistent with the welfare of children and the right of children to comprehensive and effective legal protection and redress;
 - (c) to improve the knowledge and professional practice standards of those who are charged with applying that law so as to ensure that children receive comprehensive and effective legal protection and redress within the justice system; and
 - (d) to preserve, promote and protect the rights of children of the jurisdiction of England and Wales and to seek the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989 ['UNCRC'] into domestic law; and its implementation and recognition in the courts of England.
- 2.2. In pursuance of the overarching objects the Association may undertake such functions as are necessary and appropriate, which may include but not be limited to:
- (a) working to further and improve the knowledge and practice of all persons involved and interested in the law, social policy and practice relating to children and associated issues;
 - (b) providing a forum for the exchange of and use of, opinions, research and ideas on the practice of children law and associated policies;
 - (c) research and publish reports on existing practice in connection with children law and ways of improving law, policies and practice;

- (d) arrange and provide for, or join in arranging and providing for, the holding of exhibitions, congresses, meetings, lectures, seminars/webinars and training courses to deal with children law, practice and issues relating to children;
- (e) organise such money raising activities as may be determined by the Executive Committee ('the Committee') from time to time to raise funds to promote and encourage the activities of charities or voluntary organisations concerned with the care and protection of children.
- (f) make, develop and maintain working relations with other organisations and bodies to promote professional good practice and effective interdisciplinary links;
- (g) consult and/or make representations, in so far as it may be desirable, with the legislature, executive and judiciary concerning matters pertaining to children law and those who administer it for the benefit of the children and young people ('children'), primarily in the family justice system;
- (h) engage in influencing policy developments so as to further the overarching objects; and
- (i) intervene in proceedings which have wider public importance in respect of the protection or promotion of children's rights and/or the family justice system and/or procedure and/or practice.

2.3. In furtherance of the objects, the Association may procure contributions and/or subscriptions by personal or written appeal, public meetings or otherwise. All monies raised by or on behalf of the Association shall be applied to promote the objects of the Association. This may include the payment in good faith of reasonable and proper remuneration to any employee or provider of services to the Association or the payment of reasonable and necessary expenses, including wherever the Committee considers it appropriate, an Honorarium to the Chair/Co-Chairs and Vice Chair/Vice Co-Chairs and/or partial compensation for loss of other earnings while engaged in Association business or activities to any such employee, provider of services to, Officer of or ordinary Committee member of the Association.

3. Membership

- 3.1. Full membership of the Association shall be open to any solicitor, trainee solicitor, barrister, trainee/pupil barrister, legal executive, law clerks/paralegal, solicitor apprentices, academics with a legal or socio legal qualification or working in a legal department, members of the judiciary, all legal advisers to the courts and court staff with a legal qualification.
- 3.2. Student membership of the Association shall be available to the following:
 - 3.2.1. those who are enrolled full or part-time with a recognised educational establishment (tertiary education or higher) in England and Wales studying law or a professional course leading to a qualification as a solicitor or barrister or legal executive; or
 - 3.2.2. any other student approved by the Committee.

- 3.3. Student membership is a limited membership of the Association and student members shall not be entitled to:
 - 3.3.1. stand for election to the Committee; or
 - 3.3.2. vote in any election.
- 3.4. Individual Associate membership of the Association shall be open to all other persons interested in pursuing the objects of the Association, who shall be entitled to attend meetings but not to vote.
- 3.5. Organisation membership of the Association shall be open to all duly constituted bodies interested in pursuing the objects of the Association, who shall be entitled to attend meetings but not to vote.
- 3.6. The Association may appoint any member who has held the office of Chair/Co-Chair and/or who has made an outstanding contribution to the Association, to the position of Honorary Lifetime Vice-President. Such appointment will be made on the recommendation of the Committee and is subject to the approval of a majority of members attending and voting at the Annual General Meeting.
- 3.7. Any person may be invited to be an honorary member of the Association at the invitation of the Committee.
- 3.8. Membership of the Association shall cease if the subscription fee is unpaid for more than three months.
- 3.9. Membership of the Association shall cease by resolution of the Committee, provided that in the event of such a resolution being considered the member concerned shall be given at least 14 days notice of the meeting of the Committee and be entitled to attend and be heard by the Committee.
- 3.10. The Committee may waive the requirement that any Honorary Lifetime Vice – President or honorary member pay a subscription fee.
- 3.11. All members shall be admitted at the discretion of the Committee.
- 3.12. The list of members, and the details of any individual members are to be maintained by the Administrator, or such other person appointed by the Committee, and shall be confidential to the Association, and not disclosed to any other person or organisation outside the Association, whether for payment or otherwise.
- 3.13. This preceding clause shall not be taken as limiting the ability of the Committee to use the membership lists for appropriate circulations by, or on behalf of, other organisations or groups, or the Chair(s), Vice-Chair(s), Secretary, or Treasurer having

access to, and copies of, the membership list, but in any event only for the genuine purposes of the Association and in accordance with the law.

4. Subscription

- 4.1. Each calendar year members' shall pay a subscription fee at a rate agreed by the members at the Annual General Meeting.
- 4.2. Practice and Organisation membership of the Association may be made available at such rates and conditions as may be agreed by the members at the Annual General Meeting.

5. Officers of the Association

- 5.1. The Association shall have the following Officers:-
 - 5.1.1.1. Chair or Co-Chairs;
 - 5.1.1.2. Vice-Chair or Co-Vice Chairs;
 - 5.1.1.3. Secretary; and
 - 5.1.1.4. Treasurer.
- 5.2. Subject to paragraph 5.4. below in respect of the appointment of Chair or Co-Chairs, the Officers shall be elected by the Committee through an anonymous vote by ballot, electronic ballot or online election procedure which shall be conducted by the alternative vote system unless there is only one candidate for any Officer post, in which case that person shall be declared elected unopposed.
- 5.3. Each candidate for an Officer post shall be proposed and seconded by full members of the Committee and shall countersign the proposal to certify willingness to serve and to provide the time and commitment required for the post for which they are standing. In advance of the election each candidate shall be entitled to provide the Committee with a statement in support of not more than 200 words.
- 5.4. Save in exceptional circumstances, a Vice-Chair or Co-Vice-Chairs shall be appointed as Chair or Co-Chairs at the end of their term as Vice-Chair or Co-Vice-Chairs without election under paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 above.
- 5.5. Only full members of the Committee who have served on the Committee for at least two years shall be entitled to stand for any of the four Officers' posts.
- 5.6. The results of the elections shall be announced to the Association's membership at the Annual General Meeting ('AGM') following the elections.

- 5.7. The Chair or Co-Chairs shall hold office from the AGM immediately following their appointment until the second AGM after the start of their term of office. The Chair or Co-Chair is eligible for reappointment as Chair or Co-Chair at the end of the term of office, but for no more than one further term of one year until the next AGM, and if not so reappointed may remain as an ordinary member of the Committee for a further year at the discretion of the new Chair or Co-Chairs.
- 5.8. The Vice Chair or Co-Vice Chairs shall hold office from the AGM immediately following their election until the second AGM after the start of their term of office. In the event, they do not take up an appointment as a Chair/Co-Chair; any Vice- Chair or Co-Vice Chairs is/are eligible for re-election as Vice-Chair at the end of the term of office, but if not so re-elected, may remain as an ordinary member of the Committee until the end of their existing term on the Committee or through re-election.
- 5.9. Absent exceptional circumstances one of the Co-Chairs must be a solicitor or legal executive and the other must be a barrister.
- 5.10. Absent exceptional circumstances one of the Co-Vice Chairs must be a solicitor or legal executive and the other must be a barrister.
- 5.11. The Treasurer and Secretary shall hold office from the AGM immediately following their election until the second AGM after the start of their term of office.
- 5.12. The Treasurer and Secretary may stand for re-election in the same officer post.
- 5.13. In the event of the resignation of an Officer or owing to exceptional circumstances they are unable to continue for the duration of their period in office, the Committee shall elect (through an anonymous vote by ballot, electronic ballot or online election procedure which shall be conducted by the alternative vote system if there is more than one candidate) a replacement from the Committee to serve as a replacement until the conclusion of the term.

6. Executive Committee and sub-committees

- 6.1. Members shall elect from amongst themselves an Executive Committee ('the Committee') made up of ordinary members.
- 6.2. The Committee shall consist of the Officers and ordinary Committee members to a total of 18 people.
- 6.3. The Committee should include each of the following:
- 6.3.1. an employed local government lawyer;
 - 6.3.2. a solicitor or legal executive who is in private practice with at least 8 years PQE.

- 6.3.3. a barrister who has been appointed silk or a senior junior of no less than 12 years in practice post pupillage;
 - 6.3.4. a barrister whose principal chambers is outside of London;
 - 6.3.5. a solicitor or legal executive whose principal office is outside of London.
 - 6.3.6. a solicitor or legal executive with less than 7 years PQE at the time of their election to the Committee
 - 6.3.7. a barrister with less than 7 years in practice post pupillage at the time of their election to the Committee
- 6.4. Any Honorary Lifetime Vice –Presidents shall only attend the Committee at the invitation of the Chair or Co-Chairs.
- 6.5. The Committee may fill casual vacancies by co-opting from among the full or associate membership.
- 6.6. The Committee members shall hold office from the AGM where they are first elected until the third AGM after they are first elected to the position, but on their retirement under this rule, will be eligible for, (i) re-election for a single further three-year term or (ii) at the proposal of the Chair/Co-Chairs and subject to approval by a majority of remaining Committee members, renewal of office for a single further three-year term without re-election.
- 6.7. A Committee member may be eligible for re-election after two consecutive terms at the discretion of the chairs.
- 6.8. A Committee member who becomes an Officer of the Association is eligible for re-election for more than two consecutive three-year terms. Any maximum limit as to the number of terms for such a Committee member is at the discretion of the Chair/Co-Chairs.
- 6.9. A former Committee member who has not been a member of the Committee in the two years preceding the AGM is eligible for re-election to the Committee even if that former member has served more than two consecutive terms previously.
- 6.10. The three-year term of office of any Committee member co-opted onto the Committee during any particular calendar year and between AGMs, shall be deemed to run from the previous AGM. The term of office of a Committee member co-opted onto the Committee can be initially limited at the discretion of the Chair/Co-Chairs, and may be subject to review after the first year of appointment at the discretion of the Chair/Co-Chairs.
- 6.11. A co-opted member of the Committee cannot vote in the business of the Association which is administered at a meeting of the Committee. Nothing in this paragraph affects a co-opted members voting rights as an ordinary member of the Association.

- 6.12. The election and any re-election of Committee members shall be by an anonymous vote by ballot, electronic ballot or online election procedure of all full members and shall be conducted by the single transferable vote system unless the number of candidates nominated does not exceed the number of vacancies on the Committee, in which case those candidates shall be declared elected unopposed.
- 6.13. The Secretary shall give not less than 28 days written notice to the membership of the closing date for nominations and the ballot papers shall be sent out to the membership not less than 28 days before the close of voting.
- 6.14. Each candidate shall be proposed and seconded by members of the Association (whether full or associate, but not student) and shall countersign the proposal to certify willingness to serve and to provide the time and commitment required for the post for which they are standing. They shall also provide a clear declaration that they have no convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings for any sexual or violent offences, or any offences involving children or young people, and that they are not aware of any such proceedings pending against them. Each candidate shall be entitled to include with the ballot papers:
- 6.14.1. A brief personal profile of not more than 200 words.
- 6.14.2. A short statement of support of not more than 100 words by another full member.
- 6.15. The results of the elections shall be announced at the Annual General Meeting next following the poll.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer

- 7.1. The committee shall have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer.
- 7.2. The Chair or Co-Chairs shall appoint an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer who shall also be appointed as Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee of the Association.
- 7.3. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer shall have responsibility for:
- 7.3.1. monitoring Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issues within the Association;
- 7.3.2. implementing and maintaining standards of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion good practice within the Association; and
- 7.3.3. liaising with the Law Society, Resolution, The Bar Council and other relevant organisations in order to achieve (7.4.1) and (7.4.2) above.

8. Responsibilities of and conduct of the Committee

- 8.1. The overall management of the Association shall be the responsibility of the Committee which shall be empowered to act in the name of and on behalf of the

Association as a whole. Day-to-day administration of the Association may be delegated by the Committee to an Administrator, or such other persons as the Committee shall appoint, and both management and administration shall be subject to the provisions of this Constitution.

- 8.2. The Committee may establish such subcommittees as may be necessary to promote the objects of the Association.
 - 8.2.1. Chairs of the subcommittees will be appointed by the Chair or Co-Chairs of the Association;
 - 8.2.2. such sub-committees must have terms of reference agreed by the Committee and consist of at least one Committee member, who will usually chair the subcommittee; and
 - 8.2.3. at the discretion of the Committee, sub-committees may consist of non-members of the Association where that is appropriate to its terms of reference.
- 8.3. The Committee shall open a bank account for the Association and the terms of the bank mandate shall be agreed by the Committee.
- 8.4. The Committee shall meet no less than three times each calendar year between AGMs and at places and times decided by the Committee. The quorum for meetings of the Committee shall be six.
- 8.5. The Committee members shall be given at least five days notice of a Committee meeting, and the agenda for that meeting.
- 8.6. Save as expressly provided by this Constitution, decisions of the Committee shall be reached by a simple majority of full members, , present and voting, and the Chair for the meeting shall have a second casting vote in the event of a tie.
- 8.7. If at any Committee meeting of the Association, no quorum is present within one hour of the time given for the start of the meeting, the members present can adjourn to a date at least seven days from the date for the meeting, and subject to notification of all Committee members of the adjourned meeting time and date, those full Committee members present at the adjourned meeting shall constitute a quorum.
- 8.8. Any two of the Chair or Co-Chairs, Vice Chair or Co-Vice-Chairs, Secretary, or Treasurer may together call an Emergency meeting of the Committee, provided that at least 2 working days notice are given to all other Committee members, together with a clear indication of the business to be conducted.
- 8.9. The Committee has the right to exclude any member of the Association, including Committee member or Officer, from any meeting of the Committee or Association,

or part of any such meeting where their presence or behaviour are not conducive to the orderly conduct of the particular meeting, or the interests of the Association generally.

- 8.10. In the event of any Officer, or ordinary Committee member not attending at least 50% Committee meetings following an AGM and before the next years AGM, and without reasons acceptable to at least two-thirds of the remaining members of the Committee, they shall be deemed to have resigned from the Committee. The Officer or ordinary Committee member shall be given not less than 28 days notice of the resignation and the resignation will be effective immediately following the next Committee meeting (or AGM if earlier) subject always to them being able to continue their membership of the Committee at the forthcoming AGM. This provision does not apply to any Honorary Lifetime Vice –President.
- 8.11. The term of office of any Officer or Committee member affected by this previous sub-clause who seeks to continue their membership of the Committee at a subsequent AGM, will run from the date of their originally joining the Committee in that position, or their most recent re-election, whichever is the later.
- 8.12. The conduct of all Committee meetings shall be in the sole discretion of the Chair/Co-Chairs of the meeting. The chair of Committee meetings shall be the Chair /a Co-Chair or in their absence the Vice Chair/a Co-Vice Chair or such other person as the majority of those present at the meeting shall agree.
- 8.13. The Committee acting on behalf of the Association may enter into a contract for services, and in so doing employ the services of such persons as may be required to include but not be limited to the services of an Administrator.
- 8.14. The Committee acting on behalf of the Association may in addition enter into a contract for the purchase of goods and services generally in the furtherance of the business of the Association. Such a contract for services to be agreed by the Committee, or such Officer, or Officers, as the Committee may decide from time to time. Any such contract for goods or services to include such conditions as may be agreed between the contracting parties and the Officers of the Committee. In entering such a contract for goods or services, and wherever the Committee deems it appropriate, an advertisement or tender will be published and the Committee, on behalf of the Association, will use equal opportunities recruitment standards.
- 8.15. The Committee may authorise any Administrator or other person to purchase goods or services on behalf of the Association, provided always that the authorisation is clearly noted in Committee records and in writing to the individual concerned, and subject always to such maximum in any one transaction as may be agreed by the Committee and confirmed by the Treasurer.

- 8.16. This previous sub-clause is not to be taken in any way to restrict the right of the Committee itself, or the Treasurer, together with at least one of the Chairs, any Vice Chair or Secretary, to enter into, or authorise the entering into agreements for goods or services of more than the maximum referred to in 6.17 above subject always to clear notification of the authorisation in writing in committee records.
- 8.17. The Committee acting on behalf of the Association may enter into a contract or agreement for the purposes of charging other bodies or associations or members of the public for services provided by the Association, including published material, educational courses, conferences and such other or further services that the Association by agreement of its Committee consider to be appropriate.

9. Disciplinary Procedure

- 9.1. Any Officer, ordinary Committee member or Honorary Lifetime Vice-President will be suspended immediately both from the Committee and as a member of the Association in the event that they are:
- 9.1.1. convicted, cautioned, reprimanded or warned for any sexual or violent offences, or any offences involving children or young people, or
 - 9.1.2. found guilty of professional misconduct by their professional body, or
 - 9.1.3. involved in conduct which a two thirds majority of the remaining Committee members determine would bring the Association into disrepute
 - 9.1.4. involved in conduct which a two thirds majority of the remaining Committee members determine would compromise the ability of the Committee to conduct the business of the Association.
- 9.2. The suspended person shall be given written notice by the Secretary (or another Officer) within seven days of the suspension and the matter considered at the next Committee meeting. The suspended person may attend that meeting and/or submit written representations when the Committee will decide on an appropriate way forward including that the person is deemed to have resigned from the Committee and the Association.
- 9.3. At the discretion of the Chair or Co-Chairs of the Association a former member of the Committee who is deemed to have resigned under the disciplinary procedure in paragraph 9.1.2. or or 9.1.4. above may be permitted to rejoin the Association as a member.
- 9.4. Where the Chair, or the Co-Chairs, acting jointly, reasonably consider that the conduct of any Officer, ordinary Committee member or Honorary Lifetime Vice-President:
- 9.4.1. falls below the standards expected of the Association; and
 - 9.4.2. warrants action short of that set out in paragraph 9.1. above and/or removal from office or membership of the Committee or the Association.

They may impose such proportionate and appropriate measures as they consider necessary in the interests of the proper functioning of the Association. This paragraph does not apply to conduct referred to in paragraph 9.1.1 or 9.1.3.

- 9.5. The measures referred to in paragraph 9.4 above may include, but are not limited to:
 - 9.5.1. a formal or informal warning;
 - 9.5.2. temporary suspension from attendance at one or more Committee or sub-committee meetings;
 - 9.5.3. removal from, or restriction of participation in, any sub-committee, working group, or specific role or responsibility within the Association; and
 - 9.5.4. such other interim or lesser sanctions as are reasonably necessary to address the conduct in question.
- 9.6. Any measure imposed under paragraph 9.4:
 - 9.6.1. shall be proportionate to the conduct concerned;
 - 9.6.2. may be imposed on an interim basis pending further consideration by the Committee where appropriate; and
 - 9.6.3. does not preclude the Committee from taking further action under any other disciplinary or removal provisions within this Constitution including those set out in paragraph 9.1.
- 9.7. The individual concerned shall, where reasonably practicable, be informed of the nature of the complaint or issue with their conduct and given an opportunity to respond before any formal measure is imposed, save and unless urgent action is required.
- 9.8. The exercise of powers under this clause shall be reported to the Committee, which may appoint a panel of Committee members or Honorary Lifetime Vice–Presidents to review, vary or revoke any measures imposed.

10. Annual General Meeting and Extraordinary General Meetings

- 10.1. Save as expressly provided by this Constitution, decisions of the Association shall be reached by a simple majority of full members present and voting at an Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting, and the chair for the meeting shall have a second casting vote in the event of a tie. The chair of the AGM (and any EGM) shall be the retiring Secretary or such other person as the Committee shall agree.
- 10.2. The Committee shall arrange an Annual General Meeting, with the first taking place within 15 months of the adoption of this Constitution and subsequent Annual General Meetings within 15 months of the preceding one. At least 28 days notice shall be given in writing to each member specifying the business to be conducted at the meeting.

- 10.3. In giving notice of an Annual or Extraordinary meeting to members the Committee shall include arrangements to enable members to appoint another member to act as their proxy for the purposes of exercising their vote at the meeting.
- 10.4. The quorum for meetings of the Association shall be five per cent of the current full membership.
- 10.5. If at any Annual or Extraordinary meeting of the Association no quorum is present within 30 minutes of the time given for the start of the meeting, the meeting shall be adjourned to a date at least 28 days from the date fixed for the meeting and subject to notification being sent to all members of the adjourned meeting time and date, those members present at the adjourned meeting shall constitute a quorum.
- 10.6. At the Annual General Meeting ('AGM'), the following business shall be transacted, but the order of business shall be in the discretion of the Committee:
 - 10.6.1. Notification of outcome of election of ordinary Committee members and election of Officers.
 - 10.6.2. To consider a report from the Officers on the work of the Association since the previous AGM.
 - 10.6.3. To approve the accounts of the Association for the preceding financial year.
 - 10.6.4. To approve the minutes of the previous AGM, and deal with any matters arising.
 - 10.6.5. To appoint honorary auditors for the Association.
 - 10.6.6. To decide on the level of subscriptions for membership of the Association.
 - 10.6.7. To set out plans for the Association for the following year.
 - 10.6.8. To consider motions and any other business proposed and seconded by 2 full members of the Association and notified in writing to the Secretary at least 28 days before the AGM.
 - 10.6.9. Any other urgent business.
- 10.7. The Committee can any time at their discretion call an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Association but is required so to do within 28 days of receiving a written request so to do signed by not less than either 75 full members, or 15 percent of the full members of the Association, whichever is the smaller, and which in both of these cases, must include at least 4 current full and eligible members of the Committee, giving reasons for the request. At least 28 clear days notice shall be given in writing to each member specifying the business to be conducted at the meeting.
- 10.8. The EGM has all the powers of an AGM.

11. Change of Constitution

- 11.1. This Constitution may be changed by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting at an AGM or EGM considering the proposed changes to the Constitution, provided that the members are given notice in writing of the proposed change of the Constitution at least 28 days before that meeting at which it is to be discussed.
- 11.2. Any such proposed changes to this Constitution shall be in writing, clearly signed by 2 full members of the Association and notified to the Secretary as provided for in 10.6.8 above.
- 11.3. The proposed changes to the Constitution will be voted on, in whole or in parts, at the General Meeting where they are tabled, without amendment, and by two-thirds majority of full members present and voting by show of hands at that General meeting.

12. Dissolution

- 12.1. The members may dissolve the Association by a two-thirds majority of those members present and voting at a General Meeting, provided at least 28 days notice of the resolution to dissolve is given to all members.
- 12.2. In the event of the Association ceasing to operate, or the members resolving to dissolve it, then, if any assets of the Association are left after paying out all expenses and other liabilities, they may be distributed in accordance with the instructions of the members of the Association, or in the absence of instructions by the Officers to a charity or other organisation involved in promoting the interests and welfare of children.

13. Notices

Any notices required to be given under this Constitution shall be deemed to be properly given if posted by Royal Mail or equivalent or e-mail or alternative online system to the member's last known address/e-mail address.

Adopted on 16 July 2026

Co-Chairs: Lorraine Cavanagh KC and Jamie Niven-Phillips

Secretary: Mitali Zakaria