



# Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund

## Applicant FAQs

### What is the Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund (SWSQF)?

It is a national fund which will help to improve social mobility within the legal profession, address the recruitment and retention crisis faces by the social welfare and legal aid sector and as a result improve access to justice for those who need it most. It seeks to use the introduction of the Solicitors Qualifying Exam ('SQE') to provide the next generation of qualified Social Welfare solicitors.

This scheme will provide grant funding for both the BARBRI SQE preparatory course and the SQE 1 and 2 exams for more than a dozen individuals. The courses are due to start in April 2022.

This scheme is aimed at caseworkers and paralegals currently working in social welfare law. This scheme will allow those with precious talent, expertise and experience, who may have been lost to the sector, to reach their potential and qualify as solicitors.

### What is the eligibility criteria for this scheme?

You must already work in social welfare law as a caseworker or paralegal. Some examples of social welfare law are: Actions against public authorities, Crime, debt, community care, education, employment, family, housing, immigration, inquests, mental health, welfare benefits. If you're not sure if your area of law falls within the definition of social welfare law, you can email us at [ylalsqefund@gmail.com](mailto:ylalsqefund@gmail.com).

You and your employer must confirm that you intend to focus 70% of your time working in social welfare law while you undertake the SQE.

You and your employer must also confirm that you anticipate that upon qualification you will remain at the firm for at least two years as a solicitor working for at least 70% of your time on social welfare law.

### How do you apply?

To apply, you will need to upload a letter of support from your employer on headed paper, confirming that they will give you the opportunity to obtain your two years' Qualifying Work Experience.

You will also need to complete an [online application form](#).

Applications are now open until **17 January 2022**.

## **What does the Qualifying Work Experience involve?**

Under the SQE there is no longer a requirement for a specific training contract, regulated by the SRA, to be completed. The new route requires two years Qualifying Work Experience (QWE). This is two years full time (or equivalent) during which you have provided legal services (in a paid or voluntary role) and as part of this work you have been provided with the opportunity to develop some or all of the Competences in the SRA Statement of Solicitor Competence. As this scheme is targeting those who are already working in the area of social welfare law we expect that you will be providing legal services in your current role and will already be developing the required competences.

## **Is being part of this scheme going to impact on your role at your firm? Will you need to take time off?**

The preparatory course provided under the scheme is extremely flexible and intended to be studied part time to allow those with employment and caring responsibilities to qualify whilst maintaining previous responsibilities. You are required to confirm that you understand that you are committing to studying alongside your current role as an employee, it is then up to your employer and you to discuss whether any study days will be granted or needed. Unlike the current Professional Skills Course the scheme itself does not include any commitments which will take you away from your current role other than examination sittings for the SQE 1 and 2.

## **How is the scheme funded?**

This fund has been developed by City of London Law Society, BARBRI and YLAL with the support of Legal Aid Practitioners Group ('LAPG') and Law Centres Network ('LCN').

Over a dozen City law firms have donated to the scheme. The grant will be paid directly to BARBRI, the prep course provider, and the grant will pay for both the prep course and the exam fees. Neither the employer nor the candidate will receive any payment as part of this scheme and no additional payments will be required from either party to complete the qualification.

Please see our SQE hub for additional information on the SQE and the grant scheme <http://www.younglegalaidlawyers.org/sqe>

Please see CLLS website for all details regarding the scheme application process and criteria. <https://www.citysolicitors.org.uk/social-welfare-solicitor-qualification-fund/>