

Christine Grahame MSP  
Convenor, Justice Committee  
Room TG.01  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Dear Ms Grahame,

### **Petition PE 1449 – Accountability Scotland**

I write in response to the Justice Committee's request of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014 to establish the extent to which the end user is represented in the deliberations of the interim Scottish Tribunals and Administrative Justice Advisory Committee (STAJAC).

In establishing the membership of the Committee, it has been my aim to ensure skills, expertise and experience from a number of different backgrounds and perspectives, in order to ensure a balanced and well informed contribution from the Committee to policy and practice development in relation to the administrative justice and tribunals system in Scotland.

The aim therefore has been that the overall membership should allow for the perspective of users, advice providers, decision makers and experts/academics to be represented.

Membership of the Committee is as follows:

Professor Tom Mullen (Glasgow University School of Law)  
Shaben Begum (Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance)  
Paul McFadden (Complaints Standards Authority, SPSO)  
Lauren Wood (Citizens Advice Scotland)  
Tom Drysdale (Tribunal Judge, retired)  
John Sturrock (Core Solutions Ltd)  
Douglas Proudfoot (East Lothian Council)  
Sarah O'Neill (Consumer and legal policy consultant)

Members have been invited to join the Committee not to represent the organisation they work for at present, but to contribute on the basis of the expertise and experience they have gained in different roles, mostly over many years. Three members in particular have

significant experience of either representing users directly in a variety of administrative justice or tribunal processes, and/or of representing the end user interest in related policy work:-

*Shaben Begum* has an advocacy background stretching back over many years. She is currently Director of the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (SIAA). Shaben previously worked for the Advocacy Service in Rampton Hospital before moving to Scotland in 2000 when appointed as Manager of the Patients Advocacy Service in the State Hospital, Carstairs.

*Lauren Wood* is Access to Justice Policy Officer at Citizens Advice Scotland. She is responsible for influencing decision makers and opinion formers to ensure access to justice policy and legislation is framed in the best interests of users and consumers.

*Sarah O'Neill* is a non-practising solicitor, with experience in the private, public and voluntary sectors. She is currently an independent consultant specialising in legal and consumer policy. She was formerly Director of Policy at Consumer Focus Scotland, and prior to that Legal Officer at the Scottish Consumer Council, working extensively on civil and administrative justice issues from the perspective of the user/consumer. Sarah is also a member of the board of trustees of the Scottish Mediation Network and she established the first In-Court Advice project in Scotland, in Edinburgh Sherriff Court.

These Committee members have been invited to join the Committee specifically on the strength of their expertise and experience of representing users or the end user perspective in (administrative) justice issues, and so to ensure a strong and ongoing focus on promoting the interests of users of administrative justice and tribunals, as set out in the remit of the Committee.

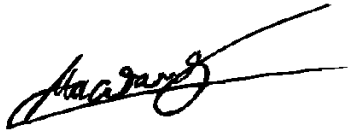
In addition, the end user perspective is represented in the work of the committee through our recent stakeholder engagement event, attended by a wide range of over 70 stakeholders, including end users. The feedback gained at this event has helped shape the work priorities for the Committee for the next 18 months.

In particular I should highlight in this context the work planned to monitor the impact on end users of the merger of the Scottish Tribunals Service and the Scottish Court Service; our intention to review the possible impact, resulting from the integration of health and social care, on the availability and effectiveness of remedies for grievances; and the work planned to explore, with local authorities, the financial and other impacts (including on end users) of not getting administrative decisions 'right first time'.

I believe that through the membership of the Committee, as well as through our intended work priorities, the Scottish Tribunals and Administrative Justice Advisory Committee demonstrates a focus on the user perspective and a commitment addressing the issues that impact on end users of the system.

Should you or members of the Justice Committee wish to discuss these matters further, I would be delighted to do so.

Yours sincerely,



**MARIEKE DWARSHUIS**

Chair  
Scottish Tribunals and Administrative Justice Advisory Committee

**Cc:** Neil Stewart, Assistant Clerk, Justice Committee