

School Admission Appeal Panel Members Wanted

Help Make a Difference to Local Families

Cheshire West and Chester Council is seeking volunteers to join our Independent School Admission Appeal Panels.

Appeal panels consider cases submitted by parents and guardians who wish to appeal against a decision not to offer their child a place at their preferred school. Panel members play a vital role in ensuring that every appeal is heard fairly, independently and in accordance with the law.

No previous experience of admission appeals is required as full training and ongoing support will be provided.

Who Can Apply?

Each appeal panel consists of three members and includes representatives from two categories:

Lay Members

Lay members are people without personal experience in the management or provision of education in a school.

You may still qualify as a lay member if you:

- are or have been a school governor
- volunteer or have volunteered in a school

Non-Lay Members

Non-lay (education) members are people with experience or knowledge of education, including:

- teachers
- teaching assistants
- former teachers or teaching assistants
- individuals familiar with local educational conditions
- parents of registered pupils at a different school

What Does the Role Involve?

As a panel member, you will:

- read appeal papers and written submissions before hearings
- attend appeal hearings as a member of an independent panel (virtually)
- listen carefully to the case presented by both parties

- ensure parents feel they have received a fair hearing and have been given every opportunity to present their case
- consider all of the evidence presented
- work with fellow panel members to reach fair and balanced decisions
- provide clear reasons for those decisions

Skills and Qualities

We are looking for people who:

- have good communication and listening skills
- demonstrate integrity, impartiality and fairness
- can work effectively with others
- can make balanced and well-reasoned decisions
- have an awareness of equality and diversity issues
- are reliable and able to honour agreed commitments
- are willing to learn about admission appeal legislation and procedures

Training and Support

Successful applicants will receive:

- comprehensive initial training
- regular refresher training
- ongoing support and guidance
- updates on changes to admissions legislation and appeal procedures

Why Volunteer?

This is a rewarding opportunity to:

- contribute to an important public service
- make a positive difference to children's and families' lives
- develop new skills and knowledge
- gain experience in decision-making and quasi-judicial processes
- meet and work alongside new people

While the role is voluntary and unpaid, an allowance is available to help cover reasonable expenses.

Time Commitment

You can volunteer as often or as little as your availability allows.

We maintain a register of trained panel members and will contact you to request advanced availability and when appeals are scheduled to check your availability.

Appeals take place Monday to Friday and are usually held:

- as half-day or full-day hearings between 9.00am and 5.00pm
- throughout the year

The busiest period is between May and July, when a larger number of 'block' appeals to reception and year 7 are often arranged over several consecutive days.

Interested?

If you would like to find out more about becoming a School Admission Appeal Panel Member, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact Darren O'Neill for more information and an application pack.

Darren O'Neill

School Admission Appeals Team

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