

Clerking Matters: Find us a clerk!

The National Governors' Association (NGA)¹ has been campaigning with The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and other partners including the National Co-ordinators of Governors Services (NCOGS) to raise the profile and professionalism of governing body clerks.

For school governing bodies to be effective, they need the support of a professional clerk to advise them on their duties and how best to fulfil them, but we understand that many schools struggle to find a good independent clerk.

The importance of high quality, dedicated support for governing bodies was a strong theme during the House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry on the role of school governing bodies.² 'An effective clerk is vital to the success of a governing body. The evidence clearly indicates that this should be a professional role—similar to a company secretary.' It was recommended 'that the government act upon the findings of the project by the National Governors' Association and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives relating to clerks.'

At [NGA's Summer Conference](#) on 6 July 2013, Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, commented: "Professional boards also need professional support. Which means clerking that goes way beyond simply taking down the minutes" and that "the NGA and others have made a very persuasive case for a more skilled approach; with clerks recognised as having a responsibility for providing boards with sound advice on their duties and functions and how to exercise them".

Lord Nash also announced that the Department for Education would be funding a new National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) training programme for clerks. Lord Nash described this as "a fantastic boost for a position that has been under-valued for too long".

In the government's response³ to the House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry on the role of school governing bodies, there was mention of the fact that NGA is 'considering piloting its own brokerage service between schools and clerk.'

The NGA is pleased to announce that this pilot service is now live! We have created a specific section on our website which contains a list of available clerks and schools with vacancies for clerks. We will be piloting this service for six months to assess whether it has helped governing bodies recruit clerks. We would recommend that schools should also undertake a job advertisement and selection process, and we have a model job description and person specification that you can use.

¹ The National Governors' Association is an independent charity representing school governors from both local authority maintained schools and academies across England. Our aim is to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards in all our schools, and improving the effectiveness of their governing bodies. We do this by providing information, training and advice to governors and ensuring the voices of governors are heard.

² This inquiry looked at the existing role of governing bodies, and the implications of recent government policy developments in education for them, as well as a range of issues concerning recruitment, reward and responsibilities. The full reports can be viewed [here](#).

³ The government's response to the inquiry can be [viewed here](#).

Available clerks and schools requiring a clerk can register with the NGA for their profiles to be on our website. The NGA is not in a position to quality assure any of the clerks listed – it is for individual schools/governing bodies to determine the suitability of each clerk, and we have produced [supporting materials](#) to assist governing bodies with the selection process.

Emma Knights, Chief Executive of the National Governors' Association:

“One of the most common complaints NGA receives from school governors is that they are drowning in paperwork; much of that should stop with a good professional clerk who is working to the governing body’s agenda focused on the school’s priorities. Such a clerk can also provide invaluable advice to the governing body. Yet schools also report they can’t find a good trained clerk to appoint, so NGA has begun a pilot to help schools identify if there are local clerks available. Please spread the word about ‘NGA’s Find us a clerk’ so we can have as many clerks registered as possible.”

If you would like to be listed on this service please contact Marty Uppal, NGA Information Officer on m.uppal@nga.org.uk

[Visit the Find us a Clerk website](#)

