

Job Description

POST TITLE:	Senior Lawyer
DIRECTORATE:	Legal and Democratic Services
SERVICE:	Legal Services
GRADE:	PO9
LOCATION:	Within the London Borough of Hackney
RESPONSIBLE TO:	Head of Commercial
RESPONSIBLE FOR:	A team of legal staff – indicative up to 7 (within one discrete area)

PURPOSE OF THE JOB:

- To manage a team of legal staff so as to ensure the provision of high quality legal services to clients
- To provide clear, consistent and accurate advice to senior officers of the Council
- To have responsibility for a personal caseload of more complex and non-routine matters

MAIN AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY:

To have lead responsibility and accountability for the following:-

1. To manage a team of legal staff so as to ensure the delivery of high quality legal services to clients.
2. To lead on the delivery of services in one or more nominated areas (e.g. Housing, Employment etc), including by carrying out the following –
 - Develop performance indicators and service level agreements as required to ensure that the service area is high performing and that performance levels can be measured.
 - Identify and implement continual service improvements.
 - Ensure the collection of data for monitoring performance in the service area.
 - Assist as required in development of the Legal Services case management system or other database(s) to ensure that data is collected as necessary for reporting purposes.

- Develop and produce regular performance reports for clients and senior managers on the work of the service area. Such reports should form the basis of preparation of the annual report.
 - Develop staff through appraisals, training, meetings etc to ensure high performance within the service area.
 - Develop officer skills across the Council in the relevant service area by communicating relevant changes in the law and conducting regular training and briefing sessions.
 - Handling of enquiries from members and the communications team.
3. Ensure that Legal Services obtains and maintains a quality assurance system (e.g. Excel) for legal work, including by doing the following –
 - Ensure compliance within the relevant service area with all quality assurance requirements, including file keeping, file reviews, supervision, training and risk management.
 - Develop precedents and processes within the service area designed to achieve and demonstrate compliance with the quality assurance system.
 - Ensure that staff understand all processes and procedures and are ready for inspection under the quality assurance system.
 - Participate actively in regular reviews of the office manual and supporting documentation to achieve quality assurance requirements.
 4. Conduct consultation on the Legal Services annual business plan and other practice documents as required.
 5. To be responsible for the effective implementation of management systems and procedures within the team, including the effective use of the case management system and adherence to any practice management standards. To be responsible for recommending and implementing appropriate corrective action as and when applicable.
 6. To manage the performance of the team and its members so as to ensure that all relevant targets are achieved, including chargeable hours targets.
 7. To ensure that all team members produce the management and performance data required by the service and the Council.
 8. To be responsible and accountable for the management of the team budget as and when applicable.
 9. To take the lead in effective liaison with clients, ascertaining and meeting their requirements and ensuring that the work of the team is carried out in accordance with any service level agreement or other arrangement agreed with clients.
 10. To carry a personal caseload of more complex matters. To advise the Authority on high level complex and/or contentious issues.
 11. To undertake advocacy on behalf of the Council in courts and tribunals, where this is part of the work of the team.
 12. To draft complex reports, briefings and legal documentation.

13. To devise and deliver training to clients, colleagues, service users, Members and others.
14. To research and analyse the law.
15. To record 900 chargeable hours per annum or such other target as is set by the Head of Legal Services or Corporate Director.
16. To attend management team meetings when required
17. To keep up to date with developments in relevant areas of law and / or services and take responsibility for self development.
18. To ensure that the team keeps up to date with developments in relevant areas of law and / or services and to develop and implement a training plan for the team.
19. To lead Council wide projects in the post holder's area of specialism
20. To manage a diverse and heavy workload in an environment of constantly changing priorities, including complex legislative changes and operational demands.
21. To deputise for the Principal Lawyer when required.
22. To notify the Head of Legal Services and / or the Corporate Director of any potential breach by the Council or an individual of the law or the Council's Constitution and / or of any course of action which could amount to maladministration. To be responsible for recommending and initiating appropriate courses of remedial action.
23. To attend meetings of officers and Members, including evening meetings, as and when required. To regularly advise Members in writing through the process of clearing reports.
24. To adhere to and implement the Council's Health and Safety Policy and agreed Codes of Practice.
25. To embrace and implement the Council's Equalities Policy.

OTHER DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To undertake other duties appropriate to the grade and character of the work as may be reasonably required by the Head of Legal Services or the Corporate Director.

The post holder will deal with officers across the Council (including senior officers), Solicitors in private practice, Barristers, Barristers' Clerks, other local authorities, the courts service, partners and members of the public and should be able to relate professionally to them.

Confidentiality

The nature of the job requires a high degree of confidentiality, tact and discretion when giving and receiving information which could be confidential.

NB: All employees are expected to adhere to the Council's Diversity & Equality and Health and Safety Policies.

Person Specification

PEOPLE SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP:

- Ability to lead and manage a team providing high quality legal services to clients across the Council
- Ability to manage a caseload of complex legal matters
- Ability to achieve chargeable hours targets
- Ability to maintain effective client liaison arrangements
- Ability to ensure that the team complies with practice management and other professional standards
- Ability to use a case management system and other data effectively to manage performance
- Excellent communication skills both oral and written, presentation, influencing and negotiation skills.
- Ability to embrace and implement the Council's Equalities Policy.

PERSONAL STYLE AND BEHAVIOURS:

- Personal and professional demeanour which generates credibility and confidence amongst customers, Members, chief officers, managers, staff, external partners and all other stakeholders.
- Resilient and robust with experience to modernise the training strategy and deliver to fit e-business and flexible working requirements.
- Ability to set personal priorities, objectives and deadlines while maintaining a focus on the key service priorities/accountabilities.

SERVICE SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS:

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

- Qualified solicitor or barrister (Supreme Court of England and Wales/English Bar) or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives
- Experience of managing staff
- Experience of using a case management system.
- Experience of undertaking a caseload of complex legal matters
- Experience in two or more of the following areas of law relevant to the Team in which the post holder will be working:

Adult social services
Children's Services
Employment
Environmental law
General litigation
Housing

Licensing
Local government
Planning
Policy
Procurement and contracts
Property
Prosecutions
Regeneration
Trading Standards and consumer protection

- Experience of researching complex areas of law and presenting them in clear and understandable terms to clients
- Experience of achieving chargeable hours targets.
- Experience of providing legal services to clients to agreed standards and of implementing client care policies and initiatives.

KNOWLEDGE

- Knowledge of two or more of the following areas of law relevant to the work of the team in which the post holder will be working:

Adult social services
Children's Services
Employment
Environmental law
General litigation
Housing
Licensing
Local government
Planning
Policy
Procurement and contracts
Property
Prosecutions
Regeneration
Trading Standards and consumer protection

- Understanding of the workings of local government and the issues affecting a multi-cultural inner city area.
- IT literate.

CIRCUMSTANCES

- To be able to attend meetings, including evening meetings as and when required
- A CRB check will be required where the post-holder has dealings with Adult Social Services and Children's Services.

NB: All employees are expected to adhere to the Council's Equality & Diversity and Health & Safety Policies.