

Senior Child Care Lawyer

Reports to:	Head of Law/Chief Lawyer		
Department:	Legal Services	Grade:	PO6 – PO7
DBS Status:	Standard	Politically restricted:	Yes

Job Purpose:

To actively support the management of the department and deputise for the Chief Lawyer, Head of Law / Chief Lawyer, as and when required.

To provide high level and proactive expert legal advice on children social care law, including child protection, adoption law, the Children Act 1989 and other related social care law issues to the Council, its members and officers and to be a point of contact for members and senior officers on legal matters pertaining to these matters.

To manage the Lawyers and Legal Assistants within the Child Care team.

Values

Collaborate proactively.
Lead inclusively.
Embrace change.
Be bold and curious.
Celebrate and share our success.

Job specific roles and responsibilities

1. Make a positive contribution to the delivery of the service, this will include working flexibly and positively to achieve the objectives of the Council and, in particular, Legal Services and the Children and Young People department.
2. Assist in managing and leading staff to achieve high performance and effective operational delivery, including developing and improving staff capability.
3. Assist in managing a customer focused service and the effective use of resources.
4. Ensure that the Legal Service's overall vision, values and ethos are central to the requirements of the service.
5. Support effective working relationships and act as an ambassador and senior lawyer with external organisations.
6. Keep up to date with developments in service delivery and best practice to ensure the service performs effectively and to the highest standards.
7. To provide high level specialist and proactive legal advice on all aspects of children social care law to the Children and Young People department, the Council more widely, its Cabinet, Committee members and senior officers and other external clients on all issues arising.
8. To advise on the Council's powers and its decision making process with regards to children social care legislation and ensure the legality of its decision making including in relation to the Council's social care related functions.
9. To consider and give advice on committee and other similar reports and to attend committee.
10. To deal with corporate complaints and Member enquiries and FOI requests.

11. To provide high level input to the Children and Young People department policies and help develop and implement the Corporate Strategy and the performance framework alongside the Council's policies strategies and targets.
12. To deal with a substantial personal caseload of complex individual casework and conduct children social care advice work and litigation arising in the area of responsibility and attending court any court or tribunal within the area of responsibility.
13. To contribute and assist towards the running of Legal Services as required and to provide general supervision guidance and training to lawyers within the team.
14. To keep up to date with changes in the law and other developments in this area of work, and to advise on any action to be taken as a result, and to provide training to clients or members of the team.
15. To take a lead in developing policy and good practice in the post holder's area of responsibility and to support with strategic and corporate legal work.
16. Provide cover as necessary for other areas within Legal Services as a whole, including advising on information governance law, and to deputise for the Head of Law/ Chief lawyer as required.
17. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all employees are required to act in such a way that at all times safeguards the health and well being of children and vulnerable adults.
18. To carry out duties with due regard to the Council's Customer Care, Equal Opportunities, Information Governance, Data Protection, Health and Safety and Emergency Planning & Awareness (including to provide assistance where available) policies and procedures.
19. Employees should embed environmental sustainability into their work, actively contributing to Brent becoming a carbon-neutral borough in 2030.
20. To undertake any other duties commensurate with the general level of responsibility of this post.

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Progression to PO7 will be by demonstrating capability to handle the most complex cases without the need for counsel and managing matters which have the highest risk implications or financial or other consequences for the Council. Also, at PO7 the postholder will be expected to develop and monitor the impact of legal policy across the full range of specialist areas.

Essential Requirements (key skills & qualifications)

Knowledge and Qualifications

1. Admitted Solicitor, Barrister or FILEX
2. Thorough knowledge of children social care law and practice
3. Comprehensive knowledge of the law affecting local government and its trends in the UK (with litigation Practice Rights).

Experience

1. Experience of attending court as a Lawyer (County Court) in the County Court, Magistrates Court, Family Court and Crown Court, including all hearings up to trial.
2. A track record of achievement in conducting high level and complex casework, including high risk cases.
3. Experience of dealing with complex cases in area of expertise.
4. Experience of providing advice to members of a Council/ Board Members on legal issues both in public meetings, through presentation briefing reports etc.

5. Experience of contributing to corporate decision making and development of corporate policy and strategy.
6. Experience of management or supervision of staff.

Skills and Abilities

1. Ability to personally handle with minimum supervision all matters within the post holder's area of responsibility and to carry a heavy caseload of children social care legal and policy work
2. Excellent communication and influencing skills, including the ability to write accurate and engaging correspondence for a range of audiences, including members and the Council Management Team.
3. Ability to give clear and proactive legal advice in a manner which supports clients in achieving their organisational objectives
4. Ability to analyse information, evaluate evidence, solve problems and present solutions at an appropriate level
5. Ability to prepare and advise on the preparation of reports to members and officers, to present reports to senior officers and members and to advise on clients' decision making processes.
6. Ability to supervise the work of more junior staff and give guidance and training to others
7. Ability to develop and maintain good collaborative working relations with clients
8. Ability to instruct Counsel, attend conference with Counsel and attend in courts, tribunals and inquiries
9. High level and excellent advocacy skills and ability to have conduct of complex and high risk casework
10. Strong role model who demonstrates a personal commitment to high standards of public service, honesty and integrity and professionalism
11. Ability to deputise for Head of Law/ Chief lawyer.

Budget Responsibility

Overall Headcount Up to 4 FTE

Within reason these key deliverables may evolve to meet service need and it is expected that the postholder will be flexible and adaptable in their delivery to meet both service and council wide needs