



LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON
CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
JOB DESCRIPTION

POST TITLE:	Team Manager and Practice Lead Social Care and Education Law
Grade:	MGC
Department:	Corporate Services
Location:	Various offices according to the needs of the service
Responsible to:	Head of Shared Legal Service (Merton and Richmond)
Responsible for:	Overall responsibility for Social Care and Education Legal Teams (team manager, 3.5 fte senior solicitors, approx. 20 solicitors and legal assistants)
Post number:	
Date:	August 2013

MAIN PURPOSE

- To lead and develop the Social Care and Education legal teams of the Shared Legal Service.
- To be responsible for Children's safeguarding professional practice and support to Directors of Children's Services in Merton, Richmond, Kingston and Sutton Councils.
- To ensure the Social Care and Education legal teams of the Shared Legal Service provide a customer focused, cost effective, comprehensive and professional legal services to all four authorities.
- To identify opportunities within Social Care and Education legal team of the Shared Legal Service to provide ongoing improvements to the productivity of the service and to maximise the reduction in the costs of the service for the benefit of all four authorities.
- To be a member of the Shared Legal Service Management Team and participate in the overall management of the Shared Legal Service.
- To have responsibility for efficiently commissioning and managing external legal support across the four authorities (circa 650k spend).
- To work towards an income target for the Social Care and Education law team.



MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Professional

- To lead and take responsibility for support across the practice to all four authorities in Social care and education.
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- To provide high level legal advice to elected members, including committees and to Chief Officers and staff across all four authorities and to any other client of the Shared Legal Service.
- To lead and manage the Social Care and Education legal team, allocating work, making arrangements for supervision and monitoring, providing advice, guidance and assistance as required.
- To lead on the client relationship with all four authorities in relation to the work in the Social Care and Education legal section or as directed by the Head of the Shared Legal Service including negotiation of the SLAs and to assure the delivery of support in accordance with those SLAs.
- To work towards an income target and to be proactive in bringing in new and existing business to meet these targets
- To pro-actively work with the relevant clients within all four authorities to identify effective legal solutions to meet the requirements for legal support that is relevant to the Social Care and Education legal team.
- To champion transformation, modernisation and improvement within all authorities.
- To keep abreast of legal developments and ensure that the Social Care and legal teams operate in accordance with modern good practice.
- To ensure the availability of out of hours legal advice for Children and Adult Social Care for all four authorities, including participation in an out of hours rota.
- To support, and deputise for, the Monitoring Officer (AD Corporate Governance) for all four authorities as required.

Managerial

- To lead, manage and develop the Social Care and Education legal teams of the Shared Legal Service in accordance with the authorities' policies and procedures, legislative and regulatory requirements, covering the provision of quality, cost effective, and customer-focussed services as listed above.
- To provide legal supervision to other team managers, senior lawyers in the team and also to lawyers and/or legal assistants as appropriate.
- To manage the Social Care and Education legal teams of the Shared Legal Service ensuring that recruitment, training, development, appraisal, performance, workload allocation,



supervision, quality assurance, risk and other management activities are carried out in accordance with policy.

- To participate in intra- and inter-departmental working parties and to ensure that such groups receive appropriate contributions from the Shared Legal Service for all authorities.
- To proactively work to ensure continuous improvement to the productivity of the team and to the client relationship.
- To represent the council as appropriate at external meetings on behalf of all authorities
- To champion Data Quality in the Department, proactively appraising data produced by the Department for robustness, ensuring that Data Quality issues are addressed, and corporate reporting requirements are met, as set out in the council's Data Quality Strategy.
- To undertake such other duties of a comparable nature elsewhere in the organisation as may be required to facilitate management development and service flexibility including deputising for the Head of Shared Legal Service.
- Any other duties as requested by the Head of Shared Legal Service or Assistant Director.



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CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
PERSON SPECIFICATION**

POST TITLE: Team Manager and Practice Lead Social Care and Education Law
Grade: MGC

Qualifications and Experience

Professional and post specific requirements

- Qualified solicitor or barrister or chartered legal executive with a background in local government
- An expert in Children's safeguarding matters with substantial experience at a senior level leading on children's safeguarding law and practice.
- A solid track record of providing proactive, expert, timely and authoritative legal advice and support to senior leaders and key decision-makers at the highest levels
- A thorough understanding of the legal environment of local government
- Experience of the procurement/commissioning of external legal advice and associated services and the interpretation of such advice to aid internal decision-making
- A solid track record of developing and embedding best practice, innovation and continuous improvement in the delivery of legal services, including experience of shaping different models of service provision and delivery
- Experience of the successful performance management of a legal team
- Significant experience of corporate working with exposure to partnership development, contract negotiation and effective performance management

Management requirements

- Experience of staff management and ability to manage, inspire and motivate staff

Skills and Knowledge

Professional and post specific requirements

- Significant personal gravitas and charisma with an ability to operate with confidence and credibility at the highest levels of local authorities
- Pragmatic and forward thinking with an ability to think 'outside the box'

- Sound personal judgement with excellent advocacy skills
- The ability to 'command a room', instilling confidence quickly in your audience
- A strong orator with excellent written and oral communication skills
- Intellectually powerful with a good degree of political nous and experience of operating in politically sensitive environments
- An ability to use expert legal opinion to provide practical and innovative solutions to complex legal, contractual or service delivery issues
- A visible operator with high levels of personal integrity and robustness
- Proactive, customer focussed and solutions led
- Outcome driven, with a strong commitment to the promotion of best practice and the development of a continuous improvement culture
- Resilient and committed, remaining composed under pressure
- Ability to motive, inspire and encourage high performance within the team

Managerial and personal requirements

- Good communication skills, both orally and in writing
- Good numeracy and analytical skills
- Understanding of the role of legal services and how it can contribute to the effectiveness of direct service provision
- Understanding of the principles of value for money and an ability to apply them in the management of support services
- Clear understanding of ways in which the council's policy of equality in employment and service provision can be reflected in all aspects of work of the team
- Understanding of both authorities' vision and mission statement and how they relate to the work of the team
- Ability to be able to travel to attend client offices wherever that service maybe based.
- Ability to be able to travel to attend courts wherever the client's case is being considered.
- Ability to be available to attend premises out of hours to attend evening meetings and in the event of emergencies or urgent management issues in relation to all authorities