

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Principal Solicitor – Childcare
Directorate & Section/Unit: Commercial and Change, Commercial – Legal and Governance
Reporting to: Head of Adults, Childcare, Education & Debt Recovery
Responsible for: Solicitor (child care)x3; Legal Assistant(Child care) x2; Legal Clerk(childcare)

Salary Grade: PO5
DMA Management Level: 1
DMA Span of Control (Direct Reports): 6
Management / Supervisory Responsibility for:
Line management of: The Childcare Legal Team

Salary Grade: PO5

WCC Management Level: 1
Number of Direct Reports: 6

Our People Values:

To uphold and act in accordance with Worcestershire County Council's values;

- **Customer Focus** – Ensure delivery of a high-quality service which meet the needs of customers
- **Can Do Culture** – Be proactive to achieve excellence, finding solutions and creative ways of working
- **Freedom within Boundaries** - Make constructive change through cohesive decision making, ensuring services are responsive

Purpose of job:

- Delivery of the provision of quality Legal Services to, Children's Services, Worcestershire Children First(WCF) for the specific category portfolio comprising Childcare and related Education
- Lead the development, management, and delivery of effective and efficient legal services within the Childcare Team with an emphasis on commercially focused strategies which meet the business objectives and deliver value for money outcomes both for the Client Directorate and the Legal and Governance Division.
- To conduct and have overall oversight of legal proceedings in the Family Court, High Court and County Court and tribunals in respect of Child protection and related educational work
- Develop and implement innovative approaches to deliver effective solutions to comply with the statutory 26 week timescale to complete care proceedings and to secure the desired outcomes
- Provide legal expertise to advise and effectively represent the Council and WCF in its statutory functions relating to childcare and related educational functions
- To robustly evaluate and challenge external suppliers of legal services, e.g, experts, counsel etc. to ensure that they are deliverable and represent best value to the Council
- Ensure procurement and commissioning best practice principles are applied in compliance with the Council's policies, processes and Procurement Code
- Contribute to the development and implementation of WCF/Children' Services service improvement plan including updating and modernising policy and procedures.
- To assist the Governance Manager to ensure all cabinet papers, CMR and Executive Officer decisions relating to child protection are legally sound and capable, as far as possible, of resisting judicial challenge including ensuring that public law principles for decision making, consultation etc. are observed.

Main Activities & Responsibilities:

Generic Accountabilities:

- To maintain personal and professional development; to meet the changing demands of the job, participate in appropriate training activities and encourage and support staff in their development and training
- To undertake other such duties, training and/or hours of work as may be reasonably required and which are consistent with the general level of responsibility of this job
- To undertake health and safety duties commensurate with the job and/or as detailed in the Directorate's Health and Safety Policy
- The duties described in this job description must be carried out in a manner which promotes equality of opportunity, dignity and due respect for all employees and service users and is consistent with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy
- Working with some vulnerable children, young people and adults can, at times, be emotionally challenging for which appropriate support will be provided through management supervision. The post holder must be able to deal with such mental demands.

Responsibilities, duties and task:

- Support the Head of Adults Childcare, Education Debt Recovery Services from time to time and deputise in his absence in the management and areas of responsibility of the Childcare Team.
- Demonstrate effective leadership skills with all stakeholders by representing, communicating and promoting the purpose, values and vision of the instructing Directorate in any given case
- Continually seek opportunities to lawfully deliver improved outcomes to the directorates' instructing Legal Services on the various projects being undertaken where legal input is required in the most cost effective manner.
- To take conduct of complex and contentious and/or non-contentious legal matters concerning one or more aspects of the Council's functions as allocated, but particularly in respect of child protection, related education and local government constitutional law, often having significant impact for the Council and often requiring creative appraisal and solutions
- To handle other legal matters within the remit of the Service or team as may be allocated from time to time.
- To participate and assist in managing the Out of Hours service for the appropriate fee
- Delivery of the Service Level Agreements with maintained schools and academies as it relates to child protection aspects of the Schools Helpline.
- To act as advocate in any forum; to prosecute; to pursue or defend child protection matters and to appear before the full range of Courts and in particular manage more complex cases (High, County and Magistrates Courts but particularly the Family Court and Deprivation of Liberty Court).
- To advocate personally in contested matters and manage and promote lawyers undertaking multi-day contested hearings to promote robust quality case management and minimise the use of legal counsel
- To oversee the procurement and sourcing of Legal Counsel to ensure best value in compliance with the Council's procurement policy and procedures. To Instruct and assist Counsel where appropriate.
- Work with the Governance Manager and senior management Childrens Services/WCF's in the development, drafting, review and approval of reports and briefings and cabinet papers, ensuring principles of public law decision making, including public consultation where required, are observed
- To undertake legal research of legal issues arising from the work of the Council or its components or associated public bodies for whom the Assistant Director of Legal & Governance also acts, and to keep abreast of developments in relevant areas of law informing interested parties of their implications.
- To manage and supervise the work of solicitors, lawyers, legal assistants and legal clerks including being responsible for staff review and development procedures.

- To participate in the provision of a comprehensive legal advice service to Member Bodies and Officers of the Council and to conduct relevant proceedings, and to communicate effectively with relevant external contacts.
- To contribute as required to the management of Legal Services (including development of job description and person specifications recruitment and allocation) and to assist in the implementation and development of appropriate policies, office procedures, standards and systems (including any case-management and time recording systems).
- To represent the Assistant Director of Legal and Governance at meetings of Member Bodies and Officer Groups, as required.
- To take all reasonable steps to ensure confidentiality, where appropriate.
- To bring to the attention of the Assistant Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer any matter of which s/he should be aware in order to discharge the duties of that office.
- To manage and participate in the implementation, development and maintenance of court bundling, case managements systems(currently Iken), office procedures, systems, standards and policies, as required with the aim of developing and maintaining a paperless office
- Use the adopted case management system to record and upload all correspondence, instructions and communications in relation to case work, management and supervisory work
- Promote the Council's commitment to achieving it's corporate objectives
- Identify opportunities to develop collaborative relationships within the team and more widely with various stakeholders and lead in their implementation where appropriate
- Work with commissioning leads and project managers on the development of various projects designed to secure better value and outcomes for the services covered
- Maintain a comprehensive insight and understanding of legal developments, at local, regional and national levels, identifying the key issues in the respective legal topics covered by the Team; understanding thoroughly the legal principals, implications and opportunities to exploit new law, practice and procedures for the benefit of the Council.
- Advise on the implementation of directorate plans, deploying commercially focused strategies and ensuring stakeholders are on board and fully involved throughout the programmes of work
- Identify opportunities for cost savings, including alternative delivery models and implement where agreed
- Work closely with service heads and managers to establish business requirements, option appraisals and business cases, presenting challenges in relation to the specified outcomes, needs, requirements and range of services/products and to highlight any potential reductions that can be deployed to deliver the same or acceptable outcome
- Develop and maintain effective working relationships, maximising the engagement and support of senior managers and other key stakeholders
- Critically evaluate service performance, ensuring legal advice is provided in a timely manner to enable the client to continue to meet its statutory duties, financial and business objectives and deliver service outcomes.
- Report progress and present monthly and quarterly statistics on workload, Feedback forms and the meeting of Key Performance Indicators(KPI's) for bench marking purposes and development of business cases and identify and implement improvement plans where required
- Lead team members, including personal development, training, continuing professional development and staff performance measurement, in accordance with Council staffing policies, and to ensure the delivery of the team and individual savings targets
- Provide advice and support across the Council on legal issues, including legislation and best practice
- Work with lawyers in other local authorities in the West Midlands region including attendance at special interest groups to identify collaborative opportunities that will benefit the Council and lead and support on subsequent projects, if appropriate
- Ensure relevant procurement reports are produced to the required standard and in a timely way in order to enable effective decision making and financial planning

Contacts:

- In all contacts the post holder will be required to present a good image of the Commercial & Change Directorate and the Council, as well as maintaining constructive relationships.

- Internal contacts: Elected Members, Strategic Directors, Directors, Assistant Directors, Senior Managers, Management Teams, Managers & Staff across all directorates, School Governors, Head Teachers, Teachers, Support and other school-based staff.
- External. contacts: District & County Councils, Government Agencies & Departments, NHS, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Healthcare Professionals, Police, Fire, Probation Service, Educational Settings, Suppliers, Contractors, Service providers, Statutory and Voluntary Organisations, service users, clients, customers, parents & pupils, members of the public, volunteers

Additional Information:

- The Council reserves the right to alter the content of this job description, after consultation to reflect changes to the job or services provided, without altering the general character or level of responsibility
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered as required by the Equality Act

Author: LJ Date: Aug 22

Date of grading confirmation: Sept 22

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job Title:	Principal Solicitor - Childcare
Directorate & Section/Unit:	Commercial and Change, Legal and Governance
Salary Grade:	PO5
WCC Management Level:	1

EXPERIENCE:

It is **essential** that the post holder has:

- Substantial experience of successfully running a complex childcare caseload to include DOL/LPS and adoption matters
- Significant experience advising and contributing on the development of and improvement of child protection strategies and policies within the Children's Services Directorate/WCF
- Significant experience advising on policy development and or change of policy, Cabinet reports public consultation requirements
- Substantial experience of robust case management of child protection casework to achieve the 26 week statutory care completion outcomes
- Significant experience of advocacy and can demonstrate an aptitude for and commitment to advocacy including undertaking contested hearings and running multiday hearings
- Demonstrable experience in the use of Iken case management system (or similar) to deliver a paperless office solution
- Significant experience of advising on reports including redrafting, writing business cases, responding to corporate complaints for a range of audiences
- Considerable experience of proactively managing, supervising and developing Legal Services staff within the Team, especially through periods of change, to achieve SMART agreed performance outcomes and sustainable improvements

It is **desirable** that the post holder has:

- Considerable relevant supervisory experience.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES:

It is **essential** that the post holder can demonstrate:

- Expert knowledge of child protection legislation, practice and procedure to include adoption law, DOL/LPS law, public/local government law to successfully provide legal advice and assistance to Children's services/WCF in the exercise of its statutory functions and to challenge its public body partners in the event that they are not delivering or meeting their statutory duties to the economic detriment of the Council
- Detailed management skills and the ability to lead, motivate and develop staff effectively
- Specialist knowledge of public law principles including issuing or defending claims for Judicial Review
- A specialist's ability to use and apply legislation and case law to formulate strategies to protect the Council's interests or make improvement to service delivery
- Demonstrable knowledge in the use of corporate governance and decision making
- Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to relate well to customers and understand their requirements and tailor advice appropriately
- Expert analytical skills, and sound and balanced judgement resulting in high quality legal advice
- Expert ability to produce accurate documentation with good attention to detail and nuance

- Specialist ability to work effectively as part of a team
- Expert communication skills, both verbal and written.
- Expert organisational skills and the ability to address competing priorities effectively, ensuring that deadlines are met
- Expert ability to work effectively under pressure and to meet tight deadlines
- Expert problem solving skills and the ability to put forward appropriate solutions based on all available evidence, being innovative and creative, where appropriate
- A positive and pragmatic approach and is prepared to take responsibility for decisions and implement appropriate changes as a result of feedback
- Expert ability to maintain confidentiality
- Detailed experience of using electronic case management systems in a paperless office
- Expert interpersonal and communication skills to effectively improve team performance
- Expert at effective communication, influencing and negotiation skills to enable effective working relationships with a wide range of stakeholders
- Expert analytical skills
- Expert presentation skills to convey key messages and training to large and small audiences, using tools such as PowerPoint.
- An expert ability to successfully meet challenging milestones, timelines and cost savings targets.

QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT:

It is **essential** that the post holder is:

- A Solicitor or Barrister entitled to practise within England

It is **desirable** that the postholder has:

- A Level 1 qualification in Essential Digital Skills or evidence of excellent IT skills in Microsoft Office

OTHER FACTORS

It is **essential** that the post holder has:

- Not applicable

It is **desirable** that the post holder has:

- Not applicable

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

It is **essential** that the post holder:

- Maintains personal and professional development to meet the changing demands of the job, participate in appropriate training activities
- The ability to travel to various external meetings/venues, within and outside the County, which could be at short notice and in response to tight timescales
- Is able and willing to attend meetings that may be held outside of normal office hours (i.e. weekends and evenings).