

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Legal Assistant – Social Care			
Directorate	Transformation & Resources			
Reporting to	Service Manager – Senior Lawyer			
Grade	13			
Evaluation ref:	AG0111	Job ref:	Family	RPG13
Role purpose				
To assist the Legal Team with various legal administrative duties, including preparation of documents, file management, correspondence, communication, research, systems and procedures.				
Responsibilities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain instructions from client departments, complete standard documents and obtain necessary evidence from a number of sources to initiate Court proceedings or to enable the fee earner to properly advise the client department. Liaise with Courts to arrange hearing dates. Prepare applications under the Children Act 1989 and represent Somerset Council in Court on Direction Appointments or uncontested hearings. Assists the relevant solicitor(s) with the preparation and conduct of the case. Having ensured all the necessary evidence is assembled, issue Court Proceedings in the appropriate court having regard to the Family Proceedings Rules or passing the matter to the appropriate fee earner for advice. Filing and service of documents to relevant parties. Attend Courts supporting Counsel and assist with documentation, ensure witness attendance and assist with statement clarification, take accurate notes for evidence and judgement for the file and reference for counsel. Gives general advice in respect private law proceedings/disclosure hearings ie criminal that require input by the Local Authority. Where proceedings are issued or contemplated takes statements from witnesses to evidential standard and advise witnesses in relation to matters of evidence and Court procedure. Checks statements, care plans, Local Authority Parenting and Viability Assessments for spelling and content in accordance with evidential rules Gives advice in consultation with Solicitors on Threshold for initiating the pre proceedings process and public law proceedings. Attend PLO meetings and advise the social work team in respect of disclosure and assessments necessary. These to be discussed in advance with the solicitor. Undertake follow up work from PLO meetings – including drafting letters of instruction and checking parenting and viability assessments. Draft letters, etc. when requesting additional/evidential information, arranging court or meeting attendance. Maintain records obtaining the required information from court orders, the court, counsel or other professionals. Check fee earners' post and deal where possible with queries etc. bringing to the fee earners attention if any immediate action is required. 				

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- Draft general correspondence, completing forms.
- Draft letters.
- Liaise with the public including external solicitors, social workers, medical professionals and the police, e.g. answer general enquiry calls; deal with general enquires and address queries and take messages for fee earners and ensure accurate and correct information is taken.
- Responds to requests for help and advice of a legal nature from officers of the LA and schools, in writing or by telephone, and responds appropriately (having researched technical aspects of issues raised if necessary).
- Conduct research on points of law using the internet and law books as requested by a fee earner, accurately and succinctly reporting back on findings.
- Notify fee earners of forthcoming important appointments and court dates.
- Personal diary management for key deadlines, required to obtain information from court attendance notes, etc.
- Arrange professionals meetings.
- Organise witness and expert attendance to court or other meetings.
- Organise external bodies at court confirming all documentation is provided, i.e. police, psychologists.
- Daily time recording of all chargeable and non-chargeable work.

Impact

- It is important to be able to communicate effectively with the client to identify the area of concern and then to effectively use a number of different sources to be able to answer a wide range of queries within a deadline.
- The postholder will be required on occasion to provide effective and sometimes firm guidance direct to the Corporate Director for Children's Services and his staff.
- Daily contact with other staff in Legal Services, in particular the fee earners with whom the postholder works; colleagues from other Services within Somerset County Council including social workers and senior officers.
- The post holder is required to effectively represent the County Council in Court, communicate with other solicitors and court personnel involved in Court proceedings.
- Contact with private practice solicitors and their secretaries, officers at all levels in other Local Authorities and their secretaries and Counsel.

Resources

The area of law for which detailed knowledge and/or research capabilities is required is highly specialised, but also covers a wide breadth of possible issues, such as the following:

- Data Protection Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information requests
- Children Act Orders
- Statutory Interpretation
- Judicial Review Claims

Legal work relies primarily on the written word and the postholder will play a key part in ensuring the efficiency of lawyers by assisting them in their work.

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Knowledge / Experience / Skills			
	Essential	Desirable	
Knowledge			
Proven administrative experience	X		
Accurate record keeping	X		
Ability to speak fluent English as stated in Part 7 of the Immigration Act (2016)	X		
Experience			
Proven administrative experience	X		
IT experience, including the Microsoft packages	X		
Experience and/or knowledge of legal procedures	X		
Previous public sector experience		X	
Previous experience in dealing with the public		X	
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications			
Qualified to A level standard or higher	X		
Level 3 Professional Diploma in Law and Practice CILEx		X	
Law Degree or other relevant professional qualification			
Skills			
Communication skills	X		
Team working skills	X		
Administration skills	X		
Research skills/experience	X		
Working Conditions			

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Working Arrangements

Somerset Council's dynamic Working Strategy will be applied to this position.

Corporate Responsibilities

Understand, uphold, and promote the aims of the council's equality, diversity, and inclusion policies; health, safety and wellbeing of self and others; and Organisational values in everything you do. Equality and Diversity practice covers both interaction with staff, service users and communities and includes challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all.

Date: 16th May 2024