

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Paralegal – Education, Environment and Litigation		
Directorate	Resources, Strategy and Transformation		
Reporting to			
Grade	12		
Evaluation ref:	AU0108	Job Family ref:	
Role Purpose			
<p>The Paralegal – Education, Environment and Litigation will provide specialist legal support to Somerset Council across either Education or Environment and Litigation workstreams. The role is responsible for delivering accurate, timely, and practical legal advice and assistance to internal clients, ensuring compliance with statutory frameworks and procedural rules. This includes preparing and managing legal documentation, conducting legal research, and supporting the conduct of cases in civil, criminal, adult social care and administrative proceedings.</p> <p>The postholder will play a key role in progressing cases, from drafting applications and witness statements to preparing court bundles and attending hearings, including representing the Council in routine or uncontested matters. They will liaise with solicitors, counsel, internal departments, and external parties to facilitate effective case management and resolution. The role requires strong organisational skills, attention to detail, and the ability to work under pressure to meet strict deadlines.</p> <p>By combining technical legal knowledge with practical problem-solving, the Paralegal will contribute to safeguarding the Council's interests, supporting decision-making, and promoting compliance across education, social care, environmental, and litigation matters.</p>			
Accountabilities			
Provides specialist advice to all clients in respect of one area of the work of Legal Services, either in (A) Education or (B) Environment and Litigation as further described below.			
Education			
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 the issues raised, if necessary).			
Deals with aspects of education and/or social services law (e.g. Special Educational Needs Tribunals, Disability Discrimination Tribunals, Judicial Review claims and complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman), advice is given on a range of other areas of law as they relate to education, including charity			

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status, Data Protection, Freedom of Information requests, trusts and contractual issues.

Provides advice to the Legal Action Panel with regard to the correct legal route to follow for children who have school attendance issues and is then responsible for issuing Education Supervision Order applications. This will involve issuing applications to the Court, interviewing, advising and taking statements from Education Social Workers, preparing the case and attending Court to represent the Local Authority. Has responsibility for renewing and discharging Education Supervision Orders.

Research legal information at the request of any of the solicitors within the Social Care & Education team and undertakes work at the direction/request of the Principal Solicitor.

Prepares applications under the Children Act 1989 and represents Somerset County Council in Court for Direction Appointments. Assists the relevant solicitor with the preparation and conduct of the case, e.g. arranging the attendance of witnesses, collating Court 'bundles' (see below) and serving documentation.

Attends Court with Counsel (Barrister) and prepares detailed notes of the evidence and judgement made in the cases heard.

Gives general advice in respect of any Court proceedings that require submissions by the LA or by Schools.

Environment and Litigation

Provides comprehensive legal, procedural and general advice in relation to the institution, defence and conduct of legal proceedings in all contentious matters, both civil and criminal. Undertakes legal research to support this advice or at the request of any of the lawyers.

In relation to the recovery of civil debts, the jobholder:

Where proceedings are instituted, in accordance with the Civil Procedure Rules and attendant practice directions, generates the necessary County Court documents and adds information setting out the basis of the Council's claim, takes statements from witnesses and files and serves documents in accordance with the Court directions.

Makes occasional appearances before the District Judge to make routine or uncontested applications and contested matters heard in chambers.

In cases where judgment is obtained, prepares statements for defendants showing the amount, frequency and method of payment as determined by the Court. Notifies staff of the finance service, prepares case reports for the client Department and takes any other necessary follow-up action.

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In other civil proceedings, including Adult Social Care litigation, the eviction of trespassers from the Council's land, complaints by Council employees or ex-employees of discrimination or unfair dismissal, or claims arising from damage to the Council's property, the jobholder:

Considers the need for Court action and, if so, instructed by the Solicitor with conduct of the case, prepares or drafts all necessary papers and applications under their direction and initiates proceedings. Serves notices or summonses on defendants by post or as directed by that Solicitor.

Drafts Witness Statements in respect of High Court, County Court, Court of Protection and Employment Tribunal proceedings, and advises witnesses in relation to matters of evidence and Court procedure.

Liaises with Local authority and other witnesses in the preparation of cases. Arranges for witnesses to attend hearings in the High Court, County Court, Court of Protection and Employment Tribunal including, where appropriate, obtaining and serving a witness summons.

Collates papers for inclusion of Briefs to Counsel and prepares notices for any interlocutory applications in the High and County Courts.

Represents Somerset County Council in Court for directions appointments.

Attends Court with Counsel to assist them by taking notes of evidence, locating documents and providing general administrative support.

Negotiates with other Solicitors or third parties in settling documentation or disputes concluding agreements and settlements on the best terms available or as instructed by the client Service.

Takes any necessary action to enforce compliance if Court Orders are not obeyed, including applying for warrants of execution and for any further Orders which may be required.

In summary criminal proceedings, for example prosecutions for failure to comply with planning Enforcement Notices, non-school attendance prosecutions or notices requiring the return of library books, the jobholder:

Initiates Court proceedings by completing and lodging complaint and summons forms on behalf of the County Council.

If so, authorised by the Solicitor having the conduct of the case, attends Court as the Council's representative and conducts the case. In uncontested cases where no witnesses are called for the Council, submits to questioning by the Magistrate's Clerk, the defendant or defendant's solicitor as appropriate.

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In criminal proceedings heard in the Crown Court or any higher Court, the jobholder carries out the functions listed above in relation to Witness Statements, liaison with witnesses, preparing papers for Counsel and attending Court with Counsel.

Knowledge / Experience / Skills

	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge		
An understanding of legal processes and procedures relevant to public law, familiarity with adult social care legislation/civil procedure rules/criminal procedure rules, administrative law, and the statutory frameworks governing local authorities, and ability to interpret and apply these laws in practical scenarios or demonstrate a willingness and ability to quickly learn and adapt to these requirements.	X	
Awareness of the broader context in which local government operates, and the legal framework that is applicable, to be able to anticipate challenges and providing proactive legal support.	X	
Experience		
Demonstrable experience in drafting legal documents, including preparing briefs to Counsel, summons, court applications, and other legal documentation with accuracy and compliance to statutory requirements.	X	
Proven ability to undertake legal research, using both electronic and traditional resources, to support casework and inform decision-making.	X	
Ability to use legal case management systems and direct the preparation of court bundles electronically. Familiarity with digital workflows in document handling.		X
Experience in liaising with internal client departments and external third parties,		X

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demonstrating professionalism and clarity in communication.		
Ability to undertake legal research and provide advice notes for consideration.	X	
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications		
A Law Degree and/or equivalent experience working as a Paralegal is essential, providing the foundational knowledge and skills required for the role.	X	
Willingness to undertake training in specific areas of Law.	X	
Skills		
Ability to work within strict deadlines, prioritising tasks and managing time effectively to ensure timely delivery of legal support.	X	
Strong attention to detail and accuracy in documentation, ensuring all legal documents are error-free and compliant.	X	
Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal, to convey complex legal information clearly. Organisational skills are vital for managing multiple cases and maintaining accurate records.	X	
Willingness to undertake training in specific areas of law, showing commitment to continuous professional development and adaptability to evolving legal requirements.	X	
Working Conditions		
Dimensions of the role		
Working Arrangements		
Somerset Council's Dynamic Working Strategy will be applied to this position.		
Corporate Accountabilities		

JOB DESCRIPTION

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: