

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON
INNOVATION AND CHANGE DEPARTMENT
JOB DESCRIPTION

POST TITLE: Principal Lawyer
Grade: **MGB**
Department: Innovation and Change
Location: Various offices according to the needs of the service
Responsible to: Assistant Head(s) of Law or Head of Law

Responsible for: A team of senior lawyers, Expert Practitioners and legal assistants

Post number: **TBC**

Date: 1st October 2022

MAIN PURPOSE

- In the South London Legal Partnership (SLLP) there are numerous areas of law. The role of the Principal Lawyer is to be the lead expert lawyer for a particular area of law.
- This role is only to be appointed to where the individual has the ability to take lead responsibility within the practice for one or more of the following areas of law:
 - Children's Social Care
 - Adoption
 - Adults Social Care
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Planning
 - Housing
 - Debt Recovery
 - Judicial Review
 - Highways
 - Property
 - Procurement
 - Administrative Law
 - Constitutional Law
 - Finance
 - Elections
 - FOI
 - Licensing
 - Environment
- The Principal Lawyer would be the Practice's specialist lead for that area of law and to manage the provision of this area of law, working across the whole practice to ensure connected disciplines are aware of key provisions and legislative change.
- To take responsibility for this area of law to provide legal services to the London Boroughs that make up SLLP and any associated arm's length delivery vehicles or additional contractors The

role would also be responsible for ensuring that the legal advice and legal services provided to those clients is cost effective and of the highest quality.

- To line manage a team of senior lawyers, Expert Practitioners, lawyers and legal assistants.
- To play an active part in the Practice's senior leadership team, attending management team meetings on a monthly basis.

Other key responsibilities include:

- Provide customer focused, high quality and responsive specialist legal advice in relation to at least one of the areas of legal expertise covered by a local authority legal team.
- To be responsible for delivering a variety of types of legal work as expected within that specialism.
- To procure external legal advisers as agreed by the process put in place by each respective partner council and to act as intelligent client in relation to any such advisers, overseeing their advice and ensuring that it protects the interests of the partner council the external legal advisers are acting for.
- To be responsible for providing creative legal solutions on a seamless basis to support service transformation and change and to meet client needs and at the more senior levels to be able to deliver advice on a broad range of areas.
- To carry an extensive case load of complex and sensitive matters and to be managing cases that would be considered to be highly complex or organisationally high profile.
- To be responsible for representing the interests of the service within the wider council organisations in any of the five authorities and with external clients.
- To supervise legal and non-legal junior staff and to supervise and provide line management of a team of fee earning staff
- Jointly with an Assistant Head of Law, be responsible for the staffing budget within the team.
- To deputise for the Assistant Head of Law, Head of Law or Managing Director of the SLLP.

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- To provide high level legal advice to elected members, including when attending committees and to Chief Officers and staff across all authorities and to any other client of the Shared Legal Service.
- To advise upon, draft and approve committee reports in respect of case and legal issues.
- To be the lead lawyer for a particular area of law; leading on the provision of advice to all five boroughs, or for larger areas of law, at least two boroughs, in that area and being the senior trusted voice on those issues.
- To lead and manage a team of senior lawyers, lawyers, Expert Practitioners and legal assistants in your area of law, allocating work, making arrangements for supervision and

monitoring, providing advice, guidance and assistance as required. In addition, to have supervisory responsibility for any other lawyers, or legal assistants working in the area of specialism.

- To manage a large caseload of wide-ranging work, including but not limited to; drafting legal letters, legal agreements, deeds, notices, orders, consents byelaws as well as negotiating agreements, settlements and such matters, managing competing demands and meeting deadlines and the requirements of the Shared Legal Service.
- Where relevant, to prepare and process all matters relevant to any proceedings before a court, arbitration, mediation or public inquiry and to attend such as the client's advocate or, if appropriate, select and instruct appropriate external legal representation.
- To work proactively to maintain and improve the relationship with the clients of the Shared Legal Service, especially those who are identifying matters that are relevant to the post holder's specialism.
- To use their role working across South West London to implement best practice from across the five councils in each authority. This is both in the provision of legal services but also in the delivery of the services supported by legal services.
- Within the caseload of the team to be responsible for the strategically important legal work and to be the lead expert lawyer for a particular legal area.
- To have lead responsibility for providing innovative solutions to deal with complex issues arising in connection with the work within the team and the legal issues presented by clients.
- To lead cross team project teams – co-ordinating the delivery of complex legal projects with lawyers from multiple teams to clients.
- To be responsible for the co-ordination of the activities within the team to ensure the provision of a quality legal service to all authorities.
- To work proactively to improve productivity, and quality, within the team.
- To be responsible for the line management and supervision of the lawyers and legal assistants allocated to them; supporting the staff in their development, providing performance management and ensuring that the work they are delivering is appropriate and conducting appraisals and 1-2-1s.
- To assist the Head of Law or Assistant Head of Law and deputise for them, in managing the overall operation of the team
- To undertake duties on behalf of the Monitoring Officer for all five authorities.
- Any other duties as requested by the Head of Law, Assistant Head of Law or Managing Director.

**LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON
INNOVATION AND CHANGE DEPARTMENT
PERSON SPECIFICATION**

POST TITLE: Principal Lawyer
Grade: MGB

Qualifications and Experience

- Qualified solicitor or barrister or chartered legal executive with a background in local government.
- Good knowledge of relevant legislation to the service area and the decision-making processes and procedures.
- Specific and demonstrable expertise in a specific area of local government law with the technical skill and knowledge to lead on it for the organisation.
- Experience of staff management and ability to manage, inspire and motivate staff

Skills and Knowledge

- Significant personal gravitas and charisma with an ability to operate with confidence and credibility at the highest levels of all authorities.
- An ability to use expert legal opinion to provide practical and innovative solutions to complex legal, contractual or service delivery issues.
- 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.
- Ability to work under pressure and respond efficiently to the changing needs of the clients.
- Ability to be able to travel to attend client officers or courts etc. wherever the client's case is being considered.
- Intellectually powerful with a good degree of political nous and experience of operating in politically sensitive environments.
- Commitment to the principles of and development of the Shared Legal Service.
- Ability to contribute to the ongoing development of the Shared Legal Service.
- Good communication skills, both orally and in writing and good numeracy and analytical skills.

- Performance orientated, able to manage and monitor performance effectively set clear objectives for the review of individual and service level performance.
- Ability to provide visible support and leadership which empowers, enables and develops staff to achieve results.
- 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 5 authorities.