

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON
CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
JOB DESCRIPTION

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| POST TITLE: | Assistant Head of Law - Social Care and Education |
| Grade: | MG1 |
| Department: | Corporate Services |
| Location: | Various offices according to the needs of the service |
| Responsible to: | Head of Law – Social Care and Education and accountable to the Director of Children’s Services for (Sutton and Merton Councils(Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth Councils) |
| Responsible for: | Responsibility for two or more Social Care and Education Legal Teams and deputising for Head of Law and Managing Director of SLLP |
| Post number: | |
| Date: | April/May 2022 |

MAIN PURPOSE

- To lead two or more teams of the Social Care and Education legal teams of the South London Legal Partnership (SLLP) and deliver excellent legal services to the London Boroughs of Merton, Sutton, Richmond, Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (“the Partner Councils” and such expression shall include any arms-length delivery vehicles operated by those Councils) and/or be the lead for Adult Social Care and Education across all five authorities.
- To have responsibility for children’s safeguarding professional practice and support to Directors of Children’s Services in two or more of the Partner Councils and/or Adult Social Care and Education professional practice across all five authorities. To operate remotely across the authorities with little or no supervision or guidance.
- To ensure the Social Care and Education legal teams of the SLLP provide cost effective, comprehensive and professional legal services to the Partner Councils
- To contribute at a strategic level within the Partner Councils to the preparation and adoption by the councils of children and adult social care and education strategies.
- To influence major policy direction both within a single council and as a joined up approach across five local authorities where it is beneficial to do so.

- To impact at a corporate level to deliver council priorities and initiate corporate working across the authorities. To devise new and innovative ways of delivering council services in a cross boundary and joint commissioning environment.
- To deliver an effective sustained and high quality legal service in conjunction with the Head of Law, Social Care and Education and Managing Director, SLLP, in the areas of children and adult social care and education law over the medium term and to adapt to the changing needs of the Partner Councils Thames (and arms-length delivery vehicles).
- To be a respected and visible manager, responsible for excellent client care and support to corporate management teams across the Partner Councils
- To identify and implement opportunities within Social Care and Education legal team to provide ongoing improvements both within the services and across the council's processes to maximise productivity and reduction in costs for the benefit of all authorities.
- To be a member of the SLLP Management Team and participate in the overall management of the Shared Legal Service.
- Together with the Head of Law, Social Care and Education, to develop opportunities to provide services to bodies other than the Partner Councils and to deliver on income targets for the Social Care and Education law team.

- To act as Deputy Monitoring Officer as required for the Partner Councils

Professional

- To provide leadership and take responsibility for support across the practice to all five authorities in Social care and education.
- To provide high level legal advice to elected members, including cabinet, committees and to Chief Officers, including Chief Executives and staff across all five authorities and to any other client of the Shared Legal Service.
- To provide leadership on the client relationship with all Partner Councils authorities in relation to the work in the Social Care and Education legal section or as directed by the Head of Law or Head of the Shared Legal Service including negotiation of the SLAs and to assure the delivery of support in accordance with those SLAs.
- To pro-actively work with the relevant clients within all five 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 five authorities..
- To manage scarce resources in a complex environment allocating resource across five authorities.
- To initiate and provide leadership in the joining up of working practices between authorities to introduce cost efficiencies.
- To initiate and provide leadership on the learning and development of client departments across five authorities.

Managerial

- To provide leadership, 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 principal and 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.

- With the Head of Law, to manage the salaries budget for the team (approximately £1.8 million)
- To deliver high performance through proactive performance management of the team
- To participate in and where appropriate. Lead intra- and inter-departmental working parties and to ensure that such groups receive appropriate contributions from the Shared Legal Service for all authorities.
- 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 Law or Head of Shared Legal Service or Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership
- Any other duties as requested by the Head of Law or Head of Shared Legal Service or Assistant Director.

**LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON
CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
PERSON SPECIFICATION**

POST TITLE: Assistant Head of Law - Social Care and Education
Grade: MG1

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 or Adult Social Care or Education Law with substantial experience at a senior level leading on children's safeguarding law and practice or adult social care or education.
- 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 motivate, 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 the vision and mission statement of all five authorities 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