

Northumberland County Council

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

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| <b>Post Title:</b> Lawyer               | <b>Directorate:</b> Chief Executives<br><b>Director/Service/Sector:</b> Legal Services |                       | <b>Office Use</b>         |
| <b>Band:</b> 10                         | <b>Workplace: Hybrid:</b> County Hall/Agile working                                    |                       | JE ref: 3435<br>HRMS ref: |
| <b>Responsible to:</b> Principal Lawyer | <b>Date:</b> July 2024   | <b>Manager Level:</b> |                           |

**1. JOB PURPOSE:**

- a) To provide a high quality efficient and effective legal service to the Council and its officers within identified subject areas and to assist and support the County Council's Monitoring Officer and Legal Management Team in discharging their duties and responsibilities.
- b) To supervise, support and mentor more junior colleagues such as trainee solicitors and legal officers and / or other colleagues as appropriate.
- c) To undertake legal work to which s/he is recruited; within at least one of the following teams by advising and representing the Council and various related bodies in relation to: -
  - Child Care e.g. work for Children' Services on any issue arising from the care of children and young persons.
  - Adult Care e.g. work for Adult Services on any issue arising from the care of adults
  - Corporate & Governance e.g. a wide range of issues involving Data Protection, Education, Employment, Governance, Information Governance, Procurement, Property, and Common Land & village greens, pensions, and other matters.
  - Regulation e.g. a range of work in relation to civil and criminal litigation, planning and highways, licensing, housing and environmental health and enforcement and other matters

**2. MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES, TASKS AND DUTIES (inc KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS):**

- a) Provision of Legal Advice and Services including:
  - i) Ensuring that the Council receives legal advice and assistance which is, timely and accurate, responsive to the Council's needs.
  - ii) Advising senior officers and Members.
  - iii) An understanding of the provision of legal advice in a politically sensitive environment.
  - iv) An awareness and understanding there will be considerable contact with members of the public with a grievance against the council and / or a history or criminal and / or anti-social behaviour, leading to aggressive and abusive presentation on occasion.
  - v) Regular exposure to situations and material that are likely to cause distress.

- iv) Undertaking all legal services work, whether advice or casework, or special projects with minimal supervision and professional support,
  - vi) Undertake complex litigation and providing advocacy in respect of complex cases at court, inquiries and tribunals,
  - vi) Ensuring the collection, collation and maintenance of data including contributing to Benchmarking and Special Interest Groups.
- b) Providing support to the Legal Management Team, including assisting in the investigation of code of conduct complaints.
- c) To assist in ensuring that Legal Services is appropriately resourced and managed and demonstrates compliance with Corporate policies and standards adopted by the Council from time to time.
- d) To attend and advise at Executive, Council, Cabinet and Committees (including Local Area Councils or equivalent) as directed by the Legal Management Team.
- e) To participate fully in any personal and professional development requirements and opportunities and to assist in the arrangement and facilitation and conduct of team training events
- f) To assist in the identification and exploration of ways in which Legal Services can be provided to external organisations including the Northumberland National Park Authority and Social Housing Providers for appropriate remuneration. To maximise all means and opportunities of raising external revenue within the remit of the post.
- g) To represent, where necessary, the Council and/or the Legal Services Management Team at meetings of relevant internal Boards and groups (both statutory and non-statutory) and outside bodies, such as the Regional Management Board of the Fire Service and multidisciplinary meetings with partner agencies such as the Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board and Safeguarding Adults Board.
- h) To provide advice, where necessary, to a range of Panels and any other similar bodies, within the Council. Such advice to include dealing with Ombudsman complaints and / or clerking of statutory appeals processes where appropriate.
- i) To support the training and development of junior members of staff and other colleagues as appropriate.
- j) To assist in the development of strong and effective links with client officers and external stakeholders
- k) To devise innovative legal solutions to highly complex legal and factual problems in situations where there are no precedents. To deal with issues either within a specified area of legal practice or which cut across more than one area of legal practice. To provide advice outside their area of specialisation or to make connections with other specialist lawyers to provide co-ordinated support of wider projects. To have an understanding of the wider policy context. To evaluate alternative solutions.
- l) Ability to meet deadlines including deadlines externally imposed by Courts, Tribunals and clients in a context of continually changing priorities. Work is carried out in a demand-led environment where the workflows cannot be controlled and work plans can be interrupted by urgent demands.
- m) Need to assess priorities between the work of different parts of the Council, all of it considered by the client to be of high importance and/or urgency.
- n) Responsible for the timely input of legal expertise from others including external lawyers.

- o) The post holder is required to demonstrate the level of skill, knowledge and expertise in the law. The post holder shall hold an appropriate professional legal qualification as set out in the Person Specification and this Job Description and experience in working in the law post qualification.
- p) The post holder shall have the ability to adapt and take on and provide advice in relation to new areas of law with efficiency and competence.
- q) the post holder shall have excellent decision making and communication skills, flexibility and to support the Legal Management Team in promoting and implementing the Councils strategic objectives.

### **3. CONTACTS:**

- a) Regular contact with senior managers, Chief Officers and elected Members across the Council.
- b) Contact with members on case specific matters.
- c) Contact with members of the public
- d) Contacts with Local Government Association, other local authorities, partners and external bodies, Government Departments, other professionals (lawyers and non-lawyers), courts and tribunals including Judges, Counsel and other multi-disciplinary experts

### **4. CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION**

- a) To devise innovative legal solutions to highly complex legal and factual problems in situations where there are no precedents.
- b) To deal with issues either within a specified area of legal practice or which cut across more than one area of legal practice.
- c) To provide advice outside their area of specialisation or to make connections with other specialist lawyers to provide co-ordinated support of wider projects.
- d) To have an understanding of the wider policy context. To evaluate alternative solutions.

### **5. DECISIONS**

**a) Discretion: The Post holder shall:**

- (i) have significant autonomy in the conduct of individual matters subject to requirement to recognise when consultation is required.
- (ii) Have a wide degree of discretion in taking decisions in the conduct of particular matters concerning the advice to be given.
- (iii) Advise on and help to develop long term policies.
- (iv) Provide advice to support decision making across the Council including, but not limited to particularly sensitive matters.

**b) Consequences: the Postholder will at all times be aware:**

- (i) Advice given, and decisions made have a major impact on Service Groups and the Council and partner organisations.
- (ii) Of the impact of any advice and / or actions on the lawfulness of the Council's actions, finances and reputation of the Council.
- (iii) Of the Impact of any advice and / or actions on the budget for individual initiatives.

**6. RESOURCES**

a) the Postholder shall be responsible for ensuring the:

- (i) Security of confidential and sensitive paper and electronic data when transporting and using files and laptops when working away from the office.
- (ii) the safe custody of electronic data, Deeds, Contracts and other original documents which, if mislaid/destroyed could have very serious consequences for the Council.

**7. WORK ENVIRONMENT**

The Postholder shall be able to meet the following:

a) **Work Demands:**

- (i) Ability to meet deadlines including statutory deadlines and those deadlines externally imposed by Courts, Tribunals and clients in a context of continually changing priorities. Work is carried out in a demand-led environment where the workflows cannot be controlled, and work plans can be interrupted by urgent demands.
- (ii) Need to assess and allocate priorities between the work of different parts of the Council, all of it considered by different client departments to be of primary and high importance and/or urgency. On occasion this may involve reassessment of priorities and subsequent reallocation of tasks within the team to ensure all objectives are met.
- (iii) Ability to sustain regular and frequent prolonged periods of intense concentration (potentially daily), often for periods in excess of 3 hours when undertaking complex case work and / or appearing in Court.
- (iv) Ability to make decisions quickly and effectively including in the provision of advice within meetings, and / or in the court arena and with little or no notice.

b) **Physical Demands**

- (i) Handling of heavy documentation requiring use of special transport appliances, especially court and public inquiry files and bundles of evidence and deed

parcels which can be large in number and difficult to transport safely.

(ii) Keyboard work in carrying out own typing in support of casework.

**c) Working Conditions.**

(i) Hybrid working arrangements with some office based and some home working with requirement to travel in and out of the County as well as between Council offices, Courts and other venues within the County

(ii) Considerable contact with members of the public with a grievance against the Council and/or with a history of criminal and anti-social behaviour,

(iii) Regular exposure to material and situations likely to cause distress for example statement of the social worker or photographs in cases of child abuses or abusive and / or threatening members of the public across the work undertaken by the legal team.

**d) Work Context**

(i) Highly stressful environment owing to routinely contentious nature of the work often including exposure to materials and situations likely to cause distress.

**Other Duties:**

The duties and responsibilities in this job description are not exhaustive. The postholder may be required to undertake other duties that may be required from time to time within the general scope of the post. Duties and responsibilities outside of the general scope of this grade of post will be with the consent of the postholder.

**Special Conditions:**

The post is politically restricted by virtue of Section 2(2)(c) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

**Equal Opportunities:**

The postholder is required to carry out the duties in accordance with Council Equal Opportunities policies.

**Health and Safety:**

The postholder is required to carry out the duties in accordance with the Council Health and Safety policies and procedures.

The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this Job Description are indicative and may vary over time. Post holders are expected to undertake other duties and responsibilities relevant to the nature, level and extent of the post and the grade has been established on this basis.

Northumberland County Council  
**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

|   |   |                  |
|---|---|------------------|
| <b>Post Title:</b> Lawyer   | <b>Director/Service/Sector:</b> Legal Services  | Ref: 3435        |
| <b>Essential</b>  | <b>Desirable</b>  | <b>Assess by</b> |
| <b>Qualifications and Knowledge</b>   |   |                  |
| <p>Qualified Solicitor or Barrister or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives holding a current practicing certificate and a minimum of two years post qualification experience.</p>   | <p>Knowledge of local government law.</p> <p>Experience in one or more of the areas of law relevant to the team in which the post holder will be working.</p>   | <b>a, o</b>      |
| <b>Experience</b>   |   |                  |
| <p>Experience of giving advice on a range of legal topics.</p> <p>Experience in using office and on-line applications on a personal computer, including legal reference texts.</p> <p>Experience of advocacy personally and through Counsel, at a range of Courts and tribunals.</p> <p>Experience of drafting legal documents, contracts and preparing case files for litigation.</p>  | <p>Experience of giving advice on local government law.</p> <p>Experience of providing advice in a sensitive political environment.</p> <p>Experience using Microsoft Office and on-line facilities.</p> <p>Some experience of supervising more junior staff</p>  | <b>a, i, r</b>   |
| <b>Skills and competencies</b>  |   |                  |
| <p>Ability to analyse issues and provide clear advice to ensure that the County Council complies with its legal obligations whilst enabling solutions to problems to be found.</p> <p>Knowledge of current legislation and common law as they affect local government.</p> <p>Excellent interpersonal, communication, persuasive and negotiating skills.</p> <p>Problem solving ability.</p> <p>Able to establish and maintain a high level of personal and professional credibility within the Service and with clients.</p> | <p>Wide knowledge of current English and common law as they affect local government.</p> <p>Ability to work with minimal supervision whilst handling a diverse portfolio of work across a range of subject areas at any one time.</p> <p>Ability to design, prepare and deliver training to officers and members of the Council.</p> <p>Project management skills to enable achievement of overall Service goals.</p> <p>Ability to produce accurate and accessible reports for consideration and determination by senior management and elected members.</p> | <b>a, i, r</b>   |

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| <p>Able to support clients and witnesses particularly where required to give evidence at Court.</p> <p>Politically aware</p> <p>Able and willing to adapt to new areas of work, takes the initiative and relishes the challenge of doing so and is able take on tasks/duties outside his/her field of expertise competently recognising when he/she lacks the requisite knowledge and requires professional support and supervision</p> <p>Advocacy skills</p> <p>Ability to manage a full, substantial and varied workload with minimal supervision and / or support.</p> <p>Experience in drafting legal documents</p> <p>Able to devise, prepare and deliver training</p>  | <p>An awareness of the duties and responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer and the ethical framework applying to local government.</p> <p>Experience of working an in house local government legal service</p> <p>Awareness of the policies aims and objectives of the Council as a whole and Service Groups</p> |                       |
| <p><b>Physical, mental, emotional and environmental demands</b></p>   |  |                       |
| <p>Usually works in a seated position. Some standing, walking, stretching, lifting or driving.</p> <p>The role may require heavy lifting of case papers to and from court.</p> <p>Frequent use of a PC</p> <p>Ability to sustain prolonged periods of intense concentration, often for periods in excess of 3 hours when undertaking complex case work.</p> <p>Ability to work under intense pressure from deadlines, regular interruptions and conflicting demands. Mental agility is also required as the postholder will be regularly required to meet demands across a varied range of activities.</p> <p>Dealing with persons who lack capacity, child abuse cases, the homeless and other similar cases can result in regular intense emotional demands.</p> <p>The role may involve frequent contact with a wide range of individuals who through their circumstances or behaviour place intense emotional demands on the post-holder or expose them to unpleasant or hazardous conditions. The post-holder must be able to demonstrate that they are able to act in a balanced and professional manner.</p> |  | <p><b>a, i, r</b></p> |

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| The role requires the ability to deal with highly emotive and charged situations especially in emergency situations and have an awareness of the desired outcome which can have serious consequences for vulnerable people.   |  |                |
| <b>Motivation</b>   |  |                |
| <p>Willing to be flexible and adopt new ways of working to manage a varied workload.</p> <p>Able to take own initiative to be proactive and work independently to ensure tasks are completed on time and to the required standard.</p> <p>Adapts to change by adopting a flexible and cooperative attitude.</p> |  | <b>a, i, r</b> |
| <b>Other</b>  |  |                |
| Ability to meet the transport requirements of the post.   |  | <b>a, i, r</b> |

Key to assessment methods; (a) application form, (i) interview, (r) references, (t) ability tests (q) personality questionnaire (g) assessed group work, (p) presentation, (o) others e.g. case studies/visits