

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Paralegal/ Legal Support Officer (Casework)		
Directorate	Legal		
Reporting to	Legal Operations Manager		
Grade	14		
Evaluation ref:	AG0112	Job ref:	Family RPG14
Role purpose			
<p>The role of a paralegal/legal secretary is to provide multi-faceted support to the legal fee earners. This symbiotic method of working maximises efficiency and effectiveness, delivering an improved service to clients.</p>			
Responsibilities			
<p>Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having regard to the relevant Proceedings Rules ensure the necessary evidence is assembled to issue Court Proceedings in the appropriate court or seek additional guidance from the appropriate fee earner. • Filing and service of documents to relevant parties. <p>Bundles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In compliance with Practice Direction 27A of the Family Proceedings Rules, Practice Direction 32 of the Civil Procedure Rules; Practice Direction 32B of the Court of Protection Practice Directions or other rules as appropriate, collate, organise, prepare, and maintain Office, Court and Witness Bundles which may contain Court applications, orders, statements and reports together with correspondence files containing highly sensitive and confidential information. • Monitor upcoming hearings to ensure bundles are filed at the appropriate Court for a range of hearings in accordance with the relevant practice directions and deadlines to avoid costs being awarded. • Responsible for the preparation and distribution of Bundles including photocopying, faxing, preparing Bundle Indices, general correspondence. Liaising with parties, Court staff and judicial support officers in each case to ensure that they are in possession of updated and amended information for each hearing. • Social Care and Education Team only - sole responsibility for using a specialist electronic bundling system. • Conveyancing and Property Team only - prepare auction packs consisting of various title documents and official searches for sending out to prospective Buyers. <p>File Management</p>			

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- Management of files of correspondence (involving filing contact information from various parties) to evidential standards in accordance with the relevant procedure rules.
- Maintain records obtaining information from Court Orders, the Court, Counsel, or other Professionals, identify and highlight matters of urgency to the relevant fee earner
- Open and close office files and bundles, using office protocols and procedures.

Correspondence files

- Check fee earners' post and where possible take the initiative to respond to queries, alternatively assess the urgency and nature of the correspondence bringing to the fee earners attention if any immediate action is required.
- Draft correspondence, completing forms.
- Draft letters.
- Audio and copy typing as required, including identifying the relevant precedents and updating them as required.

Telephone Calls

Liaise with the Public including external Solicitors, Social Workers, Developers, Medical Professionals, and the Police, e.g. answer enquiry calls; deal with enquires and address queries and take messages for fee earners and ensure accurate and correct information is taken.

Research

- To have a working knowledge of the Procedure Rules relevant to the area in which work is undertaken, to maintain knowledge when updates are issued via Statutory Instrument.

Systems and Procedures

- Update key dates on the case management system and in the section diary.
- Arrange renewal dates including preparation of documentation for renewals to take place upon own initiative.
- 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.
- Chase evidential documentation to comply with deadlines, e.g. court directions/orders.
- Create and maintain template documents within the case management system.
- Obtain information to assist the fee earner, e.g. accessing Land Registry Direct via the internet to obtain details of registered titles to land.
- Provide support to other fee earners in the Service in the absence of their paralegal/legal secretary.

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Awareness and adherence to Court and Office Systems and Procedures

- Archive cases in accordance with office procedures and statutory requirements.
- 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.

Impact

Contacts & Relationships

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.

Contact with private practice solicitors and their secretaries, officers at all levels in other Local Authorities and their secretaries and Counsel.

Resources

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

Knowledge / Experience / Skills

	Essential	Desirable	
Knowledge			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to speak fluent English as stated in Part 7 of the Immigration Act (2016). 	X		
Experience			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proven administrative experience. • Accurate record keeping • IT experience • Experience and/or knowledge of legal procedures. • Experience of Microsoft systems, especially Word, Excel, and Outlook 	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous public sector experience • Previous experience in dealing with the public 		X	
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 GCSE's (or equivalent) at grade C/Level 4 including English Language and Maths • Minimum typing speed of 60 wpm 	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications in IT Skills e.g. ECDL • A Level Law 		X	

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Skills			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills • Team working skills. • Administration skills 	X		
Working Conditions			
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: 3 June 2024