

Job Profile Principal Lawyer [Supporting People]

Job Title: Principal Lawyer

Job Grade: Level 6, Zone 1

Salary Range: £66,573 - £79,782

About Camden

Camden is building somewhere everyone can thrive, by making our borough the best place to live, work, study and visit. We're not just home to UK's fast-growing economy we are much more. We're home to the most important conversations happening today. Through our mission led approach we're making radical social change a reality, so that nobody gets left behind. Here's where you can be part of a progressive legal team, exploring the art of the possible to unblock barriers and ensure Camden is a place that works for everyone.

Our We Make Camden and The Way We Work strategies set out a compelling vision for an organisation that moves beyond a bureaucratic approach to a way of working focused on relationships, embracing innovation and valuing people. Legal Services, and Corporate Services more generally, is in the process of adapting its model to support this shift. We are looking for a Principal Lawyer to drive the agenda on the delivery of the Council's top priorities by ensuring that legal services provides a high-quality customer focused, and dynamic legal service in relation to Social Care, Adult Protection, Education SEN. Our in-house legal team plays an essential part in the achievement of the objectives of Camden Council. As a service, we strive to provide a high-quality professional service that meets our client's expectations. You will be a valued member of a lively, responsive, and supportive team delivering essential advice to clients and providing representation in diverse and interesting cases across the Council.

About the role

Legal Services in Camden explore the art of the possible to unblock barriers, taking a risk aware, compliant, but not averse, approach. We embody the values of the O-shaped lawyer of operating with openness, optimism and originality.

Rather than keeping the organisation 'safe' we are part of a 21st century legal profession that is animated by principles of social justice and works to solve problems rather than provide advice or support compliance as its default. We are clear that it is not about either but about being able to do both.

We embed ourselves in our client services, forming strong collaborative relationships from the outset which helps us to act early and prevent unnecessary escalation. As a service, and as individuals, we are visible across the organisation and are trusted advisers for both senior officers and Members.

As a Principal Lawyer in Camden you will assume a leadership role in driving forward improvements in practise in both legal services and across the council. You will provide a high quality and comprehensive legal service on all aspects of law relating to the area of Child Protection, Adults Social Care, Education and SEN. You will need to mirror the values of the O-shaped lawyer by your behaviours and be a role model to the Senior lawyers and Lawyers.

You will be heading up to a strong team of twelve and managing decisions on staff assignment, performance and development targets and reviews in the teams. With the Head of Legal Services, you will bring fresh focus to project managing, risk managing and service improvement initiatives throughout Legal Services. You will actively engage with clients on legal decisions provided and work closely with the Head of Legal Services to make all appropriate and proportionate resourcing decisions

1. You will be a Principal Lawyer advising Senior Managers and elected Members in the areas of child protection, adult social care, education and SEN, leading a team which provides comprehensive, high quality legal advice within the area of specialism.

2. Collaborative in your approach you will need to develop meaningful partnerships with the Executive Director, Directors, and Heads of Service to maintain open channels of communication between directorates and legal services. You will need to proactively develop effective and constructive working relationships across the organisation. You will need to ensure that your team works in a joined-up way across the organisation, to deliver effective service delivery for all clients.
3. You will enable the effective decision-making process of the council by preparing reports for, and on occasion attending committee meetings (which are held in the evening), working party meetings and other meetings in order to provide legal advice as and when required. You will therefore need to feel confident building relationships with elected Members and other senior stakeholders
4. Where required you will develop and deliver training for Camden officers and on occasion for external bodies. This training will champion best practice and novel approaches.
5. This is a leadership role and you will manage a team of specialist Senior lawyers, ensuring they deliver a customer focused service. With a clear view of what good looks like you will draw on tools such as appraisals and professional supervision to support and coach others to meet that ideal
6. You will be a visible ambassador across the council for a legal services team which is fit for purpose, creative and problem solving, responsive and future thinking. Proactive in your approach, you will seek out solutions rather than provide advice or support compliance as a default, acting as a role model for colleagues to adopt a similar way of working.
7. As a leader in the Legal Services you will play an important role in the development of an evolving Legal Services team, ensuring the team have the tools and capabilities to deliver excellent legal services. This will involve recruiting, training, leading and developing the performance of lawyers and support staff in order to deliver an excellent service.
8. You will be a role model for the utilisation of case management and IT systems. Ensuring that the team are using the systems and recognise the importance of being able to identify trends and performance indicators.
9. You will lead on the day-to-day allocation of work and use of staff in the team.
10. You will be responsible for leading or participating in service wide projects and/or initiatives as and when requested to do so by the Head of Law.
11. You will handle a personal caseload of the more complex, and reputational sensitive legal matters and cases. You will proactively raise new points of law including finding solutions for clients and members to achieve their goals and ensure compliance with the law. You will represent the Council at court as appropriate.
12. You will have personal responsibility for reviewing the risk assessment on cases, including maintaining a list of high risk cases for the team, and make clients aware of the costs and other implications of proposed courses of action to enable them to modify their instructions if necessary.
13. You will be expected to identify instructions or events that would result in a breach by a client of common law, legislation or rules of procedure or propriety or would constitute a course of action amounting to maladministration and take steps to resolve such issues
14. You will oversee the provision of external legal advice ensuring it represents best value where appropriate
15. You may be required to undertake advocacy at court where required or in appropriate cases instructing Counsel. You will be working under considerable pressure and you must be confident working entirely autonomously, ensuring the council achieves its goals in a way which is legally compliant, risk - aware but not adverse

In addition to the above you will be responsible for carrying out other duties of a similar nature as may be required from time to time.

This role requires you to be comfortable working with a high degree of personal responsibility whilst contributing to the cultivation of an evolving team. You will be expected to think creatively and help us to re-shape how we think about risk and governance for a 21st digital-era organisation. You will be thoughtful about a modern legal profession and its role in local public services, leading the team to think deeply about its purpose and contributing to a dialogue about how it responds to the implications of We Make Camden and The Way We Work.

Other relevant matters:

- If required by the Head of Law you may be required to assume a different area of work/ move to another team albeit one which suits your skill base and experience or one which you could relatively easily acquire the relevant skills
- You will undertake all training needed in order to fulfil the full range of tasks outlined in this job description.
- Ensure records are maintained and work carried out in accordance with professional good practice and any requirements to preserve confidentiality as well as adhering to relevant professional conduct rules.
- Endeavour to carry out the work in accordance with the principles of effective service to the client and community at large and in accordance with the Council's stated policies and objectives on equality of opportunity.
- Regularly review the standard of professional practice within your area of responsibility and recommend and implement methods of improving professional standards.
- You will embed equity and anti-racist practice across legal services. As an organisation we are on a journey to become truly anti-racist and in your role you will be expected to lead by example, championing the importance of social justice and equity
- All employees are expected to observe the Council's Health & Safety Policy and safety legislation whilst carrying out the specific duties and responsibilities of their post.
- Working with computerised and manual record systems, you will need to be fully aware of your responsibilities under Data Protection legislation for the security, accuracy and relevance of personal data.

About you

You will have the following technical knowledge and experience:

- Qualified solicitor or barrister with significant post-qualification experience
- Extensive knowledge and application of knowledge within the area of Child and Adult Protection and related to projects and generally related to local government and decision making
- Experience of a number of areas of local government practice including Child and Adult protection and ideally including some experience of SEN and Education or be able to demonstrate the ability and willingness to become sufficiently knowledgeable to manage others dealing with these matters and at times lead on related issues
- Demonstrable experience of building meaningful relationships with senior officers and elected Members so that you can provide advice to support them to make accurate, considered judgements and decisions.
- Ability to develop the client relationship manager role with clients (including external ones) and absorb key business needs in the short, medium and long term, therefore developing client's confidence in you, your team and legal services.
- Experience of successfully managing and motivating individuals and teams but also being a collaborative colleague within a team. In addition, an ability to manage staff who are not direct reports (in the absence of the HOLS)
- Working knowledge of the standards framework
- Knowledge of the political process, including understanding of corporate and strategic service issues.

- Commitment to the Council's Valuing Diversity Policy and understanding of its relevance to service delivery and employment.
- You will be an effective leader who is comfortable acting as an ambassador for legal services across the council, sharing good practice and encouraging innovation amongst colleagues
- Effective communication skills including, devising effective communication mechanisms and communicating clearly both orally and in writing, and explain the law simply and concisely in a manner that is appropriate for the client
- Flexibility, ownership and taking responsibility on all aspects of performance
- Aptitude and ability to learn and quickly marshal challenging situations, often at pace and in high pressure environments and autonomously.
- Have a bias for solving problems, using a maturity of judgement to seek out acceptable solutions which support the council to achieve it's objectives in a way which is legally compliant, risk - aware but not adverse.
- Ability to demonstrate creativity and innovation when meeting client needs within a legal framework/setting.
- Experience of introducing and maintaining quality initiatives
- Excellent organisational skills able to manage a complex and varied workload with a flexible and innovative approach to work.

Working at Camden

- At Camden we view work as an activity, not a place. We create trusting relationships, we embrace innovation rather than bureaucracy and we value people. Collaboration is the Camden way, silo working isn't.
- The postholder will need to work some part of each week (two days minimum) in the office (5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG) as determined in regular discussions with the Head of Legal Services and the team together with needing to attend for particular meetings (some may be at night) and hearings
- This role will manage a team of experienced senior lawyers and lawyers
- The postholder is expected to develop and maintain effective and constructive relationships with Chief and Senior Officers within the council and other public/local authorities in Camden; Elected Members; members of the public; the Borough Solicitor, other Principal and Senior Lawyers; Chief and Senior Officers of other Local Authorities; Professional and technical bodies; Counsel and private solicitors as well as Court officials.
- The post is politically restricted, which means individuals holding these posts cannot have active political role.

Over to you

We're ready to welcome your ideas, views, and rebellious spirit. Help us redefine how we're supporting people, and we'll redefine what a career can be. If that sounds good to you, we'd love to talk.

Is this role Politically Restricted?

Some posts at Camden are politically restricted, which means individuals holding these posts cannot have an active political role. For a list of all politically restricted roles at Camden, [click here](#).

Inclusion and Diversity:

We want Camden Council to be a great place to work and to ensure that our communities are represented across our workforce. A vital part of this is ensuring we're a truly inclusive organisation that encourages diversity in all respects. We particularly welcome applications from Black, Asian and those of Other Ethnicities, LGBT+, disabled and neurodiverse communities to help us make a real difference to our residents so that equity, inclusion, and justice remains at the heart of everything we do. To discover more about Camden and our commitment towards diversity, equality and safeguarding, please visit our recruitment website.

Agile working:

At Camden, we view work as an activity, not a place. We focus on performance, not presenteeism. We create trusting relationships, embrace innovation rather than bureaucracy, and value people. Collaboration is the Camden way; silo working isn't.

At Camden, we are proud to be one of Hire Me My Way's inaugural campaign supporters. Hire Me My Way is a national campaign led by Timewise, designed to increase the volume of good quality jobs that can be worked flexibly in the UK (www.HireMeMyWay.org.uk). Hire Me My Way aims to triple the number of available good-quality, flexible jobs to 1 million by 2020.

Asking for Adjustments:

Camden is committed to making our recruitment practices as accessible as we possibly can for everyone. This includes adjusting or changing the process for disabled people, neurodiverse people or people with long-term health conditions. If you would like us to do anything differently during the application, interview or assessment process, please contact us on 020 7974 6655, at resourcing@camden.gov.uk or post to 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG.