

Job description

Job Title: Solicitor - Family Department

Reporting to: Head of Department

Qualifications

8 years + PQE with experience in both public and private law children matters. Law Society Children Law Accreditation Panel Membership is essential. Knowledge of legal aid and public law children matters is essential. Knowledge of adoption is also an advantage. The candidate will also require an excellent track record as a solicitor and solid academic background.

Role:

- To undertake fee earning work
- To make a positive contribution to the work of the Department and to the firm

Key responsibilities

The fee earner is responsible to the Head of the Family Department, and to the firm as a whole, for the effective and efficient conduct of cases on behalf of clients in accordance with the overall policies and objectives of the firm. The fee earner is also responsible for proactive development and promotion of the firm's high standards and reputation.

All the firm's qualified fee earners are specialists and although they may have some opportunity to work outside their field of specialism, it is anticipated that the specialist area will account for the majority of their fee earning work.

For fee earning and case management purposes, the fee earner is responsible to the Head of the Family Department. For other purposes, e.g. in relation to issues relating to equipment or accommodation the fee earner may be responsible to the Partner with the responsibility for that specific issue.

The post primarily involves (with the support and assistance where necessary and available of other staff including the partners) the following:

1. dealing effectively with enquiries from referral agencies and direct from prospective new clients so as to assess the nature of the matter and whether it falls within the firm's area of practice, and in a case where the firm is unable to act, and identifying alternative sources of advice where appropriate;
2. accepting instructions from new clients, and in so doing advising them (a) of the likely costs and means of funding the advice, (b) of the firm's terms of business and (c) confirming all such advice in writing in accordance with the professional requirements of the Law Society/Solicitors Regulation Authority;
3. obtaining a realistic sum of money on account of costs and disbursements or, subject to approval, entering into a standard private retainer or conditional fee agreement with the client, or obtaining legal aid ;
4. notifying where appropriate the court, registry, tribunal or other body and any other party and/or their solicitors of the firm's interest, and maintaining all necessary correspondence;
5. undertaking such legal and factual research as is necessary for the case;
6. providing or contributing to detailed, high quality specialist advice to the client in family law matters including regulatory issues;
7. undertaking all necessary preparation of the case or matter, including instructing specialist counsel, assisting with the preparation and drafting of pleadings where appropriate, preparing documents for disclosure, taking the client's proof(s) of evidence, proofs of witnesses including expert witnesses, obtaining and perusal of all necessary documents, preparing and delivering instructions to experts where appropriate, attending or arranging attendance at conferences, consultations, or hearings, confirming with the requirements of the FPR or other applicable rules of procedure;

8. maintaining a full and orderly file with comprehensive attendance notes of all meetings and telephone calls, and, where appropriate, following the firm's system of time recording;
9. when appropriate, invoicing the client by delivery of a detailed narrative bill and applying for further private funds on account; alternatively, applying for legal aid funds on account of disbursements, where necessary making interim claims for costs; ensuring the prompt payment of disbursements; and at the conclusion of a matter delivering papers to a costs draftsman and expediting the assessment process;
10. facilitating claims for costs from the Legal Aid Agency;
11. at the conclusion of any matter, giving the client all advice necessary at that stage, including advice as to the firm's policy as to retention and destruction of papers;
12. at all times, having strict regard to the Law Society/SRA's Standards of Professional Conduct and Ethics, and in particular to the strict requirement of confidentiality of clients' affairs;
13. liaison within the firm with other fee earners engaged in similar and / or related cases matters or clients with a view both to maximising efficiency and avoiding conflicts of interest;
14. maintaining such financial records and supplying such financial information as may be required by the Law Society/SRA or the firm, including providing calculations of work in progress from time to time; and adhering so far as possible to the billing target which will be calculated from time to time after consultation with the fee earner;
15. becoming familiar with and observing the internal requirements of the firm as to file opening and closure, accounting procedures, and the maintenance of all necessary records and any other administrative requirement;
16. working effectively and efficiently with the non fee earning staff, including the fee earner's own secretary;
17. becoming familiar with and making best and most effective use of the firm's equipment;
18. attending as required at meetings within departments or otherwise to review case work or for the purposes of supervision;
19. attending such training as may be approved by the firm as will be necessary to fulfil the Law Society/SRA's requirements and to maintain a record of all training undertaken and points earned; and
20. to complete and maintain as necessary any professional documentation or records (such as a Practising Certificate) as the Law Society/SRA or any other professional body may require.

Person specification

You must hold the Law Society's Children Law Accreditation. You must have a good understanding of private children and public children law. You must undertake your own advocacy. You must be willing to undertake legally aided and privately funded work. You must be willing to act for parents, children, other relatives and local authorities.

The key competencies are set out below:

Commercial Awareness

- Identifies business opportunities and new ways of delivering services for the firm and shares those with colleagues.
- Identifies, assesses and manages case and financial risk in accordance with the firms' policies.
- Manages billing/costs administration - money on account, unpaid bills, minimising WIP, cash collection in a timely manner etc.

Client Care

- Establishes and maintains strong relationships with clients and organisations.
- Is reliable in delivery of services to clients.
- Understands the need for client confidentiality and is conscious of it at all times, both inside and outside of the office.

Personal Effectiveness

- Upholds the Values and Code of Conduct of the firm.
- Uses technical skills and expertise to perform role to the highest standards.
- Manages workload effectively with good time management, is organised and understands that others will be affected by poor management.

Communication

- Uses a balanced, fair, thoughtful and consistent communication style.
- Is able to identify and articulate key messages clearly and succinctly (verbally and in writing).
- Has a professional and confident style with clients and colleagues.

Management & Leadership

- Exercises good, informed judgement with decisions that are understood and communicated effectively.
- Delegates with trust, clearly understood, agreed responsibilities and deadlines and clear reporting lines.
- Is self-disciplined, organised and effective and does not impact negatively on others.

Self Development

- Agrees objectives that are specific, measureable, achievable, realistic/relevant and time bound.
- Recognises and values achievements of others.
- Is self aware and seeks support for own development.

Experience and education

- 8 years PQE + with an excellent academic background.
- The Law Society's Children Law Accreditation

SKILLS & Abilities - Must Have:

- Strong knowledge of MS Office, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook;
- Knowledge and use of time recording systems;
- Experience of representing clients in all aspects of public law children work;
- The ability to demonstrate engagement in the wider issues of family law;
- Excellent oral and written communication skills.

Essential qualities for this role are:-

- a solid understanding of the key principles of law and relevant legal procedures and a desire to excel when using them as a lawyer;
- ideally be a member of Resolution; to conduct litigation in accordance with their code of practice;
- knowledge of and commitment to the professional duties of a solicitor;
- knowledge of legal aid system and Legal Aid Agency procedures; knowledge of private funding;
- an understanding of, and ability to advise, clients from a wide range of backgrounds both orally and in writing on complex legal issues (including the ability to adapt styles appropriate to the needs of different types of clients);
- the ability to draft persuasive representations and letters, statements, witness statements and other documents;
- the ability to make sound strategic decisions when advising and during litigation to achieve the best results for clients whether in settlements or at trial;
- a good understanding of the Family Procedure Rules and the Civil Procedure Rules to the extent that they are relevant to family cases;
- willingness to keep up to date with developments in the law by reading relevant publications and attending appropriate courses and meetings;
- ability to research, analyse and evaluate complex fact patterns, legal concepts and related issues;
- undertake your own advocacy and provide cover for colleagues;
- ability to establish and maintain strong client relationships;
- interest in and ability to develop links with potential referral organisations (as our work is largely dependent on referrals from satisfied clients and organisations).