

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

**Title of Post:** Director of Legal Services

**Reports To:** Police Ombudsman/Chief Executive

**Main Duties**

The Director of Legal Services provides advice and guidance to the Police Ombudsman, Chief Executive and Executive Leadership Team (ELT) on all legal matters, which may be subject to legal challenge. He/she will also provide legal advice to investigation teams, ensuring investigative and corporate decisions are based on a sound legal foundation. The Director of Legal Services is a high profile role which plays a significant part in supporting the reputation of the Office. The post holder will also have a policy reform role within the organisation. The Director of Legal Services will manage a small team of lawyers, a Legacy Inquest team, and will act as the Data Protection Officer for the Office.

**Key Responsibilities**

1. To provide legal advice to the Police Ombudsman, Chief Executive and SMT regarding all aspects of legislation pertaining to the statutory functions of the Office of the Police Ombudsman, in particular the Police (NI) Act 1998 (as amended) and subordinate regulations.
2. To provide strategic, as well as case specific legal advice directly to the Ombudsman, Chief Executive and ELT, on all legal matters, which may be subject to legal challenge.
3. To lead and manage the Police Ombudsman’s Legal and Legacy Inquest Teams.
4. To review policy/legislation and its’ impact on the Office to conduct its’ business, and make recommendations for future legislative changes to improve the statutory foundations of the functions of the Office. To ensure that any impact is highlighted, addressed and managed to the benefit of the Office.
5. Deal with a range of criminal, civil and public law litigation work and Coroner’s inquests, from inception to conclusion at all court levels, including disclosure/discovery of documents.
6. To manage casework within litigation, policy development and provide operational legal advice to all staff.
7. To ensure effective delivery of the obligations on the Office for effective disclosure to the Coroner’s Legacy Inquests, and other third-party requests for access to information.
8. To provide considered, detailed advice on the Office’s strategic direction on legacy issues and be cognisant of the fact that such issues will attract political, media and public interest.
9. To represent the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland at court hearings at all levels and at other forums, such as public enquiries.
10. To instruct and appoint legal counsel as appropriate, where external law firms are engaged to provide specialist advice in areas such as employment or media law.
11. To have oversight of the legal services provided by external solicitors firms and counsel, including the quality of service being provided, and have ultimate accountability for this.
12. To deal with a range of court applications, draft and approve legal instruments and related protocols, as required by the Police Ombudsman.
13. To have a thorough grasp of the Legal Directorate’s caseload in its entirety, so as to be aware of the implications, or potential implications, of what are referred to as “strategic litigation.”
14. To manage those elements of the risk register applying to the Legal Directorate whilst, at the same time, contributing to the development, scrutiny and monitoring of the risk register as a whole.
15. To be responsible for leading, maintaining and developing professional interface with key stakeholders, such as DOJ, PSNI, Public Prosecution Service, Coroner’s Office, Human Rights Commission, Equality Commission, Information Commissioner and the Attorney General.
16. To build a strong network of collaborative relationships and partnership, whilst protecting the interests of PONI to avoid any potential undue restrictions in its freedom of action, or adverse external influences that might limit the effectiveness of PONI’s performance.
17. To act as the Data Protection Officer (DPO) for the Office, involving accountability for the design, review and implementation of all legal protocols and memorandum of understanding (MOUs) with key stakeholders.
18. As DPO, to report to the Information Commissioner any potential wrongful privacy or data protection practices.
19. To be responsible for providing and supervising all advice to investigative staff on criminal law, civil and public law litigation including the liability position of the legal claims and negotiate as appropriate the settlement of claims at the direction of the Chief Executive.
20. To contribute to the strategic direction of the Office, advising and updating the Ombudsman and ELT on existing issues and anticipate potential legal matters and vulnerabilities.
21. To assist with the development of the quadrennial Strategic Plan and Annual Business Plans, and individual Business Plan for the Legal Department.
22. To attend CPD and other Ombudsman Association events as required and ensure the professional development and CPD of the legally qualified team members.
23. To have responsibility for all records held, created or used as part of the business, including corporate and administrative records whether paper-based or electronic and also including emails, in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
24. To have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

* Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
* Men and women in general;
* Persons with a disability and persons without;
* Persons with dependants and persons without.

1. Any other relevant duties appropriate to the grade as may be required.

**Essential Criteria**

1. Be a qualified solicitor or barrister licensed to practice in Northern Ireland and have at least 7 years relevant post qualification experience as a legal practitioner.
2. Demonstrate relevant experience at a senior level in providing legal advice relating to complex legislation in the field of criminal law.
3. Have relevant experience in **two** of the following four areas:
4. Providing legal advice and/or representation relating to civil litigation;
5. The representation and/or case management of judicial review proceedings at all stages;
6. The representation and/or case management of legal matters presented at Coroner’s inquests.
7. The representation and/or case management of disciplinary or regulatory proceedings.
8. Have demonstrable experience of leading and managing legal professionals and administrative staff.
9. Experience of dealing with high profile and politically contentious issues.
10. Demonstrate highly developed communication skills, both in writing and in person, with experience of building strong stakeholder relationships.