Vale of Glamorgan Council

Job Description



- **Job Title** ▸ Principal Lawyer – Community Services
- **Post Number** ▸ X/LG/LG004
- **Directorate** ▸ Corporate Resources
- **Section / Team** ▸ Legal
- **Location** ▸ Civic Offices, Barry and Hybrid Working, (to agree days on site)
- **Grade** ▸ Grade 11 - £51,356 - £54,495 (plus Market Forces Supplement of £8,000)
- **Responsible to** ▸ Operational Manager – Legal Service
- **Responsible for** ▸ Senior Lawyers, Legal Officers and support staff within the Community Services Team
- **Liaise with** ▸ Senior Officers, Social Workers, Elected Members, external Counsel, partner agencies, Welsh Government and other external stakeholders as required.

Role Purpose

The Principal Lawyer / Team Leader plays a key role in delivering a high-quality, efficient and forward-looking legal service within Community Services. The postholder will:

- Lead and oversee the delivery of expert legal advice across children's social care, public law, adoption, fostering, education and related safeguarding matters.
- Support the Council's statutory safeguarding responsibilities, ensuring decisions are legally robust, proportionate and aligned with strong governance.
- Provide confident, visible leadership, fostering a collaborative, inclusive and high-performing team culture within a high-pressure environment.
- Strengthen organisational resilience through proactive risk management, early legal engagement and clear, balanced professional judgement.

Key Accountabilities

Leadership and People Management

- Lead, develop and motivate Senior Lawyers, Assistant Lawyers and support staff within the Community Services Legal Team, providing professional guidance, coaching and visible leadership.



- Set clear expectations for legal quality, professional standards and behaviours aligned with the Council's values.
- Foster a psychologically safe, inclusive and solution-focused team environment within a high-pressure safeguarding context.
- Manage performance, attendance, wellbeing and conduct matters in line with Council policy and professional standards.
- Allocate work effectively across the team, ensuring balanced caseloads, compliance with the 26-week public law timetable and continuity of cover.
- Monitor team performance, time recording and Lexcel compliance, using data to support accountability and continuous improvement.

Operational Responsibilities

- Manage a varied and complex personal caseload including children's social care public law proceedings, child protection, adoption, fostering and related education matters. Represent the Council in Family Court and tribunal proceedings, including complex and contested cases before senior judiciary.
- Prepare briefs to Counsel, attend conferences and manage high-risk or sensitive litigation.
- Draft, negotiate and review complex legal documentation, ensuring accuracy, clarity and legal robustness.
- Provide timely, practical and accessible legal advice to officers, senior managers and Members, including attendance at meetings and case conferences where required.
- Anticipate and mitigate legal risk, ensuring decisions are proportionate, defensible and aligned with statutory safeguarding duties.
- Ensure compliance with departmental procedures, Lexcel standards and performance expectations, including time recording requirements.

Governance and Corporate Contribution

- Provide expert advice on public law, governance and constitutional matters as they relate to Community Services.
- Promote strong decision making, transparent processes and high standards of statutory and regulatory compliance.
- Contribute to service planning, risk management and departmental performance monitoring.
- Build constructive relationships with Children's Services, external partners, Counsel, Welsh Government and regional bodies.



- Deputise for the Operational Manager Legal Services where required, contributing to organisational resilience and continuity of leadership.
- Support continuous improvement and modernisation within Legal Services, identifying opportunities to strengthen efficiency and service quality.

Corporate responsibilities

- Uphold the Council's Constitution, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders, ensuring that decisions are lawful, transparent and financially responsible.
- Champion equality, inclusion and respect, embedding these principles in daily practice and supporting a culture where colleagues feel valued and able to thrive.
- Help maintain a safe, healthy and psychologically safe workplace, following health and safety legislation and modelling supportive behaviours.
- Support the Council's commitments to sustainability, climate action and responsible resource use by integrating these principles into professional practice.
- Prioritise safeguarding by recognising, responding to and reporting concerns appropriately and in line with Council policy.
- Undertake any other duties that reflect the spirit, purpose and grade of the role and contribute to an effective, modern Legal Service.

Our Values

The postholder will demonstrate the Council's values in all aspects of their work:

Open

Open to different ideas and being accountable for the decisions we take

What it means to this role:

- Providing transparent, balanced legal advice
- being clear about risks and options
- creating an environment where team members feel safe to raise concerns or challenge constructively.

Together

Working together as a team that engages with our customers and partners, respects diversity and is committed to quality services.

What it means to this role:

- Building strong relationships with Children's Services and other partners
- fostering inclusive team working
- supporting collective problem solving rather than siloed practice.



Proud

Proud to serve our communities and to be part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

What it means to this role:

- Maintaining integrity, professional credibility and dedication to safeguarding vulnerable children and families within our communities.

Ambitious

Forward thinking, embracing new ways of working and investing in our future

What it means to this role:

- Driving high standards of legal excellence, developing team capability, and identifying opportunities to strengthen governance and service resilience.

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Person Specification



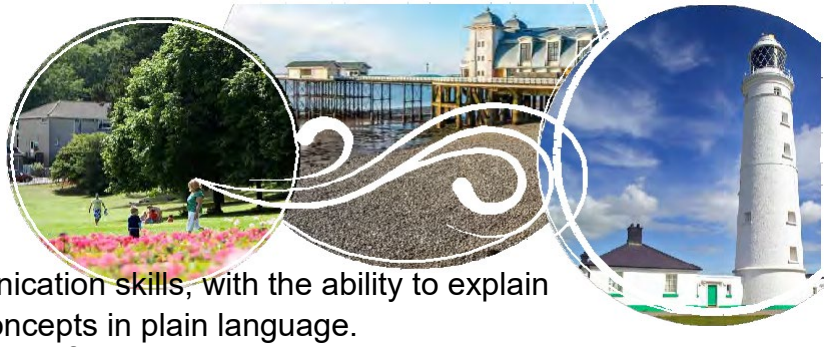
1 Experience

Essential	■ Significant experience in children's social care or related public law. ■ Experience managing complex and contested childcare proceedings, including advocacy. ■ Experience providing written and oral advice to senior managers and stakeholders on sensitive, high-risk matters. ■ Experience managing a demanding and time-critical caseload independently. ■ Experience contributing positively within a team environment.
Desirable	▸ Supervisory, mentoring or people management experience. ▸ Experience presenting to Committees, Panels or decision-makers.
Ascertained by	CV and Cover Letter Interview / Assessment Day

2 Knowledge

Essential	■ Strong knowledge in relevant specialist legal areas (English Law, practice and procedure in relation to Children's and Adults Social Care, and Education). ■ Knowledge of safeguarding legislation, statutory guidance and multi-agency responsibilities.
Desirable	▸ Knowledge of Welsh legislative and policy context relevant to children's services. ▸ Knowledge of local government governance arrangements, delegated decision-making and constitutional frameworks.
Ascertained by	CV and Cover Letter Interview / Assessment Day

3 Skills and aptitudes



■ Essential	■ Excellent communication skills, with the ability to explain complex legal concepts in plain language. ■ Strong analytical, drafting and problem-solving skills. ■ Ability to work under pressure, manage risk and deliver pragmatic solutions. ■ Ability to build strong working relationships and influence non-legal audiences. ■ Ability to motivate and support others, contributing to a positive team culture.
▶ Desirable	▶ Ability to use digital tools, legal research software and case management systems.
Ascertained by	Interview / Assessment Day

4 Qualifications and training

■ Essential	■ Solicitor, Barrister or Fellow of CILEX (or equivalent qualification) entitled to practise in England & Wales.
▶ Desirable	▶ Evidence of ongoing continuing professional development and up-to-date knowledge of relevant case law and statutory developments. ▶ Management or leadership qualification.
Ascertained by	CV and Cover Letter

5 Attitude and motivation

■ Essential	■ A values-driven approach with a commitment to acting with integrity, professionalism and fairness. ■ A proactive mindset, demonstrating initiative and ownership of work. ■ Commitment to delivering high-quality legal services that support public value and strong governance. ■ A growth mindset with willingness to learn, adapt and respond to changing demands. ■ A collaborative attitude, recognising the importance of shared goals, partnership working and constructive challenge.



Desirable	Motivation to contribute to service improvement, innovation and new ways of working. Interest in developing leadership capability and supporting the growth of others. Enthusiasm for contributing to major projects that shape communities and deliver long term impact.
Ascertained by	Interview / Assessment Day

6 Other (please specify)

Essential	Personal and professional credibility. Drive, energy, and enthusiasm to sustain an extensive agenda. Capacity to work outside of normal office hours and participate in Emergency Duty Rota including evenings and weekends. Ability to drive/travel throughout the Vale or between locations as appropriate.
Desirable	Ability to communicate in or committed to learn Welsh.
Ascertained by	CV and Cover Letter Interview / Assessment Day