

Newham Community Law Project

Head of Legal Practice /Immigration Solicitor Job Description

Responsible to: Trustee Board – Chair of Trustees

Responsible for: Casework and operations staff, volunteers and trainees

Location: Newham, London (with some flexibility for remote working)

Hours: 35 hours per week– 5 days a week but with flexibility in hours worked and requirement for occasional evening work.

Annual leave: 30 days per year

Salary scale: NJC Local Government scale Point 37 £52,269 – Point 40 £55,353

Background

We are a newly formed organisation, www.newhamcommunitylawproject.org.uk aiming to launch our legal service in the summer of 2026. This will be our first appointment and will be a key role, helping to shape all aspects of the service. Our strategic plan sets out our aim to employ a second solicitor and operational support by the end of 2026. We will also be applying for a legal aid contract. Our longer-term aim is to transition to Newham Community Law Centre, expanding into other areas of law, and possibly in the future recruiting a CEO.

The post holder is for the present, accountable to the Trustee Board, and directly supervised by the Chair. They will also work closely with the Treasurer on all financial matters. As we are a start-up, role functions may vary as the organisation expands. We have also budgeted for external mentoring support for this role in the first year.

Job Purpose:

- To manage the legal practice at NCLP and ensure that the local community benefits from high quality specialist legal advice.
- To ensure that NCLP provides consistently high-quality legal services across the range of its activities, and to assist the Board to ensure NCLP's development.

- To Assist the Board to set the strategic goals of the organisation and to implement the business plan.
- As Immigration Solicitor, to provide advice and representations on immigration and asylum matters and maintain Legal Aid Agency Supervisor status.

Key responsibilities

1. Legal Delivery, Casework and Supervision

- Be accountable for the quality, accuracy and compliance of all legal casework undertaken by the organisation.
- Manage a personal caseload appropriate to the role, modelling high standards of legal practice.
- Ensure that all legal staff are competent to undertake their roles and are appropriately supervised, including overseeing external supervision for different areas of social welfare law.
- Ensure that documented supervision systems and regular file reviews are in place and operating effectively.
- Take prompt and appropriate action where concerns arise about casework quality, competence or compliance.

2. Compliance and Regulation

- Act as the accountable lead for compliance with:
 - SRA Standards and Regulations (including the SRA Accounts Rules)
 - Legal Aid Agency contracts
 - Quality standards
- Ensure legal systems, processes and controls are robust, up to date and compliant with regulatory and contractual requirements.
- Working with operational leads, ensure client confidentiality is protected and files are handled in accordance with GDPR and organisational policies.
- Oversee audit readiness and address identified compliance risks.
- Escalate significant legal or regulatory risks to the Board.

3. Staff Management

- Contribute to a positive working environment in which equality and diversity are well-managed and dignity at work is upheld.
- Identify training and development needs for relevant staff.
- Assist the Trustee Board with compliance with HR policies, procedures and frameworks.
- Assist the Trustee Board with effective recruitment and performance management systems, as well as initiatives to boost staff wellbeing.
- Oversee DBS policy.
- Ensure practicing certificates are renewed.
- Be prepared to initially act as health and safety officer to ensure that health and safety policies and procedures for staff, premises and equipment are agreed and maintained and comply with statutory requirements.

4. Financial control

- Ensure full compliance with the SRA Accounts Rules.
- Work closely with finance officers and the Treasurer to ensure appropriate financial controls and oversight are maintained.
- Assist the Board in ensuring that financial and other reporting obligations are met in relation to monitoring reports for funders.

5. Safeguarding

- To act as safeguarding lead in liaison with the safeguarding Trustee.

6. Breaches, Complaints and Reporting

- Investigate and respond to complaints relating in line with organisational procedures.
- Monitor breaches and determine whether they are reportable to relevant regulators.

7. Legal Aid Contract Performance

- Be accountable for the effective delivery of legally aided work, including volume, quality and outcomes.
- Monitor performance against contract requirements and take corrective action where delivery is at risk.

9. Governance, and Leadership

- Support the trustees to develop, implement and monitor the business plan.

- Provide regular reports to the Board on legal delivery, compliance and risk.
- Contribute to organisational strategy and risk management.

10. Service Development

- Support the Trustees to design, develop and implement new legal services.
- Support the Trustees to develop the organisation's funding base.
- Assist in building and maintaining partnerships with community organisations, advice agencies, local authorities and public bodies.
- Ensure new services meet regulatory, contractual and quality standards from inception.
- Contribute legal and operational input to funding bids.
- Support the organisation's communications strategy.

11. Other

- Adhere to the organisation's policies and procedures.
- Keep abreast of national and local policy and practice and how this affects the NCLP's work.
- Carry out any other duties that are appropriate to the role.
- Adopt a flexible approach to sharing duties as the organisation grows and other members of staff are recruited.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential Criteria

Qualifications and Professional Status

- Qualified solicitor in England and Wales with a minimum of three years PQE.
- Must be authorised litigator.
- Eligible to act as Head of Legal Practice.
- Hold a Law Society IAAS accreditation as a supervising caseworker.

Experience

- Significant experience of providing a range of immigration casework.
- Experience of delivering Legal Aid or publicly funded work.
- Experience supervising legal staff and ensuring high standards of quality and compliance.
- Experience working in partnership with a variety of stakeholders.

Skills and Knowledge

- Strong knowledge of the challenges facing marginalised communities.
- Knowledge of regulatory standards such as SRA, SQM and Standard Civil Contract with the Legal Aid Agency.
- Excellent leadership, communication and interpersonal skills.
- Strong organisational skills, with the ability to manage competing priorities, risk and change.
- High level of attention to detail.
- Ability to analyse data, outcomes and feedback to improve services and demonstrate impact.

Values and Approach

- Clear commitment to social justice, equality and access to justice.
- Collaborative and supportive leadership style promoting learning and wellbeing.
- Willingness to take responsibility and exercise sound professional judgement in complex situations.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA

- Experience acting as Head of Legal Practice, COLP or equivalent senior role.

- Experience of strategic or impact litigation.
- Experience contributing to funding applications or service development proposals.
- Experience working in the charity or not-for-profit sector.
- Experience of trauma-informed approaches and empathetic leadership.
- Knowledge of communities served by NCLP.