

**Band & Job Title****Head of PDS Solicitors (Band Ac)****Location**

Public Defender Service, Commissioning & Strategy Directorate

Place of work

Any PDS office

Employment type

Permanent

Background

The Public Defender Service (PDS) is a department of the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) that operates alongside private providers delivering a full range of quality services within the criminal defence market. Informed by its participation in the market, PDS contributes credible and expert advice to the government on service and policy development affecting the sector and acts as a test-bed for innovation and quality improvements. PDS operations provide a critical safeguard against market failure across England and Wales, thereby ensuring the LAA fulfils its statutory responsibility to ensure continuous access to justice.

Purpose of the role

To lead and manage PDS Solicitors in relation to the delivery of quality criminal defence services through the four PDS offices at Swansea, Pontypridd, Cheltenham and Darlington, providing advice and representation at the Police Station and Magistrates Court (for 'own clients' and via participation in relevant 'duty solicitor' schemes), and directly or indirectly in the Crown Court, as appropriate. To provide leadership for an experienced team of legal professionals and associated administrators.

Tasks / accountabilities / responsibilities

The main areas of responsibility for this role are:

1. Quality and performance of PDS Solicitors services
2. Leadership and management of PDS Offices
3. Compliance with Civil Service and legal standards
4. Advising LAA/MoJ policy development
5. Managing strategic relationships with criminal/defence community

With a regard to the above, the main activities of the role will include:

Leadership

1. Be an active participant of the PDS Senior Management Team and the wider LAA Senior Leader Group.
2. With the Head of PDS:
 - a. provide direction to the Solicitor business through contributing to the PDS Annual Business Plan

- b. define PDS office head and solicitor business objectives that align PDS activity with LAA and MoJ priorities.
3. Work with the Head of PDS Operations to develop and maintain efficient mechanisms to monitor and report on performance.
4. Work with the Head of PDS Advocacy to develop and maintain legal quality and professional development.
5. Review business performance weekly and take necessary remedial action, including:
 - a. Maintaining PDS Solicitors budget assigned from within the wider PDS budget;
 - b. Overseeing an efficient and effective client service delivery.

Legal quality and standards

1. Be the 'Head of Legal' for the PDS solicitor business.
2. Be responsible for the effective operation of the PDS quality review framework of ongoing supervisory activity; monthly file review; internal and external peer review and Standard Operating Procedures;
3. Plan, oversee and deliver performance reports on framework activity to inform continuous improvement by ensuring that issues arising from performance and quality reviews are dealt with in an adequate and timely manner and contribute to continuous improvement;
4. Lead delivery of the highest professional and quality standards and achieving quality accreditation, ensuring that duties and obligations are upheld across the service and that PDS legal work achieves a minimum peer review rating of 2;
5. Achieve and maintain Lexcel accreditation the Law Society's legal practice quality mark for practice management and client care.
6. Maintain an up-to-date knowledge and expertise of legal aid and criminal defence law and practice - participating in training courses and seminars and delivering presentations
7. Manage complaints across the Service and dealing with relevant external bodies as appropriate
8. Brief the Head of PDS and the Professional Head, on all relevant issues.

People

1. Lead and manage the Office Heads in an efficient and effective manner
2. Ensure achievement of assigned personal performance objectives including market failure activity
3. Ensure effective communication by means of regular team and 1:1 meetings for every team member
4. Responsible for effective line management within the solicitor team
5. Review performance regularly and complete fair and constructive appraisals
6. Ensure that staff are developed to provide opportunities for the individual while also meeting the needs of the business by facilitating CPD reviews and ensuring training/development is undertaken

7. Assist Office Heads in annual development planning for their teams
8. Act as a role model by contributing to the LAA and wider MOJ's corporate agenda, supporting individuals within the solicitor team to do the same

Stakeholder engagement

In conjunction with the Head of PDS:

1. Manage interactions with Legal Aid Agency, MoJ and other stakeholders.
2. As necessary liaise with LAA and MoJ colleagues to ensure criminal defence expertise is provided to service and policy development.
3. Develop relationships with wider criminal justice agencies and legal aid providers
4. Work with public defence experts to ensure appropriate contribution to wider LAA/MoJ projects and facilitates the engagement of PDS staff assigned to development projects.

Essential criteria

- Line Management experience and communication skills and personal presence that enable rapport-building with all stakeholders, line reports and teams
- Financial and operational management skills including budget preparation, budget and performance profiling, execution, monitoring and review
- Solicitor, Barrister or Chartered Legal Executive fully qualified to practice in England and Wales and with at least 5-7 years post-qualification experience in crime
- Excellent advocacy skills and experience in preparing a range of cases to trial in both the Magistrates and Crown Courts, and excellent practical knowledge of current Criminal law, evidence and procedure
- Ability to supervise the legal work and legal service delivery by applying the components of the PDS quality assurance framework
- Experience in maintaining a quality mark for practice management and client care
- Personal resilience with a commitment to personal care, to maintain mental and physical wellbeing of self and line reports in a working environment that may present emotional and other challenges
- Commitment to the wider aims of the PDS to become an exemplar of best practice in criminal litigation and advocacy and its remit to act as a test-bed for innovation, increased efficiencies and quality improvements for the benefit of the wider criminal defence community
- Sound IT hardware and Microsoft Office software skills, particularly in Word, and the ability and willingness to operate in a self-sufficient, efficient manner in the creation of high quality documentation and other business information and the flexibility where appropriate to work unsociable hours

Success Profile

Civil Service Success Profiles apply to this role as relevant to the Band A grade. The main duties and responsibilities of this post include, but are not limited to:

Strengths

Authentic	You are self-aware and true to yourself in all situations, even when under pressure.
Confident	You are an innovator who tries new approaches and pushes yourself to work outside your comfort zone.
Mediator	You provide stability and cohesion within teams, finding common ground and purpose. You enjoy collaborating with others to drive forward a shared goal.
Networker	You proactively create and maintain positive, professional and trusting working relationships with a wide range of people within and outside the organisation. You identify connections and reach out to bring people together.
Problem Solver	You take a positive approach to tackling problems and find ways to identify suitable solutions.
Relationship Builder	You quickly establish mutual respect and trust, building long lasting relationships with others.

Behaviours

Seeing the Big Picture	Anticipate the long-term impact on the Department of economic, political, environmental, social and technological developments, at both national and international levels. Create joined up strategies that put into practice and support the Government's vision for the future. Identify and shape how your work area fits within and supports the priorities of the organisation. Develop an in-depth insight into customers, services, communities and markets affected by your work areas and the wider public sector context. Ensure work is in the national interest whilst meeting the diverse needs of all end users.
Leadership	Promote diversity, inclusion and equality of opportunity, respecting difference and external experience. Welcome and respond to views and challenges from others, despite any conflicting pressures to ignore or give in to them. Stand by, promote or defend own and team's actions and decisions where needed. Seek out shared interests beyond own area of responsibility, understanding the extent of the impact actions have on the organisation. Inspire and motivate teams to be fully engaged in their work and dedicated to their role.
Delivering at Pace	Ensure everyone clearly understands and owns their roles, responsibilities and business priorities. Give honest, motivating and enthusiastic messages about priorities, objectives and expectations to get the best out of people. Comply with legal, regulatory and security requirements in service delivery. Set out clear processes and standards for managing performance at all levels. Ensure delivery of timely quality outcomes, through providing the right resources to do the job, reviewing and adjusting performance expectations and rewarding success. Maintain own levels of performance in challenging circumstances and encourage others to do the same.