



HM Courts &  
Tribunals Service

# Legal Officer Role Overview



Justice Matters

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What the courts and tribunals do every day is supremely important. States without justice do not function; the rule of law is one of the things that makes us civilized and lets us live life knowing that there are fundamental underpinnings of fairness.

At HMCTS, we play a crucial role in running of a fair, accessible and efficient justice system. We are responsible for the administration of criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales.

We're always looking to recruit into our exceptional legal team to make a difference. Legal Officers, across England and Wales have played, and will continue to play, a valuable and vital part in our justice system.

Legal Officers, across England and Wales have played, and will continue to play, a valuable and vital part in our recovery efforts'



# | What does a Legal Officer do?

Legal Officers play a hugely important role in helping Tribunals run smoothly and efficiently. We're looking to expand our numbers to allow us to take on new areas of work as our experience continues to grow.

As part of the Legal Officer team, you'll get the opportunity to make decisions and help find the best way to move appeals forward. You'll learn about the Tribunal Rules, and communicate with our users to help them understand what we need from them to progress their case - it's a challenging and rewarding role which allows you to make a difference. We're always looking for new ideas, and you'll be able to build relationships with other Legal Officers from across the country and get involved in working groups to help make improvements to the service we deliver.

The work done by a Legal Officer varies depending on the jurisdiction they're working in; it can include, but is not limited to, making decisions on applications to postpone hearings, considering whether time extensions to file evidence or comply with the Tribunal Rules should be granted, triaging cases to assess whether they're ready to list for hearing or making directions to progress a case. In some areas, Legal Officers chair case management appointments/discussions with the parties to the appeal.

Legal Officers work closely with both the Tribunal administrative teams and the judiciary and are allocated a mentor judge who will support their training and development.



# Fact File - Legal Officer

**Band:** Higher Executive Officer (HEO)

**Contract Type:** Permanent

## Role overview:

Working within a Courts & Tribunals Service Centre or Regional Hearing Centre, the Legal Officer will support the effective administration of Tribunals business by undertaking a range of complex case work and assessment activity in order to determine how best to advance caseloads and remove any barriers to effective and timely case progression.

Working closely with judiciary, legal professionals and Tribunal administration teams, the Legal Officer will undertake initial assessments on a range of incoming Tribunal work, including case files, applications and correspondence in order to establish the level of authority and expertise needed to address the case and determine the most effective route for case progression. Working to delegated judicial functions and working to directions from the judiciary, the Legal Officer will provide ongoing and proactive management of caseloads, identifying any barriers or risks to effective case progression and developing interventions or actions to resolve these, liaising with a range of stakeholders and the public.

## What qualifications/experience do I need?

There are no formal qualification requirements, though a law degree or equivalent technical experience is desirable. Equivalent technical experience has been defined as: "The demonstration of a transferable decision-making aptitude, working within a set framework or guidance and previous precedents, under a form of supervision." Legal Officers demonstrate a variety of skills, from drafting and verbal communication to teamwork and problem solving. If you can demonstrate these skills and have an interest in the law and delivering justice, the Legal Officer role may be for you.

Full training is provided to all new recruits, and there are opportunities to study for formal legal qualifications/apprenticeships. The Legal Officer Career Progression group continuously looks for ways to help Legal Officers develop.



***"The role of a Legal Officer is pivotal to the smooth running of the Tribunal. There are many Tribunals, covering a wide range of areas affecting day-to-day life."***

The First-tier Tribunal hears appeals from citizens against decisions made by Government departments or agencies, while proceedings in the Property Chamber are on a party v party basis as are proceedings in the Employment Tribunal. As a legal officer you are responsible for the case management of an appeal using delegated judicial powers to make decisions and progress the appeal as you determine best.

Although it is not necessary to have a law degree, (a good legal knowledge or) relevant technical experience is vital to the job to help you deal with appeals justly."

**Zaynab Hussain - Legal Officer, Immigration and Asylum Chamber, Bradford**

# What's involved in the role?



***"Legal Officers (LOs) have responsibility for a wide range of case management decisions throughout the appeal process"***

These decisions range from ensuring an appeal is valid right through to ensuring hearing requirements are captured in preparation for the substantive hearing. You will be using your delegated judicial powers to make complex decisions and draft directions for the parties to comply with. In some jurisdictions, LOs can hold case management appointments with the parties to resolve any issues. Effective case management is really important to ensure appeals progress through the system and to prevent adjournments at the substantive hearing. We have LOs across 10 jurisdictions including Employment Tribunal, Immigration and Asylum Chamber and Mental Health. Each jurisdiction has different delegations but at the core of all of the jurisdictions is the need to settle disputes as efficiently as possible.

***You will have a judicial mentor to guide your decision making and provide you with training on the law.***

The judiciary are always incredibly approachable and willing to help with any questions on using delegated powers. You will report to a Senior Legal Officer (SLO) who will monitor your progress, provide feedback and give you the support you need to be effective in your role. LOs can also apply for a place on the Level 3 or Level 6 CILEx apprenticeship to gain more knowledge of the law and to improve legal skills.

I completed the Level 6 apprenticeship and found it particularly useful to improve my drafting skills. I started as an LO before progressing to SLO and, upon completing my apprenticeship, I successfully applied for a Legal Team Manager role.

**Katie Agada - Legal Team Manager (Tribunals)**



***"As a Legal Officer you will work closely with the judiciary and tribunal administration teams providing proactive management of caseloads."***

"You will start by learning the law, appeal process and observing hearings within your jurisdiction to allow you to identify barriers to effective case progression, and what interventions or actions are required to resolve these.

Once authorised, you will work to delegated judicial functions and directions from the judiciary making decisions on applications from the parties such as postponing hearings, withdrawing proceedings or extending/varying time to comply with an aspect of the procedure rules.

***You will have the benefit of a mentor judge who will support you in your role and if you wish to obtain legal qualifications, we may be able to fund this through an apprenticeship programme.***

There are also opportunities to progress your career as I have done from Legal Officer to Senior Legal Officer and now Legal Team Manager.

**Louise Hayhurst - Legal Team Manager (Tribunals)**

# | How do I apply?

Legal Officer roles will be advertised via the Civil Service Jobs website: [www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk](http://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk). You can sign up for job alerts to be notified about new vacancies.

The selection process will use the Civil Service Success Profiles Framework which assesses the behaviours, strengths and potential of candidates. The Civil Service is a diverse and inclusive workplace, and we want to help you demonstrate your full potential throughout the assessment process.

## Behaviour questions

Behaviours are assessed at both application and interview stage. When looking at behaviours, we want to get an understanding of the actions/activities you have undertaken in the past which have resulted in a successful outcome. We are looking for answers which follow the CAR/STAR approach, as outlined below.

### The CAR method

- **Context** - Explain the situation; what, where and when. Simply describe the challenge that you faced. Give the reader some background, just enough to set the scene.
- **Actions** - Make sure that you explain how you did **something**, not just what you did. What action or steps did you take? How did you do it? For some examples, this might be quite detailed so try to summarise as best as you can.
- **Results** - What was the outcome? What results did you achieve? Use numbers and percentages whenever possible. If the result was not positive, describe what you learned.

### The STAR method

- **Situation** - Describe the situation you found yourself in. You must describe a specific event or situation and not provide a general description of your job/skills.
- **Task** - We want to understand what task you had to complete and why. Tell us what you tried to achieve from the situation you found yourself in.
- **Actions** - What did you do? We will be looking for evidence of what you did, how you did it and why. Keep the focus on you; what specific steps did you take and what was your contribution? Remember to include how you did it, and the behaviours you used. Try to use "I" rather than "we" to explain the actions you took that led to the result.
- **Results** - Don't be shy about taking credit for your behaviour. It may help to provide specific facts and figures. What results did the actions produce? What did you achieve through your actions and did you meet your goals? Was it a successful outcome? If not, what did you learn from the experience?

Keep the "situation" and "task" parts brief and concentrate on the action and the result. If the result was not entirely successful, describe what you learned and what you would do differently next time. Make sure you focus on your strengths.

### Strengths questions

When looking at your strengths and abilities, we want to find out whether you and the organisation/job role are a good fit. We will look at what you enjoy doing and what you do well and often.

During your interview you will be asked questions to understand whether you have strengths relevant to the job role. It is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Do not rehearse your answers because we are looking for your initial response.

The qualities required for the role will be described in the job description and the best way to prepare is to reflect on what you feel your personal strengths are and your preferred ways of working.

Your strengths will be assessed alongside the other elements of the Success Profile to get a more rounded picture of your suitability for the role. The job description will outline the elements required for the role.

### Reasonable Adjustments

If you require any reasonable adjustments to our recruitment process, please let the recruiting manager know. Examples of adjustments include providing documents in large print or braille, allowing more time for a test or interview or providing assistance at an assessment centre.

### Reserve Lists

If we receive applications from more suitable candidates than we have vacancies for at the time, we may hold suitable applicants on a reserve list for 12 months for any future Legal Officer vacancies. In these circumstances, roles would be offered to candidates on the list without having to re-apply.

# Terms, conditions and benefits

## Personal Development

We take your development seriously and want to enable you to build a successful career within the department or the wider Civil Service. It is crucial that our employees have the right skills to develop their careers and meet the challenges ahead. At HMCTS you'll benefit from regular performance and development reviews to ensure that your development is ongoing. You'll also be given the training required to allow you to perform effectively in your role.

## Appointment Term

Permanent.

## Location

Various - Nationwide. Travel will be expected across the region and base location could change within a region due to business needs.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Civil Service values and supports all employees. We have strong and proactive staff networks, special leave policies for hospital and other appointments and reasonable adjustments are put in place for those who need them. Our diversity talent programmes are designed to help everyone, irrespective of background, to achieve their potential.

## Pension

Your pension is a valuable part of your total reward package. We provide you with a competitive contributory pension scheme that you can enter as soon as you join, and where we will make a significant contribution to the cost of your pension. Your contributions will come out of your salary before any tax is taken. For more details, visit [www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/](http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/)

## Generous Annual Leave and Bank Holiday Allowance

You will initially be entitled to 25 days annual leave, increasing on a sliding scale to 30 days after 5 years' service. This is in addition to 8 public holidays, complimented by one further days' paid privilege leave entitlement.

## Staff Wellbeing

Subject to business needs, we offer flexible working arrangements, including part-time or term-time working. We also offer generous paid maternity and paternity leave.

Childcare benefits (policy for new employees as of 5 April 2018): The government has introduced the Tax Free Childcare (TFC) Scheme. Working parents can open an online childcare account and for every £8 they pay in, the government will add £2, up to a maximum of £2000 a year for each child or £4000 for a disabled child. Parents then use the funds to pay for registered childcare. Existing employees may be able to continue to claim childcare vouchers.

## Contracted Hours

37 hours, excluding lunch breaks. You will be required to work those hours over five days, Monday-Friday.

## Training and Development

The Department offers engaging jobs in work that really matters. These jobs have a direct impact on the quality of public services. Our roles can offer great job satisfaction. There are many opportunities to develop and progress both within the department and across the wider Civil Service.

To create a more skilled and unified organisation, the Civil Service is developing 10 specialist areas of expertise. Cross-government functions provide professional services and support to departments and supplement the 25 recognised professions within the Civil Service. We are also committed to investing in our staff and we offer a range of work-based training and qualifications, coaching and mentoring opportunities and a guaranteed five days of learning a year.

## Season Ticket and Bicycle Loan

Interest free loans allowing you to spread the cost of an annual travel season ticket or a new bicycle.

## Modernised Terms and Conditions

Civil Servants taking up appointment on promotion will adopt the modernised Civil Service terms and conditions which came in to effect from 1 July 2013. Existing Civil Servants appointed on level transfer will retain their existing terms and conditions.

## Eligibility

### Right to work:

To be eligible for employment to this role you must be a national from the following countries:

- UK nationals
- Nationals of Commonwealth countries who have the right to work in the UK
- Nationals of the Republic of Ireland
- Nationals from the EU, EEA or Switzerland with (or eligible for) status under the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)
- Relevant EU, EEA, Swiss or Turkish nationals working in the Civil Service
- Relevant EU, EEA, Swiss or Turkish nationals who have built up the right to work in the Civil Service
- Certain family members of the relevant EU, EEA, Swiss or Turkish nationals

If you do not have existing right to work in the UK, or you are not eligible for status under the EUSS, please be aware that for this role we are not able to offer sponsorship under the Skilled Worker route. We encourage you to check your RTW status prior to applying.



# HM Courts & Tribunals Service

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## HMCTS Careers website

Find out more about HMCTS, our values and the roles available on:

[HMCTSjobs.co.uk](https://hmctsjobs.co.uk)

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## We are HMCTS

Scan the QR below to see what makes working at HMCTS so rewarding:



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## HMCTS Careers on social media

Keep up to date on HMCTS careers follow us on Twitter at:

[@HMCTScareers](https://twitter.com/HMCTScareers)