



Legal Officer

Role Overview



Justice Matters

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



At HMCTS, we play a crucial role in running 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 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.

Tribunal Jurisdictions

There are seven Chambers of the First-tier Tribunal, dealing with legal disputes across diverse areas of law. Legal Officers work in jurisdictions falling under each of these seven Chambers, plus the independent Employment Tribunal.



Health, Education and Social Care Chamber



General Regulatory Chamber



Tax Chamber



Immigration and Asylum Chamber



Social Entitlement Chamber



War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber



Property Chamber



Employment Tribunal

Further information on each of the Tribunal jurisdictions is available here: [About us - HM Courts & Tribunals Service - GOV.UK](#)

What does a Legal Officer do?

Legal Officers demonstrate a variety of skills, from drafting directions 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.

As part of the Legal Officer team, you'll get the opportunity to use delegated judicial functions to make decisions and help find the best way to move appeals forward. You'll 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 of a Legal Officer will vary depending on the jurisdiction you're working in. Some of your duties could include:

- Making decisions on applications to postpone, withdraw or reinstate hearings.
- Considering whether time extensions to file evidence or comply with tribunal rules should be granted.
- Triaging cases to assess whether they're ready to list for hearing.
- Issuing directions to progress a case.
- Chairing case management appointments with parties.

A Day in the Life of a Legal Officer

Claire Anderson, Legal Officer, Immigration and Asylum Chamber, Newcastle

My day begins around 8.45am, usually with a cup of coffee and a quick look through the inbox.

Overnight, new applications, correspondence, or urgent updates may have come in, and part of my job is to spot what needs attention straight away. This first review helps me prioritise my caseload and sets the pace for the rest of the day.

By 9.30am, I'm into the heart of my work: making decisions that keep appeals moving. Using my delegated judicial powers, I might decide whether a postponement request should be granted, whether someone needs more time to file evidence, or whether a case is ready to be listed for hearing. Other times, I'm drafting directions to help parties understand what they need to do next. Each decision plays a part in ensuring cases progress fairly, efficiently, and in line with Tribunal Rules.

Late morning is often when I work most closely with the judiciary. I may discuss a tricky case with my mentor judge, ask for guidance on something unusual, or prepare matters that need judicial oversight. These conversations are invaluable, not just for decision-making, but for my development. Sometimes I sit in on hearings to deepen my understanding of the law in my jurisdiction.

Around 12.30pm, I take a break. It's a good moment to reset and catch up with colleagues. We often share insights about cases, changes in procedure, or things we've learned. It's a supportive environment, and those small interactions help build confidence and expertise.

After lunch, my focus shifts to progressing ongoing cases. This part of the day can involve drafting detailed directions, checking compliance with rules, or contacting parties for clarification. A big part of my role is identifying barriers that might slow a case down and removing them. It's satisfying to see the impact this has when cases move through the system more smoothly.

By mid-afternoon, I may be contributing to our team meeting or an improvement project. Legal Officers across the country share ideas about how to simplify processes, improve user experience, or support wider tribunal reform. It's one of the things I love about the role: I'm not just managing cases; I'm helping to shape how the system works.

As the day winds down around 4.30pm, I take stock of what I've achieved and plan for tomorrow. I make sure urgent matters have been dealt with or escalated and check that the path is clear for upcoming deadlines or hearings. No two days are the same, and that variety is part of what keeps me motivated.

Working as a Legal Officer is both challenging and rewarding. I make decisions that genuinely matter to people, I'm constantly learning, and I get to be part of a team committed to delivering fair and timely justice. It's a role with purpose and one that offers real opportunities to grow.

Legal Officer Training and Development



There are no formal qualification requirements, though a law degree or equivalent technical experience is desirable. Full training is provided to all new recruits.

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*”.

We are committed to investing in our staff and we offer a range of work-based training and qualifications, job shadowing, coaching and mentoring opportunities and a guaranteed five days of learning per year. Some Legal Officers take the opportunity to study for formal legal qualifications, whilst others focus on development into leadership roles with programmes such as Growing Future Leaders and Beyond Boundaries open to applications from Legal Officers.

Legal Officers may be allocated a mentor judge who will support their training and development alongside their Senior Legal Officer.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I apply?

Legal Officer roles will be advertised via the Civil Service Jobs website: [Civil Service job search - Civil Service Jobs - 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.



What does a Legal Officer interview look like?

If you are successful in being invited to interview for a Legal Officer position, there will typically be three sections of questions – behaviours-based questions, strengths-based questions and a technical legal scenario. Candidates will be assessed using the Civil Service Success Profiles. Candidates will pass the interview if they meet the minimum pass score for each question/section of the interview.

Behaviours-based questions are designed to help us get an understanding of the actions and activities that you have done which would support effective performance in this role. You should try to provide specific examples of experiences in response to the questions asked. It is often helpful to hear about actions you have taken and the results of those actions. These examples can be from your personal or professional life. You can read more about Civil Service Behaviours here: [Success Profiles: Civil Service behaviours - GOV.UK](#).

Strengths-based questions help us to understand your natural strengths. Strengths are the things that we do regularly, do well and are motivated by. You will not be informed which strengths are being assessed at interview, as we are looking for your natural responses to the questions asked. You can read more about Civil Service Strengths here: [Success Profiles: Strengths - GOV.UK](#)

The technical legal scenario will help us to assess your technical experience, ensuring that you are able to evidence the following:

“The demonstration of a transferable decision-making aptitude, working within a set framework or guidance and previous precedents, under a form of supervision.”

The technical legal scenario is not based on a specific area of law, and does not require any preparatory reading before your interview. You will be given an opportunity to consider the technical scenario and prepare your response to the questions during the interview. You will be given a set of Procedure Rules and/or Practice Directions to consider as part of the technical legal scenario, and will be asked a series of questions on how you would apply these rules. Try to be as thorough as possible and provide clear reasoning for your answers.

What do targets look like for Legal Officers?

Legal Officer work targets will vary in each jurisdiction, taking into account local and national priorities at any given time. Targets may be qualitative or quantitative and are reviewed at formal performance reviews (PIDS) taking place four times per year, alongside talent reviews every six months to consider development goals and future targets.

Frequently Asked Questions



Is this a court-based role?

Most Legal Officer work is completed outside of a courtroom, with Legal Officers exercising delegated functions to support the case management of appeals up to the final hearing. There may be opportunities for Legal Officers to get involved with in-court case management work in some jurisdictions and geographical locations. Legal Officers are based at regional tribunal hearing centres and HMCTS offices across the country – the number of sites nationally varies by jurisdiction.

Is this role suitable for part-time working?

Yes, this role is available on a full-time or part-time basis. Flexible working arrangements can be requested with any flexible working applications considered by a line manager, taking into account business needs at the time of the application. Hybrid working arrangements are currently available for some Legal Officers, however these will again be subject to business needs and in line with HMCTS policy, a minimum of 60% office attendance is required.

What are the working hours?

A standard, full-time week is 37 hours, regardless of geographical location. This will be pro-rata for any part-time staff. Flexible working arrangements allow Legal Officers to vary working hours between 7am and 7pm, subject to site-specific opening hours, although there is an expectation that urgent duties are covered during core hours, between 10am and 3pm.

What makes someone stand out as a top-performer in this role?

The most successful Legal Officers are thorough and structured in their decision making. Legal Officers need to achieve a good balance of quality and quantity of tasks completed, responding quickly and effectively to changing priorities in their jurisdiction. The Legal Officer role requires an openness to learning and developing beyond the initial training period. Top-performing Legal Officers will make thoughtful suggestions for improvement, responding proactively to feedback from the judiciary, admin colleagues and external stakeholders, in order to ensure the best service possible is provided to Tribunal users.

What is the annual leave and bank holiday entitlement?

Upon appointment, you will be entitled to 25 days annual leave, increasing to 30 days after 5 years' service. This is in addition to 8 public holidays, complimented by one further day of paid privilege leave.



HM Courts &
Tribunals Service

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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