**JOB DESCRIPTION**

**Post:** Legal Officer

**Reports to:** Head of Legal & Advocacy Services

**Salary:** £43,584 to £46,712 (Deputy Principal Grade)

(August 2025 Pay Ward Pending £47,304 to £49,515)

**Hours:** 37 hours per week (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)

(flexible working opportunities available)

**Tenure:** Permanent

**Job Purpose:**

The post-holder will play a key role in delivering a client-focused service. They will manage a caseload, dealing with enquiries, providing legal advice, advocating on client’s behalf, and attending meetings / court when required. The post-holder will also be expected to contribute to broader organisational objectives through contributing to policy / procedural reviews, continuous improvement, research and policy advice, and investigations.

The post-holder will also provide support to the Legal Advocacy team.

**Staffing Structure:**

**Key Responsibilities**

1. Formulate and oversee the maintenance of the COPNI’s legal assistance and casework, in line with the COPNI’s overall policies.
2. Ensure the development of systems and processes to ensure effective handling of applications for legal assistance from COPNI within financial and strategy criteria.
3. Ensure the appropriate procedures, controls and structures are in place for the effective, efficient management of casework and monitor their outputs and outcomes.
4. Undertake and manage legal research and produce recommendations to government for legislative change.
5. Formulate and oversee the maintenance of the COPNI’s strategic approach to the selection and conduct of formal investigations.
6. Ensure appropriate action is taken to minimise risk of judicial review when conducting formal investigations.
7. Ensure cost effective and efficient conduct of formal investigations.
8. Ensure the establishment and maintenance of effective systems and processes in respect of investigations and complaints arising in respect of S75 Northern Ireland Act, both individual and Commission generated.
9. Develop and deliver business plans and programmes of work for the Legal Division.
10. Provide high quality leadership to the Legal Division, ensuring that any line-managed staff are effectively motivated, managed and developed and that appropriate arrangements are in place for supervision and appraisal.
11. Ensure that services provided are responsive, flexible, cost effective, and delivered within an appropriate timescale using established organisational and management systems.
12. Demonstrate a high level of personal integrity and maintain professional standards throughout the Legal Division.
13. Responsible for developing and maintaining effective communication within the Legal Division and with the rest of the organisation.
14. Provide effective, timely advice and information to the Commissioner, Chief Executive, members of the Senior Management Team and the broader COPNI team.
15. Establish good working relationships and effective communication with the sponsoring government department.
16. All staff are expected to comply with Data Protection, Freedom of Information and COPNI requirements relating to documentation and record keeping.
17. Undertake any other duties on behalf of COPNI as assigned by the Commissioner/Chief Executive or Head of Legal and Policy Advice, as appropriate to the grade.

**Other Duties**

1. To undertake any other duties on behalf of COPNI as assigned by the Commissioner or Chief Executive, as appropriate to the grade.
2. To participate in COPNI’s performance management process, via completion of an annual Personal Development Plan and Personal Performance Agreement.
3. To uphold the values of the Commission in terms of its commitment to promoting awareness of the interests of older people and listening to and involving older people in key aspects of the Commissioner’s work.
4. Members of staff are expected at all times to provide the appropriate service and to treat those with whom they come into contact in a courteous and respectful manner.
5. All duties are carried out in compliance with COPNI’s Health and Safety Policy and statutory requirements.
6. COPNI is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All staff are required to adhere to COPNI’s Equal Opportunities Policy throughout the course of employment.
7. To ensure the confidence of the public in COPNI, staff must ensure they maintain the highest standards of personal accountability.
8. All staff are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to promote equality of opportunity between: -

* Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, and sexual orientation.
* Men and women generally.
* Persons with a disability and persons without; and
* Persons with dependents and persons without.

1. All staff are expected to comply with Data Protection, Freedom of Information and COPNI requirements relating to documentation and record keeping in line with GDPR guidelines.

**The above is given as a broad range of duties and is not intended to be a complete description of all tasks. It is important to note that the responsibilities may change to meet the evolving needs of COPNI.**

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

**Essential Criteria (Eligibility Criteria)**

The successful applicant must be able to demonstrate via evidence on their application form that, by the closing date for applications, they meet the following criteria:-

1. Be qualified as a solicitor entitled to practice in Northern Ireland or in a position to become so entitled by the date of appointment.
2. Have at least 3 years’ post qualification experience within the last 5 years in at least two of the following areas: constitutional law, administrative / public law (including judicial review), contract law, employment law, civil litigation, human rights law, family law.
3. Experience of gathering and analysing information, including taking instructions, conducting enquiries, and preparing evidence to support legal casework.
4. One year’s experience of supervising or managing staff.
5. Have the ability to create and maintain relationships with key stakeholders.
6. The ability to communicate confidently, clearly, and persuasively, both orally and in writing with the ability to understand, value and incorporate different perspectives.

**Desirable Criteria (Short-listing Criteria)**

In addition to the essential criteria above, applicants should be aware that after an eligibility shift, should it be necessary to short-list candidates to go forward to interview, this will be done by applying the following additional criteria in the following order: -

1. An understanding of issues affecting older people covered by the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland’s remit.
2. Knowledge and understanding of Health and Social Care systems and services pertaining to or affecting older people.

**General note**

Applicants should demonstrate in their application how they meet all the criteria outlined above. Clear evidence should be provided of all the elements of each criterion in the application form giving specific length of experience, examples, and dates. It is not sufficient to simply provide a list of duties and responsibilities. The selection panel will not make assumptions from the title of an applicant’s post or the nature of the organisation as to the skills and experience gained.

**If an applicant does not provide sufficient detail, including the appropriate dates, in their application form against each individual criterion as stated, the selection panel will reject the application.**

**CORE COMPETENCIES**

The NICS Competency Framework 2014 (updated April 2018) sets out what people in different grades need to do in order to be effective at work. It is not enough to just have the knowledge and skills to do our jobs. Competence is about what people actually do, it is about how we apply or demonstrate our knowledge and skills whilst carrying out our tasks. Demonstrated competence is observable and measurable.

This post is similar to Deputy Principal grade (DP) in the NICS. Further information on the Core Competences associated with this grade can be accessed through [www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk](http://www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk).

**Competency Based Interview:** The competency-based interview will be conducted by a panel consisting of 3 suitably qualified professionals. Due regard will be given to the composition of the selection panel in respect of gender and community balance.

If necessary, COPNI reserves the right to hold a two-stage interview process.

In addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria and shortlisting criteria applicants will also be expected to display the following competencies and skills at the interview:

**Seeing the big picture**

* Be alert to emerging issues, legislation and trends which might impact, or benefit own and team’s work.
* Understand own business area strategy and how this contributes to departmental policies and priorities.
* Contribute to the development of policies, plans and service provision to meet citizens’ diverse needs based on an up-to-date knowledge of needs, issues, and relevant good practice.
* Ensure own business area/team activities are aligned to departmental activity, policy, and priorities.
* Actively seek out and share experience to develop understanding and knowledge of own work and of team’s business area.
* Seek to understand how the services, activities, and strategies work together in the business area to create value for the customer/end user.

**Changing and improving**

* Find ways to improve systems, policy development and structures to deliver with more streamlined resources.
* Regularly review procedures or systems with teams to identify improvements and simplify processes and decision making.
* Be prepared to take managed risks, ensuring these are planned and their impact assessed.
* Actively encourage ideas from a wide range of sources and stakeholders and use these to inform own thinking.
* Be willing to meet the challenges of difficult or complex changes, encouraging and supporting others to do the same.
* Prepare for and respond appropriately to the range of possible effects that change may have on role/team.

**Making Effective Decisions**

* Make decisions when they are needed, even if they prove difficult or unpopular.
* Identify a range of relevant and credible information sources and recognise the need to collect new data, when necessary, from internal and external sources.
* Recognise patterns and trends in a wide range of evidence/data that may affect policy and draw key conclusions.
* Explore different options outlining costs, benefits, risks, and potential responses to each.
* Recognise scope of own authority for decision making and empower team members to make decisions.
* Invite challenge and, where appropriate, involve others in decision making to help build engagement and present robust recommendations.

**Leading and Communicating**

* Take opportunities to regularly communicate and interact with staff, helping to clarify goals and activities and the links between these and Departmental policy and strategy.
* Recognise, respect, and reward the contribution and achievements of others.
* Communicate effectively orally and in writing in a succinct, engaging manner; know when to stand ground when needed.
* Communicate using appropriate styles, methods, and timing, including digital channels, to maximise understanding and impact.
* Promote the work of the Department and play an active part in supporting the NICS values and culture.
* Convey enthusiasm and energy about their work and encourage others to do the same.

**Collaborating and Partnering**

* Establish relationships with a range of stakeholders to support delivery of policy and business outcomes.
* Invest time to generate a common focus and genuine team spirit.
* Actively seek input from a diverse range of people.
* Readily share resources to support higher priority work, showing pragmatism and support for the shared goals of the organisation.
* Deal with conflict in a prompt, calm and constructive manner.
* Encourage collaborative team working within own team and across the Department.

**Building Capability for All**

* Identify and address team or individual capability requirements and gaps to deliver current and future work.
* Develop team members, devoting time to coach, mentor and develop others.
* Value and respond to different personal needs in the team using these to develop others and promote inclusiveness.
* Proactively manage own career and identify own learning needs with line manager, plan and carry out workplace learning opportunities.
* Continually seek and act on feedback to evaluate and improve their own and team’s performance.

**Delivering Value for Money**

* Recommend actions to achieve value for money and efficiency and reduce fraud and error.
* Cultivate and encourage an awareness of cost, using clear simple examples of benefits and how to measure outcomes.
* Work confidently with performance management and financial data to prepare forecasts and manage and monitor budget against agreed plans.
* Follow appropriate financial procedures to monitor contracts to ensure deliverables are achieved.
* Monitor the use of resources in line with organisational procedures and plans and hold team to account.

**Managing a Quality Service**

* Make effective use of project management skills and techniques to deliver outcomes, including identifying risks and mitigating actions.
* Develop, implement, maintain, and review systems and service standards to provide quality, efficiency, and value for money.
* Work with team to set priorities, goals, objectives, and timescales.
* Establish mechanisms to seek out and respond to feedback from customers about policy and service provided.
* Promote a culture that tackles fraud and error, keeping others informed of outcomes.
* Develop proposals to improve the quality of service with involvement from a diverse range of staff, stakeholders, or delivery partners.

**Delivering at Pace**

* Successfully manage, support, and stretch self and team to deliver agreed goals and objectives.
* Show a positive approach in keeping their own and the team’s efforts focused on the goals that really matter.
* Take responsibility for delivering expected outcomes on time and to standard, giving credit to terms and individuals as appropriate.
* Plan ahead but reassess workloads and priorities if situations change or people are facing conflicting demands.
* Regularly monitor own and team’s work against policy, milestones or targets and act promptly to keep work on track and maintain performance.
* Coach and support others to set and achieve challenging goals for themselves.

**Achieving Outcomes through Delivery Partners**

* Consider, in consultation with experts, alternative ways of working with partners and contractors to identify more efficient outcomes, balancing cost, quality and turnaround times.
* Work with experts in engaging effectively and intelligently with delivery partners in order to define and/or improve policy and service delivery.
* Gather and use evidence to assess the costs, benefits, and risks of a wide range of delivery options when making decisions.
* Identify and understand relevant legal and commercial terms, concepts, policies, and processes (including project approvals and assurance procedures) to deliver agreed outcomes.

**Selection panels will design questions to test the applicant’s knowledge and experience in each of the above areas and award marks accordingly. The evidence you use may relate to your achievements and/or experiences in any kind of setting, for example, work, education, or leisure and must, of course, be factual.**

**The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland is an Equal Opportunities employer and welcomes applications from all suitably qualified applicants regardless of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation and whether or not they possess a disability or have or do not have dependents. Applications from young people (under the age of 35), people with a disability, and people from minority communities are particularly welcomed for this post.**