Job title: Chief Ombudsman

Team / department: Chief Executive / Ombudsman
Reports to: Chief Executive and Board of the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC)
Salary / Grade: £86,275 to £101,500 dependant on experience
Location: Edward House, Birmingham
Working Hours: 37.5 per week.
(As a senior employee, you are required to work such hours as may reasonably be required for the proper performance of your duties without further remuneration).

Work Pattern: The organisation’s hours of operation are 07.30 – 19.00 Monday to Friday.

Job description

Background

The Legal Ombudsman (LeO) is a free, independent service that helps to resolve issues between the public and lawyers through impartial investigation and balanced reasoning. When we look into a complaint, we look at the facts and weigh-up both sides of the story.

Last year we helped to resolve over 8,000 legal services issues between members of the public and their lawyers. We not only help to get resolutions to complaints from the public; we also help legal services providers improve their communications, service levels and complaint handling processes to prevent the need for complaints in the first place.

From 2015 we extended our jurisdiction to be able to resolve complaints against claims management companies. Our aim is to provide a complaint handling service that is fair, accessible, easy to use and which focuses on resolving complaints informally and quickly.
Job summary

The Chief Ombudsman, who must be a lay person, is responsible to the OLC for the discharge of the functions of the Legal Ombudsman scheme,¹ a statutory scheme set up under the provisions of the Legal Services Act 2007.

The Chief Ombudsman is managed by the Chief Executive who is the overall head of the executive staff and who is expected to be designated as Accounting Officer. The Chief Executive is responsible for providing vision, leadership and strategic direction to the organisation as a whole and for ensuring the fitness of its systems, controls, processes and structures. However, the Chief Executive has no locus in relation to the Chief Ombudsman’s statutory responsibilities.

The Chief Ombudsman will therefore lead the scheme’s casework policy, ensure casework quality, and maintain and develop excellent stakeholder relationships to support the scheme in fulfilling its statutory duties, having regard to the accepted principles of evidence-based decision making, and to the principles of best practice for the administration of ombudsman schemes.²

The Chief Ombudsman must prepare and present to the OLC a report for each financial year on the discharge of the functions of the ombudsmen,³ and any other report required by the OLC on the functions of the ombudsmen.⁴ S/he is also personally responsible, with the OLC, for the appointment of one or more assistant ombudsmen to assist with the delivery of the ombudsman scheme.⁵ This requires the Chief Ombudsman to provide strong leadership, including:

- To achieve the scheme’s strategic and operational objectives.
- To deliver the scheme in a way that complies with its own values and the accepted principles of good complaint handling.
- To ensure the scheme delivers consistent, quality outcomes for the parties involved in individual complaints.
- To ensure the scheme’s contribution to the statutory objectives of the Legal Services Act 2007.

In more detail, the role involves:

- Senior strategic leadership of the scheme;
- Management of, and overall responsibility for, all complaint handling functions, including operational efficiency, service and quality;

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¹ s122, Legal Services Act, 2007.
² s116(3)
³ s123
⁴ s124; s134(2) (d)
⁵ s122(b)
Leadership and oversight of casework quality procedures, and the promotion of best practice;

Leading and setting casework policy, including advising on individual cases, and scheme policy, including with regard to the operation of the Scheme Rules;

Strategic oversight of the operation of the Act and Rules, including by deciding which Judicial Review claims should be defended; monitoring how the technical and legal framework restricts or supports the strategic objectives; and identifying how it could be improved in support of organisational objectives.

Leadership of external information dissemination, such as providing evidence based guidance and information to the legal services and claims management sectors and to their consumers, as well as leading the exercise of statutory powers to name underperforming legal services providers in the public interest.

External leadership, including representing the organisation with key external stakeholders and the media.

Principal Success Factors

1. Key Result Areas

- Ensuring complaints are resolved in a timely and effective way, and in line with the organisation’s current policies and performance standards to:
  - meet or exceed delivery targets;
  - meet or exceed quality and customer service standards; and
  - disseminate data, knowledge and learning widely and in accordance with the regulatory objectives.

- Maintaining the principles of good practice for ombudsmen, and the criteria for recognition as an ombudsman scheme.

- Building a positive organisational culture which fosters innovation and collaboration, and embeds the organisation's values in all it does.

- Representing and promoting the scheme externally and engaging external stakeholders in furthering its mission, vision and goals, to publicise, explain and build the work and reputation of the organisation.

- Building effective relationships with legal services providers, consumer bodies and others about matters relevant to the OLC.

2. Direct Accountabilities

The Chief Ombudsman is accountable to the Chief Executive in relation to budgetary and governance matters but not in relation to the role’s statutory responsibilities,
Line management of:

- Customer Experience Team Leader
- Lead Ombudsmen

3. Behaviours

The following list describes core behaviours required for success as an Ombudsman:

- **Leadership and Collaboration**
  The Chief Ombudsman will be a proven manager and leader, comfortable working in a role where commitment in others is built not only through formal authority but by example and by interacting in ways that win trust and respect. Skills in working with a diverse group of stakeholders are essential.

  The Chief Ombudsman, as the statutory post holder, must exemplify the highest standards of honesty, integrity and independence.

- **Analysis and Decision-making**
  The Chief Ombudsman, whilst not normally carrying a personal caseload, will establish and lead the intellectual framework for the end-to-end operation of the ombudsman scheme. As such s/he is required to have proven and confident judgement, and high-level analytical and decision-making skills: the ability to sift through large quantities of detail and data, assimilate it quickly to identify what is critical to the case in hand, weigh up evidence, assess what is reasonable against a complex range of parameters and arrive at a decision that is objective, shrewd and fair.

- **Communications and Influence**
  The Chief Ombudsman must be adept at translating complex information, making it clear and meaningful to internal and external audiences, orally and in writing.

  The Chief Ombudsman will be a confident communicator, able to express a compelling vision of the scheme’s strategic direction, lead the development of external relationships and maintain the scheme’s wider public profile.

  The Chief Ombudsman will set the agenda for the scheme in disseminating learning across the sectors in which it operates and improving legal complaint handling.

- **Continuous Improvement**
  The Chief Ombudsman will be responsible for driving quality standards and improvements in casework and investigation, challenging themself and others to find new approaches and generate ideas for improving quality, consistency, effectiveness and customer service.
5. Skills and Knowledge

- **Ombudsman knowledge**: As the statutory post-holder accountable for the functions of the scheme, the Chief Ombudsman is likely to have a good understanding of, and a proven ability to apply, the principles of ombudsmanship, good complaint handling and procedural fairness at a senior level.

- **Leadership and Management**: The Chief Ombudsman will provide the thought leadership for the scheme, so will have skills in influencing and engaging staff at all levels. S/he will also be able to manage and inspire the senior operational management team.

- **Intellectual skills**: The Chief Ombudsman must bring a high level of analytical skill, be able to cut quickly through large amounts of complex information and identify the essential factors to resolve any problem, complaint or conflict.

- **Communication skills**: The Chief Ombudsman acts as the scheme’s lead ambassador, and will demonstrate high-level communication skills. S/he will have excellent presentation skills and the skills to work effectively with key senior stakeholders, undertake public speaking engagements, media liaison, and write decisions, case studies and press articles.

- **Coaching and Mentoring**: The Chief Ombudsman’s role in building organisational capability and service excellence requires them to be able to help colleagues develop their own ability to reach quick, clear and fair judgements about cases.

- **Knowledge of the law or legal profession**: The Chief Ombudsman must be a lay person, and is tasked to review service provision, not to comment on the legal content of that service. However the ability to be able to acquire a working knowledge of legal processes and the duty of care between a law firm and its client is essential. A good understanding of how the regulation of the legal profession works will be an advantage.

Note: We are committed to accessibility and will make reasonable accommodations for candidates dependent on their need.