THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

JOB DESCRIPTION FORM

Job Title: Head of Legal (Employment)

Department: Legal Services

Reports to: Associate Director of Legal Services

Key relationships:
Legal Management Team
Legal Employment Team
Policy and Public Affairs Department
Regional/Country Directors
Heads of Operations
Public Inquiry Teams
RCN(NI) Board
Internal and External Stakeholders

Hours: 35 hours per week
(Required to work flexibly to meet the requirements of the job. Occasional travel within the UK with occasional overnight stays and extended days required to fulfil the duties of the post)

Grade: D

London Weighting: As applicable

Location: RCN Northern Ireland HQ with hybrid working

JOB PURPOSE

As a member of the Legal Management Team (LMT), the post holds responsibility and accountability for the Employment legal team for the day-to-day provision of RCN Legal Services across England, Wales and Northern Ireland to members, staff and others. In collaboration with other members of LMT and the Senior Management Team, the post holder will provide strategic leadership of the legal team, line management of Senior Legal Officers and legal advice to the RCN including the Senior Leadership in Northern Ireland

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Management responsibilities

1.1 Strategic management of the delivery of RCN legal department jointly with the other Heads of Legal and Associate Director and other Senior Managers across the RCN including developing and setting standards, developing policies and processes and budget management

1.2 Manage delivery of RCN legal services to members in England, Wales & N. Ireland, with particular emphasis on employment law, ensuring the implementation of supervision and review standards in accordance with the requirements of the RCN legal department and the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

1.3 Ensure proper systems for regular reviewing and monitoring of the support, quality, and volume of workload of RCN employment law Senior Legal Officers and Legal Officers.

1.4 Lead the RCN legal employment team and supervise the work of the employment Senior Legal Officers and oversee the work of the whole team ensuring the delivery of legal services in compliance with relevant internal and professional quality and diversity standards and KPIs to ensure strong performance management, with an emphasis on a consistent and cost-effective service, within the directorate and any allocated programmes or projects.

1.5 Participate with the LMT and other departmental heads as a member of Directorate SMT, assisting with the production of annual operational plans and the management of the legal services department budget.

1.6 Work with colleagues in the Legal and member Relations Directorate Senior Management Team to deliver Directorate-wide objectives.

1.7 Manage complaints from members and others ensuring swift resolution in line with the RCN complaints policy.

1.8 Promote RCN legal services across the designated countries.

1.9 Effectively manage the client relationships between legal staff and RCN members, and legal staff and other RCN staff.

2. People management

2.1 Recruit, manage and develop the roles of the Senior Legal Officers within the department.

2.2 Undertake the staff development reviews and ensure their training and development needs are met.

2.3 Lead and promote staff engagement, wellbeing and inclusivity across the department.

2.4 Apply employment policies and good management practices, ensuring harmonious team working within the RCN legal team and across the RCN, and enable development opportunities and safe working practices and environment for team members.

2.5 Embrace and promote the principles of smart working, role model the practice of new technologies, with the purpose of enabling greater business agility, efficiency and innovation in support of enhancing the customer journey.

2.6 Promote and enable a learning culture, where teamwork and cross-departmental collaboration are encouraged, and excellence is recognised.

3. Legal

3.1 Lead on employment litigation within the RCN and liaise with other departments and relevant external bodies, including RCN subsidiary companies.

3.2 Advise on consultations, policies and other relevant projects/documents.

3.3 Prepare and conduct cases before the Employment Tribunal and higher courts, on behalf of members, arranging representation by barristers in appropriate cases.

3.4 Contribute to the training of RCN activists and officers on the relevant law, ensuring that they are updated on current developments in both case law and legislation.

3.5 Update and develop yourself in accordance with the requirements of your profession and the RCN.

3.6 Always to act in accordance with the standards imposed by your professional regulatory body.

3.7 Provide legal advice to the RCN's Executive Team as required.

4. Northern Ireland

4.1 To support the RCN Board, the Director and Associate Directors in Northern Ireland.

4.2 To provide strategic legal advice in relation to high level legal issues for RCN NI instructing counsel as appropriate e.g. safe staffing and equal pay.

4.3 Co-ordinate group civil litigation projects, instructing counsel as appropriate;
4.4 Provide legal advice on the RCN's engagement with Northern Ireland specific Public Inquiries (including exposure of the organisation to risk and representation of high-profile or vulnerable members) instructing counsel as appropriate;

4.5 Collaborate with relevant internal and external stakeholders in respect of Northern Ireland specific legal issues, instructing counsel as appropriate;

4.6 Analyse and present performance data and updates on live legal issues at quarterly board meetings. for NI legal department and report to NI Board.

5. Financial and governance responsibilities

5.1 Be jointly responsible for the management and accountability of the departmental financial planning, working within the RCN's financial, budgetary and business planning procedures.

5.2 Provide strategic direction on expenditure by collaborative working with RCN Finance Team including forecasting of departmental spend a regular interrogation of departmental budget ensuring appropriate and proportionate use of RCN funds.

5.3 Adhere to all governance processes within the organisation.

6. Any Other Duties

6.1 Champion equity, diversity, inclusion and human rights and be responsible for contributing to achieving the commitments set out in the RCN Group equality, diversity and inclusion statement.

6.2 Treat colleagues, members, customers and others with respect in line with our values and Our Respect Charter.

6.3 Maximise all opportunities available to:

- encourage member recruitment and promote the benefits of joining the RCN
- promote the RCN as the organisation that represents nurses and nursing, and that promotes excellent in practice and shapes health policies

6.4 Support member ballot and industrial action activities when required.

6.5 Comply with the RCN Data Protection Policy, Retention Schedule and department procedures to ensure personal data is always protected.

6.6 Undertake any other duties commensurate with the grade of post as directed by the Associate Director or Director and/or to meet the needs of the organisation as requested in line with the job role.

Job description updated by:
Associate Director, Legal Services, October 2026

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job Title: Head of Legal (Employment)

Department: Legal Services

The person specification sets out the essential and desirable criteria required for this role. The selection process will look for evidence that you meet these criteria as well as the core behaviour competencies described further below.

Each criteria is assessed at one or more stage of the process as indicated by a ✓

- AF (application form) - your application needs to address the criteria ticked in this column
- A (assessment) – if you're shortlisted you'll do assessments that test these criteria
- I (interview) – if you're invited to interview you'll be asked questions to assess these criteria

AREA	CRITERIA	A/F	A	I
1. Knowledge, training and qualifications	**Essential**			
	• Qualified solicitor, barrister, Cilex lawyer or equivalent experience	✓		
	• Expert up to date knowledge of employment law (England & Wales and Northern Ireland)	✓	✓	✓
	Desirable			
	• Experience and/or knowledge within a claimant, trade union, healthcare, or regulatory organisation	✓		
2. Experience	**Essential**			
	• Significant post qualification experience in the required knowledge area	✓		✓
	• Experience of representing organisational views in external consultations and representing your organisation in external forums in writing and in person	✓		✓
	• Experience of project management and involvement in wider strategic projects		✓	
	• Significant experience of supervising, developing and professionally line managing legal and support staff	✓		✓
	• Experience of managing the workload of a team, ensuring the team is working to all internal operating protocols and customer service standards	✓		✓

AREA	CRITERIA	A/F	A	I
	• Experience of managing budgets to ensure a cost-effective service delivery and able to develop new income generating processes	✓		
	• Significant experience of building strong and successful relationships with both internal and external stakeholders	✓		✓
	• Experience of making a positive contribution to promoting and embedding equity, diversity and inclusion.	✓	✓	✓
	Desirable			
	• Experience of managing own case load in addition to significant line management responsibilities	✓		
3. Skills	**Essential**			
	• Ability to advise and represent members on all aspects of employment law	✓		✓
	• Outstanding analytical, communication, written and presentation skills to assess complex information and situations to achieve an appropriate solution/approach		✓	✓
	• Ability to contribute to both corporate, operational, and strategic plans and translate these into realistic team and individual targets and objectives in line with strategy		✓	✓
	• Ability to continuously develop, implement systems and new ways of working, communicating reasons for change and implications for the team		✓	✓
	• Ability to develop and sustain successful positive working relationships with both internal and external stakeholders and where necessary manage conflict and relationships appropriately, negotiating by building a shared understanding and achieve resolutions where appropriate	✓	✓	✓
	• Ability to work as a member of the Legal Management Team and contribute to collective management decisions and clearly communicate and decisions	✓		✓
	• Ability to represent both the Legal Services Department and the wider organisation in internal and external forums	✓		✓
	• Ability to draft legal pleadings and other documents	✓		
	• Ability to lead, manage and motivate a high performing team, including both Legal and support staff	✓	✓	
	• Ability to handle and investigate complaints and implement any lessons learnt	✓		

AREA	CRITERIA	A/F	A	I
	• Ability to supervise casework	✓		
4. Other requirements	**Essential**			
	• Commitment and evidence of continuous professional development	✓		
	• Share knowledge by leading and delivering training as and when required	✓		
	• Treat your colleagues fairly, consistently and with respect	✓	✓	✓
	• Ability to travel with occasional overnight stays			✓
	• Strong personal commitment to promoting and embedding equity, diversity and inclusion.	✓	✓	✓

The RCN Core Behavioural Competency Framework informs the key behaviours our employees need to demonstrate in their roles.

Inspire others to greater heights	**Value those around you**	**Show passion for our services**	**Build outstanding relationships**	**Get to the heart of the business**	**Stay one step ahead**
Be passionate about developing yourself and others and push yourself beyond your comfort zone	Prize diversity and deal fairly and consistently with people while recognising individual differences	Have members' and customers' interests at the heart of everything you do and go out of your way to manage & exceed their expectations	Lead and contribute to your teams success and collaborate with people around you & those beyond your immediate team	Have the business interests of the RCN at the forefront of all you do and seek out opportunities to develop your business know-how	Be inquisitive, think differently and embrace opportunities for change, helping others to adapt and encouraging new ideas
Use the strengths of those around you to maximum effect	Challenge unacceptable behavior where it exists	Demonstrate pride in the RCN and passion for its services	Understand how your team impacts on others	Learn all aspects of the business with enthusiasm	Improve how things are done
Take personal ownership of all that you do	Treat everyone with respect regardless of their position	Ensure all you do has a benefit to members and customers	Focus on your team's primary goals	See yourself as a shareholder in the RCN	Adapt enthusiastically to change and different ways of working
Persist in the face of difficulties and overcome obstacles	Recognise the benefit of different viewpoints	Empower members and customers to help them become more involved	Share knowledge within your team and across other teams	Generate viable opportunities to help the RCN grow and develop	Tackle unfamiliar situations with confidence
Articulate your views and be open to others' opinions	Communicate openly and actively listen to those around you	Stay calm and focused when dealing with challenging situations	Support and help those around you	Work within tight timescales when needed	Help others to respond positively to change
Coach others and share your expertise	Treat everyone fairly and consistently	Go the extra mile	Demonstrate pride in your team and its work	Prioritise work to respond to urgent needs	Be prepared to do things differently & learn from mistakes
Trust those around you to do their jobs	Encourage mature discussion of differences	Build strong partnerships with outside agencies	Plan projects to involve key people from the start	Show efficiency and value in your use of resources	Adapt your thinking according to the needs of the situation
Seek feedback and learn from what you hear	Be approachable and give time to others	See a task through to the end	Identify opportunities for cross-team working	Translate plans into realistic targets and objectives	Show positive energy even in times of pressure
Lead by example and act as a role model	Respect individual and cultural differences	See things from the members' and customers' perspectives	Understand your strengths and play to them when you can	Understand the impact of your actions on the business	Keep an open mind and think creatively about problems at work
Empower and develop yourself and those around you	Recognise the impact of your behaviour on those around you	Build rapport with members and customers	Seek expertise from outside the team where necessary	Focus on the purpose of your role	Encourage constructive discussion about change
Speak up if you can see a better way to do things	Seek out stakeholders' views where possible	Keep members and customers informed	Ensure all team members have a meaningful part to play	Concentrate on delivering best value	Show your initiative in all that you do