

## SECONDMENT OPPORTUNITY

### PERMANENCE LEGAL OFFICER

#### SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DIRECTORATE, CARE AND PROTECTION, LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN UNIT

Salary range: £34,919 to £42,220 approx (B3 equivalent)

This is a 23 month secondment opportunity for a solicitor or legal officer with family law experience, based in Children and Families Directorate, working in the Looked After Children Unit but with some divisional responsibilities.

This is an excellent opportunity for a suitable candidate able to support an ambitious and rapidly evolving agenda around securing earlier permanence for children and young people who become looked after.

Our aim is to deliver better outcomes for children and young people by removing drift and delay for every child who is subject to statutory intervention. Our data shows that the different public systems – the Children’s Hearings system, the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration, sheriff courts and social work departments – often do not work in an integrated and effective way around the needs of children. The fragmentation of the ‘system’ leads to protracted timescales for determining permanence for most children and the result is that children’s outcomes are not as good as they could be. The public sector bears a heavy cost associated with children being in care too long that can extend from childhood throughout adult life. Significant and sustainable improvement is needed and we require legal experience and knowledge to help us navigate this landscape and make insightful changes that lead to sustainable improvement for every child.

The post will include a core of work that will make use of the post holder’s legal knowledge and experience, but will also offer the post holder the chance to contribute to other areas including policy development and to some extent, operational delivery.

### The Post

Your duties will include the following.

- Provide support to the **Looked After Children Strategy** and on the early permanence action plan.
- Take forward specific work within the plan including:
  - Engaging with Scottish Government leads and other stakeholders around Court Reform through the **Family Justice Modernisation** work
  - Working with stakeholders in the children’s sector and the courts to **address legislative and practice issues** with existing legislation relating to permanence, by supporting the **Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) Programme** .
  - Advising and supporting the work of the team on legal and operational issues around looked after children

- **Support the division head** on specific relevant projects, particularly around engaging with the legal sector.
- Support the **Care Review Team** on legal and operational issues around the independent Care Review.
- Support policy leads within the Unit in developing policy and legislation, as required
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- Support the Intercountry Adoption Officer as required in the development of the Scottish Government's **intercountry adoption service** (no specialist knowledge required), including the development of guidance, identifying potential requirements for secondary legislation and exploring how the service can best be provided in the future.

### **Skills, knowledge and experience required**

The successful candidate should have knowledge and experience of family law, preferably with experience of practising in a local authority team. Knowledge of the wider care and permanence agenda would be helpful.

The post holder will need excellent communication and influencing skills. He or she must be able to engage effectively with a wide range of senior stakeholders across the legal and children's sectors.

The post holder will need excellent analytical and written skills.

This post requires the post holder to be proactive in developing their work programme and identifying opportunities to engage and influence. The post holder should have a track record of effectively managing their work and working autonomously.

### **Who will you be working with?**

Your line manager will be Belinda Robertson.

You will have wider divisional responsibilities and will support Children's Hearings and Youth Justice on specific issues as well as supporting the division head Donald Henderson.

The division consists of around 45 people situated in 2A/B North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh. You will be supported by a friendly, motivated and highly competent team who will make you feel welcome.

## How to apply

Applications should be made using the [Inward Secondment Application Form](#) supplied and must include an employer endorsement. Applications should address the **essential**, and where possible, **desirable criteria** within the job profile.

Candidates are advised that **interviews are competency-based** with a focus on the competencies in the job profile.

For both applications and interviews, candidates are asked to provide **examples** from their working life that demonstrate how they meet the required criteria or competency. You should make clear what **your contribution** has been in your examples. In addition, you should not assume any knowledge based on job titles or qualifications. Please also avoid use of acronyms and jargon without explaining what they mean.

A good example will generally cover a description of the 'Situation', the 'Task', the 'Activity' undertaken and the 'Result'.

We would look to negotiate a maximum four week handover period following acceptance of an offer from the date of the offer to the successful candidate.

## Remuneration and conditions of secondment

The successful candidate will remain on their employers salary rate, terms and conditions, or will be paid the B3 range minimum if this is higher. They will continue to be paid by their employer and will remain an employee of their organisation during the period of secondment. The employer (donor) organisation will be expected to invoice the Scottish Government Directorate representative on a quarterly basis to recover salary and on costs during the secondment period. We expect that suitable candidates would be likely to be at assistant/junior associate level, probably in the 1 – 5 years PQE range.

If you want to find out more about the post please contact Belinda Robertson on 0131 244 5415/07964 247 388 or [belinda.robertson@gov.scot](mailto:belinda.robertson@gov.scot)

The closing date for applications for the post is **Friday 12 May**. Applications should be made using the secondment application form and **emailed** to [belinda.robertson@gov.scot](mailto:belinda.robertson@gov.scot)

Belinda Robertson  
Programme Lead, PACE  
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## Job Profile – Permanence Legal Officer

Section		Permanence Legal Officer (Looked After Children Unit, Review of Care and Family Justice)
1	Overview and National Outcomes	<p>This vacancy contributes towards the Scottish Government National Outcome: 5 (“Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed”) and 8 (“We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk”)</p> <p><a href="http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms/outcomes">http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms/outcomes</a></p>
2	Priority areas for post	<p>This is an exciting and challenging post which offers scope to make a real difference to the lives of looked after children. This work is a ministerial priority and attracts significant stakeholder interest and involvement.</p> <p>The post holder will support the PACE Programme Lead in expanding and aligning PACE with wider permanence policy: will lead on the development of the Family Justice Modernisation Strategy (in conjunction with the Property and Family Law Team, Justice Directorate), which is linked to the recently announced review of the care system by the First Minister: will also support the lead policy officer for the Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership Permanence Group which aims to improve the permanence process for looked after children and is also linked to the review of the care system.</p> <p>As a corporate parent, your job is to make a difference to the lives of around 15,000 children and young people in care each year and to help as many as possible benefit from a safe, stable, nurturing and permanent home environment. We publish statistics every March and June on the outcomes of looked after children. These are historically poor but have been improving in recent years and we need to maintain this progress. A key intermediate aim is to reduce the numbers of children and young people on long term compulsory (temporary) supervision by ensuring each child or young person secures legal permanence at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>You will work closely with the other three teams within the Unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Formal Care and Corporate Parenting which deals with foster care, residential care and unaccompanied children and thematic issues like health, education, homelessness and housing.</li> <li>&gt; Realigning Children’s Services which is a dedicated data gathering, analysis and service-redesign programme for CPPs to re-focus children’s services spend towards early intervention, based on what works.</li> <li>&gt; Family Care Team which leads on policy on early intervention, edge of care, adoption, kinship and looked after at home policy, and oversight of intercountry adoption case</li> </ul>

		<p>work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; The Care Review Team which leads on the independent root and branch Care Review as the sponsorship team.</li> </ul> <p>The key duties and priorities of the post include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Develop and implement the Family Justice Modernisation Strategy (in conjunction with the Justice Directorate) to improve the court process for family law cases involving children.</li> <li>&gt; Support the Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership Permanence Group and work with key stakeholders to identify areas of improvement to practice, policy and legislation to reduce drift and delay in the permanence process for looked after children.</li> <li>&gt; Assist the Property and Family Law Team (Justice Directorate) on any matter in which looked after children have an interest and matters relating to the court processes associated with looked after children.</li> <li>&gt; Provide advice to all colleagues in the Looked After Children Unit regarding the legal processes involved in permanence and give an insight from a practitioner’s perspective on policy and legislative initiatives (<b>NB It should be noted that this is not legal advice</b>).</li> <li>&gt; Input into the development of policies relating to permanence and looked after children.</li> <li>&gt; Support the PACE Programme Lead in expanding and aligning PACE with wider permanence policy.</li> </ul>
3	Competencies and experience required	<p>Competencies and experience required:</p> <p><b><i>Analysis and Use of Evidence</i></b>  You will need to develop policy options and decisions using a range of evidence and research, to ensure that policies are aligned to outcomes. You will need to use relevant evidence and use this to underpin good policy advice which should also be drawn from your engagements with stakeholders.</p> <p><b><i>Experience of Working as a Solicitor in a Local Authority</i></b>  You will have experience of working as a solicitor in a local authority leading on all matters relating to permanence, child protection, looked after children and the Children’s Hearings System. You will have experience of the court process in relation to permanence and associated child protection matters.</p>
4	Essential and Desirable Criteria	<p>Skills, Knowledge and Experience Required:</p> <p>Essential Criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Qualified solicitor and knowledge and experience of practising family law, preferably in a local authority legal team.</li> <li>2. Ability to manage a busy day-to-day workload while achieving longer term goals.</li> <li>3. Ability to distil complex, sometimes conflicting information</li> </ol>

		<p>and evidence, which can be of limited quality, into meaningful policy advice on which decisions can be taken.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Ability to deliver change on the ground, through effective working relationships.</li> <li>5. Excellent communication skills (verbal and written).</li> <li>6. Knowledge of the policy around permanence for looked after children and the justice system.</li> </ol> <p>Desirable Criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge of the policy around, or operations of, the care system and the Scottish Government's improvement agenda in this area e.g. Getting It Right for Every Child, Christie Commission, Scottish Approach, Quality Improvement / Improvement Methodology.</li> <li>2. Evidence of working with relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>3. Evidence you are personally committed to this agenda.</li> </ol>
5	Further Information	<p>Information about the Branch/Unit/Team:</p> <p>The Looked After Children Unit leads all policy on looked after children and implements much of it through partner teams in Learning and Health.</p> <p>For further information on this vacancy please contact Belinda Robertson PACE Programme Lead on 0131 244 5415 or 07964 247 388</p>
6	Salary Comments	<p>This post is offered as a secondment and therefore all terms and conditions remain as those of the host organisation.</p>