

## ROLE PROFILE

<b>Job title</b>	Legal Officer
<b>Internally accountable to</b>	Income Legal Manager
<b>Key customers/contacts</b>	Midland Heart Customers, Midland Heart staff, external agencies

### **Purpose of the role**

To maximise the company's income collection by ensuring the best legal outcome for Midland Heart and its customers. The Income Legal Team is primarily responsible for court attendance for rent possession claims and gas injunctions, as well as disrepair dispute resolution. You will be required to prepare for and attend court in relation to the above, which will require travel across the regions covered by Midland Heart.

You will need a positive attitude to customer service and be flexible within the requirements of the role, and to forge and maintain effective interdepartmental working relationships. You will also liaise with external partners such as County Courts, Solicitors and Housing Benefit departments to ensure the needs of the Association and our customers are met

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

#### **Main Duties**

To be the leading expert for income related legal advice and provide necessary training and advice to the Rent Payment Team and other internal departments. Ensure compliance with the Rent Pre-Action protocol & Civil Procedure Rules.

Prepare information for, and attend court, as a representative of Midland Heart to ensure the best legal outcome for Midland Heart and its customers. This will require travel across the regions covered by Midland Heart to the various Crown and County Courts.

To liaise with external solicitors regarding legal matters and possession procedures, including responding to defence claims within set timescales.

To liaise with the Rent Payment team, Money Advice team, Neighbourhoods team, advice agencies, Social Services and Housing Benefit departments to ensure up to date information is presented at court.

To update and maintain notes on Northgate and ensure correct information is entered to enable statistical analysis to be carried out on the progress of legal action, and provide reports as and when required.

Prepare and present legal work on behalf of other internal departments, such as gas injunction orders, disrepair dispute resolution and possession for breach of tenancy.

Prepare and attend court for complex cases, involving the preparation of witness statements, allocations questionnaires and directions. To identify case complexities and individuals/vulnerable groups and make relevant referrals to Money Advice, CAB or any other agencies. This will require the ability to listen, clarify issues, suggest options and problem solve.

To assist with the process of Small Claims requests ensuring that it complies with the pre-action code of conduct. To assist with the completion of allocations questionnaires and directions prior to small claims hearings. To prepare and attend as an advocate for Small Claims hearings.

To assist with the recovery of monies for service only accounts, including preparation and attendance at legal proceedings through the County Court for money judgments, and further enforcement action where applicable.

To advise customers of their court costs and sundry debts and attempt to recover accordingly.

### **General Duties**

To maintain a good working knowledge of existing Midland Heart policies and procedures, especially income related ones.

To participate in team meetings, bring forward suggestions for service improvement and assist in training sessions and working groups.

To support colleagues through innovation and learning and contribute to making Midland Heart a great place to work. This will include assisting with the training of new staff.

All staff are expected to work flexibly within their skill level to respond to changing priorities and make sure that customer needs and business objectives are met. Act flexibly to give cover and support to other staff when required.

### **Code of Conduct & Confidentiality**

Observe Midland Heart's Code of Conduct at all times and advise of any suspected breaches to a manager.

Promote our good name and effective working relationships with outside organisations.

To ensure all personal data is dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

### **Health & Safety**

Observe health and safety procedures in the workplace to ensure personal safety and to safeguard the interests and safety of colleagues, customers and visitors.

In particular, staff to ensure they are aware of and follow health and safety procedures with regard to lone working

## Person Specification

	Application	Interview	Test
<b>Education, qualifications and training</b>			
A high standard of education is essential to this role with a sound understanding of pre-action protocols & relevant CPR Rues.	X	X	
<b>Experience</b>			
Experience of attending court, ideally relating to rent possession for a housing association or social housing organisation. This includes court representation and a track record of delivering results.	X	X	X
<b>Knowledge</b>			
A sound knowledge of Housing Law and Civil Procedure Rules in relation to income recovery processes and welfare reform is essential.	X	X	X
<b>Skills &amp; Behaviours</b>			
General office skills, including the use of various IT systems including Microsoft Office packages.	X	X	
Good English language skills and the ability to communicate effectively in writing, in person and on the telephone.	X	X	X
A methodical, organised approach to work, self-motivation and personal drive to complete tasks to the required quality and within timescales. Attention to detail is essential.	X	X	
Tact and diplomacy in all interpersonal relationships with customers, both internal and external.		X	
You will need a positive attitude to customer service and to be flexible within the requirements of the role. You will have the ability to work on your own and manage your own workload and that of a team to ensure objectives are met.	X	X	X
Have a tactful approach to problems and be able to handle difficult situations.	X	X	X
Understanding of and commitment to the principles of equality and diversity.	X	X	