

Apprentice & Post Apprentice Solicitor's Handbook

2025- 2027 with possible
extension to 2028



Working together



Excellence



Openness & Honesty



Compassion

Introduction

Welcome to the Northern Ireland Health & Social Care Apprentice and Post Apprentice Solicitor Training Scheme. The following information is designed to answer some questions that you may have during the course of your 24 month apprentice scheme and 12 months Post Apprentice Scheme. All information is correct at the time of writing; however some arrangements for the scheme may change from time to time.

A typical day in the life of an apprentice solicitor in BSO Legal Services (DLS):

Since joining BSO Legal Services (DLS) as an Apprentice in 2022, I have really enjoyed the challenges and tasks that I have faced so far and look forward for what's to come in the future. As an Apprentice, you will get the opportunity to gain experience in a number of areas of law such as Employment, Litigation, Medical Negligence, Inquests, Public Inquiries, Commercial, Property, Recovery of Residential Charges, Judicial Review and Family law (to name a few)!

Having such a great team in BSO Legal Services (DLS) has allowed me to develop massively, both personally and professionally. There really is no silly question – everyone is always willing to help and guide you no matter how busy they may be.

I normally start my working day at around 8:30 when I am in the office – but not before making myself a cup of tea and having a quick chat with whoever I can find! I would then check my emails, mark my tasks for the day and make a note of when they are due.

Time management and organisation is key to staying on top of things. There is also no shame in being honest – if I feel like I am too busy it is important to make this clear. Similarly, if I find myself with spare time, I will always ask my team if they have anything I could help with which often gives me valuable experience.

Before heading home, I will check that I have time recorded for my tasks and make a note of anything that needs to be done the following day. This allows me to go home with a clear mindset, feeling prepared for the next morning.

No two days are the same – some days, I will be down in Court for review or hearings, and other days I could be drafting instructions to Experts, Counsel and sending advices to Clients. It really is a mixed bag and you will soon discover what you enjoy! My number one tip is to always keep an umbrella in your bag as you never know when you are going to be offered the chance to go down to Court (I have been drenched a few times too many- can't rely on NI weather).

I was also quick to learn that if I ever did have any worries, it was nothing that a cup of tea or a walk with a colleague couldn't fix!

Natasha O'Neill (Apprentice Solicitor 2022- 2024)

My apprentice experience was not a typical one... the pandemic impacted upon my apprenticeship but despite this, BSO Legal Services (DLS) ensured that I was still able to get the most out of it. Thankfully we are slowly returning to a post pandemic world and normalisation.

Our working day can start anywhere between 8am -10am but for me, personally, I like to start at 8am. As an apprentice, you do not have a typical daily routine as your workload fluctuates. Some days are extremely fast paced and busy whilst other days are (just a bit) slower and more relaxed.

A standard day in DLS consists of checking emails, responding to queries, drafting pleadings, attending hearings/ consultations/meetings with clients, barristers or other legal professionals either remotely or in person, preparing documents for court, attending court, liaising with clients or counsel, taking instructions from clients, providing advice and anything in between.

It is important to regularly keep your team up to date on the status of your work to ensure you meet all deadlines. You will be given many different tasks which need to be prioritised by urgency. The key is to be organised and manage your time efficiently. Prioritisation, time management and organisation are extremely valuable and useful skills to apply in your apprenticeship.

There are eight main areas of law and it is envisaged that you will cover as much areas as possible through the course of your training. As an apprentice solicitor you will need to be adaptable, flexible, eager, accountable and have a willingness to learn. The best piece of advice I could give is to say 'yes' to everything as this is a great way to learn and to grasp all opportunities.

You will gain valuable, real life experience as an apprentice for the sole provider of legal services for the public Health and Social Care Sector in Northern Ireland. Since joining in 2019 they have provided me with the foundation for personal development and growth to begin my legal career. As the current post apprentice solicitor, I am extremely grateful for all the opportunities I have been given which I do not believe would have been available to me anywhere else.

Caitlin Turnbull (Apprentice Solicitor 2020- 2022)

Teams within BSO Legal Services (DLS)

During the Apprentice and Post Apprentice Scheme you will gain a varied experience in different legal teams in BSO Legal Services (DLS)

Working in Medical Negligence Department - may involve investigating and assessing clients' legal liability in respect of claims. Work closely with trained solicitors to develop both personally and professionally.

Working in the Inquests and Inquiries Team- you may gain experience of assisting our clients involved in the many complex Inquests and Public Inquiries which are ongoing.

Working in the Commercial Team– you may gain invaluable experience in areas such as complex procurement matters, breach of contract claims, construction disputes and mediation and property matters.

Working in our Employment Law, General Litigation and Debt Team – may involve assisting with such matters as our client's response to claims and compliance with directions of the Tribunals and courts and Discovery matters.

Working in the Family Law section - may involve attendance on Counsel in the Family Care Centres throughout Northern Ireland and in the High Court in Belfast. This experience will allow for establishment and building new relationships, both with our clients and with Counsel.

Working in Judicial Review, MCA and Regulatory Law Team - The work includes mental health and mental capacity, judicial review and a wide variety of other general queries received from our clients. You may gain experience in declaratory applications to the High Court, taking instructions from the client and reviewing reports.

Please note the above is not exhaustive.

Year 1, 2 Apprentice Solicitors and Year 3 Post Apprentice

Throughout years 1, 2 and 3 of the Scheme, the following will be applicable:-

1. The (Post) Apprentice Solicitor will ensure that staff are treated in accordance with the BSO's core values, policies and procedures.
2. The (Post) Apprentice Solicitor will participate as required by the Chief Legal Advisor in management issues in particular the Organisation's Quality Initiatives.
3. The (Post) Apprentice Solicitor will participate in Performance Management procedures.
4. The (Post) Apprentice Solicitor will participate where necessary in job rotation arrangements/movement within BSO Legal Services (DLS) as required by service delivery requirements.
5. The (Post) Apprentice Solicitor will undertake such other duties as may be required from time to time by the Chief Legal Adviser.

Apprentice Solicitor - Year 1 and 2

During year 1 and 2 the apprentice will, as far as possible consistent with business need, be given opportunities to work across different areas of law within BSO Legal Services (DLS). Work will include a mix of the following under the supervision and direction of the Chief Legal Adviser, Assistant Chief Legal Adviser, Solicitor or Senior Admin Staff

DUTIES:

1. Duties will include-
 - a) Conducting legal research
 - b) Attending counsel at court and taking notes
 - c) Carrying out directions of counsel or DLS staff
 - d) Preparing briefs and court bundles
 - e) Preparing initial draft legal advice to clients for the supervising member of DLS staff
 - f) Preparing initial drafts of contracts, pleadings or other documents for the supervising member of BSO Legal Services (DLS) Staff
 - g) Attending meetings with clients along with supervising staff
 - h) Preparing attendance and file notes

- i) Assisting with projects or preparation of training materials
- j) Travelling to courts, HSC buildings and other locations throughout NI as required
- k) Any other appropriate duties assigned by supervising staff

In addition, the apprentice will attend regularly and undertake their vocational studies and exams at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies with reasonable diligence.

During years 1 and 2 of the Apprenticeship scheme, the apprentice solicitor will be expected to work in the office during the following periods (*precise dates to be discussed and agreed with line manager/Master*):-

Year 1 –

September to December

Easter holidays – March/April

Summer period – June to September

Year 2 –

December/January to August

Post-Apprentice Solicitor - Year 3

Subject to satisfactory performance during years 1 and 2, satisfactory completion of all relevant professional exams and business need, this fixed term post is an extension to the standard 2 year apprenticeship contract. As such it provides the opportunity for the post holder to gain some post qualification experience, to continue their training and consolidate and develop their skills and learning. The Post Apprentice Solicitor will assist in the provision of legal services to a range of clients within the Health and Social care Sector. The post holder will provide those services in accordance with the standards established by the Chief Legal Adviser and the BSO's Service Level Agreements with its clients. The Post Apprentice Solicitor will carry out these duties under the supervision of an Assistant Chief Legal Adviser who will directly allocate their caseload.

DUTIES:

1. Duties will include -

- a) Assisting Counsel in the progression of family law cases. This includes attending Counsel at court and at consultations throughout Northern Ireland, taking detailed attendance notes of same and emailing a summary to the client in a timely way (normally within 48 hours of the court/consultation). To ensure that Counsel's directions are forwarded to the client Trust and followed and that dates are added to the main office diary. To ensure that necessary drafting is completed – to include

including letters of instruction and C2 applications. All drafting should be approved by Counsel or a Solicitor Consultant before issuing. To ensure that the files are ready for hearing- necessary witnesses arranged, appropriate discoverable documentation collated and accurate court bundles are compiled- both in conjunction with administrative staff and when necessary by the Post Apprentice Solicitor themselves. To obtain timely legal advice and opinions from Counsel on behalf of clients in respect of their statutory responsibilities pursuant to child care law and adoption law. To assist with a professional hand over of files at the expiry of the term.

b) To assist other Solicitors and Solicitor Consultants in the progression of their cases as requested and with the agreement of the Chief Legal Adviser or an Assistant Chief Legal Adviser.

c) To represent Trusts in mental health review tribunals.

d) To undertake research or participate in projects as requested by the Chief Legal Adviser or an Assistant Chief Legal Adviser.

e) To ensure that a high quality of legal service is delivered to clients by planning and organising the schedule of his/her own work in accordance with the operational requirements of their own and their Teams' allocated client base in co-operation with the Assistant Chief Legal Adviser, and other Team members and with colleagues in relation to general or specialist group work, using his/her initiative, professional skills and organisational acumen.

f) To complete sufficient training and self-development to meet the requirements laid down by the Law Society in terms of Continuous Professional Development.

g) To have a direct individual professional obligation to the Courts as an Officer of the Court. The job holder also has direct individual professional responsibility and accountability to the Law Society.

h) To work in close association with Solicitors and support staff within BSO Legal Services (DLS), sharing information and experience and participating in the development of the various sections to enable BSO Legal Services (DLS) to enhance its expertise and meet present and future demands and expectations of clients in the most efficient and effective way.

The duties outlined in this Job Description serve as a guide to the current and major responsibilities of the post. The duties and obligations associated with the post will inevitably vary and develop and the Job Description will be reviewed on a regular basis. Change will be subject to consultation with the post holder.

The successful candidate will be expected to comply with the BSO's No Smoking Policy.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The post holder will be required to:

1. Ensure the Organisation's policy on equality of opportunity is promoted through his/her own actions and those of any staff for whom he/she has responsibility.
2. Co-operate fully with the implementation of the Organisation's Health and Safety arrangements, reporting any accidents/incidents/equipment defects to his/her manager, and maintaining a clean, uncluttered and safe environment for patients/clients, members of the public and staff.
3. Adhere at all times to all the Organisation's policies/codes of conduct, including for example:
 - Smoke Free policy
 - IT Security Policy and Code of Conduct
 - standards of attendance, appearance and behaviour
4. Contribute to ensuring the highest standards of environmental cleanliness within your designated area of work.
5. Co-operate fully with regard to the Organisation's policies and procedures relating to infection prevention and control.
6. All employees of the Organisation are legally responsible for all records held, created or used as part of their business within the Business Services Organisation including patients/clients, corporate and administrative records whether paper-based or electronic and also including emails. All such records are public records and are accessible to the general public, with limited exceptions, under the Freedom of Information act 2000 the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Employees are required to be conversant with the BSO's policy and procedures on records management and to seek advice if in doubt.
7. Take responsibility for his/her own ongoing learning and development, in order to maximise his/her potential and continue to meet the demands of the post.
8. Represent the Organisation's commitment to providing the highest possible standard of service to patients/clients and members of the public, by treating all

those with whom he/she comes into contact in the course of work, in a pleasant, courteous and respectful manner.

This Job Description will be subject to review in the light of changing circumstances and is not intended to be rigid and inflexible but should be regarded as providing guidelines within which the individual works. Other duties of a similar nature and appropriate to the grade may be assigned from time to time.

It is a standard condition that all BSO staff may be required to serve at any location within the Organisation's area, as needs of the service demand.

Entry Requirements

We are looking for exceptional graduates who aspire to become a Solicitor in a fast paced and challenging environment with a drive to deliver an excellent and high quality service to Health and Social Care NI in line with the HSC values.

To be eligible to apply for this scheme candidates must (by the closing date for applications):

1. Be in receipt of an offer of a place on the Institute of Professional Legal Studies Solicitor trainee programme, conditional only on a degree classification. Please note that candidates placed on the waitlist will not be shortlisted.
2. Be prepared to travel throughout Northern Ireland and hold a current full driving licence which is valid for use in the UK and have access to a car on appointment. (This criterion will be waived in the case of applicants whose disability prohibits driving but who have access to a form of transport approved by the Organisation which will permit them to carry out the duties of the post)

Candidates must attach to their application form a copy of their letter of offer or letter of conditional offer.

Any applications submitted without the letter of offer or conditional offer will not be considered.

Master

Each Apprentice Solicitor will require a Master and must be approved by the Law Society NI. This is essential part of the Apprentice training programme and Scheme

and the Apprentice Solicitor will be unable to meet the Law Society's requirements and qualify as a solicitor without a Master.

Following the completion of its recruitment process, BSO Legal Services (DLS) will identify a suitable Master. The Apprentice Solicitor must contact the Master in good time before the deadline set by the Law Society to complete all relevant documents which must then be lodged with the Law Society.

Salary Arrangements

In year 1 Apprentice Solicitors will receive 65% of the Agenda for Change Band 5, top point, pro rata for days worked in the office.

For time spent in vocational training at IPLS, the apprentice will be entitled to payment of the National Minimum Wage apprentice rate.

In Year 2 Apprentice Solicitors will receive 70% of the Agenda for Change Band 5, top point, pro rata for days worked in the office.

For time spent in vocational training at IPLS, the apprentice will be entitled to payment of the National Minimum Wage apprentice rate.

Subject to performance and business need, you may be offered a one year appointment for a 3rd year as a post apprentice solicitor.

Pay is paid on the 3rd last banking day of the month.

Code of Conduct

As an Apprentice Solicitor in Health & Social Care, you must observe the Health and Social Care Values (page 12) through your behaviours. You must also comply with relevant Law Society expected standards of conduct for apprentice solicitors.

Terms and Conditions

Apprentice and Post Apprentice Solicitors will be subject to Agenda for Change Terms and conditions which can be found via this link <https://www.nhsemployers.org/tchandbook>. A Summary of Leave entitlements, expenses, Tax pension scheme, and corporate induction are provided below.

Leave Entitlements

Annual Leave

Annual leave entitlement for HSC employees is 27 days, pro rata, commencing 1 April to 31 March the following year. Staff retaining terms and conditions pertaining to their previous service may retain their annual leave entitlement. You will also be entitled to 10 statutory days per annum:

Sick Leave

Overall guidance is given in BSO's Attendance at Work Policy and Procedure, which is given to all new staff at induction. Information on the Occupational Health service is also contained within the Policy and Procedure and is located on the BSO Intranet.

In the event of absence due to ill health, you must:

- Notify your line manager as soon as possible on the first day of your illness, no later than 9.30am.
- Notification **MUST** be by telephone; emails or text messages are not acceptable communication
- You must indicate the reason for absence, the expected duration of the absence and whether or not a medical practitioner will be seen.

Your line manager will record you as sick on the HRPTS portal.

If the absence lasts for more than **3** days you must complete a Self-Certificate Form which must be submitted your line manager within 7 calendar days from the first day of absence. If the absence extends beyond **7** calendar days you must submit, to your line manager, a Statement for Fitness to Work (Sick Line) to cover from day 8.

Special Leave

Please refer to the BSO Intranet for guidance on arrangements for special leave.

Expenses

Travel & Subsistence

You are entitled to claim travel expenses incurred whilst working in BSO. BSO is responsible for payment of travelling expenses between your base and other locations which you may be required to visit in the course of your duties. *You cannot claim from your home to your base (i.e. your normal commute).* Travel and subsistence expenses should be claimed via HRPTS and Original receipts should be retained by the trainee. Car parking fees can be claimed, and taxis will only be paid for when there is no public transport alternative, or by prior agreement (e.g. luggage and tight timescales).

All rates for Travel and Subsistence rates are located in section 17 and section 18 of Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions.

HSCNI Pensions Scheme

There is an Occupational Pension (HSC Pension Scheme) relating to this employment. If you are over 22 years of age this appointment is Pensionable and you will automatically be opted into the HSC Pension Scheme. Pension contributions will automatically be deducted from your pay before tax.

To opt out of the scheme you will be required to complete Form SD502, which is available on the HSC Pension website. If you require further information, please contact HSC Pensions on 028 7131 9111.

Additional Information

The Apprentice Solicitor must ensure that they attend the BSO corporate induction on commencement of their contract.

Employer Information

For the duration of this post you will be considered an employee of the Business Services Organisation BSO (details below) and are subject to BSO's policies and procedures, including during this Apprentice scheme as well as Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions. Policies and Procedures can be found via BSO's intranet and Agenda for Change Terms and conditions can be found via this link: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/tchandbook>





Business Services Organisation (BSO)

Address: 2 Franklin Street, Belfast, BT2 8DQ

Telephone: 0300 555 0113 (Main Switchboard)

Website: www.hscbusiness.hscni.net

HSC Regional Values

HSC Value	What does this mean?	What does this look like in practice? - Behaviours
 <p>Working Together</p>	<p>We work together for the best outcome for people we care for and support. We work across Health and Social Care and with other external organisations and agencies, recognising that leadership is the responsibility of all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I work with others and value everyone's contribution • I treat people with respect and dignity • I work as part of a team looking for opportunities to support and help people in both my own and other teams • I actively engage people on issues that affect them • I look for feedback and examples of good practice, aiming to improve where possible
 <p>Compassion</p>	<p>We are sensitive, caring, respectful and understanding towards those we care for and support and our colleagues. We listen carefully to others to better understand and take action to help them and ourselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am sensitive to the different needs and feelings of others and treat people with kindness • I learn from others by listening carefully to them • I look after my own health and well-being so that I can care for and support others
 <p>Excellence</p>	<p>We commit to being the best we can be in our work, aiming to improve and develop services to achieve positive changes. We deliver safe, high-quality, compassionate care and support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I put the people I care for and support at the centre of all I do to make a difference • I take responsibility for my decisions and actions • I commit to best practice and sharing learning, while continually learning and developing • I try to improve by asking 'could we do this better?'
 <p>Openness & Honesty</p>	<p>We are open and honest with each other and act with integrity and candour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am open and honest in order to develop trusting relationships • I ask someone for help when needed • I speak up if I have concerns • I challenge inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour and practice

