

Medico Legal Advisor

About AvMA and the Medico Legal Department

Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA) is the independent UK wide charity for patient safety and justice, established over 30 years. AvMA is widely credited with both having put “patient safety” on the map and having brought about huge advances in access to justice for those patients who have been affected by lapses in patient safety (“medical accidents”).

AvMA is a unique organisation for many reasons, not least because we provide free advice and information to members of the public who have suffered injury as a result of negligence and substandard medical treatment. Our core advice services are:

- our Helpline (open five days a week).
- written advice and information service
- Pro bono inquest service.

Through these services we help over 3,000 people a year, including signposting to accredited medical negligence solicitors where appropriate. We are constantly reviewing how best we can develop services to best meet unmet needs, we have a focus on providing up to date information through our self-help leaflets available from the website.

AvMA enjoys a special relationship with lawyers practicing in clinical negligence and medical law. We accredit specialist clinical negligence solicitors and are in the process of rolling out a Certificate of Competence scheme to help support junior lawyers working towards AvMA Panel accreditation. The applicant should have an interest in assessing and promoting this aspect of our work, training will be given.

You should be able to recommend appropriate medical experts to assist lawyers with progressing medico-legal claims and investigations. You will be responsible for maintaining and building AvMA’s expert database as well as being one of the people primarily responsible for assessing the quality of the experts applying to be on our experts list. We have a well-deserved reputation for our excellent conferences, you will also be expected to identify suitable medical experts to speak at our conferences. When capacity allows you will be expected to take on and deal with some of our written work, both advice and information clients and/or inquest clients.

AvMA’s Medico Legal Services

AvMA’s Medico-Legal Department is comprised of services to support the public and services to lawyers. Our Medico Legal personnel are involved with all aspects of our services which provides variety and job satisfaction.

The core services can be described as follows:

Services to support the public:

- A national helpline,
- Written casework, including reviewing lawyers’ decisions to turn cases down upon receipt of expert evidence.

- Inquest service and

Services to clinical negligence lawyers:

- Providing expert witness recommendations to our Lawyers Service members.
- We also provide advice to lawyers (who have varying degrees of expertise in medical negligence litigation) to help them handle their client's cases.
- Publication of the AvMA Newsletter

The Post

We are currently recruiting for a Medico Legal Advisor, the position is part time, 3 days (21 hours) per week. Training will be provided on our services although some prior knowledge of clinical negligence is required. We are particularly interested in candidates who have a medical background and who have some understanding of clinical negligence litigation. A legal background would be an asset although it is not essential for this position.

You should be able to identify the appropriate medico-legal experts to advise on breach of duty and/or causation issues as well as condition and prognosis. You will be involved in monitoring and keeping the medico legal expert database current and maintaining a high level of service to our Lawyer Service members.

The successful applicant will be expected to work with the conference department by suggesting medical speakers and topics for conferences.

From time to time, you will be involved in providing support to members of the public by way of providing written advice and information on a range of issues, helping with inquests and the helpline.

Capacity permitting you will be involved in rolling out AvMA's junior certification scheme (Certificates of Competence) for lawyers.

Skills Required

Applications are encouraged from people who have a medical background and a demonstrable interest and understanding of the law relating to clinical negligence.

You should be hard-working, enthusiastic, and versatile enough to recognise the need to change and help adapt AvMA's services to meet the demands in an ever-changing clinical negligence market. You should be committed to protecting the rights and needs of injured patients, including good client care and access to justice.

As well as having good communication skills and the confidence to deal with lawyers and medical experts alike, you should have an interest in all aspects of clinical negligence litigation (including costs); Human Rights Act issues and Coronial Law.

Empathy with patients/potential claimants and recognition of the importance of gaining client trust and upholding confidentiality are essential to these positions.

You will be working with a highly respected team of professionals who have specialist knowledge and experience in clinical negligence matters. You will be supported in a friendly and collegiate team environment.

People

Our people are our greatest asset. AvMA currently employs approximately 22 staff (many of whom are part-time), bringing a wide range of skills, experience, and passion for what AvMA stands for. AvMA also benefits from a pool of dedicated volunteers and an excellent board of trustees.

Information for Candidates

AvMA is a small but unique organisation, although staff predominantly work from home, we place huge value on working as a team and supporting each other. There is an expectation that AvMA staff will get together in person at least three times a year, the Staff Days are well structured, collegiate and help the organisation to maintain the emphasis on playing as a team.

Job Description

Job Title:	Medico Legal Advisor
Hours:	Part Time, 3 days (21 hours) per week
Salary:	Starting salary is £36,006 full time (point 21 on the AVMA pay scale), pro-rated for part time, rising to £38,229 (point 24 on the AvMA pay scale).
Holiday:	25 days a year (full time), plus bank holidays. In addition, the office closes over the Christmas break for 3 days; annual leave does not have to be taken. Leave is pro-rated for part time employees.
Location:	We are a remote working organisation, currently with an office based in East Croydon.
Responsible to:	Director Medico Legal Services and Medico Legal Team Leader
Applications By:	0900 hours Monday 15th April
Interview Dates:	Planned for Monday 29th and Tuesday 30th April
Start Date:	The successful candidate will be expected to start as soon as possible.

Main Purpose of the Job

This is a part time position and work will be allocated to reflect this, however Medico Legal Advisors are expected to be able to work on any of the main duties below, the exact balance will be determined by the Medico Legal Team Leader depending on priorities on the service.

Lawyers Service

- Providing high quality services to our lawyers including identifying and recommending appropriate medical experts to clinical negligence solicitors; maintaining and developing the medical expert database; assisting with planning of regional lawyer support meetings.
- Analysing medico-legal expert reports on breach of duty and causation.
- Maintaining and developing AvMA's database of medical experts by recruiting new experts and updating the database to reflect any changes to medical expert details or status in line with GDPR requirements.
- Liaising with the AvMA caseworkers on medical reports, expert's performance etc.
- Liaising with medico legal agencies as and when required
- Leading on the Medico Legal Department's contribution to conference department, by suggesting suitable medical expert talks and medical speakers for AvMA conferences especially the annual conference.

Inquest Service

- Assessing cases for eligibility for AvMA's pro bono Inquest Service according to

AvMA's criteria

- Preparing cases for the coroner's court to include sorting medical records; liaising with bereaved families by phone and in writing; researching medical literature; taking and preparing initial statements; liaising with the coroner's officer; securing appropriate disclosure documents; instructing counsel; assisting with preparation of bundles of documents for the hearing. Identifying general and specific patient safety issues; considering need for Prevention of Future Death Reports and or Action Plans.
- Attendance at pre-inquest hearings and inquest hearings with counsel and the family may involve some travel and overnight stays; out of pocket expenses are paid. Although overtime is not payable, time out of the office is recoverable in accordance with AvMA Time Out in Lieu (TOIL) policy.
- Capturing and recording key data from inquest, securing feedback from clients.
- Working with Medico Legal Team Leader to ensure appropriate publicity on case outcomes where appropriate to include obtaining relevant client consents and that the case is written up for potential publication in AvMA's Lawyer Service Newsletter

Advice and Information Service

- Providing advice, support, and information to the public through written casework. This involves helping people affected by medical accidents to obtain an understanding of what has happened to them, their rights, and the most appropriate option(s) for resolving their concerns and meeting their needs including referral to panel solicitors.

Helpline

- Providing advice and assistance to the public on AvMA's specialist helpline. Training will be given and in due course assisting the Helpline Development Officer to train helpline volunteers.

Other Duties

- **Referral panel and junior solicitor certification:** to assist with assessment of solicitors for the AvMA specialist clinical negligence panel and assist with promotion of the certification scheme and applications by solicitors to it.
- **To contribute to service and policy development:** For example, by feeding back policy issues and case examples to the Director of Medico-Legal Services and assisting with new initiatives.
- **Occasional representation of AvMA at meetings and events:** Residential attendance at AvMA's Annual Clinical Negligence Conference is expected.
- To undertake such other duties as required commensurate with this position.

Person Specification

The successful candidate will be able to demonstrate in their application that they meet all of the essential criteria and as many of the desirable criteria as possible.

Essential Criteria

- Has demonstrable knowledge and/or experience of clinical negligence litigation, a sound understanding of the legal principles as they relate to clinical negligence civil claims and inquests.
- Good client care skills: Able to work with tact, empathy and understanding with people who are vulnerable, distressed or traumatised by their experience of a medical accident whilst managing their expectations.
- Prepared to travel to inquests and stay overnight when required.
- Knowledge and/or experience of the NHS complaints, private healthcare complaints procedures.
- An awareness of the changes and challenges facing the legal profession in relation to clinical negligence work especially in relation to medico legal experts and use of medico legal agencies
- Good communication skills, with the ability to articulate clearly and effectively both in writing, on the telephone, and face to face with clients, lawyers, and medical experts.
- Ability to work effectively both as a member of a team and on own initiative.
- Passion, commitment and drive to promote patient rights and follow the aims of AvMA.
- IT literate, with ability to use databases, e-mail, internet for research and programs such as Word and Excel. An interest in and commitment to, using IT to support the work of the department for example to help introduce case management systems.
- Committed to principles of equal opportunities and diversity.

Desirable Criteria (Training will be provided where necessary)

- Holds a medical qualification.
- Some knowledge or experience of the law and/or procedures relating to professional regulation.
- Previous experience of advice or advocacy work.
- Previous experience of developing good relationships with counsel and medico-legal experts.
- An understanding of the issues relating to solicitor/client costs, particularly in clinical negligence cases.
- Experience/interest in collecting data, and monitoring quality.
- Previous experience of working on a helpline