

## Panel Accreditation Manager

This is an exciting opportunity for someone with proven management experience and a keen interest in AvMA's unique work supporting people affected by healthcare harm and promoting patient safety and justice by driving forward our AvMA Panel Accreditation programme. AvMA is a charity which was set up over 40 years ago. We were the first body to devise an accreditation scheme for lawyers specialising in claimant clinical negligence work. AvMA has the longest running accreditation scheme, it is widely considered to be the most rigorous scheme and securing AvMA accreditation is widely considered to be a mark of excellence by lawyers.

AvMA is a small, independent charity which due to generous legacies is comparably financially secure although not without its challenges. AvMA has always punched above its weight and was instrumental in leading change for patient safety including the introduction of a statutory duty of candour. AvMA has achieved a tremendous amount and gained the admiration and the respect of many stakeholders. The Panel Accreditation Manager will guide AvMA accreditation through the next phase of its journey, including progressing the Certificates of Competence Scheme for junior lawyers and considering the need for refining areas of our existing panel accreditation scheme to possibly include a discreet complex brain injury. This post has become available due to retirement later in August 2024 of Liz Thomas who has been a long standing member of AvMA staff for more than 30 years.

### Finance

AvMA is in the very fortunate position of owning its own four storey office building and having good reserves, thanks to legacies it has received. It has a well-established income mainly from providing services and running conferences for lawyers, although we recognise the need to focus on diversifying our income streams not least because of the effect of Government legal reforms.

### People

AvMA has an excellent Board of trustees with a wide variety of relevant experience, and 22 excellent staff, many of whom have been at AvMA for some time. AvMA see its staff as its greatest asset. The successful applicant for the post of Panel Accreditation Manager will need to be able to work alone but also as a team.

### Working arrangements

The organisation adapted well to the working at home when required during the pandemic, thanks to timely investment in IT. Most staff have found working from home beneficial and productivity has not suffered.

As a result AvMA is now a remote working organisation although we currently retain our own office building in Croydon. AvMA provide a laptop to staff to work remotely, it is the responsibility and expense of each AvMA employee to ensure they have adequate wifi which will enable them to carry out their work duties.

Although we are a remote working organisation there is a requirement to occasionally attend in person meetings to consolidate our collegiate and team working work ethic. Staff meetings are held a minimum of three times a year and are usually structured events which often include external speakers on topical issues, they are usually held in our Croydon office but from time to time they may be held elsewhere including venues in central London. Staff are expected to attend these events at their own expense.

Apart from staff meetings, staff may also be required to attend the offices/other designated venue at their own expense for team building, or other business requirements. Attendance at AvMA's Annual Clinical Negligence Conference is required, typically this event is held over three days and two nights, AvMA organises the travel and accommodation expenses for this.

Regular staff meetings and department meetings are held online and remote attendance is expected. The Panel Accreditation Manager sits in on the Medico – Legal Department meetings.

AvMA's working from home policy has also enabled AvMA to recruit experienced and well qualified staff nationally, members of staff work live as far away as Cumbria in the North and Suffolk in the East. Online induction has been successful.

## **IT & Digital**

AvMA is in the process of implementing a new CRM system, it is about halfway through its phased roll out programme. This has been a massive investment of time and effort and is expected to greatly help improve the organisation's efficiency and reliability for years to come. AvMA intends to develop its Digital Strategy further.

## **Location**

Although AvMA is a remote working organisation it currently retains a four-storey modern office building (which is owned by AvMA), set in a pleasant courtyard just off Croydon High Street in the centre of Croydon. East and West Croydon train stations are approximately a 10 minutes' walk away and provide excellent travel links to London and the South East. Central London is around 15 minutes by rail from East Croydon. Three of the four floors are let to other businesses or are in the process of being let.

## Job Description

<b>Job Title:</b>	Panel Accreditation Manager
<b>Hours:</b>	Full time, 35 hours a week, part time will be considered
<b>Salary:</b>	£43,055 - £45,548 (pro rata if part time) point 30 on the salary scale rising to point 33. Annual increments are paid until the top of the scale is reached. A discretionary cost of living increase is usually applied each year in addition.
<b>Holiday:</b>	25 days a year (full time), plus bank holidays, increasing by a day per year of service during the first five years of service up to a maximum of 5 days. In addition to public holidays the office is normally closed on Christmas Eve and is closed between Christmas and New Year (this is additional paid leave).
<b>Location:</b>	We are a remote working organisation, currently with an office based in East Croydon.
<b>Responsible to:</b>	The Director Medico-Legal Services and the CEO
<b>Applications By:</b>	<b>0900 hours Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024.</b>
<b>Interview Dates:</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>

***If you would like an informal discussion about this position, please contact Lisa O'Dwyer, Director Medico Legal Services Monday – Thursday between 8.30 am and 5.00 pm on 0208 688 9555.***

### 1. Main Purpose of the Job

- To manage and oversee the operation of the AvMA panel including the qualifying requirements for panel applicants, assessment of applications and convening meetings of the panel committee to include drafting agendas and identifying issues to be discussed.
- Developing the AvMA panel to ensure that delivery of applications and assessment of the same is done in the most effective and timely way without compromising the rigour of the scheme.
- Organising panel interviews for applicants, updating database of panel membership and special interests. Giving informal advice to solicitors enquiring about panel membership requirements and AvMA's expectations of panel members.
- Travelling and attending key networking events, including AvMA's three-day (2 overnight stays) annual conference event to engage with potential AvMA panel applicants, promote the benefits of accreditation, keep up to date with medical and legal developments.
- To grow the current levels of panel membership. At present, we receive on average 15 new applications each financial year.

- To lead on reviewing the existing format of the accreditation panel committee which is currently in-house but consideration to the need to amend and restructure this model.
- To provide and arrange appropriate training to the accreditation panel committee, including case workers where appropriate to ensure the panel committee is up to date and running as efficiently as possible.
- To improve on the current re-accreditation process to make it more streamlined and user friendly for applicants.
- To ensure panel application and reaccreditation requirements remain of a high standard and are reviewed in light of relevant changes to practice, law and other relevant factors.
- To ensure relevant data from panel applications is captured on the CRM and is properly analysed and relevant information is shared in an appropriate manner.
- To ensure relevant data from panel applications is captured on the CRM. This data needs to be properly analysed and relevant information shared with key AvMA personnel to inform AvMA's legal and medical policy work and in turn AvMA's public facing services and AvMA's conference department.
- To pursue AvMA's EDI strategy by introducing ways in which the panel can be developed to ensure panel members are as ethnically diverse as possible.
- To liaise with AvMA's conference department to advise on any training which may be required to strengthen AvMA panel members knowledge and information base.
- To organise the assessment of the applications for Certificate of Competence Scheme (CCS) for juniors. To update and work on the Certificates Competence Scheme including organising applicant feedback to ensure this scheme continues to be fit for purpose. To inform and work with panel applicant mentors in strengthening the scheme.
- To deliver on administrative requirements such as quarterly reports for trustees, working with AvMA's in house Quality and Outcome Committee (QOC) as required to update on continued improvement of AvMA Panel Accreditation Scheme.
- Dealing with queries raised by AvMA Panel applicants and/or juniors who may have had their applications rejected.
- Ensuring AvMA panel template letters and documents are updated
- From time to time speaking publicly about requirements for AvMA panel membership, common pitfalls and how to overcome them as well as other matters relating to panel.
- To consider client complaints to determine whether it meets the threshold for disciplinary action under AvMA's Panel procedures.

- To manage AvMA's disciplinary procedure for AvMA Panel members, identify and liaise with adjudicators, prepare documentation, set up the hearing.
- To manage appeals against rejection of an application for accreditation/reaccreditation, liaise with adjudicators.
- To keep on top of any government, regulatory or other policy changes which may affect the way in which patients can access justice, recover damages and seek redress more generally from adverse clinical outcomes, as well as any improvements or impediments to lawyers undertaking this work.
- To develop the AvMA panel accreditation and Certificates Competence scheme so it is more cost efficient and maximises engagement with AvMA accredited panel solicitors.

## **2. Skills and experience**

### **2.1 Administration and management of the AvMA Panel**

The bulk of the administration and management tasks do not require specialist skills; however, assistance is provided by the PA to the CEO when required.

AvMA is in the process of introducing a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) driven computer system throughout the organisation, the introduction has been phased and the applicant should be confident enough with sufficient IT skills to onboard the new system. The CRM works with Microsoft Dynamics 365 a data driven software solution which is intended to manage, track and store information. AvMA considers IT to be an ongoing commitment and the new manager should be willing to consider ways in which AvMA can maximise the impact of the CRM to improve services and data collection on key issues identified from panel related activities.

Tasks such as updating and preparing new application documents will require legal input, the interview process will involve discussions about topical medico legal issues and for this reason the post would suit someone who has a legal background, qualified as a solicitor or barrister, with demonstrable claimant clinical negligence experience from private practice and who is preferably an accredited clinical lawyer.

Panel lawyers may be able to assist but capacity is always an issue and conflict of interest may also be a consideration.

### **2.2 Assessment of new applications, interviews and dealing with correspondence**

The Panel Accreditation Manager is primarily responsible for the assessment of new applications.

The role of Panel Accreditation Manager would suit someone who has practised as a claimant clinical negligence lawyer who is looking to draw on their expertise and experience in a new role. The successful applicant should be confident in assessing former peers and colleagues in a fair and impartial way.

The nature of this work is such that the Panel Accreditation Manager can come into possession of commercially sensitive information, discretion and respecting confidentiality are key qualities for this role.

### 2.3 Reaccreditations

Reaccreditation assessments are done internally by the Panel Accreditation Manager, occasionally assistance can be provided by members of the internal panel assessment team.

AvMA aims to make reaccreditations more straightforward for practitioners and the new appointee will be expected to liaise with the profession to understand where they consider the biggest hurdles to reaccreditation lie and to consider how these can be overcome without compromising standards.

AvMA receives a minimum of 15 applications for reaccreditation per annum, however numbers can be considerably higher, up to 30 per annum. It is thought that the reaccreditation process could be designed to be more streamlined and user friendly for both the applicant and in house.

### 2.4 Other AvMA Panel assessments

In addition to AvMA panel applications, reaccreditations the Panel Accreditation Manager will need to assess applications from accredited panel members who have changed firms.

Change of firm applications tend to be straightforward if the applicant has been on the panel for some time and is going to a firm where there is another AvMA panel member but the process is more in depth for those going to a firm which does not have another AvMA panel member.

The Panel Application Manager needs to be confident that the new firm can meet the minimum standards and supervision requirements required of a first time panel application.

There are a minimum of 5 applications for changes of firm rising to a maximum of 10 per annum.

**Interim Reviews:** From time to time first time applicants may demonstrate that they meet the core criteria for AvMA Panel membership but there may be some areas that require improvement. In those cases, AvMA can award the applicant AvMA panel status subject to a review sometime later. The Panel Accreditation Manager is responsible for following up that review and examining progress made. The review is an opportunity to identify if the applicant has succeeded in strengthening the areas of weakness identified. If they have not, they risk losing their AvMA panel status entirely.

There are a minimum of 3 interim reviews per annum, currently not exceeding 6.

## Person Specification

### Essential Criteria

- Holds a legal qualification and is either a barrister or solicitor preferably with specialist clinical negligence accreditation.
- Demonstrable knowledge and/or experience of claimant clinical negligence litigation, in particular a sound understanding of the legal principles as they relate to clinical negligence civil claims and inquests.
- An understanding of the principles underlying the European Convention Human Rights
- Knowledge of inquests and the rules and Acts governing coronial law
- Knowledge of costs: An understanding of the core principles of cost recovery, modes of funding clinical negligence work; the importance of After the Event (ATE) insurance and recovery of premiums; retention of client damages to cover shortfall in costs; likely ramifications of a fixed recoverable costs regime in clinical negligence claims.
- 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.
- An awareness of the changes and challenges facing the legal profession in relation to clinical negligence work
- Good communication skills, with the ability to articulate clearly and effectively both in writing, on the telephone, and face to face.
- An ability to read and marshal large quantities of documentation submitted in support of AvMA Panel applications.
- Good organisation skills and the ability to manage and work effectively both as a member of a team and on own initiative.
- Forward thinking and able to suggest appropriate changes to AvMA's panel accreditation process to meet the changing needs of the public and the clinical negligence market place.
- Passion, commitment and drive to promote patient rights and follow the aims of AvMA, recognition of the importance of both experience and expertise in clinical negligence work but also the importance of consistently good client care.
- IT literate, with ability to use databases, e-mail, internet for research and programs such as Word and Excel and AvMA's new CRM (training can be provided).
- An interest in and commitment to, using IT to support the AvMA Panel work and the work of the organisation more generally. To work with IT to ensure maximum use and

efficiencies from the newly implemented CRM case management system. Undaunted by the use of social media to promote aspects of AvMA accreditation schemes.

- Committed to principles of equal opportunities and diversity
- An understanding of and a commitment to the values and objectives of AvMA particularly in relation to patient safety and learning and access to justice.
- Excellent interpersonal skills - with the ability to develop effective and positive working relationships with a wide range of individuals and organisations.
- Good communication skills. Strong writing skills - with the ability to prepare well-written and appropriate correspondence.
- Good analytical skills
- Well organised and can remain good-humoured under pressure.

#### **Desirable Criteria (Training will be provided where necessary)**

- Some knowledge or experience of the law and/or procedures relating to professional regulation.
- Previous experience of running clinical negligence cases in private practice.
- Experience of developing good relationships with the legal profession, medico-legal experts and clients/beneficiaries.
- Experience/interest in collecting data, and monitoring quality .
- Previous experience of working on a helpline

#### **Experience and skills**

##### **Essential:**

1. An understanding of and commitment to the values and objectives of AvMA.
2. Senior management experience
3. Proven leadership skills including experience of change management
4. An entrepreneurial attitude with experience of generating income for organisations
5. The ability to work well within a team but also to take tough decisions and stick to them
6. Experience of specialist claimant clinical negligence

##### **Desirable:**

- a) Experience of working within an advice / advocacy-based organisation or role.
- b) Knowledge or experience of healthcare, the NHS or patient safety work

- c) Knowledge and/or experience of management in the charity sector
- d) Experience of influencing through policy and campaign work

### **Qualifications and Education**

Degree level education or equivalent. Professional qualification as either a solicitor and/or barrister. Preferably experience of representing claimants in clinical negligence litigation.