

Our ref: PM
Your ref:
Date: 2 January 2018

Dear Applicant

Re Housing, Community Care, Welfare Benefits Solicitor/Caseworker

Thank you for your interest in this post.

I am pleased to enclose:

1. Job Description and Person Specification for Housing Solicitor/Caseworker
2. Guidelines for Applicants
3. Organisation Summary

You can download the application form from our website.

The closing date for receipt of applications is ongoing and you are advised to submit an application as soon as possible. Applications in the form of a CV and covering letter should be sent by email to recruitment@swllc.org.

Yours faithfully

Patrick Marples CEO
South West London Law Centres

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
Legal Action for Local Communities

JOB ADVERT – Housing and Community Care Caseworker / Solicitor

South West London Law Centres (SWLLC), one of the largest and most progressive Law Centres in the country, is seeking Community Care, Welfare Benefits or Housing Solicitors/Caseworkers to be based in either our Kingston or Wandsworth Office.

We are looking to expand our capacity to undertake community care casework and there is considerable demand for housing work. There are currently 11 solicitors in the housing team and one trainee. One of the solicitors also undertakes community care casework. We run a wide range of housing and community care cases covered by Legal Aid including a significant amount of representation work as part of the housing court duty schemes. We are considering looking further at a range of fixed fees and conditional fee agreements for areas that have now gone out of scope of Legal Aid.

Housing and Community Care Solicitor / Caseworker

We are looking to expand our team and are willing to consider applicants at the start of their career as well as those with significant experience.

Salary: competitive

Reports to: Team Leader

Term: Permanent

Based at: Wandsworth or Kingston. Travel will be required to Croydon for Court Duty

The post is available for an immediate start. If you would like to discuss the post further, please email recruitment@swllc.org.

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

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JOB DESCRIPTION

POST:	Solicitor/Caseworker
Salary:	Competitive
Reports to:	Team Leader
Line Managers:	Volunteers assigned to them
Functional Links:	Head of Legal Practice, Board of Trustees, CEO, Finance Manager, Client Services Manager, Team Leaders, Branch Administrators
Term:	Permanent
Based at:	Wandsworth or Kingston with duty in Kingston, Wandsworth or Croydon County Court

Key Tasks

- 1 The post-holder will advise and represent clients who live or work in South West London in all areas of housing and community care law taking cases as necessary to all levels of courts and tribunals.
- 2 To be part of the one of three housing teams and based at one of our Offices.

Duties & Responsibilities

- 3 To ensure that all advice, assistance and representation complies with the requirements of our Lexcel quality mark and where publicly funded complies with the requirements of the Legal Aid Agency
- 4 To ensure all casework is recorded within our SOS case management system and prompt billing and payment of work undertaken. The post holder will be expected to meet billing and time recording targets which are set in accordance to the overall requirements of the Law Centre's annual budget and our contracts.

- 5 To ensure that the terms of all Law Centre funders are kept to in relation to advice & casework including providing reports as required. To report on the work of the Law Centre to the management committee as required.
- 6 To participate in team meetings and to carry out file reviews in accordance with Lexcel requirements.
- 7 To participate in staff meetings from time to time.
- 8 To be responsible for your own word processing, filing and case recording within SOS case management system.
- 9 To advise and provide training and talks to Law Centre staff and volunteers and to front line advice agency staff within the Law Centre's catchment area as necessary
- 10 To attend meetings of coordinating bodies as required.
- 11 To share the work of maintaining everyday necessities.
- 12 To provide cover for colleagues during absences.

Advice & Casework

- 13 To provide community care and housing advice and casework service to clients of the Law Centre. This is to include interviewing clients, advising them of their rights and responsibilities, assessing suitability and effectiveness of alternative courses of action, advising on potential challenges and legal procedures.
- 14 To assist other teams in the Law Centre in helping clients resolve any community care or housing matters
- 15 To assist clients in liaising with other people and organisations to resolve their community care or housing problems where possible.
- 16 To represent clients at Courts and Tribunals and do the necessary preparation and research.
- 17 To visit clients at their homes if appropriate.
- 18 To instruct and attend Counsel's chambers with clients as appropriate.
- 19 To supervise as required any community care or housing advice and casework conducted.

Professional Development

- 20 To attend courses on new legislation, specialist skills and the use of information technology.
- 21 To keep up to date with the changes in relevant legislation.
- 22 To read the relevant law journals
- 23 To discuss regularly with the Team Leader your job performance and personal career development.
- 24 To be appraised regularly and to engage fully in this process to further personal development and maximise your contribution to SWLLC.

- 25 To undertake such training as is necessary to maintain and/or achieve the standards required of a Legal Aid Agency Supervisor.

Social Policy

- 26 To be alert at all times to the social policy implications of issues presented by clients.
- 27 To take appropriate action to influence social policy in regard to these issues

Equal Opportunities

- 28 To have regard at all times in the planning and execution of duties to SWLLC's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Other Duties

- 29 Play a full role in the organisation supporting colleagues to maximise their effectiveness.
- 30 In addition to the tasks and duties listed in this job description to undertake such duties as may be identified and which are generally compatible with the functions of the post.

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

POST:	Solicitor/Caseworker
Salary:	Up to £34,150 p.a (NJC Scale 35 including Inner London) depending on experience
Reports to:	Competitive
Line Manages:	Volunteers assigned to them
Functional Links:	Head of Legal Practice, Board of Trustees, CEO, Finance Manager, Client Services Manager, Team Leaders, Branch Administrators
Term:	Permanent
Based at:	Wandsworth or Kingston with duty in Kingston, Wandsworth or Croydon County Court

Essential Experience

1. Experience of working under a Legal Aid Agency Contract for Public Funding (Legal Aid) and Legal Help where you can demonstrate meeting billing targets.
2. Candidates with at least three year's full time equivalent experience of Community Care or Housing Law casework and representation covering a wide range of cases will be offered the full salary of £34,150.
3. Applications from candidates with less than three years full time equivalent experience will be considered but will be offered a lower salary on a lower scale point.
4. Ability to manage a varied caseload of sufficient appropriate matters to meet the current annual billing target of up to £65,000 depending on experience.
5. Ability to draft appropriate documentation in all areas and procedures of Housing and Community care law
6. A wide range experience representing clients in the county court with the ability to take cases through the higher courts.

7. Commitment to equal opportunities as set out in the principles and policies of South West London Law Centres

Essential Skills

8. An intelligent and highly motivated person who is accustomed to taking significant decisions and having a high level of personal accountability.
9. Ability to work independently with a proven ability to prioritise work and to meet deadlines.
10. Ability to take strategic overview and to plan for the long term.
11. Ability to liaise and work effectively in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders.
12. Excellent communication skills: you must be able to relate well to colleagues, clients and third parties, in person, in writing and on the telephone, despite the pressures of the role
13. Understanding of the problems which face diverse communities.
14. Ability to be self servicing: you will be expected to manage most of your own typing, filing and billing and payment of cases.
15. Ability to use computer and information technology including management information systems and to be self servicing. Must be proficient in Microsoft operating systems (Word, Excel, and Office).
16. Ability to working collaboratively within SWLLC
17. You must be very well organised in order to work well under pressure without compromising standards

Desirable Experience and Skills

18. Experience of running cases through conditional fee agreements
19. Experience of giving successful training or talk
20. Currently meets the LAA supervisor standard in Community Care

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ORGANISATION SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POST

SWLLC is a community based legal practice and a registered charity. Our history dates back to 1974 when the first Law Centres in Wandsworth were created. We became SWLLC in 2004 through the merger of a number of Law Centres in South West London

We now work across six South West London boroughs (Croydon, Merton, Kingston, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth) helping people to understand and enforce their legal rights. In doing so, we address the root causes of social injustice – poverty, family breakdown, unemployment and exploitation. SWLLC provides full legal casework, representation and advice in the following areas of social welfare law – **Community Care**, Debt, Employment, **Housing**, Immigration & Asylum and in a limited way in Welfare Rights. We represent clients in all courts and tribunals. In 2015/16 we worked upon 2,361 cases. We also provide the **housing duty solicitor schemes** at Croydon, Kingston and Wandsworth County Courts giving emergency representation in possession hearings for rent and owned homes and at the warrant stage for evictions. In 2015/16, we represented 1702 people in court.

SWLLC has a long history of using volunteers since 1977 and our first pro bono clinic started in 1982 in conjunction with a local Citizens Advice Bureau. In 1986 the first clinic run by an individual firm started with Simmons & Simmons. SWLLC delivers 13 - 14 pro bono clinics each week to provide initial advice on legal problems concerned with Crime, Criminal Injury, Consumer, Employment, Family, General Litigation, Housing, Immigration, Inquests, Motoring Offences, Personal Injury, Small Claims and Wills & Probate. The overarching aim is to empower clients by encouraging them to take steps to resolve their problems themselves but advisers may also carry out a limited amount of follow-up work such as drafting documents or writing letters on clients' behalf. The work is important because addressing legal problems in their early stages can prevent them from escalating into bigger, more complex problems. In 2015/16, 4,349 people were assisted. We estimate in any one year over 400 volunteer lawyers will help with our clinics. There are 16 firms involved with the clinics as well as individual solicitors.

SWLLC also delivers a significant volunteer programme, supporting our administrative and reception functions, assisting our caseworkers, and providing debt advice to our clients. In 2015/16 over, 150 volunteers helped with legal work or by providing invaluable back-up and support

Context of the Post

We are looking for candidates with either housing or community care experience of both.

We are looking to expand our capacity to undertake community care case work and there is also considerable demand for housing work. There are currently 10 solicitors in the housing team and one trainee. Three of our housing solicitors undertake some community care casework with help from other members of the team. We are seeing a growing demand for community care casework and can see that this is likely to increase. Currently, our community case work covers obtaining and challenging assessments, obtaining home adaptations, challenging decisions regarding direct payments, obtaining financial assistance for families with No Right to Recourse to Public Funds and seeking a transfer to suitable accommodation. We run a wide range of housing cases covered by Legal Aid including a significant amount of representation work as part of the housing court duty schemes. We are considering looking further at a range of fixed fees and conditional fee agreements for areas that have gone out of scope of Legal Aid.

We are looking for a candidate who is interested in community care law and wants to expand our team here. Preferable you will already have the experience to be a Legal Aid Agency qualified supervisor or could do so within a year. This is the html version of the file with the relevant supervisor declarations at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-civil-contract-2018>.

Experience in Housing and Community Law is not necessary.

Our Wandsworth office is based a short walk away from Clapham Junction Station and our Kingston office a short walk from Norbiton or Kingston Station.