

September 2023

Dear Applicant

Part Time Welfare Rights Paralegal

Thank you for your interest in this post to work in our Croydon office.

I am pleased to enclose:

- Job Description and Person Specification
- Guidelines for Applicants
- Organisation Summary

You can download the application form from our website.

This post has been funded by the National Lottery Communities Fund.

The closing date for receipt of applications is 5pm on 24 October 2023.
Applications 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 DESCRIPTION

POST:	Welfare Rights Paralegal
Salary:	Salary £24,000 pro rata, per annum (£14,400 per annum actual)
Reports to:	Money Team Manager (Cost of Living Co-ordinator)
Line Manages:	Volunteers assigned to the project.
Functional Links:	Board of Trustees, CEO, Senior Management Team,, Team Leaders, Branch Administrators
Hours:	This is a part time role, 21 hours per week – to be agreed with the successful candidate.
Term:	Funded to 2026
Based at:	SWLLC's Croydon Office with outreach to our other offices and community locations across South London

Purpose of Role

To provide a targeted welfare rights based casework and representation service through a mix of appointment types including face to face at office or outreach locations, telephone, video, email, web access, outreach. Some appointments will involve home visits.

The beneficiaries of the service will be those living within South West London primarily the Boroughs of Croydon, Merton, Wandsworth, Sutton, Kingston and Richmond, focusing on maximising income for clients by carrying out benefit checks, assisting them to apply for benefits they are entitled to, and where appropriate representing at tribunals.

Key Tasks

- 1 To provide specialist welfare benefit advice, casework and representation across all benefit types to at least 150 clients per annum, ranging from one-off benefit checks to Upper Tier Tribunals.
- 2 To manage and support volunteers and apprentices by providing training and mentorship to enable them to deliver welfare benefits advice themselves.
- 3 To be responsible for your own case management including using our online case management system AdvicePro, Word and Outlook with a typing speed of at least 40 words per minute.
- 4 To be able to deliver talks/training to internal and external bodies.
- 5 To be flexible about delivery methods for the service and able to innovate to improve client engagement.

Duties & Responsibilities

- 6 To ensure that all advice, assistance and representation complies with the requirements of our Lexcel quality mark and accreditation.
- 7 To regularly participate in team and staff meetings
- 8 To carry out file reviews in accordance with Lexcel requirements.
- 9 To provide training and talks to Law Centre staff, volunteers and to front line advice agency staff within the Law Centre's catchment area at least once per month.
- 10 To represent the service at partnership meetings.
- 11 To provide cover for colleagues during absences as appropriate.

Advice & Casework

- 12 Provide the full range of advice activities to assist clients with welfare rights advice. This is to include interviewing clients, advising them of their rights and responsibilities, assessing suitability and effectiveness of alternative courses of action, advising on legal procedures
- 13 To assist other teams in the Law Centre in helping clients resolve any benefits matters.
- 14 To assist clients in liaising with other people and organisations to resolve their benefits problems where possible.

- 15 To prepare and represent clients at Tribunals including the necessary preparation and research as well as assisting clients who are self-representing.
- 16 Keep abreast of changes in legislation, practice and caselaw.
- 17 Keep accurate and detailed case records.

Project Record Keeping and Reporting

- 18 Maintain relevant client databases and produce returns to Money Team Manager (Cost of Living Co-ordinator) so we can provide grant monitoring reports to funders.
- 19 Search for and collect missing data to enable complete monitoring returns
- 20 Work with the Money Team Manager (Cost of Living Co-ordinator) to provide case studies and client voices.
- 21 Assist with the development and maintenance of a database of standard documents and paragraphs to aid in the efficiency of delivery of welfare rights advice

Training and professional development

- 22 Attend relevant training courses and appropriate internal and external meetings, to enhance skills as a specialist welfare rights caseworker.
- 23 Undertake a range of matters and courses to maintain sufficient expertise to fulfil the old Legal Service Commission supervisor standard.
- 24 Consult relevant colleagues to ensure that working practice is consistently of a high quality.
- 25 Keep up to date with all relevant current legislation and policy and share knowledge with colleagues
- 26 Provide feedback to trainers, team members and Manager on the effectiveness of informal and formal learning activities
- 27 Take part in regular supervision meetings with Manager and other caseworkers and obtain informal support as necessary.
- 28 To be appraised regularly and to engage fully in this process to further personal development and maximise your contribution to SWLLC.

Supervision and Support

- 29 Participate in supervision of volunteers and file/peer review of colleagues, volunteers and apprentices

- 30 Oversee and monitor volunteer advice sessions to provide welfare rights advice given by volunteers or apprentices
- 31 Assist with the Volunteer Service Coordinator in maintaining a cadre of volunteers to assist with all aspects of welfare rights advice and including the administration of this project.
- 32 Train and oversee volunteers and apprentices work so that they gain skills in appropriate case management and file maintenance practises including the use of our Advice Pro case management system.
- 33 Train volunteers in welfare rights law, practices and procedures to deliver the service and make use of external help and resources in delivering this.

Social Policy and Service Development

- 34 To be alert at all times to the social policy implications of issues presented by clients.
- 35 To take appropriate action to influence social policy in regard to these issues.
- 36 Take part in service planning activities

Equal Opportunities

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

Other Duties

- 38 Play a full role in the organisation supporting colleagues to maximise their effectiveness.
- 39 Travel to meetings and other events across SW London as required.
- 40 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.

Working Hours

- 41 This post may require some evening working providing advice at events or occasional evening advice sessions for workers. You may also work with



our partner organisations providing outreach in their offices. You may also be required to work the occasional weekend for one off events

Location

42 South West London Law Centres is made up of 4 branches based in Wandsworth, Croydon, Kingston, and Merton. Your main office base will be Croydon

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
Legal Action for Local Communities

PERSON SPECIFICATION

POST:	Welfare Rights Paralegal
Salary:	Salary £24,000 pro rata, per annum (£14,400 per annum actual)
Reports to:	Money Team Manager (Cost of Living Co-ordinator)
Line Manages:	Volunteers assigned to the project.
Functional Links:	Board of Trustees, CEO, Senior Management Team,, Team Leaders, Branch Administrators.
Hours:	This is a part time role, 21 hours per week – to be agreed with the successful candidate.
Term:	Funded to 2026
Based at:	SWLLC's Croydon Office with outreach to our other offices and community locations across South London

Essential Experience & Skills

1. At least six months experience in delivering advice to a range of individuals, or
2. At least one year's experience in a customer service environment.
3. Up to date knowledge of social security law and welfare rights matters and awareness of important policy issues.
4. Ability to deliver a minimum of 150 cases per annum with volunteer support.
5. Ability to write detailed up to date case notes, letters and reports as required in plain English.
6. Ability to deal with clients advice needs face to face, over the telephone, via email, Skype or outreach

7. Ability to manage a challenging caseload, and prioritise work in the face of competing demands on your time.
8. Ability to respond sensitively to clients from a variety of backgrounds who are under pressure and negotiate with third parties in order to minimise conflict.
9. Ability to research, understand and explain complex information both orally and in writing.
10. Practical knowledge of IT sufficient to use Microsoft Office applications including Word, Outlook and Excel to administer your own workload.
11. Commitment to taking part in social policy, research or evaluation activities as required, for example by responding to survey and identifying trends in your caseload
12. Understanding of, and commitment, to the organisation's equal opportunities policies.
13. Commitment to undergo training and participate in other forms of professional development. This includes ongoing development to reach a similar standard to previous Legal Service Commission core competences of a welfare rights supervisor.
14. Experience in working with volunteers to deliver a service.
15. Experience of mentoring and supervision
16. Willingness to undertake evening and weekend work if required with prior notice.
17. Commitment to equal opportunities as set out in the principles and policies of South West London Law Centres

ORGANISATION SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POST

Context of the Post

This project is being funded by the Lottery and will continue to 2026. We want to continue to expand this area of work and make a success of this project so it continues to be attractive to funders and demonstrates its impact. A key to that successes will a continual collection of data and evidence and this will be a key function of this role. Alongside grant funding next year the housing possession court duty scheme will expand to increase its scope to include some provision for early legal advice including welfare rights. Alongside this we anticipate taking part in Housing Loss Prevention Advice Service (HLPAS), incorporating the existing service of advice and representation at court for housing court duty and also early legal advice before court. We are therefore anticipating opportunities to expand experience for competent candidates.

We have a small welfare rights and cost of living team. The current team includes a part time welfare rights solicitor, a welfare rights caseworker and two apprentice solicitors. The team works alongside our debt and money advice team of four caseworkers. Roni Marsh, an experienced money advice caseworker manages the cost of living and debt and money advice team. Our welfare rights solicitor is based most of the week in a city firm supervising a larger welfare rights appeal project. This person will also be able to provide some mentoring in this role.

The Law Centre

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. The law centre won the highly prestigious Legal Aid Firm/Not for Profit of the year 2020 at the LALY Awards.

SWLLC now works 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. 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.

SWLLC delivers one of the largest pro bono clinic programs in the country, to provide initial advice on legal problems. There are 16 firms involved with the clinics as well as individual solicitors. SWLLC works with and assists over 6,500 people per year.

Our Croydon Office is a short walk from either East or West Croydon stations

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
Legal Action for Local Communities

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

Please read these notes carefully before filling in your application form, as the decision to shortlist for interview will be based solely on the information provided on the application form.

General Guidelines

1. Give only information, which is relevant to the post.
2. Complete all sections of the form. You will need to do this in order to be fairly compared to other candidates. All information given is treated as confidential.
3. Complete a rough draft first. This avoids mistakes and untidiness and enables you to organise and review the information you put on the form.
4. Get feedback from other people and make sure you give examples, which demonstrate your ability to do the job.
5. Complete the form in type, word processor, black ballpoint or ink.

Selection Criteria – The Person Specification

The skills, experience and qualification described in the Person Specification are the criteria against which you will be assessed and short-listed. Make sure you have covered each section of the Person Specification in your application form.

Employment

When completing this section include relevant part-time work or work taken on a voluntary basis. Outlining your previous work experiences or other responsibilities may help you to uncover relevant skills, which are clear signs of your ability to do the job.

Further Information

In section four of the application form you should try to show how you are able to do the job. Rather than simply repeating your career history, look at the skills and experience required for the job and provide evidence that you possess them. Concentrate on the things you know and what you can do rather than on what other people in your group or workplace can do.

References

Where possible at least one of your referees should be a previous employer; either you're present or most recent employer. If you have not previously been employed, or have not worked for some time, give the name of someone who knows you sufficiently well to confirm the information given and who can comment on your ability to do the job. (You must not provide a relative or partner's name as a referee).

Monitoring Information

This section is included in order to monitor the effectiveness of SWLLC's Equal Opportunities Policy, which aims to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly. All information is treated in confidence and used only for statistical monitoring.

The monitoring section of the application form is not used as part of the selection process. Consequently, if for example you have a disability, and this is an item in the person specification, do also mention it in the main part of your application form.

Finally – take a copy of the form and keep it to remind yourself of what you have said if you are called for an interview. Good Luck!