

April 2024

Dear Applicant

Head of Housing

Thank you for your interest in this post.

I am pleased to enclose:

- Organisation Summary and context of the post
- Job Description and Person Specification for Head of Housing

Please apply to recruitment@swllc.org by forwarding your CV together with a covering letter of no more than two pages of A4 setting out how you meet the person specification and why you would like to work with South West London Law Centres.

Please note that applications without a covering letter will not be considered.

The final closing date for applications to this role is 5pm on 20 May 2024, however, we will be evaluating applications as we receive them and so you are advised to submit your application as soon as possible.

If you would like to have a brief informal chat to discuss the role, please contact us at recruitment@swllc.org

Yours faithfully

Patrick Marples CEO
South West London Law Centres

JOB ADVERT – Head of Housing

South West London Law Centres (SWLLC) is one of the largest Law Centres in the country and we are seeking an experienced housing caseworker or solicitor to lead our well established, effective housing team in order to support members of the community within SW London with Legal Aid casework to resolve their housing issues.

We currently have a large, experienced team consisting of five solicitors, two trainees and three paralegals across our three South West London offices. We run a wide range of housing work covered by Legal Aid including a significant amount of representation and advocacy as part of the housing court duty schemes. We are looking for an energetic lawyer with housing law experience to help us expand our work and develop this committed and passionate team.

You will either be a solicitor with experience of housing law under a Legal Aid contract, or a highly experienced housing caseworker with knowledge of Legal Aid.

We offer flexible working and generous benefits

Head of Housing

Salary:	Up to £45,000 p.a depending on experience
Reports to:	Head of Legal Practice; CEO; Deputy CEO
Term:	Permanent
Based at:	Hybrid working, with a permanent base at one of our offices and court duty schemes we operate.
Hours:	Flexible – we welcome applications from those who wish to work part time and support a range of flexible working arrangements.

The final closing date for applications to this role is 5pm on 20 May 2024, however, we will be evaluating applications as we receive them and so you are advised to submit your application as soon as possible. If you would like to have a brief informal chat to discuss the role, please contact us at recruitment@swllc.org. Please see above for how to apply.

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

Legal Action for Local Communities

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). 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. In 2022/23 we assisted 6778 people. We represent clients in all courts and tribunals and worked on 2,609 cases. We also provide the **housing duty solicitor scheme** currently Kingston and previously 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. Last year we helped 899 clients through the scheme.

We continue to run one of the largest pro bono clinic services across England, we deliver around 100 free clinics appointments per week offering initial advice on a wide range of civil / legal problems over 400 pro-bono lawyers helped 2,954 clients last year.

We have a strong emphasis on quality – we are accredited to the Law Society’s Lexcel standard for excellence in legal practice management and client care and our Immigration Team has been rated as “Excellent” in a Legal Aid Peer Review for three years running.

Working at South West London Law Centres

South West London Law Centres has served the communities of South West London for 50 years. Today, we continue to meet the needs and address the disadvantage of around 7,000 clients per year. They include women fleeing domestic violence, people who are in housing crisis, people with no income or recourse to public funds, those with complex benefit challenges, and people mistreated by unscrupulous employers.

Joining the law centre is a chance to be a part of the law centres movement and to make a real impact with every case.

As an employer we offer hybrid working and support a range flexible working arrangements, including compressed hours to a four day week or nine day fortnight. We welcome applications from those wishing to work part time.

We have a generous leave allowance at 29 days per calendar year, rising to 34 days after five years' continuous service as well as a range of discretionary leave to cover emergencies.

We offer opportunities for training and progression and support staff wellbeing through an employee assistance programme.

Our offices are centrally located close to transport hubs.

The context of the post

Our housing team of 10 includes five solicitors, three paralegals, a trainee solicitor and an apprentice solicitor. They are a friendly and mutually supportive team. They are all very committed to housing law and passionate about their work, one of the solicitors is a part time deputy district judge.

We are seeking an experienced housing lawyer to lead our team in order that we can continue to meet the growing demand within the community for specialist housing casework under Legal Aid.

Recent local authority funding has enabled us to take on two paralegals. We run housing advice lines in Wandsworth and Merton and aim to start one in Croydon. We also have a HLPAS contract and provide court duty at Kingston County Court.

We work closely with community partners to develop referral links, meaning that we have a wide range of housing matters comprising the full spectrum of housing casework from which Legal Aid caseworkers can draw their cases. We have a dedicated legal administrator and billing coordinator as well as enthusiastic and highly capable volunteers to support the smooth running of the casework.

We are looking for an energetic and compassionate lawyer with a broad experience of housing casework and representation, who has the confidence to lead a team and to develop it so that we can continue to make a real difference within the community.

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
Legal Action for Local Communities

JOB DESCRIPTION

POST:	Head of Housing
Salary:	Up to £45,000 p.a depending on experience
Reports to:	Head of Legal Practice; CEO; Deputy CEO
Term:	Permanent
Based at:	Hybrid working, with a permanent base at one of our offices and court duty schemes we operate.
Hours:	Flexible – we welcome applications from those who wish to work part time and support a range of flexible working arrangements.

Key Tasks

- 1 To manage the flow and scope of work undertaken by the Housing Team. To be responsible for supervising the Housing Team leaders.
- 2 To improve the consistency of work across the Housing Team seeking to achieve higher levels of peer review rating and improve the flow of files through the billing process.
- 3 To supervise the Housing Pro Bono Supervisor and oversee pro bono housing projects in partnership with a number of firms.
- 4 To help and facilitate cross working between the Housing Team and the Cost of Living project. This will include supervision or ensuring that there is appropriate supervision of the housing work carried out by the cost of living team.
- 5 The post-holder will advise and represent clients who live or work in South West London in all areas of housing law taking cases as necessary to all levels of courts and tribunals.
- 6 You will work within SWLLC's policies and procedures to make sure the Housing Team leaders and those caseworkers/paralegals in their teams meet their performance targets, maintain quality standards in line with regulation and contracts, and develop their professional skills.
- 7 The post-holder will ensure maintenance of standards in accordance with Lexcel accreditation.

Duties & Responsibilities

- 8 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.
- 9 To ensure all casework is recorded within our Clio case management system and prompt billing and payment of work undertaken.
- 10 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. The current target along with other duties would be £30,000

- 11 To ensure that the terms of all Law Centre funders and partners are kept to in relation to advice & casework including providing reports as required.
- 12 To report on the work of the Law Centre to the management committee as required.
- 13 To participate in team meetings and to carry out file reviews in accordance with Lexcel requirements.
- 14 To participate in staff meetings from time to time.
- 15 To be responsible for your own word processing, filing and case recording within Clio case management system.
- 16 To advise, provide and develop 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
- 17 To attend meetings of coordinating bodies as required.
- 18 To share the work of maintaining everyday necessities.
- 19 To provide cover for colleagues during absences.

Advice & Casework

- 20 To provide 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.
- 21 To assist other teams in the Law Centre in helping clients resolve any housing matters. This may include supervising or ensuring that there is supervision of housing casework carried out outside the Housing Team.
- 22 To assist clients in liaising with other people and organisations to resolve their housing problems where possible.
- 23 To represent clients at Courts and Tribunals and do the necessary preparation and research.
- 24 To visit clients at their homes if appropriate.
- 25 To instruct and attend Counsel's chambers with clients as appropriate.
- 26 To supervise as required any housing advice and casework conducted.

Management

- 27 To provide line management to the Housing Team leaders, monitoring performance against targets and ensuring caseworkers under supervision comply with contractual requirements, our Lexcel accreditation, and SWLLC policies and procedures.
- 28 To supervise Housing Team Leaders and Housing Pro Bono Supervisor formally at least every quarter and complete a formal appraisal annually, as well as holding regular one to one meetings and regular team meetings as set out below.
- 29 Checking that the Housing Team leaders are completing supervision and appraisals.
- 30 This includes checking files and monitoring standards of work, going through billing and time recording, ensuring that Lexcel standards are maintained for the whole of the Housing Team. Where appropriate to delegate supervision to Housing Team Leaders within the team.
- 31 To monitor the assignment and allocation of new and existing casework within the Housing Team as necessary to ensure contract compliance and appropriate cover

where a member of the Housing Team is absent from work so that a professional standard of service is maintained at all times.

- 32 Co-ordinate and carry out file reviews in accordance with the Lexcel Quality Manual with the Housing Team to ensure agreed quality standards are maintained.
- 33 To follow the underperformance procedure for any Housing Team member not meeting the performance targets within the guidelines set by the CEO. This will include supporting Housing Team leaders in following the underperformance with a member of their team.
- 34 To work with the Housing Team to identify appropriate professional development objectives and training or other routes to meet those objectives.
- 35 To hold regular Housing Team meetings to update the Housing Team on operational issues, trends, procedures and practice, and training. To produce minutes of these meetings and to provide the Head of Legal Practice, Deputy CEO and CEO with a copy.
- 36 Ensure volunteers are trained, supported and supervised in the Housing Team, in line with SWLLC procedures.
- 37 Be responsible for the line management of the Housing Team leaders, specifically to include:
 - Supervision and appraisals
 - Authorising annual leave
 - Reporting issues to the CEO and Deputy CEO relating to sickness, performance and timekeeping
 - Cascading information about training needs and opportunities between management and the team
where appropriate ensuring the team leaders carry out the above for members of their team.
- 38 Investigate and respond to complaints in line with SWLLC procedures.
- 39 To be aware of other issues within the office and to assist the administrators where necessary.
- 40 All of these duties to be carried out in line with SWLLC procedures.

Professional Development

- 41 To attend courses on new legislation, specialist skills and the use of information technology.
- 42 To keep up to date with the changes in relevant legislation.
- 43 To read the relevant law journals
- 44 To discuss regularly with the Head of Legal Practice your job performance and personal career development.
- 45 To be appraised regularly and to engage fully in this process to further personal development and maximise your contribution to SWLLC.
- 46 To undertake such training as is necessary to maintain and/or achieve the standards required of a Legal Aid Agency Category Supervisor in Housing.

Social Policy

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

Equal Opportunities

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

Other Duties

- 50 Play a full role in the organisation supporting colleagues to maximise their effectiveness.
- 51 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.

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

Legal Action for Local Communities

PERSON SPECIFICATION

POST:	Head of Housing
Salary:	Up to £45,000 p.a depending on experience
Reports to:	Head of Legal Practice; CEO; Deputy CEO
Term:	Permanent
Based at:	Hybrid working, with a permanent base at one of our offices and court duty schemes we operate.
Hours:	Flexible – we welcome applications from those who wish to work part time and support a range of flexible working arrangements.

Essential Experience

1. Experience of working under a Legal Aid Agency Contract specification for Public Funding (Legal Aid) and Legal Help with demonstrate able billing targets.
2. At least three year's full time equivalent experience of Housing Law casework and representation covering a wide range of cases including ability to meet LAA qualified category Housing Supervisor standard
3. Ability to manage a varied caseload of sufficient appropriate matters to meet a reduced billing target of £30,000 alongside other management and supervision duties. Currently a full time caseworker has a target of a minimum £60,000.
4. Ability to draft appropriate documentation in all areas and procedures of Housing law
5. A wide range of representation experience in the county court with the ability to take cases through the higher courts.
6. Commitment to equal opportunities as set out in the principles and policies of South West London Law Centres

Essential Skills

7. An intelligent and highly motivated person who is accustomed to taking significant decisions and having a high level of personal accountability.
8. Ability to work independently with a proven ability to prioritise work and to meet deadlines.
9. Ability to take strategic overview and to plan for the long term.
10. Ability to liaise and work effectively in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders.
11. 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
12. Understanding of the problems which face diverse communities.
13. Ability to be self-servicing: you will be expected to manage most of your own typing, filing and billing and payment of cases.
14. 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).
15. Ability to work collaboratively within SWLLC
16. You must be very well organised in order to work well under pressure without compromising standards

Management Experience & Skills

17. Experience of successfully line-managing and mentoring caseworkers, including carrying out appraisals, monitoring performance against targets and taking action to address unsatisfactory performance
18. Commitment to leading a team
19. A track record of managing change and a willingness to work towards expanding the Housing Team

Desirable Experience and Skills

20. Experience of running cases through conditional fee agreements
21. Experience of giving successful training or talks
22. Demonstratable experience of managing and developing a legal casework team achieving growth in targets, quality and customer care.