

June 2024

Dear Applicant

Housing Solicitor/Caseworker

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 Housing Solicitor/Caseworker

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.

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

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
Legal Action for Local Communities

JOB ADVERT – Housing Caseworker / Solicitor

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 join 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 enthusiastic housing specialist who wants to take the next step in their career and to be a part of improving housing for the community.

You will either be a solicitor with experience of housing law under a Legal Aid contract, or an experienced housing caseworker with experience of the advice sector.

We offer flexible working and generous benefits

Housing Solicitor / Caseworker

Salary:	Up to £41,000 depending on experience
Reports to:	Head of Housing (vacant post); 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.

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 a housing solicitor/caseworker to join 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 who wishes to gain a broad experience of housing casework and representation and to make a real difference within the community.

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
Legal Action for Local Communities

JOB DESCRIPTION

Housing Solicitor / Caseworker

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Key Tasks

- 1 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.
- 2 To be or work towards being a LAA category housing supervisor. The post-holder will ensure maintenance of standards in accordance with Lexcel accreditation.

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 Clio 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 Clio 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 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 housing matters
- 15 To assist clients in liaising with other people and organisations to resolve their 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 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 your Team Leader/Head of Legal Practice 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 Category Supervisor in Housing.

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

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Essential Experience

1. At least two year's full time equivalent experience of Housing Law casework and representation.
2. Experience of working under a Legal Aid Agency Contract specification for Public Funding (Legal Aid) and Legal Help with demonstrate able billing targets.
3. Ability to manage a varied caseload of sufficient appropriate matters to meet the billing target currently 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

Desirable Experience and Skills

17. Ability to meet LAA qualified category Housing Supervisor standard
18. Experience supervising trainees and paralegals in housing casework
19. Experience of running cases through conditional fee agreements
20. Experience of giving successful training or talks