

August 2024

Dear Applicant

### **Cost of Living Adviser**

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 the role of Cost of Living Adviser

Please apply to [recruitment@swllc.org](mailto: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 9am on 23 September 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](mailto: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 – Cost of Living Adviser**

South West London Law Centres (SWLLC) is one of the largest Law Centres in the country and we are seeking highly-motivated and proactive caseworker to provide generalist advice and casework to community members in crisis.

We are looking for someone who can work full time, but we will consider applications from those who wish to work part time. Our cost of living team is highly respected and very busy, receiving referrals from other teams within the law centre as well as from community partners. The Law Centre is well known and highly regarded, winning the Legal Aid Firm/Not for Profit in the 2020 LALY Awards.

You will work with colleagues and volunteers to provide an holistic service to clients you meet at drop-ins, outreach locations and those who are referred to you by other teams within the law centre. You will develop a caseload of income maximisation and crisis support cases and you will manage volunteers to help us support more people. You will show care and attention to our clients and the command of detail which is a hallmark of our work. This is an exciting opportunity for someone who wants to take the first step in their advice career and to make a real difference within the community.

We can offer flexible working and generous benefits.

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<b>POST:</b>	<b>Cost of Living Adviser</b>
Salary:	£24,720 per annum
Reports to:	Cost of Living Project Manager
Term:	Initial fixed term contract for one year, with the intent to secure onwards funding to make the role permanent.
Based at:	South West London Law Centres Croydon Office
Hours:	Full time – 35 hours per week, but we welcome applications from those who wish to work part time in a job share arrangement.

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## **SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES**

*Legal Action for Local Communities*

### **ORGANISATION SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POST**

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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 **Welfare Rights**. In 2022/23 we assisted 6778 people. We represent clients in all courts and tribunals and worked on 2,609 cases in 2022/23.

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 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 cost of living team is grant funded and carries out crisis navigation and welfare benefits casework for community members struggling with the cost of living. Crisis navigation involves a full triage of the matter, income maximisation and wraparound care so that our clients receive an holistic service and are better able to put our advice into practice.

Our team is comprised of two crisis navigators, three welfare benefits paralegals and an experienced welfare benefits caseworker. The team is overseen by our cost of living project manager who has many years of experience in debt and welfare benefits issues and is recognised as an expert in the field. Our busy debt team complements our cost of living work and provides a steady stream of referrals alongside referrals from community partners, outreach and drop-ins.

Our project has been running for two years and we are now seeking to recruit a Job Title TBC to carry out crisis navigation for our clients in order to stabilise their short term crisis so that they can get better outcomes from the specialist casework provided by our team. You will be able to attend outreach locations and be prepared to support clients with a wide range of problems related to maximising income and identifying welfare benefits issues. The role is rewarding and varied and a fantastic opportunity to learn key casework skills as well as developing client care and customer service skills.

This is an exciting role for someone who wants to work in a legal environment and be involved in supporting their community through the cost of living. No legal experience is required as this is a non-legal role, but customer service skills are desirable as well as a willingness to learn.

**SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES**  
***Legal Action for Local Communities***

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

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**Key Tasks**

- 1 To provide crisis navigation and follow up support to at least 150 clients per annum. Clients will be referred from other parts of the service, externally and at outreach venues in South West London.
- 2 To work closely with the money and housing teams to identify suitable people to help and support following court duty and debt advice.
- 3 To provide welfare rights and grants casework and support.
- 4 To link clients to other teams in the law centre and externally to help resolve the underlying problems that led their situation.
- 5 To collect data from clients to support the impact of the project and to take part in preparing reports on the progress of the project.
- 6 To manage and support volunteers and apprentices by providing training and mentorship to enable them to deliver crisis navigation advice themselves.
- 7 To be responsible for your own case management including using our online case management system AdvicePro, Word and Outlook.

**Duties & Responsibilities**

- 8 To ensure that all advice, assistance and representation complies with the requirements of our Lexcel quality mark and accreditation.
- 9 To regularly participate in team and staff meetings
- 10 To carry out file reviews in accordance with Lexcel requirements.
- 11 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.
- 12 To be responsible for your own word processing, filing and case recording using AdvicePro.

- 13 To help develop relationships and work arrangements with local partners to develop referrals
- 14 To attend meetings of coordinating bodies as required.
- 15 To provide cover for colleagues during absences.
- 16 Work with the Cost of Living Project Manager and Communications Manager to provide case studies and client voices.

### **Advice & Casework**

- 17 To Identify, engage, assess and induct suitable clients for the project from referrals from the housing and debt teams, people seen at our local County Courts and other outreaches set up.
- 18 To collate monitoring and evaluation data from client interactions to provide updates for the project
- 19 To deliver a series of advice and support sessions to overcome immediate crisis including completing relevant forms and applications and attending appointments with clients as and when necessary
- 20 To help clients create a personal action plan including outcomes
- 21 Provide the full range of advice activities to assist clients with their crisis. 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.
- 22 To assist clients in liaising with other people and organisations to resolve their problems where possible.
- 23 Keep accurate and detailed case records.

### **Professional Development**

- 24 To attend courses on new legislation, specialist skills and the use of information technology.
- 25 Keep abreast of changes in legislation, practice and caselaw.
- 26 To discuss regularly with the Money Team Leader your job performance and personal career development.
- 27 To be appraised regularly and to engage fully in this process to further personal development and maximise your contribution to SWLLC.

### **Equal Opportunities**

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

### **Social Policy**

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

### **Location**

33 You will initially be based in our Croydon office but will be expected to regularly work out of our Wandsworth and Merton branches as well. The post will be involved in twice weekly outreach sessions across South West London. South West London Law Centres is made up of 3 branches based in Wandsworth, Croydon, and Merton.

**SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES**  
***Legal Action for Local Communities***

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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**Essential Experience and Skills**

1. Familiarity with welfare systems including benefits, housing, debt, health and social care services.
2. Ability to assimilate information from client interviews, documents, meetings and workshops to produce accurate action points and to take action accordingly
3. Ability to work to project targets and project objectives
4. Ability to engage and support clients to develop long term strategies for coping with crisis
5. Excellent organisational and time management skills
6. A positive, proactive and flexible approach to working with colleagues, clients and partners
7. Empathetic, patient and caring attitude towards working with those in crisis
8. With training, ability to deliver mentoring and coaching
9. Excellent IT skills including using Microsoft Office packages Word, Excel and Outlook.
10. A typing speed of at least 40 words per minute.
11. Ability to communicate with a wide range of clients, some of whom may be vulnerable and have barriers to communication, and to build rapport quickly in order to support them.
12. Ability to deliver one off advice succinctly.
13. Ability to draft clear and accurate advice for clients.

**Desirable Experience and Skills**

14. Experience of working with a variety of partner organisations
15. Previous experience of housing, debt or welfare benefits legal advice work
16. Experience of delivering advice and support projects with volunteers