

9 December 2024

Dear Applicant

**Welfare Rights Paralegal**

Thank you for your interest in working with South West London Law Centres.

I am pleased to enclose:

- Organisation Summary and context of the posts
- Job Description and Person Specification for the Welfare Rights Paralegal post

To apply, please forward to [recruitment@swllc.org](mailto:recruitment@swllc.org), your up-to-date CV together with a cover letter of no more than two pages of A4, setting out how you meet the person's specifications and why you would like to work with South West London Law Centres.

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

The closing date for receipt of applications is 5 pm on 5 January 2025.

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 – Welfare Rights Paralegal**

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South West London Law Centres (SWLLC) is one of the largest Law Centres in the country. We are seeking 1 Welfare Rights Paralegal to join our Cost of Living Crisis and Money Advice Team. You will support Croydon, Merton, and Wandsworth residents to access advice about their welfare benefits rights. Our teams are highly specialist and well respected. The Law Centre is well known and highly regarded, winning the Legal Aid Firm/Not for Profit in the 2020 LALY Awards. We are looking for one paralegal who can join the team working on a full-time basis. You will work with colleagues to deliver welfare benefits advice, resolve issues through casework, and begin to develop skills as an adviser. 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 next step in their legal career and to make a real difference within the community.

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

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<b>POST:</b>	<b>Welfare Rights Paralegal</b>
<b>Salary:</b>	£24,720 per annum, plus 4% pension contributions
<b>Reports to:</b>	Money Team Manager (Cost of Living Co-ordinator)
<b>Line Manages</b>	Volunteers assigned to the project.
<b>Hours:</b>	This is a full-time role – 35 hours per week
<b>Term:</b>	Permanent (subject to funding, which is currently in place until March 2026 )
<b>Based at:</b>	SWLLC’s Croydon Office with outreach to our other offices and community locations across South London

Please apply by 5 pm on 5 January 2025. Applications received after this time will not be considered. You are encouraged to apply soon, as we wish to fill these roles ASAP. We will offer interviews from 13 January 2025. Please, see above for how to apply.

## **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.

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. In 2023/24 we assisted 5868 people. We represent clients in all courts and tribunals and worked on 2,505 cases in 2023/24.

We continue to run one of the largest pro bono clinic services across England, we deliver around 100 free clinic appointments per week offering initial advice on a wide range of civil/legal problems over 400 pro-bono lawyers helped 2,800 clients last year.

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.

### **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 6,000 clients per year. They include women fleeing domestic violence, people who are in a housing crisis, people with no income or recourse to public funds, those with complex benefits challenges, and people mistreated by unscrupulous employers.

Joining the law centres is a chance to be a part of the law centres movement and to make a real impact with every case. We have a generous leave allowance of 29 days per calendar year, rising to 34 days after five years of 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 program.

Our offices are centrally located close to transport hubs.

## **Context of the Post**

Thanks to the support from the National Lottery Communities Fund we've expanded our crisis navigation initiatives and launched a new cost-of-living team, providing crucial crisis navigation and welfare benefits casework alongside our work and expertise within our Money Advice Team.

We have a small but busy welfare rights and cost of living team. The current team includes a part-time welfare rights solicitor, who is based most of the week in a city firm supervising a larger welfare rights appeal project, a welfare rights caseworker, and one other paralegal, plus two crisis navigators. The team works alongside our Money advice team of five caseworkers and an administrator.

Roni Marsh, an experienced money advice caseworker manages the cost of living and money advice team.

## **Purpose of Role**

To provide 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, and outreach. Some appointments will involve home visits. The Welfare Rights Paralegal is an entry-level role suitable for someone with some knowledge of the welfare system, who wants to develop their experience and knowledge, with a view of specializing in this area.

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

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**Key Tasks**

- 1 To provide specialist welfare benefits 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 comply 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, and 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 the 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 organizations 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 case law.
- 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 fulfill 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 the Manager on the effectiveness of informal and formal learning activities
- 27 Take part in regular supervision meetings with the 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 maximize your contribution to SWLLC.

### **Supervision and Support**

- 29 Participate in the 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 maintaining a cadre of volunteers to assist with all aspects of welfare rights advice 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 practices 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 work providing advice at events or occasional evening advice sessions for workers. You may also work with our partner organizations 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 3 branches based in Wandsworth, Croydon, and Merton. Your main office base will be Croydon



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**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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**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, Zoom, Teams or outreach
7. Ability to manage a challenging caseload, and prioritize 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 to minimize 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 workload.
  11. Commitment to taking part in social policy, research or evaluation activities as required, for example by responding to surveys and identifying trends in your caseload
  12. Understanding of, and commitment, to the organization'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 competencies of a welfare rights supervisor.
  14. Experience in working with volunteers to deliver a service.
  15. Experience in 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
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