# SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

## Housing Caseworker

### Salary

£28,500–£38,000 per annum, depending on experience

### Hours

Full time, 35 hours per week, Monday to Friday

### Location

Hybrid working across South West London.

The role will involve regular attendance at the Housing Possession Court Duty Schemes at Croydon, Wandsworth and Kingston, alongside office-based work in Battersea and Morden.

Flexible working arrangements may be considered, although the regular court commitments attached to the role will place some limits on the flexibility available.

### Reports to

A senior member of the Housing Team, determined according to the experience and seniority of the successful candidate.

### How to Apply

Email your CV and cover letter to recruitment@swllc.org

# About the role

South West London Law Centres is looking for a Housing Caseworker to join our Housing Team.

This is a varied and hands-on role for someone who wants to develop their expertise in housing law while making a tangible difference to people facing homelessness, eviction, poor housing conditions and other serious housing problems.

You will manage your own caseload with a high level of autonomy, while receiving regular supervision, support and training from experienced members of the Housing Team.

A significant part of the role will involve our Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme. You will regularly attend court in Croydon, Wandsworth and Kingston, provide advice and assistance to people facing possession proceedings and mortgage repossession, and carry out follow-up work arising from court.

The wider caseload will be shaped by what we are seeing through our court duty work and by where the need for housing advice is greatest across our communities. This may include homelessness, possession and eviction, disrepair and housing conditions, unlawful eviction and harassment, allocations and suitability of accommodation, and related housing issues.

You may also contribute to our housing advice line, community outreach and other Law Centre activities.

We are particularly interested in applicants with legal qualifications or those working towards a legal career. The regular court exposure and opportunity to develop practical housing law experience could make this a particularly valuable role for someone considering the Bar or another legal qualification.

However, formal legal qualifications are not essential.

We recognise that strong caseworkers come from different professional backgrounds. We are therefore equally interested in applicants who have experience managing casework and working with clients, and who have the ability and motivation to develop into a specialist housing practitioner.

Experience of Legal Aid work would be highly beneficial, but it is not essential. Where someone has strong casework experience but limited Legal Aid experience, training and support will be provided.

# Key Tasks

1. To manage an independent housing advice and casework caseload, with appropriate supervision and support.
2. To provide advice and assistance to clients facing housing problems including homelessness, possession and eviction, rent and mortgage arrears,

repossession, disrepair and housing conditions, unlawful eviction and harassment, allocations and suitability of accommodation and other related housing matters.

3. To participate regularly in the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme at courts across South West London, (Croydon, Wandsworth and Kingston).
4. To provide advice and assistance to clients attending court and undertake appropriate follow-up work following court duty sessions.
5. To develop and progress housing cases at an early stage and prior to court proceedings, including correspondence, negotiation, evidence gathering and preparation of representations and other documents.
6. To identify cases requiring escalation, litigation or specialist legal input and work with supervising solicitors and other members of the Housing Team to ensure clients receive appropriate assistance.
7. To contribute to other housing advice services delivered by the Law Centre, which may include telephone advice, outreach sessions and community-based services.
8. To maintain accurate and timely case records, time recording and billing information.
9. To meet agreed casework, time-recording and billing targets.
10. To play an active role within the Housing Team and the wider Law Centre, contributing to service development and identifying emerging issues affecting our clients.

# Duties and Responsibilities

## Housing Advice and Casework

11. Interview clients, identify their legal and practical needs and provide clear, accurate and accessible advice.

12. Assess cases, identify urgent issues and deadlines and determine appropriate next steps.

14. Gather and assess evidence, draft correspondence, prepare representations and negotiate with local authorities, landlords, lenders, solicitors and other third parties.
15. Support clients to understand their options and make informed decisions about their case.

16. Identify where matters require litigation or representation beyond the scope of the post and work appropriately with supervising solicitors, counsel or other legal professionals.
17. Make appropriate internal and external referrals where clients have legal or social welfare needs that cannot be dealt with within the Housing Team.

18. Manage deadlines effectively and prioritise urgent and complex work across a busy caseload.

## Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme

21. Participate regularly in the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme at Croydon, Wandsworth and Kingston.
22. Provide advice and assistance to tenants, borrowers and other court users facing possession or repossession proceedings.
23. Review court papers and client circumstances, identify possible legal arguments and practical solutions and provide advice appropriate to the client's situation.
24. Where appropriate and within the scope of the scheme and the post-holder's competence, assist clients with negotiations and discussions arising from possession proceedings.
25. Prepare clear follow-up advice following court appointments and identify cases suitable for further Legal Aid casework or other assistance.
26. Work with colleagues to identify patterns in the cases being seen through court duty and areas where additional early advice or community intervention may be needed.

## Legal Aid, Time Recording and Billing

27. Undertake publicly funded housing work in accordance with Legal Aid Agency requirements and the Law Centre's procedures.
28. Where the post-holder does not have previous Legal Aid experience, undertake appropriate training and development to build competence in Legal Aid casework, eligibility, scope, evidence requirements, matter management and billing.

29. Caseworkers are expected to record a minimum of 4.5 hours of casework time per working day, subject to agreed adjustments for other duties.

30. Participate in regular billing and casework review meetings to identify barriers to progressing or billing matters, discuss case management issues and support the effective delivery of the Housing Team's work.

31. Ensure matters are opened, progressed, billed and closed appropriately and in accordance with organisational and Legal Aid requirements.

## Quality and Professional Standards

34. Ensure that all advice and casework is delivered to a high professional standard and in accordance with SWLLC policies, procedures and quality requirements.
35. Maintain accurate and complete files and participate fully in file review and quality assurance processes.
36. Seek supervision appropriately on complex, unfamiliar or high-risk matters.
37. Apply feedback from supervision and file review to strengthen casework practice.
38. Maintain client confidentiality and comply with all relevant information governance and data protection requirements.

## Training and Professional Development

39. Take part in regular supervision with an experienced member of the Housing Team.
40. Attend relevant training, internal learning sessions and external professional development opportunities.
41. Keep up to date with developments in housing law, Legal Aid and relevant policy and practice.
42. Develop increasing expertise and independence in housing casework.
43. Share knowledge, learning and useful developments with colleagues.
44. Engage fully with appraisal and professional development processes.
45. Opportunities to develop additional responsibility, including supporting or supervising junior colleagues or volunteers, may arise in the future depending on the needs of the service and the interests and experience of the post-holder.

## Community Work and Service Development

47. Contribute to the delivery of housing advice through other Law Centre services where required, including telephone advice and community outreach.
48. Attend outreach sessions, community events or partner organisations where this supports access to housing advice.
49. Help the Housing Team identify where there are gaps in advice provision or areas of growing need.
50. Contribute to the development and improvement of housing casework processes, precedents, resources and ways of working.
51. Play an active role in team and organisational meetings.
52. Provide appropriate cover and support for colleagues where required.
53. Work flexibly across the Law Centre and contribute to activities which support the effective delivery of services to our communities.

## Wider Impact and the Law Centre Mission

54. Understand that individual cases can highlight wider problems affecting our clients and communities.
55. Be alert to recurring or systemic issues emerging through casework and court duty.
56. Raise significant themes, patterns or emerging problems with relevant colleagues.
57. Where appropriate, contribute information and casework insight to colleagues working on communications, impact reporting, policy or campaigns.
58. Support the Law Centre to demonstrate the impact of its work through case studies, anonymised client experiences, data and other appropriate evidence.
59. Be committed to the Law Centre's wider mission of improving access to justice and tackling the underlying causes of legal problems.

# General Responsibilities

60. Work collaboratively with colleagues across SWLLC and contribute positively to the wider organisation.
61. Participate in team meetings, staff meetings and organisational activities.
62. Undertake such other duties as may reasonably be required and which are compatible with the nature and level of the post.
63. Work in accordance with SWLLC's equality, diversity and inclusion policies and values.
64. Be willing to travel across South West London as required for court, office-based work, outreach and other service delivery.

# Equal Opportunities and Accessibility

South West London Law Centres is committed to equal opportunities and to creating an inclusive workplace that reflects the communities we serve.

We welcome applications from people from all backgrounds and particularly encourage applications from people whose experiences and perspectives are underrepresented in the legal and advice sectors.

We know that people do not always apply for roles unless they meet every point in a person specification. If you are interested in the role and believe you have the skills and experience to do it well, we would encourage you to apply even if you do not meet every desirable criterion.

We are also committed to making our recruitment process accessible. If you need reasonable adjustments at any stage of the application or interview process, we will work with you to make appropriate arrangements.

# Person Specification

## Essential

### Experience

1. At least 12 months' experience managing casework, advice work or comparable client matters.
2. Experience of taking responsibility for progressing work independently rather than solely carrying out tasks allocated by others.
3. Experience of working directly with clients, service users or members of the public, including people who may be experiencing difficult or stressful circumstances.

### Skills and abilities

4. Ability to manage a busy caseload and prioritise effectively where there are competing demands and urgent deadlines.
5. Ability to work with a high degree of autonomy while recognising when supervision or additional support is required.
6. Strong written communication skills, including the ability to draft clear and accurate correspondence and explain complex issues in accessible language.
7. Strong verbal communication skills and the ability to build trust with clients from a wide range of backgrounds.
8. Ability to gather, organise and assess information and evidence.
9. Ability to identify the key issues in a case and develop a practical plan for progressing it.
10. Ability to remain organised and accurate when working under pressure.
11. Confidence using IT systems to manage work, including email, Microsoft Office and electronic case management systems.
12. Ability and willingness to maintain accurate case records and time recording.
13. Willingness to work regularly in court and across different Law Centre and community locations.

### Approach

14. A strong interest in housing law, social welfare law or access to justice.
15. Commitment to developing specialist housing casework skills.
16. Willingness to undertake training and professional development.

17. Curiosity and initiative, including an interest in understanding why clients are experiencing particular problems and whether individual cases reflect wider issues.
18. Commitment to delivering high-quality services to clients experiencing disadvantage.
19. Commitment to the values and mission of South West London Law Centres.
20. Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

# Desirable

The following are desirable but are **not essential**, and applicants should not be discouraged from applying if they do not meet all of them:

1. Experience of housing advice or housing casework.
2. Experience of Legal Aid work or another publicly funded advice service.
3. Knowledge of housing law, including homelessness, possession, disrepair or related areas.
4. Experience of court-based work or supporting clients involved in court proceedings.
5. Experience of advocacy, negotiation or representation.
6. Experience working in a Law Centre, Citizens Advice service, advice agency, legal practice, local authority, charity or other social justice organisation.
7. A law degree, legal qualification or other relevant professional qualification.
8. Qualification as a solicitor, barrister, lawyer or other legal professional.
9. Current study towards a legal qualification or intention to pursue further legal training, including the Bar course or SQE.
10. Experience working with vulnerable clients or people experiencing homelessness, poverty or other forms of disadvantage.

# Who we particularly want to hear from

We know there is more than one route into good housing casework.

You might already be a housing caseworker looking to deepen your expertise. You might have Legal Aid experience and be ready for more autonomy. You might be legally qualified and want to build a career in social welfare law. Or you might be an

experienced caseworker from another advice setting who is ready to specialise in housing law.

What matters most is that you can manage casework, take responsibility for progressing your own matters, work confidently with clients and have the judgement, curiosity and motivation to develop into a strong housing practitioner.

For the right candidate, we will provide significant training and support.

In return, you will have the opportunity to build a varied housing caseload, work regularly in court, develop practical Legal Aid experience and become a core member of a growing Housing Team working at the frontline of access to justice.