

Recruitment Pack Housing Solicitor/Caseworker



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✉ recruitment@centralenglandlc.org.uk

📍 Coventry/Birmingham

Dear Candidate

I am delighted that you are considering joining the Central England Law Centre team. This recruitment pack includes all the information you will need to make your application and also to provide you with some information about the Law Centre. You can also find more information about the work of the Law Centre on our website www.centralenglandlc.org.uk

You will be joining us at an exciting time of our growth and development. We have recently implemented a new five-year strategy and this role will play an important part in this work. You will see in this pack that we have provided you with an infographic which explains our vision and the three different parts of our strategy: people, partnerships and policy.

Working at the Law Centre is a brilliant opportunity to not only use your skills and experience to provide legal advice to clients, but also gives you opportunities to develop skills in partnership working and policy work. Working at Central England Law Centre is immensely rewarding and you will work with a team of dedicated colleagues.

We provide training and support and a comprehensive induction programme to help you settle into your role. Our terms and conditions ensure that you have a good work life balance, with hybrid working for most roles, company sick pay after a qualifying period, enhanced maternity leave pay, excellent annual leave allowance and a flexible approach to staff working in general.

We value diversity and warmly encourage applications from disabled and LGBTQIA+ people, candidates who share lived experience with our clients, and people from black, asian, and minority communities. If you require any adjustments to assist you in making your application or at interview (if you are shortlisted) please let us know. We want to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to apply for our roles.

We look forward to receiving your application. For more information please contact recruitment@centralenglandlc.org.uk

Best wishes

Elayne Hill

Chief Executive



A fairer, more just society in which an understanding of rights and their power is embedded within communities.

Central England Law Centre is the UK's largest Law Centre. Our size enables us to provide legal expertise across eight different areas of social welfare law including: discrimination; employment; health and social care; housing; immigration and asylum; public law; and welfare benefits. This means that we can offer services that can address all of the interconnected problems people face in their everyday lives.

Our services are rooted in the communities we serve and we are an organisation that uses its legal expertise to improve the lives of those who are often vulnerable and socially excluded due to poverty, illness or disability.

The Law Centre is a charity employing solicitors and advice workers. We currently employ 72 people across our two offices in Coventry and Birmingham. We receive funding from a variety of Foundations and Trust Funds and also from Coventry City Council for our work in Coventry. We hold a legal aid contract with the Legal Aid Agency in housing, community care, public law, family, welfare benefits (in the Upper Tribunal), immigration and asylum. We offer specialist advice, representation and advocacy and our aim is to use the law to seek change. We take on test cases that may well have an impact beyond the actual case fought. As well as our core advice and legal casework service we deliver a range of projects in partnership. We currently have projects for example with local universities, women's organisations, homeless charities, refugee support organisations and a GP surgery.

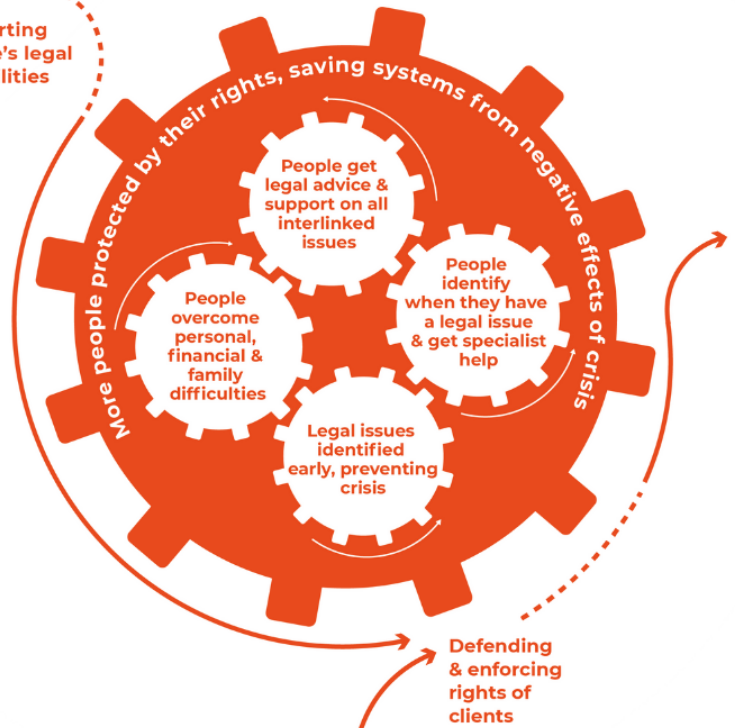
The Law Centre is a member of the national Law Centres Network. It is governed by a board of trustees, who are the Directors of Central England Law Centre - a company limited by guarantee. The Trustees meet monthly to monitor the Law Centre's work and give guidance on policy and direction. The Law Centre employs a chief executive officer (CEO), solicitors, caseworkers, admin and reception staff. Staff are organised into teams with a team head to lead and manage them. The CEO is responsible to the Trustees for the running of the Law Centre and advises them on policy issues. Each team covers one or two areas of law. Staff generally work in only one team but we recognise that many cases cross boundaries and staff therefore need to be able to work closely with other teams where their expertise are required. You can find out more about the Law Centre by looking at our website www.centralenglandlc.org.uk

In 2022 the law centre refreshed its organisational strategy, developed with staff and trustees following the Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. Our rights in the community strategy sets out our vision of a fairer, more just society in which an understanding of rights and their power is embedded within communities.

The key driver for our approach and the biggest volume of our activity will always be our work with individuals to ensure more people are protected by their rights and to build their understanding of where they can use legal rights to protect themselves in the future.

People

Supporting people's legal capabilities



We work alongside our strategic partners so that we can better understand the challenges and issues that local communities face. We share our legal expertise and in close partnerships with other community-focused services we help to place legal rights at the heart of their work and to activate a rights-based approach in their support.

Partnership

Developing relationships & collaborative action

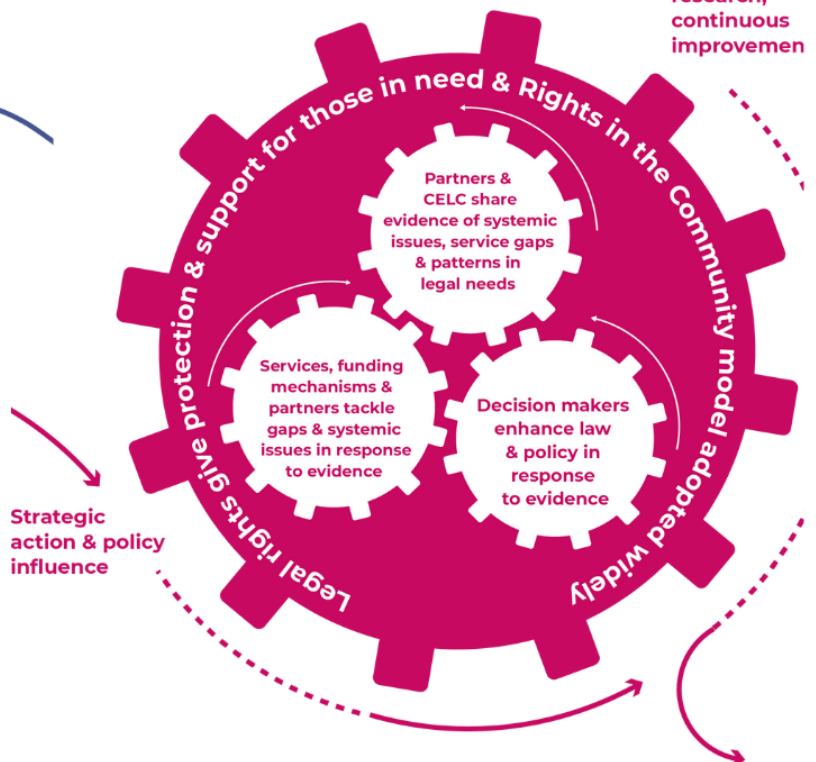


We build alliances with organisations, pooling evidence of service gaps and patterns in clients' needs and using it as the basis of our activity and collaborative campaigns.

We take strategic action at a local, regional and national level to influence change in policy and legislation, ranging from strategic litigation, membership of local statutory steering groups, boards and advisory bodies through to the work of the Strategic Public Law Clinic, work on national campaigns and responding to calls for evidence.

Policy

Evidence, research, continuous improvement



Job Title: Housing caseworker/solicitor

Reports to: Housing team head

Salary: £35,948

Hours: Full-time (37 hours per week)

Location: Tyseley, Birmingham (with some potential for hybrid working)

About this role

Central England Law Centre (CELC) provides a vital service to clients across Coventry and Birmingham, providing support for all aspects of housing law through a team of dedicated solicitors, caseworkers, paralegals and support workers.

This is an exciting opportunity for an experienced caseworker or solicitor to join the team, supporting our clients across Birmingham in the delivery of casework through the Law Centre's Legal Aid contract.

The successful candidate will be subject to a basic DBS check.

Responsibilities

With responsibility for a caseload of clients across Birmingham, the successful candidate will:

- Advise clients on all aspects of housing law through face-to-face and telephone appointments
- Undertake casework and represent clients at court as appropriate
- Work collaboratively with colleagues across the Law Centre to provide a high quality, holistic service for clients
- Accurately and consistently record time spent on casework, maintaining records to the standards required by the Law Centre
- Conduct casework in compliance with Legal Aid Agency requirements
- Liaise with the Legal Aid Agency in respect of funding applications and claims
- Complete public funding forms via CCMS and paper applications where appropriate
- Promptly cost and bill closed cases in order to meet individual and team targets

- Carry out file reviews
- Work in partnership with other organisations who are supporting our client group
- Keep up to date with current legislation, case law and policy in relation to housing
- Identify opportunities for strategic litigation work, to influence the local authority and others public bodies.

General

The housing caseworker/solicitor will also:

- Demonstrate commitment to the vision, mission and aims of Central England Law Centre
- Abide by policies and procedures as set out in the office manual and staff handbook
- Attend team meetings, CELC away days and external event as required
- Undertake any other task reasonably required within the context of this post

- A solicitor or caseworker with proven experience of the delivery of casework through a legal aid contract
- A demonstrable commitment to social justice
- The ability to work sympathetically and effectively with a wide variety of clients
- Experience of advocating for clients in court and with other agencies
- Demonstrable knowledge and understanding of legal aid eligibility requirements and legal aid applications
- Experience of the completion of public funding forms via CCMS and in hard copy
- Proven ability to meet cost targets
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- An understanding of the importance of confidentiality
- A non-judgemental attitude
- Experience of using specialist legal case management systems, and of MS Outlook, Word and Excel
- Sound organisational skills with the ability to organise and prioritise workload, ensuring excellent service to your clients at all times
- The ability to get on with people and be polite under pressure and to work co-operatively as part of a team.
- Ability to work as part of a team and with partner agencies

To apply for the post you will need to provide

- A completed Housing Caseworker/Solicitor form (link on our website)
- An up-to-date CV which should include the names and addresses of your referees
- A covering letter of no more than two sides of A4 which should include:
 - Please describe how your skills, qualities and experiences meet the requirements set out in the Job Description. Where possible, provide examples (which could be from a professional, voluntary or personal context) which demonstrate those skills, qualities and experiences
 - Explain how you have used, or how you would like to use, the law and community participation to bring about positive change in your community. Where possible please relate your answer to previous experience, which could be in paid or voluntary work
- A completed equality and diversity form (section 3 and 4 of the Housing Caseworker/ Solicitor form)

The deadline for the application is **12:00 pm on 15th May 2024**

Please do not submit any additional papers. We will only consider the information in the CV and personal statement.

We really want you to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your abilities and skills. We therefore strongly suggest that you pay particular attention to the job description and person specification when completing your application.

We will confirm receipt of your application by email. We will then shortlist applications and successful applicants will be contacted by email and telephone and invited for interviews.

We expect to hold interviews on the week commencing **20th or 27th May 2024**.

Please let us know of any arrangements we may need to make to enable you to attend for an interview. Our Coventry office is wheelchair accessible and has disabled toilet facilities, If you are attending an interview at our Birmingham office please let us know whether you need any assistance prior to coming to your interview.

The interview will last for approximately one hour. The interview panel usually consists of two people which would normally include the relevant team head. You may be asked to provide a short presentation or complete a written test. If this is the case you will be notified prior to your interview and provided with any further information. We will take up references only after interview. We require references from two people who will be able to comment on your suitability for the role. Usually, one should be your previous employer.

We monitor our selection process for compliance with our statement of commitment to equal opportunities. The first and last page of the application form is not available to those shortlisting and considered only after the appointment has taken place and then only for the purpose of ensuring that our selection process is fair.