

December 2024

Recruitment of a Solicitor (Covid 19 Public Inquiry)

Dear Applicant

Thank you very much for your interest in applying for the role of Solicitor at the Public Interest Law Centre.

We seek to recruit **two Solicitors** to support PILC's work on the last and perhaps most important module of the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry. This module will examine the impact of Covid on the population of the United Kingdom with a particular focus on key workers, the most vulnerable, the bereaved, mental health and wellbeing. This will build on all the work we have already completed with domestic abuse, migrants' rights and grassroots unions on previous modules.

In this pack you will find:

- Background information
- Role description
- Person specification
- Application form
- Equality & Diversity form

After reading the enclosed information should you have any further questions please visit our website or otherwise contact Dermot Morrow at dermot.morrow@pilc.org.uk.

Make sure to address as many of the points listed in the person specification as you are able. If you need more space, please limit your personal statement to **no more than two additional supplementary pages**. Please do not send CVs as these are not considered. Your completed application form should be returned by email to jobs@pilc.org.uk.

The closing date for applications is **9am on Friday 10th January 2025** and we anticipate holding interviews in person during the week commencing 20th January.

I wish you the very best of luck!

Yours sincerely



Dermot Morrow
Operations Manager
Encs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



PUBLIC LAW | HUMAN RIGHTS | LEGAL ACTION

The Public Interest Law Centre (PILC) was initially set up in 2016 as an independent unit within Lambeth Law Centre and became independent in 2019. PILC has operated its own Legal Aid Contract since September 2023, enabling the Law Centre to act in Public Law, Claims against Public Authorities and Housing Law. PILC is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in England and Wales (No.1192355).

Mission

The Public Interest Law Centre exists to challenge systemic injustice through legal education, strategic litigation, research and advocacy. We specialise in public law, actions against public authorities and public inquiries, bringing cases to court for individuals and grassroots groups who have been treated unfairly. We hold government and public bodies to account, challenging unlawful policies and practices. We see this work as vital in the context of austerity, Local Authority funding cuts, the expansion of the Hostile Environment and an increasingly authoritarian state. We will not rest until we see a fairer and more equal society.

Our Approach

PILC is a legal organisation located at the grassroots. This is not a market choice: rather, it is where we come from and where we believe social change begins. This commitment forms the basis of our distinct identity as a Law Centre rooted in communities fighting for social justice.

We work in solidarity with people affected by systemic issues to build their power whilst highlighting their experience. Our priorities and the direction of our strategic litigation are set by these relationships. Strategy is formulated together with the individuals and groups we represent, whom we support through legal education to ensure that the process is transparent and meaningful throughout. Working this way implies a recognition that process and outcomes are not separate; we aim to integrate litigation within a broader movement for social justice.

We work in collaboration with grassroots groups, campaigns and frontline organisations through a legal hub model, building capacity through legal education and advocating through legal action in key priority areas: state accountability, housing and land, migrants' rights and racial justice.

Achievements & Activities

PILC has achieved significant policy change through its litigation work: we quashed a Home Office policy detaining and removing EU nationals sleeping rough (2017), enabled settled migrants to access student finance (2018), prevented the sale of Southall Town Hall, an iconic building used by community groups (2018), forced the Home Office to provide destitute migrants on immigration bail a way to be supported (2019), ended Lambeth Council's deceitful housing scheme that pushed homeless families out of borough (2020), compelled government to release £76 million ring-fenced funding to the Violence Against Women & Girls sector during C-19 first lockdown (2020), successfully challenged LB Camden's use of mixed-gender accommodation for women escaping domestic abuse (2020) and LB Southwark housing allocations policy (2019 and 2022). In 2020-21, we also represented Ricky Tomlinson, Arthur Murray and Brian Williams (members of the Shrewsbury 24) in their Court of Appeal case, which saw their 47-year-old convictions quashed. In January 2024 with the support of PILC, campaigners against the demolition of the Aylesbury Estate won their Judicial Review claim in the High Court against Southwark Council and the developer Notting Hill Genesis. The victory recognised that developers working with local authorities cannot make 'drop-in' amendments to planning applications that go far beyond the scope of the original plans. We use civil claims to strategically secure justice for our clients.

PILC continues to represent a number of individuals and groups in the Undercover Policing Inquiry, including the Stop the War coalition and ex-members of the SWP. We have also been instructed to act as solicitors to the independent Inquiry into the collusion of Unite the Union officers or officials in the operation of blacklists in the construction industry. We have been instructed by a number of organisations in the Covid 19 Public Inquiry, where we are representing Southall Black Sisters, Solace Women's Aid, IWGB, UVW, Kanlungan, JCWI, Doctors of the World and Medact as Core Participants in Module 2, Module 3, Module 4 and Module 6.

PILC also delivers its work through funded projects in key priority areas. These projects are not separate from PILC's legal representation and strategic litigation. In fact, they often provide additional resources to develop and maintain relationships with vulnerable individuals, grassroots groups and frontline organisations. They also enable us to deliver on some of the Legal Hub model which complement formal legal work, such as training, capacity-building and second-tier advice.

In July 2024, PILC was awarded the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year award for Legal Aid Firm/Not-For-Profit Agency.

Our People

PILC is co-led by Jean Demars (Director) who oversees strategic, operational and financial management and Paul Heron (Legal Director) who oversees legal matters, which includes Inquiries work, casework management, litigation strategy and Legal Aid contract management. He is supported by Helen Mowatt (Head of Legal Casework). Dermot Morrow (Operations Manager) completes the management team. PILC currently employs nineteen staff, including eight solicitors, hybrid-working from our modern offices in Cambridge Heath, E2.

The UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry

In July 2020, PILC formally wrote to the Government Legal Department, on behalf of the Law Centres Network, to demand a Public Inquiry into the Government's handling of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic under s1 of the Inquiries Act 2005. The letter was also signed by a network of over seventy small and large organisations who supported our call. In May 2021, the Prime Minister announced that an Inquiry would take place. It has been divided into 'modules,' each dealing with a different aspect of how the pandemic was dealt with and involving different core participant groups

providing testimony. Between August and December 2022, PILC made core participant applications on behalf of several organisations for modules one, two and/or three. PILC has supported organisations in providing Rule 9 witness evidence at each of the three modules undertaken so far. These include Southall Black Sisters, Solace Women's Aid, the Independent Workers' union of Great Britain (IWGB) and United Voices of the World (UVW) grassroots unions, Kanlungan, Medac, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) and Doctors of the World (UK).

We have recently been granted core participant status for a large number of organisations who will be participating in the final and perhaps most important Module 10 of the Inquiry. This module will examine the impact of Covid on the population of the United Kingdom with a particular focus on key workers, the most vulnerable, the bereaved, mental health and wellbeing. The module will also seek to identify where societal strengths, resilience and or innovation reduced any adverse impact.

Whilst we are not in a position to openly name the organisations yet, they have been grouped around four themes, namely:

- Domestic Abuse
- Migrants' Rights
- Prisons and Immigration Removal Centres
- Access to Justice

We anticipate we will need to start facilitating working groups early 2025 and begin sifting through disclosure from March onwards. The hearings are due to start in January 2026 and we expect all work to be completed by the end of March 2026, unless there are delays.

The post holder will be an integral part of PILC's work in preparing for these modules. Working closely with these grassroots groups, campaigners and frontline organisations, you will understand the importance of reviewing large volumes of disclosure. With the support of your supervisors, you will assist core participants to complete their Rule 9 requests, be confident in liaising with counsel, and proactive in assisting PILC's Solicitors with inquiry admin and in prompt billing. It is hoped that the successful candidates can start ASAP.

Legal Aid and funding

Most of our legal work is otherwise funded by the Legal Aid Agency, though we also receive grant funding to enable our movement lawyering approach and to fill the gap left by a broken public funding system. We were awarded our first contract with the Legal Aid Agency in September 2023, for matters in Public Law, Claims against Public Authorities and Housing Law. Prior to this we operated as an agent of Camden Community Law Centre. We retain a small number of legacy matters under this contract.

Quality Standards

The Law Centre is accredited by the Law Society's Lexcel Quality Mark standard, and certified with the Cyber Essentials scheme, providing PILC with protection against the most common cyber-attacks. A technical assessment for both standards is carried out on an annual basis.

Registrations and memberships

PILC is registered with the Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Law Society. We are also a member of the Law Centres Network, AdviceUK and the Legal Aid Practitioners Group.

Doc Ref: 4.4
JOB REFERENCE: PILC/2/2025



ROLE DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Solicitor (Covid-19 Public Inquiry)
STARTING SALARY:	£38,961 per annum
HOURS	Full Time 35 hours/week
CONTRACT:	12-months fixed-term
BENEFITS:	25 days holiday per year with 7% pension contribution
LOCATION:	Cambridge Heath E2 / Hybrid
ACCOUNTABLE TO:	Supervising Solicitor
DIRECT REPORTS:	None
PURPOSE:	To work as part of the Inquiries team, representing Core Participants at the Covid-19 Public Inquiry. The post holder is responsible for their own administration.

Introduction

Public Interest Law Centre exists to challenge systemic injustice. We do this by holding government and public bodies to account and promoting access to justice for dispossessed and excluded groups. We work through legal representation, strategic litigation, research & advocacy and legal education.

PILC has been highly successful since its inception, winning a number of significant cases against government departments, local government authorities and other public bodies. Its successes have changed the law and administrative practices.

The post holder will work under the supervision of PILC's Supervising Solicitor, predominantly with core participants to the covid inquiry.

Please note: the nature of PILC's litigation work may mean that longer hours may be required to be worked in particular weeks or at particular times. PILC has a flexible work hours policy which provides for this, offering time off in lieu of additional hours worked and monitoring the impact of the workload on individual staff members.

Specific duties include:

1. Inquiries work

- a) Obtain accurate information and instructions from clients and core participants, analyse legal and practical aspects of their position in the Inquiry and obtain the necessary documents/evidence to provide preliminary advice on prospects of success/costs & funding
- b) Interview clients and witnesses, draft statements

- c) Brief counsel, attend conferences and the Inquiry with counsel
- d) Analyse and advise on strategy, tactics, and how best to achieve the most successful outcome for each client according to their particular circumstances
- e) Enable clients to make informed decisions on how to proceed in the Inquiry based on advice on legal and other appropriate considerations
- f) Ensure the timely and effective deployment of others involved in the matter e.g. expert witnesses, counsel, cost draftsmen
- g) Work with colleagues and Counsel to effectively manage, review and analyse large volumes of disclosure
- h) Monitor all aspects of the Inquiry on behalf of the client and advise on whether developments affect views previously expressed
- i) Be aware of deadlines in the Inquiry and adhere to these
- j) Comply with the Solicitors Regulation Authority's standards of professional conduct and ethics and, in particular, with the strict requirement of confidentiality of client's affairs, at all times.

2. Client Care

- a) Facilitate meetings with client organisations to ensure group agrees objectives and those are coherently and strategically represented in the Inquiry
- b) Deal with clients in a sensitive, professional and compassionate way
- c) Identify clients' objectives and seek to further them in a manner consistent with all professional and ethical obligations
- d) Anticipate as well as respond to clients' needs and demands.

3. Administration & Billing

- a) Prepare funding applications to the Inquiry and manage any response to these
- b) Maintain a full and orderly file with comprehensive attendance notes of all meetings, attendances and telephone calls
- c) Maintain such financial records and financial information as may be required by the Solicitors Regulation Authority or the Law Centre, including providing calculations of work in progress from time to time
- d) Adhere so far as possible to annual billing and performance targets.

4. Team Working

- a) Under the supervision of the Supervising Solicitor, identify and pursue issues of importance to our clients in the Inquiry
- b) Provide supervisory casework support to a Paralegal, caseworkers and volunteer advisers as required
- c) Work effectively with non-legal staff including Operations Manager and Finance Officer
- d) Attend and contribute to regular and special team meetings and discussions.

5. Social Policy

- a) Remain alert to the social policy implications of issues presented by clients
- b) Contribute to taking appropriate action to influence social policy in regard to these issues.

6. Other duties

- a) Complete and maintain as necessary any professional documentation or records (such as a Practising Certificate) as the Solicitors Regulation Authority or any other professional body may require
- b) Engage in regular managerial supervision
- c) Attend training internally and externally as agreed with the Supervising Solicitor and maintain a record of all training undertaken and CPD points
- d) Undertake other duties which may be regarded within the nature of the post, in discussion with the Director.

Organisational standards

The post holder will be expected to meet the following organisational standards in how they undertake their work and conduct themselves in the post.

Professional Development

The post holder will:

- participate in the PILC team review and supervision processes as appropriate
- attend courses on new legislation, specialist skills and the use of information technology relevant to the role
- keep up to date with the changes in relevant legislation
- undertake such training as is necessary as to maintain the standards required.

Equality and Diversity

The Law Centre's clients are largely on low incomes and come from a diverse range of minority ethnic groups. The post holder will be expected to show a particular interest in working with this client group and to show an understanding of equality and diversity issues.

The post holder will have regard at all times in the planning and execution of their duties to the Law Centre's Equality & Diversity Policy and will implement that policy faithfully.

Information Technology and Data Protection

The post holder will be expected to use computers on a regular basis. S/he will also be expected to take responsibility for their own word processing, recording keeping, filing and case recording.

The post holder will be expected to follow the Law Centre's data protection policies and ensure the security of client data.

Review of this role

This job description is to provide guidance and direction. It is not an inflexible document, nor is it intended to limit the range of duties which could reasonably be expected of the post holder. The job description will be reviewed at each appraisal.

**PERSON SPECIFICATION
SOLICITOR (COVID 19 PUBLIC INQUIRY)**

	Criterion	Essential	Desirable
1.	Qualified Solicitor or equivalent level of experience and autonomy with a strong interest in Public Inquiries	✓	
2.	Ability to work to instructions from clients and act on them appropriately at any stage of the Inquiry and/or on discrete issues arising from the Inquiry	✓	
3.	Ability to liaise with, take instructions from and manage a large number of client organisations	✓	
4.	An understanding of the key principles of relevant law and procedure applicable to Public Inquiries	✓	
5.	Demonstrable experience of conducting cases from initial advice to trial, including drafting pre-action protocol letters, instructions and witness statements	✓	
6.	A demonstrable commitment to access to justice and an interest in PILC's key priority areas	✓	
7.	Excellent time management skills, demonstrated by an ability to organize and prioritize a complex workload and meet tight deadlines	✓	
8.	Good interpersonal skills, including excellent communication skills both verbal and written	✓	
9.	Extensive experience in file management, including the preparation of accurate attendance notes, time recording and good knowledge of billing procedures	✓	
10.	A commitment to the Public Interest Law Centre's Equality & Diversity Policy	✓	
11.	Ability to be self-servicing with competent use of the suite of Microsoft Office 365 apps as well as online-based case management systems	✓	
12.	Demonstrate willingness to work as part of the Law Centre's team and carry administrative and other duties shared amongst the staff	✓	
13.	Experience of supervising a Paralegal or Trainee		✓
14.	Experience of participation at Public Inquiries		✓
15.	Experience of grassroots campaigning or activism		✓