Our ref: PM

 Your ref:

 Date: October 2023

Dear Applicant

**Re Head of Housing**

Thank you for your interest in this post.

I am pleased to enclose:

1. Job Description and Person Specification for Head of Housing
2. Guidelines for Applicants
3. Organisation Summary

You can download the application form from our website.

The closing date for receipt of applications is 27 November 9 am. Applications should be sent by email to 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 – Housing Caseworker / Solicitor**

South West London Law Centres (SWLLC), one of the largest and most progressive Law Centres in the country, is seeking a Head of Housing Solicitor/Caseworker

We are looking to expand our 10 person housing team consisting of 5 solicitors, 2 trainees and 3 paralegals across our 3 branch offices.  We run a wide range of housing work covered by Legal Aid including a significant amount of representation work as part of the housing court duty schemes. We are looking for an energetic lawyer to help us to expand our work and develop this committed and passionate team.

We offer flexible working and generous benefits

**Housing Solicitor / Caseworker**

**Salary:** From £39,000 up to £42,000 p.a depending on experience

**Reports to:** Head of Legal Practice

**Term:** Permanent

**Based at:** Croydon - Travel may be required to our other branch offices and court duty schemes we operate.

The closing date for the post is 20 November 23 9am with interviews soon after. If you would like to discuss the post further, please email recruitment@swllc.org. Applications should be made on our application form available from our web site at <http://www.swllc.org/Vacancies.php>

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**ORGANISATION SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POST**

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 in a limited way in Welfare Rights. In 2022/23 we assisted 6778 people We represent clients in all courts and tribunals. In 20 we worked on 2,609 cases. We also provide the **housing duty solicitor scheme** currently Kingston and previouslyat Croydon, Kingston and Wandsworth County Courts giving emergency representation in possession hearings for rent and owned homes and at the warrant stage for evictions. Last year we helped 899 clients.

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 – our Immigration Team was rated as “Excellent” in a Legal Aid Peer Review.

**The context of the post**

The current team of 10 includes 5 solicitors, 3 paralegals a trainee solicitor and an apprentice solicitor. They are all very committed to housing law and passionate about their work, one of the solicitors is a part time deputy district judge. There has been a period of change. Much of the law centre’s work was focused on possession through court duty scheme. Although this was extremely valuable our community engagement work continues to show that we are not meeting all the community’s needs; including assistance before cases reach possession hearings and disrepair. Recent funding has enabled us to take on two trainee/apprentices. We are starting housing advice lines in Wandsworth and Merton and would like to start one in Croydon. Alongside this our Cost of Living team has grown significantly and there is now an opportunity to provide early housing legal advice, In the last Legal Aid tender round from August 23 we lost the duty scheme in Croydon, the busiest court, we share Wandsworth with Hammersmith & Fulham Law Centre and run Kingston on our own. In the current tender round we have reapplied for all courts from September 24. Much of the team’s work is funded by legal aid, there should now be opportunities to attract other sources of funding including grant funding. We are working with a number of firms to further develop our clinics to provide more than one off advice to those who fall out of legal aid. We are recruiting a clinic caseworker to supervise to work.

We are wanting to expand the work of the team to meet the community’s need with a commitment to providing a quality service. Although legal aid will continue to be the mainstay of the team we want to attract and develop other sources of funding so we can do more than legal aid work and better meet the community need. We are looking for an energetic and compassionate lawyer to manage our current housing team and help it develop.

**SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES**

***Legal Action for Local Communities***

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

**POST:** Head of Housing

**Salary:** Salary range from £39,000 up to £42,000 p.a depending on experience

**Reports to:** Head of Legal Practice, CEO

**Line Manages:** Housing Team Leaders, Caseworkers/Paralegals andVolunteers assigned to them

**Functional Links:** Head of Legal Practice**,** Board of Trustees, Senior Management Team and other project teams in SWLLC

**Term:** Permanent

**Based at:** One of our offices in Battersea, Merton or Croydon.

**Key Tasks**

1. To manage the flow and scope of work undertaken by the Housing Team. To be responsible for supervising the Housing Team leaders.
2. To increase the capacity of the team to undertake earlier housing work by developing a team of paralegals supervised by the Housing Team Leaders.
3. To improve the consistency of work across the Housing Team seeking to achieve higher levels of peer review rating and improve the flow of files through the billing process.
4. To supervise, the Housing Clinic caseworker for a pro bono housing project in partnership with a number of firms.
5. To help and facilitate cross working between the Housing Team and the Cost of Living project. This will include supervision or ensuring that there is appropriate supervision of the housing work carried out by the cost of living team.
6. The post-holder will advise and represent clients who live or work in South West London in all areas of housing law taking cases as necessary to all levels of courts and tribunals.
7. You will work within SWLLC’s policies and procedures to make sure the Housing Team leaders and those caseworkers/paralegals in their teams meet their performance targets, maintain quality standards in line with regulation and contracts, and develop their professional skills. The post-holder will ensure maintenance of standards in accordance with Lexcel accreditation.

**Duties & Responsibilities**

1. To ensure that all advice, assistance and representation complies with the requirements of our Lexcel quality mark and, where publicly funded, complies with the requirements of the Legal Aid Agency.
2. To ensure all casework is recorded within our Clio case management system and prompt billing and payment of work undertaken.
3. The post holder will be expected to meet billing and time recording targets which are set in accordance to the overall requirements of the Law Centre’s annual budget and our contracts. The current target along with other duties would be £30,000
4. To ensure that the terms of all Law Centre funders and partners are kept to in relation to advice & casework including providing reports as required.
5. To report on the work of the Law Centre to the management committee as required.
6. To participate in team meetings and to carry out file reviews in accordance with Lexcel requirements.
7. To participate in staff meetings from time to time.
8. To be responsible for your own word processing, filing and case recording within Clio case management system.
9. To advise, provide and develop training and talks to Law Centre staff and volunteers and to front line advice agency staff within the Law Centre’s catchment area as necessary
10. To attend meetings of coordinating bodies as required.
11. To share the work of maintaining everyday necessities.
12. To provide cover for colleagues during absences.

**Advice & Casework**

1. To provide housing advice and casework service to clients of the Law Centre. This is to include interviewing clients, advising them of their rights and responsibilities, assessing suitability and effectiveness of alternative courses of action, advising on potential challenges and legal procedures.
2. To assist other teams in the Law Centre in helping clients resolve any housing matters. This may include supervising or ensuring that there is supervision of housing casework carried out outside the Housing Team.
3. To assist clients in liaising with other people and organisations to resolve their housing problems where possible.
4. To represent clients at Courts and Tribunals and do the necessary preparation and research.
5. To visit clients at their homes if appropriate.
6. To instruct and attend Counsel’s chambers with clients as appropriate.
7. To supervise as required any housing advice and casework conducted.

**Management**

1. To provide line management to the Housing Team leaders, monitoring performance against targets and ensuring caseworkers under supervision comply with contractual requirements, our Lexcel accreditation, and SWLLC policies and procedures.
2. To supervise Housing Team Leaders and Housing Clinic caseworker formally at least every quarter and complete a formal appraisal annually.
3. Checking that the Housing Team leaders are completing supervision and appraisals.
4. This includes checking files and monitoring standards of work, going through billing and time recording, ensuring that Lexcel standards are maintained for the whole of the Housing Team. Where appropriate to delegate supervision to Housing Team Leaders within the team.
5. To monitor the assignment and allocation of new and existing casework within the Housing Team as necessary to ensure contract compliance and appropriate cover where a member of the Housing Team is absent from work so that a professional standard of service is maintained at all times.
6. Co-ordinate and carry out file reviews in accordance with the Lexcel Quality Manual with the Housing Team to ensure agreed quality standards are maintained.
7. To follow the underperformance procedure for any Housing Team member not meeting the performance targets within the guidelines set by the CEO. This will include supporting Housing Team leaders in following the underperformance with a member of their team.
8. To work with the Housing Team to identify appropriate professional development objectives and training or other routes to meet those objectives.
9. To set up and maintain in conjunction with the Housing Team Leaders, to hold in rota Housing Team meetings on a quarterly basis to update the entire Housing Team across SWLLC on operational issues, trends, procedure and practice, and training. To produce minutes of these meetings and to provide the Head of Legal Practice and CEO with a copy.
10. Ensure volunteers are trained, supported and supervised in the Housing Team, in line with SWLLC procedures.
11. Be responsible for the line management of the Housing Team leaders , specifically to include:
	* Supervision and appraisals
	* Authorising annual leave
	* Reporting issues to the Chief Executive relating to sickness, performance and timekeeping
	* Cascading information about training needs and opportunities between management and the team

where appropriate ensuring the team leaders carry out the above for members of their team.

1. Investigate and respond to complaints in line with SWLLC procedures.
2. To be aware of other issues within the office and to assist the administrators where necessary.
3. All of these duties to be carried out in line with SWLLC procedures.

**Professional Development**

1. To attend courses on new legislation, specialist skills and the use of information technology.
2. To keep up to date with the changes in relevant legislation.
3. To read the relevant law journals
4. To discuss regularly with the Head of Legal Practice your job performance and personal career development.
5. To be appraised regularly and to engage fully in this process to further personal development and maximise your contribution to SWLLC.
6. To undertake such training as is necessary to maintain and/or achieve the standards required of a Legal Aid Agency Category Supervisor in Housing.

### Social Policy

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

### Equal Opportunities

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

### Other Duties

1. Play a full role in the organisation supporting colleagues to maximise their effectiveness.
2. 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.

**SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES**

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**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

**POST:** Head of Housing

**Salary:** Salary range from £39,000 up to £42,000 p.a depending on experience

**Reports to:** Head of Legal Practice, CEO

**Line Manages:** Housing Team Leaders, Caseworkers/Paralegals andVolunteers assigned to them

**Functional Links:** Head of Legal Practice**,** Board of Trustees, Senior Management Team and other project teams in SWLLC

**Term:** Permanent

**Based at:** One of our offices in Battersea, Merton or Croydon

**Essential Experience**

1. Demonstratable experience of managing and developing a legal casework team achieving growth in targets, quality and customer care.
2. Experience of working under a Legal Aid Agency Contract specification for Public Funding (Legal Aid) and Legal Help with demonstrate able billing targets.
3. At least three year’s full time equivalent experience of Housing Law casework and representation covering a wide range of cases including ability to meet LAA qualified category Housing Supervisor standard
4. Ability to manage a varied caseload of sufficient appropriate matters to meet a reduced billing target of £30,000 alongside other management and supervision duties. Currently a full time caseworker has a target of a minimum £60,000.
5. Ability to draft appropriate documentation in all areas and procedures of Housing law
6. A wide range of representation experience in the county court with the ability to take cases through the higher courts.
7. Commitment to equal opportunities as set out in the principles and policies of South West London Law Centres

**Essential Skills**

1. An intelligent and highly motivated person who is accustomed to taking significant decisions and having a high level of personal accountability.
2. Ability to work independently with a proven ability to prioritise work and to meet deadlines.
3. Ability to take strategic overview and to plan for the long term.
4. Ability to liaise and work effectively in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders.
5. Excellent communication skills: you must be able to relate well to colleagues, clients and third parties, in person, in writing and on the telephone, despite the pressures of the role
6. Understanding of the problems which face diverse communities.
7. Ability to be self-servicing: you will be expected to manage most of your own typing, filing and billing and payment of cases.
8. Ability to use computer and information technology including management information systems and to be self-servicing. Must be proficient in Microsoft operating systems (Word, Excel, and Office).
9. Ability to work collaboratively within SWLLC
10. You must be very well organised in order to work well under pressure without compromising standards

**Team Leader – Management Experience & Skills**

1. Experience of successfully line-managing and mentoring caseworkers, including carrying out appraisals, monitoring performance against targets and taking action to address unsatisfactory performance
2. Commitment to leading a team
3. A track record of managing change and a willingness to work towards expanding the Housing Team

**Desirable Experience and Skills**

1. Experience of running cases through conditional fee agreements
2. Experience of giving successful training or talks

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### GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

Please read these notes carefully before filling in your application form, as the decision to shortlist for interview will be based solely on the information provided on the application form.

### General Guidelines

1. Give only information, which is relevant to the post.
2. Complete all sections of the form. You will need to do this in order to be fairly compared to other candidates. All information given is treated as confidential.
3. Complete a rough draft first. This avoids mistakes and untidiness and enables you to organise and review the information you put on the form.
4. Get feedback from other people and make sure you give examples, which demonstrate your ability to do the job.
5. Complete the form in type, word processor, black ballpoint or ink.

### Selection Criteria – The Person Specification

The skills, experience and qualification described in the Person Specification are the criteria against which you will be assessed and short-listed. Make sure you have covered each section of the Person Specification in your application form.

### Employment

When completing this section include relevant part time work or work taken on a voluntary basis. Outlining your previous work experiences or other responsibilities may help you to uncover relevant skills, which are clear signs of your ability to do the job.

Further Information

In section four of the application form you should try to show how you are able to do the job. Rather than simply repeating your career history, look at the skills and experience required for the job and provide evidence that you possess them. Concentrate on the things you know and what you can do rather than on what other people in your group or workplace can do.

References

Where possible at least one of your referees should be a previous employer; either you’re present or most recent employer. If you have not previously been employed, or have not worked for some time, give the name of someone who knows you sufficiently well to confirm the information given and who can comment on your ability to do the job. (You must not provide a relative or partner’s name as a referee).

Monitoring Information

This section is included in order to monitor the effectiveness of SWLLC’s Equal Opportunities Policy, which aims to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly. All information is treated in confidence and used only for statistical monitoring.

The monitoring section of the application form is not used as part of the selection process. Consequently, if for example you have a disability, and this is an item in the person specification, do also mention it in the main part of your application form.

Finally – take a copy of the form and keep it to remind yourself of what you have said if you are called for an interview. Good Luck!