Job Pack

Housing Solicitor

Thank you for your interest in working at Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre (Leeds CALC). In this job pack you will find information about:

- Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre
- The job description/person specification and the team the role is within
- Benefits of working for Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre
- Our approach to equality and diversity
- The application process

To apply for this role please submit your CV and a covering letter to jobs@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk

Please also complete the diversity monitoring form on our website: www.citizensadviceleeds.org.uk/diversity-monitoring/

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis and successful candidates will be contacted to arrange a mutually convenient date for interview

If you would like an informal chat about this role before applying contact julie.balfour@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk

Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre

Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre is a local charity working for a fairer society where people are free from the effects of poverty and social injustice. We help individuals, families and communities by offering free advice and representation and challenging systemic injustice.

We have deep roots in the local community, dating back to 1939 when we first opened our doors, and have been providing advice to Leeds residents ever since. Our status as a Law Centre is more recent, having joined the Law Centres Network in 2024, but is built on our long experience in working for social justice, locally and nationally.

Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre is the largest provider of free and independent advice in the city, helping 35,000 people a year through telephone, online and face-to-face services delivered at over 20 locations citywide. We have around 70 employees and 30 volunteers.

We deliver a wide range of advice services including:

- Generalist advice covering Benefits, Debt, Employment, Housing, Immigration and other social welfare law matters.
- Casework/legal advice in Benefits, Debt, Housing and Immigration.
- Outreach advice sessions for people experiencing mental health issues and for families with young children.
- Energy advice (addressing fuel poverty and energy efficiency).

Leeds CALC has strong partnerships with organisations in Leeds and across the region, working together to increase access to justice and strengthen the advice sector as a whole.

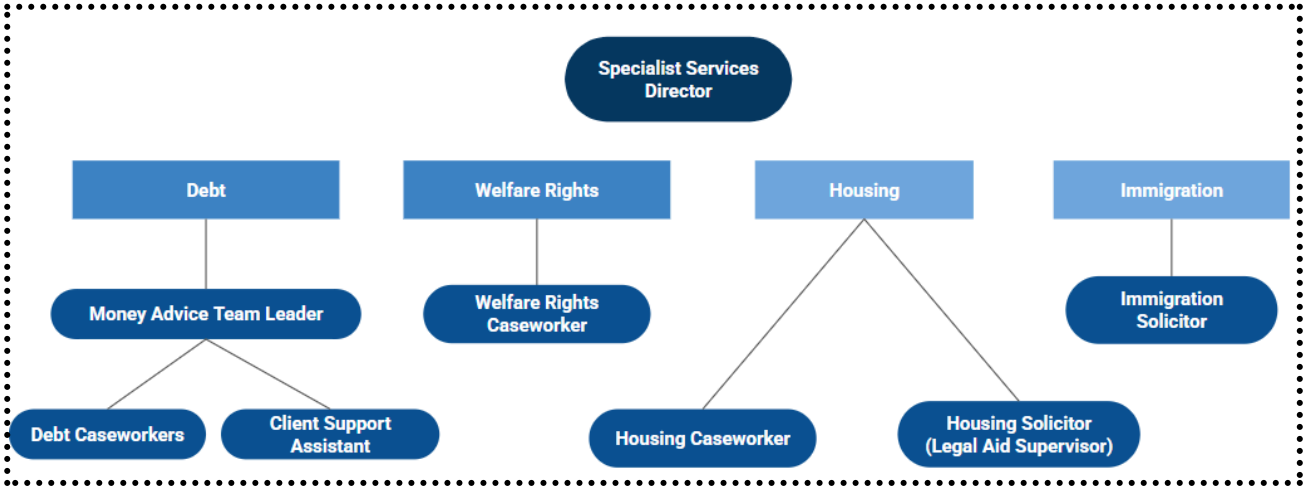
The role

Job title	**Housing Solicitor**
Location	Leeds/ Hybrid
Salary	£40,000 - £45,000 per annum, dependent on experience
Hours	Full Time (35 hours pw)
Reports to	Specialist Services Director

Background to the role

As a city, Leeds faces a number of housing related challenges, including high rents, a shortage of social housing and significant levels of disrepair. Working as part of Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre's Specialist Services Team, the Housing Solicitor will play a key role in supporting clients suffering the effects of these problems, in defending their housing rights and obtaining suitable housing.

Leeds CALC is seeking an experienced Housing Solicitor to conduct casework on specialist housing issues and to provide training and supervision to Caseworkers and other Advisers on housing matters. The Solicitor will supervise our Housing Legal Aid contract, ensuring that quality and contractual requirements are consistently met.



Job description

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Legal advice service & supervision

1.1. Conduct casework on a range of specialist housing issues in accordance with Legal Aid Agency (LAA) and Specialist Quality Mark standards.

1.2. Maintain an active caseload sufficient to retain LAA supervisor status, representing and advocating for clients at court and tribunal hearings where required.

1.3. Supervise and develop Caseworkers/Advisers to support the delivery of an effective housing advice service.

1.4. Ensure compliance with relevant professional and quality standards e.g. Specialist Quality Mark (SQM), Solicitors Regulatory Authority (SRA), Legal Aid Agency (LAA), Chartered Institute for Legal Executives (CILEX), etc.

1.5. Ensure that work in progress and billing targets are met.

1.6. Ensure that case recording is carried out to required standards and accurate records of work and time are maintained.

1.7. Work with Leeds CALC colleagues to deliver holistic advice to clients and provide briefings and training on housing issues to other teams where required.

1.8. Provide technical supervision for housing caseworkers, offering consultancy and guidance on legal and procedural issues relating to their caseload.

1.9. Complete regular independent file reviews, identifying training and development needs for the team and assuring quality standards are met.

1.10. Contribute to internal and external monitoring reports as required.

1.11. Maintain professional standards and competencies and demonstrate these in all dealings with clients, colleagues and stakeholders.

1.12. Assist in maintaining a quality of advice manual that ensures compliance with SQM and other relevant quality standards.

2. General responsibilities

2.1. Attend and contribute to organisational meetings as required.

2.2. Adhere to all the organisation's policies and procedures, including Health & Safety, Confidentiality, Data Protection and Equality & Diversity Policies, and ensure they are implemented in the legal advice team.

2.3. Foster good relations with advice agencies and other organisations and individuals with the aim of promoting effective partnership working to meet local advice needs.

2.4. Represent Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre at relevant external meetings and events.

2.5. Identify own training and development needs and agree with the Specialist Services Director on appropriate training and development activities to be undertaken.

2.6. Maintain an awareness of legislative developments, social trends and local issues likely to impact on advice needs and future service development, and identify ways to address them.

2.7. Promote the aims, policies and membership standards of the Citizens Advice service and Law Centres Network.

2.8. Present a professional appearance, help maintain an orderly working environment and act at all times to uphold the good reputation of Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre.

This job description cannot cover every issue or task that may arise and the post-holder will be expected to carry out other duties from time to time which are broadly consistent with those in this document. This job description does not form part of the contract of employment.

Person Specification

Essential criteria	
1	Qualified Solicitor or CILEx with 3 years' PQE in Housing law. Meets the supervisor standards for the Legal Aid Agency or quickly able to achieve this.
2	Experience of working under a legal aid contract on a range of matter starts.
3	Good understanding of legal aid contract requirements, and the ability to manage cases effectively and submit accurate bills in a timely manner.
4	Evidence of the ability to prioritise your work and the work of others, meet competing deadlines and manage workload in a demanding environment.
5	Proven ability and willingness to meet appropriate targets, including time recording, billing and financial targets, set by funders and the organisation.
6	Excellent written and verbal communication skills and the ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of people.
7	Evidence of a commitment to challenging discrimination and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
8	Ability to analyse and interpret complex information and excellent attention to detail.
9	Ability to work independently and build successful relationships with staff, volunteers and external stakeholders and networks.
10	Confident in using IT to carry out day to day duties (the Legal Advice Team uses Google Workspace and AdvicePro).
11	In good professional standing (e.g. SRA, CILEX, etc) and evidence of meeting high standards and competencies.

12	Evidence of continuous professional development and learning relevant to this post.
13	Enhanced DBS check prior to start date will be required for this post and failure to voluntarily disclose a criminal record will result in the withdrawal of the offer.
Desirable criteria	
14	Understanding of and commitment to the aims and principles of the Citizens Advice service and Law Centres Network.
15	Experience of managing, supervising, developing and coaching others, including appraisal and performance management.

Benefits of working for Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre

Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre offers a competitive remuneration package with additional benefits that support a positive work-life balance:

- Full-time hours are 35 per week with a flexible working policy
- Defined contribution pension scheme
- Employee assistance programme with access to 24/7 telephone support
- Annual leave entitlement starting at 25 days p.a. (plus bank holidays) and increasing with long service
- Incremental pay awards
- We are a Disability Confident Employer and a Mindful Employer
- Located in the city centre, directly opposite the Combined Courts centre, with good transport links

Our commitment to equality and diversity

Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive culture for our employees, volunteers, service users and other stakeholders.

We recognise the positive value of diversity, promoting equality and fairness, and challenging discrimination. We value the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates practicable, ensuring that employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit.

Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre is a Disability Confident Employer and a Mindful Employer and we are committed to showing a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with disabilities or mental health issues and our employee policies and benefits support that commitment.

The application process

- You will find details about our vacancies and how to apply on our website www.citizensadviceleeds.org.uk on the *Working for us* page. On this page you will find:
  - Job descriptions for current vacancies
  - Guidance on how to apply
  - Diversity monitoring form
- You should also complete the anonymous diversity monitoring form on the Working for us page of our website
- If you are shortlisted for a role we will contact you to invite you to an interview. Interviews are carried out by a panel of 2-3 people and are usually face-to-face. Interviews may be carried out online if necessary.
- We may also ask you to undertake an exercise as part of the assessment process. This could include providing answers to case studies for advice roles, making a presentation for a management role, or other appropriate activity.
- Following the interview process you will be contacted to inform you if we are making an employment offer or not. This verbal offer will be followed by a written confirmation subject to the receipt of satisfactory references and completion of ID and other checks as required for the role.
- Verbal feedback will be offered to candidates who are unsuccessful at the interview but we do not provide written feedback.

Disability Confident Employer

As an organisation that values equality, fairness and diversity, Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre encourages applications from candidates from all backgrounds. We are a Disability Confident Employer and signatories to the Mindful Employer Charter.

We commit to invite to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum (essential) criteria for the role. To opt into this scheme, please tick the relevant box on the application form. The essential criteria for the role are shown in the person specification. Please let us know if you have any access or adjustment needs as part of the recruitment process.

If you are invited to an interview we will ask you about any access needs or adjustments to the interview/assessment process that you may need. Please be assured we will be supportive in discussing reasonable adjustments with you at any stage of the recruitment process, although we cannot guarantee to be able to meet all requests.

Shortlisting outcomes

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for an interview. Some positions may require additional assessments (practical task/test or assessment centre) and information on this will be provided if you are invited to interview.

Entitlement to work in the UK

A job offer will be subject to confirmation that you are permitted to work in the UK in accordance with the provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. If you are invited to an interview you will be asked to provide evidence of your entitlement to work in the UK at that time.

Diversity Monitoring

Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre encourages and welcomes applications from suitably skilled candidates from all backgrounds. Monitoring recruitment and selection procedures is one way of helping us to ensure that there is no unfair discrimination in the way that we recruit people. To do this we need to know about the diversity profile of people who apply for posts at Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre. This information is given in confidence for monitoring purposes only and is not seen by anyone responsible for making recruitment decisions. However, if you would prefer not to answer any of the questions we ask, please leave them blank.

References

All job offers are subject to the receipt of two satisfactory references. One should be from your current or most recent employer (or your course tutor if you have just left education). The other should be someone who knows you in a work related, voluntary or academic capacity. Both referees should be able to comment on your suitability for the role. References will only be taken up for successful candidates following interview.

Criminal convictions

Anyone who applies to work within Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre will be asked to disclose details of unspent convictions during the recruitment process.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working for Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre but we are not able to employ anyone with a conviction for a sexual offence against a child or vulnerable adult regardless of when the offence took place. All other convictions will be considered on an individual basis.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosures are only requested where proportionate and relevant to the post concerned. If the post for which you are applying requires a DBS disclosure, this will be noted in the application pack.