

COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE (CLC)

Job description

Job title: Commissioned Legal Adviser
Reporting to: AfCD Director
Hours: 35 hours a week

About the Community Legal Centre

The Community Legal Centre is a pan-London charity providing free legal advice, casework and representation to people on a low income who otherwise could not afford to enforce their legal rights. Our vision is a society where everyone should have access to advice and representation to enable them to secure their legal rights and entitlements. Through the provision of free legal advice, we aim to tackle poverty and disadvantage through maximising incomes, reducing debts, saving homes and improving general wellbeing.

We employ solicitors and caseworkers to provide specialist legal advice and representation in the following areas of law:

- Debt: rent or mortgage arrears; council tax arrears, utility debts; Magistrate Court debts; credit debts; bankruptcy proceedings; Debt Relief Orders; county court claims.
- Housing: homelessness; defending possession proceedings and warrants for eviction; serious disrepair where a tenant's health is at risk due to poor housing conditions.
- Welfare Benefits: helping people gain their full benefit entitlement through challenging negative decisions.

In addition to our casework service, we run free weekly legal advice clinics, delivered by volunteer lawyers, in the areas of: employment, housing, family and general civil litigation.

Each year we give legal advice and support to over 3,000 new clients. This figure doesn't include work supporting existing clients.

Over 40 per cent of the people we help report having a disability and/or long-term health condition. Over 60 per cent are from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Clients access the services via face-to-face appointments at our office in Deptford Bridge and by telephone and video appointments.

The Community Legal Centre is part of Action for Community Development, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee.

Staffs are divided into the following teams:

- Debt
- Housing
- Welfare Benefits
- Access to Legal Services
- Senior Management Team

Diversity and equality

Community Legal Centre provides services to disadvantaged people of all backgrounds. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the Centre's practice and policy. We value diversity amongst our paid staff and volunteers.

We are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality and diversity within our policies and procedures. This applies to our professional dealings with clients, all staff (including all volunteers), other legal service providers, experts and third parties.

Access to Legal Services Team

This post is based in the Community Legal Centre's Access to Legal Services Team which deals with all face-to-face, telephone and email enquiries from members of the public (and organisations calling on their behalf) wanting to access legal advice. This team also runs the Community Legal Centre's pro bono service, where volunteer lawyers deliver advice to our clients on a range of matters.

The Team are very busy due to high demand for specialist legal advice. They are the first point of contact for clients so an efficient, friendly service is vital. The ability to deal calmly and sensitively with clients, who may be frustrated or desperate due to the issues they are facing, is essential.

The ability to work well in a team, have good administrative, communication and organising skills are also important for this post, as is the ability to build and maintain good working relationships with staff, clients, volunteers, and other advice organisations. You will develop knowledge of the various areas of law we advise on to enable you to triage clients effectively and make referrals. You will be required to work from our office in Deptford Bridge.

Job summary

The post holder will provide a triage service to those contacting the Community Legal Centre, and provide other administrative support.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Triage telephone, online and face-to-face contact from the public and organisations to assess suitability for accessing services at the Community Legal Centre (including assessing eligibility for Legal Help) or signposting accordingly.
- Handle bookings and cancellations.
- Ensure clients complete relevant forms for their appointments and drop-ins.
- Maintain records of client contact.
- Provide support to the Community Legal Centre's pro bono service, including dealing with correspondence, liaising with the volunteer lawyers, and ensuring deadlines are met.
- Ensure the maintenance of the office equipment and facilities including: repair and maintenance of photocopiers, that equipment is replenished with paper and toner, are kept stocked and ordered as required; deal with deliveries of goods to the office and other reasonable tasks.
- Provide other administrative support including, data entry, dealing with incoming and outgoing post, and other reasonable tasks that may be required, consistent with the post.

Person Specification

Essential Criteria

1. A minimum of 1 year's full-time equivalent experience of dealing with members of the public either over the telephone or face-to-face in a busy environment.
2. Experience of providing administrative support.
3. An understanding of the needs of the clients we work with.
4. Excellent verbal and written communication skills to provide an efficient and friendly triage service to those contacting the Legal Centre.
5. An ability to deal efficiently, calmly and confidentially with those in need of information and/or advice.
6. An ability to prioritise a varied workload, be punctual, reliable and use one's own initiative.
7. Excellent organisational and administrative skills.
8. Excellent attention to detail.
9. An ability to work well in a team and with both paid staff and volunteers.
10. Confident in the use of information technology and in particular knowledge and experience of Microsoft Word and Outlook or similar packages.
11. An understanding of and commitment to the principles of equality and diversity.