



Housing Solicitor Recruitment Pack

Closing date for applications 1 March 2019

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Welcome from Karin Woodley, Chief Executive

I am delighted that you are considering joining the Cambridge House Law Centre. This recruitment pack includes some information about our organisation that I hope you will find useful.

Our vision

We pursue a vision of a society without poverty where all people are valued, treated equally and lead fulfilling and productive lives.

Our history

As one of the UK's pioneering university settlements, Cambridge House was founded to promote social justice in South London's 19th century 'slum' neighbourhoods. In 1889 we began working at a 'grass roots' level to empower local people to tackle the social problems created by urbanisation and industrialisation. Established in 1893, the Law Centre is one of the oldest free legal advice services in the UK.

The ideological principles driving the work of the settlement movement contributed to the 1906 Liberal welfare reforms and the creation of the 20th century's welfare state.

Today the welfare state is retracting and the financial restrictions arising from welfare reforms are disproportionately affecting the communities in which Cambridge House works. These neighbourhoods include a high proportion of wards which are in the most deprived 5 to 20 per cent nationally.

The 21st century context for our work

As austerity measures and far-reaching welfare reforms come into full effect we are driven to address their combined effects on existing levels of poverty and the equity and cohesion of society.

Against the backdrop of diminishing levels of social security, we are seeing poverty in our communities increase most drastically because of complex, cumulative and varied combinations of need. This context requires us to invest in:

- i) Our communities by providing targeted support and advice to those most adversely affected: individuals and families facing a build-up of problems across several aspects of their lives.
- ii) Systems changing activities that increase society's capacity to tackle poverty and social injustice.

In 2017/18 we provided services to 187,000 people across the following portfolio:

i) **Social Justice Services**

▪ **Law Centre**

Free, independent and expert legal services in housing, employment and welfare benefits. We also undertake public law challenges within welfare benefits and or housing law issues.

▪ **Independent Advocacy**

Care Act, NHS Health Complaints, Mental Health (IMHA) Mental Capacity (IMCA) and independent professional and community advocacy for adults and children.

▪ **Safer Renting**

Specialist advice, support and advocacy for vulnerable tenants of criminal landlords.

ii) Education and Inclusion Services

▪ Youth Empowerment

Medium to long-term, intensive and wrap-around schemes for excluded 16 to 25-year olds.

▪ Disabled Peoples' Empowerment

Arts, sports, life skills and wellbeing clubs for disabled children and adults.

iii) Our people's social action centre

We manage our building as a community anchor so that it is a focal point for local communities and civic activity, a home for voluntary and community organisations, and a space where local people and statutory agencies can come together to promote and bring about positive social change.

iv) Research and knowledge exchange projects

We organise activities that generate and collate evidence of what delivery strategies are most effective at tackling poverty and social exclusion at a local level and establish opportunities for evidence sharing and knowledge exchange.

This post is an exciting opportunity for a housing solicitor with at least two year's post qualification experience. Candidates must be results orientated, committed to our vision, and have a track record of dealing with and supervising a broad range of Social Housing, Property, and Landlord and Tenant disputes - including possession proceedings, unlawful evictions, homelessness matters, and disrepair matters.

As an organisation we are particularly keen to ensure that our staff reflect the diverse nature of the community in which we work. We value diversity and warmly welcome applications from disabled people, the LGBTQ communities and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Working at Cambridge House is immensely rewarding. If you would like to be part of this very special organisation and believe that you can manage the development of our Law Centre, we welcome your application. You can find out more about our work, including our corporate strategy and most recent audited accounts on our website www.ch1889.org.

I do hope that you choose to apply for the role.



The Cambridge House Law Centre

Helping vulnerable people to save their homes, keep their jobs and protect their families

- i) Our Law Centre provides free expert legal advice and representation in the areas of housing, welfare benefits, employment and public law.
- ii) Recognised as a Centre of Excellence by the London Legal Support Trust and holding Lexcel accreditation for quality legal practice management and excellence in client service, Cambridge House maintains a reputation as one of the country's leading law centres.
- iii) The Law Centre holds Legal Aid Agency and Southwark Council contracts and generates more than £200,000 per annum in legal fees.
- iv) The team comprises four solicitors (including the Law Centre Manager), one caseworker and an administrator. New three-year funding from the City Bridge Trust will fund a skilled Crisis Navigation Adviser position to work flexibly across housing and welfare benefits.
- v) Working with around 2,500 clients every year, the Law Centre's recent successes have included:
 - Achieving a historic recognition of the rights of homeless people by winning a Supreme Court case defining vulnerability and priority of need. This was the first Supreme Court case concerning a homeless individual with a disability in 30 years.
 - Excellence in case outcomes protecting the homes and incomes of vulnerable individuals:
 - 100% success rate in possession/eviction proceedings, enabling clients to protect their homes.
 - 100% success rate in homelessness challenges, protecting homeless individuals' right to housing.
 - 100% success rate in welfare benefits appeals.
 - 100% success rate in welfare benefits appeals to the First Tier Tribunals encapsulating legal issues for example, overpayment of tax credits or housing benefit. Disallowance of ESA, PIP, DLA.
 - Advice given on Judicial Review matters such as unreasonable delay, breach of a statutory duty such as failure to send decision notices notifying the claimant of his or her appeal rights.
 - Appeals to the Upper Tribunal on point of error of law.
 - Cases involving the right to reside, habitual residence test, or Windrush issues.
 - Housing Benefit backdating revisions and supersessions.
 - Social Fund Reviews.
 - Advice given on entitlement to contributory-based benefits, such as maternity allowance, contribution-based JSA/ESA.
 - Income Maximisation.
 - Advice given to elderly clients in respect of Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance.
 - Advice on all aspects of employment related enquiries.

- Excellence in client service:
 - 93% were “Very Satisfied” with overall level of service.
 - 97% rated the overall service as “Excellent” or “Very Good”.
 - 93% reported increased awareness of their rights and responsibilities.
- vi) The Law Centre is embedded in the local community It is closely involved in local advice networks and belongs to a consortium of advice organisations providing welfare benefits, employment and housing advice and casework services to Southwark residents who do not qualify for legal aid.

Job Description and Person Specification

Job Title:	Housing Solicitor
Responsible to:	Law Centre Manager
Responsible for:	Staff and volunteers allocated to the post
Location:	Cambridge House
Salary:	£33,000 to £38,000 per annum depending on experience
Working Hours:	35 hours per week
DBS:	Enhanced

1. Job Purpose and Objectives

As a member of the Law Centre team to:

- i) Provide high quality legal advice and representation to users of the Law Centre in the field of Housing.
- ii) Keep up to date with practices within the field relating to provision of a quality advice service and spot opportunities for business development and the enhancement of the current services offer throughout the Law Centre.
- iii) Drive casework performance so that income targets are achieved, and Legal Aid income is maximised.
- iv) Ensure compliance with relevant legislation, regulatory and accreditation frameworks, Legal Aid Agency and local authority contracts, grant conditions and best practice.

2. Main Duties and Responsibilities

a) Housing Law

- i) Provide advice, casework and representation to clients in Housing Law at all levels including County Court, High Court and above.
- ii) Work with the Law Centre team to ensure compliance with all professional body requirements and grant conditions including, for example, the accreditation and audit requirements of Lexcel, the Legal Aid Agency, Peer Reviews and the Housing Possession Court Duty Schemes (HPCDS).
- iii) Maintain accurate and complete files and records in line with professional standards and Cambridge House procedures.
- iv) Ensure billing targets are met and the timely progression, accurate reporting and closure of cases.
- v) Assist with running the legal aid contract as appropriate, bill files, complete legal aid applications and comply with other Legal Aid Agency and Lexcel requirements.
- vi) Undertake outreach, community education and social policy-related work, and participate in a rota to provide a regular evening advice session and possession duty schemes.
- vii) Keep abreast of other relevant services, policies and issues in the sector including national and local trends and developments.
- viii) Consolidate, build and maintain key service partnerships including, as required:
 - Representing the Law Centre in partnership, sector and stakeholder meetings.
 - Developing effective working relationships with relevant external organisations including, for example, local, regional and national networks, policy and service delivery forums.

b) Case work

- i) Maintain a Practising Certificate in your own name and:
 - Conduct the number and range of cases necessary to maintain compliance with Legal Aid standards.
 - Undertake the training and professional development required to maintain compliance with Legal Aid standards and best practice.
- ii) Provide advice, training and casework in your area of expertise for the Law Centre, and represent clients in courts and tribunals, with the possibility of combining this work with one of the other areas of Law conducted by the Law Centre.
- iii) Manage complex cases and take on cases which break new ground.
- iv) Be responsible for your own word processing, filing and case recording within AdvicePro or other such systems as may be used for case management.

3. General Responsibilities

- a) To keep abreast of the overall work of Cambridge House.
- b) To participate in regular supervision and annual appraisal, and to be committed to own professional development.
- c) To participate in internal/external meetings, as required, to attend conferences and other functions, and to contribute to general management decision making, as necessary.
- d) To comply with all of Cambridge House's governance policies and procedures.
- e) To carry out any other duties commensurate with the role.
- f) To work occasional unsociable hours (evenings and weekends)
- g) Travel across, and on occasions, outside of London.

This job description is provided as a guide to the role. It is not intended to be an exhaustive description of duties and responsibilities. It will be subject to periodic revision as the emphasis on and ways of working within the role changes.

Person Specification	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	A qualified solicitor (England & Wales) with a current practicing certificate	1. Ability to meet Solicitor Regulation Requirements regarding taking on trainee solicitors.
Professional Knowledge and Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least two year's significant and recent post-qualification casework, representation and advocacy experience in housing law. 2. Experience of undertaking work in a legal aid practice and a detailed understanding of legal aid eligibility requirements and legal aid applications, 3. Track record of managing a varied caseload of sufficient to achieving high billing targets. 4. A commitment to the role of Law Centres in the provision of legal services with knowledge of legal/advice sector and Law Centre development. 5. Substantial experience of handling a wide range of cases (public and private sector) in your area of expertise, including a wide range of representation experience in courts and tribunals with the ability to take cases through the higher courts. 6. Knowledge of and ability to run case files in accordance with the Lexcel standards. 7. Experience supervising trainees (or other staff members) undertaking casework. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working in voluntary/public /health sector environment 2. Experience of working with clients from diverse communities. 3. Experience and knowledge of family, social welfare and/or employment law 4. Knowledge and awareness of broader access to justice issues and policies.

Skills, abilities and competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highly developed sense of legal professionalism and a commitment to access to justice with excellent client care skills. 2. Ability to working collegiately and collaboratively within Cambridge House and demonstrate sensitivity to group dynamics, respect of alternative points of view and be able to build on the contribution of others. 3. Ability to liaise and work effectively in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders. 4. Ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, take initiative and responsibility for completing tasks in a fast-paced environment, set priorities, work independently and in a team environment 5. Excellent written and oral communications skills demonstrating the ability to work effectively with a variety of people including colleagues, young people, vulnerable clients, visiting and resident professionals and the public. 6. Numerate, detail orientated and analytical. 7. Ability to work flexible hours, including evenings and weekends 8. Strong interpersonal skills at all levels and an ability to create a positive and professional working environment 9. Windows, Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, SharePoint etc.) and case management software gained over a minimum of two years 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional languages 2. Financial Management and Budgeting
Personal Attributes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Honesty, reliability and excellent time-keeping 2. Loyalty and a commitment to Cambridge House's work 3. Positive, enthusiastic and friendly attitude 4. Problem solving and 'can-do' approach 5. Listening skills 6. Flexible, motivated and adaptable to change 7. Discretion 8. Client-focused 9. Team-player 	

How to Apply

Please include the following in your application:

1. A short evidenced-focused supporting statement of no more than two sides of A4 explaining why this appointment interests you and how you meet the essential criteria in the person specification.
2. Your curriculum vitae with:
 - i) Education and professional qualifications.
 - ii) Full employment history, giving details where applicable of budgets and numbers of people managed as well as relevant achievements in recent posts.
 - iii) Details of your latest remuneration and your notice period.
3. The names, positions, organisations and contact details of two professional referees:
 - i) Your referees must include employers covering the last five years of your employment history.
 - ii) References will only be taken once your express permission has been granted.
4. A completed Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form (attached)
 - i) The information provided will be treated as confidential and used for statistical purposes only.
 - ii) The form will not be treated as part of your application.
5. We request that you inform us if you will require any special provision because of a disability should you be called for interview.
6. Email, mobile, work and home telephone numbers, as well as any dates when you will not be available or might have difficulty with the interview timetable.

Recruitment Timetable	
Closing Date for applications	Friday 1 March 2019
Interviews	Week commencing 11 March 2019
The interview dates may be subject to change and candidates will be advised in advance should this happen	

Please email completed applications on or before midnight on Friday 1 March 2019 to Jan O'Day: joday@ch1889.org

If you do not hear from us within 14 days of the closing date, please assume your application has been unsuccessful on this occasion.

Please note that we only provide feedback to shortlisted candidates.