March 2024

Dear Applicant

**Welfare Benefits Caseworker**

Thank you for your interest in this post.

I am pleased to enclose:

* Information about Tower Hamlets Law Centre
* Job Description and Person Specification for Welfare Benefits Caseworker
* Application Form and Equalities Monitoring Form

The first stage of the recruitment process requires you to complete an application form. We use a strict equal opportunities approach, so only the information contained in the application form will be used to shortlist applicants for interview. Your ability to complete the form in accordance with instructions, and to communicate effectively using the form, will be used when assessing your suitability for the post.

Before completing the application form you should look very carefully at the job description and person specification. We will shortlist only those applicants who are able to show that they meet the essential criteria listed in the person specification in full. Please demonstrate on the application form how your experience, skills, abilities and interests enable you to meet the essential and desirable criteria. Tell us about voluntary experience as well as paid work and studies. Please mention other experience or qualifications which you feel are relevant to the job and explain why they are relevant.

Please email the completed application and monitoring forms only (without the other documents in this pack) to [recruitment@thlc.co.uk](mailto:recruitment@thlc.co.uk) as soon as possible.

We look forward to receiving your application.

Yours faithfully,

**Martin South**

Chief Executive

Tower Hamlets Law Centre

**About Us**

**About Tower Hamlets**

Tower Hamlets is one of London’s most deprived boroughs, with the highest rate of pensioner poverty in England and the highest rate of child poverty in Great Britain. Nationally, the proportion of households in the social rented sector is the fourth highest and that in the private rented sector is the fifth highest. There are 19,000 households are on the council’s housing waiting list. Tower Hamlets also has one of the most diverse populations in the country, home to many communities including the largest Bangladeshi community in the country (one in three of the borough’s residents).

Tower Hamlets Law Centre gives a voice to the people behind these statistics; people who are often in crisis, vulnerable, marginalised by society and experiencing discrimination. Demonised by the popular press and others, our clients need specialist legal advice and representation to give them access to justice that would otherwise be denied to them. By helping them to assert their legal rights, we not only defend their dignity and human rights, but promote their proper place as members of a fully functioning, genuinely inclusive society.

There are stark contrasts between the grinding poverty of some parts of the borough and the riches on its doorstep in Canary Wharf and the City of London. We represent the many victims of benefit cuts, too often characterised as ‘scroungers’ but leading lives of desperate poverty.

Tower Hamlets is still the traditional gateway to the UK of immigrant communities fleeing persecution or simply seeking a better life – Huguenots, Chinese, Jews, Bengalis, Somalis and more. Yet our clients - migrants generally, and refugees and asylum seekers in particular - are facing intolerance and persecution to an extent not seen in the last 70 years.

Against a backdrop of the relentless growth of new luxury housing developments in the borough, we represent people whose landlords force them to live in properties in such appalling disrepair that their health and that of their families is in peril. And we act for homeless people, marginalised by society to the point of invisibility, often working together with other local charities.

**About the Law Centre**

Tower Hamlets Law Centre has served the borough for more than 40 years. Today, we continue to meet the needs and address the disadvantage of around 1500 clients per year. They include women fleeing domestic violence, people who are in housing crisis, people with no income or recourse to public funds, those with complex benefit challenges, disabled children and adults.

We currently have legal aid contracts in housing and immigration. We also provide advice on welfare benefits, housing and immigration using funding from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets; and housing, employment, and immigration advice through regular pro bono evening advice sessions. We are able to pursue cases all the way from initial enquiry to representation in the higher courts, if necessary. In addition to our casework, we support other advice-giving organisations in Tower Hamlets by providing them with training and second-tier advice, equipping them to offer a better service to their clients.

We are accredited to the Law Society’s Lexcel standard for excellence in legal practice management and client care. We employ 14 FTE advice and support staff. Our welfare benefits team currently comprises a supervisor and a caseworker. In addition, we work with a large number of trainee solicitors from city law firms who volunteer at our evening advice sessions, and sometimes work on placement at the law centre.

The law centre currently receives funding from a variety of sources including the Legal Aid Agency, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, City Bridge Trust, Trust for London, and the London Legal Support Trust. We have long-standing partnerships with Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer and Norton Rose Fullbright.

Local people, service users, representatives of organisations in Tower Hamlets and others who support our work are entitled to apply to be members of the law centre. The law centre is governed by a Board of Trustees elected annually from the membership. The day to day management is led by a Chief Executive and Senior Solicitor.

**Job Description**

**JOB TITLE:** Welfare Benefits Caseworker

**SALARY:** c. £33,500 p.a.

**LINE MANAGED BY:** Welfare Benefits Supervisor

**MAIN OBJECTIVES:**

1. To provide advice and casework in welfare benefits law
2. To represent clients at tribunals

**Casework**

1. To provide advice and assistance on a wide range of welfare benefits issues.

2. To prepare and make written representations to the relevant authorities.

3. To conduct and present cases through all stages of welfare benefits appeals.

4. To raise target-based income for the law centre through cases funded by grants, contracts, the Legal Aid Agency, and private fees; and by claiming costs from other parties where possible.

5. To keep abreast of welfare benefits issues as they develop, both nationally and locally, and in particular as they affect our existing or potential client groups.

6. To assist in daytime and evening welfare benefits advice sessions and undertake all necessary follow up work.

8. To undertake outreach sessions as and when required.

9. To engage in project work, campaigning, training, publicity and information work and support to other agencies as required.

10. To act as an expert resource on welfare benefits matters to other law centre staff members and workers in other agencies.

**General**

1. To undertake work in accordance with the Solicitors’ Practice Rules with regard to the rules and principles of professional conduct and the agreed practice of the law centre.

2. To work under the professional supervision of the law centre’s Welfare Benefits Supervisor.

3. To attend staff meetings convened by the Welfare Benefits Supervisor, Chief Executive and/or Senior Solicitor, including meetings of the Board of Trustees if required.

4. To identify your own training and development needs and implement plans to meet them.

5. To work in accordance with the law centre’s policies and procedures as set out in its Office Manual and amended from time to time. We place particular emphasis on our Confidentiality and Equal Opportunities policies.

6. To assist in cover arrangements during the absence of other members of staff or at times of pressure.

7. To undertake your own typing, filing and word processing.

8. To undertake any other duties as may be reasonably required.

**Person Specification**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ESSENTIAL** | **DESIRABLE** |
| **1. Area of substantive law**   1. Thorough knowledge of welfare benefits law 2. At least two years’ experience of providing welfare benefits casework 3. Ability to explain complex legal ideas in Plain English to diverse audiences in a variety of media including effective writing skills | 1. Experience of dealing with and following through complex welfare benefits cases including preparation for hearings 2. Experience of representation at court/tribunal 3. Proven ability to keep knowledge up to date |
| **2. Ethos of the Law Centre**   1. Commitment to equal opportunities, anti-discrimination and social inclusion 2. Commitment to client-focused service delivery | 1. Experience of paid or unpaid work contributing to the promotion of equal opportunities, anti-discrimination and social inclusion 2. Experience of working in a not-for-profit organisation |
| **3. Management of workload**   1. Experience of identifying priorities, working to deadlines, balancing competing demands, spotting and averting crises 2. Ability to work remotely when required | a) Experience of managing workload without direct supervision  b) Experience of meeting reporting targets  c) Ability to speak a second language as well as English – particularly of one of the law centre’s client communities. |
| **4. Procedures and Administration**   1. Experience of complying with standards and procedures 2. Good IT skills, including use of MS Office, communications and case management applications | 1. Experience of participating in development of procedures 2. Ability to monitor and maintain recording systems and procedures |
| **5. Team working**  a) Willingness to share in routine tasks essential for the day-to-day running of the law centre  b) Experience of group negotiation and decision-making  c) A positive and constructive approach to problem solving  d) Willingness to share expertise, support colleagues and contribute to a productive working environment | 1. Experience of participation in consultative processes and implementing the outcomes 2. Experience of working as part of a team |

**Welfare Benefits Caseworker**

**Application Form**

*Please type or complete this form legibly in block letters and black pen. Address each criterion in the Person Specification in conjunction with the Job Description.*

**Candidates will be shortlisted solely based on the information contained in this application form - CVs or any other form of information will be disregarded.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1. PERSONAL DETAILS** | | | |
| **First name(s)** |  | **Surname** |  |
| **Address** |  | | |
| **Mobile phone no:** |  | **Home phone no:** |  |
| **Email:** |  | | |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **2. EDUCATION** | | |
| Include all relevant courses and qualifications, including short courses. | | |
| **School / college** | **From - to** | **Course studied and examinations passed** |
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| **3. EMPLOYMENT** | | |
| Please give details of all your work experience. Present or most recent employer first. | | |
| **Employer**  **name and address** | **From - to** | **Position and main responsibilities** |
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| **4. OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE** | | |
| e.g. voluntary work, campaigning, trade union work, involvement in women’s groups or black groups etc. | | |
| **Organisation** | **From - to** | **What you did** |
|  |  |  |

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| **5. KEYBOARD SKILLS** | | | |
| **Can you type?** |  | **Typing speed (wpm)** |  |
| **Which Word processing software**  **(eg. *Microsoft Word*) have you used?**  Please specify what level of experience have you attained and any qualifications gained. |  | | |
| **What other software are you familiar with?**  Please specify what level of experience have you attained and any qualifications gained. |  | | |

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| **6. FURTHER INFORMATION** |
| Please describe the experience you have which is relevant to the job and how the skills and abilities you have will enable you to carry out the duties of the post. You should go carefully through the person specification and show how you meet each of the requirements. |
| *Continue on a separate sheet if necessary* |

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| **7. LANGUAGES** | |
| **If you speak any language other than English, please specify:** | |
| **(a) which language(s)** |  |
| **(b) your fluency in the spoken language** |  |
| **(c) your ability to read and write the language** |  |

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| **8. NOTICE** | |
| **When could you start if offered the post?** |  |

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| **9. REFERENCES** | | | |
| Please give the name and contact details of two referees, at least one of whom should be your last or most recent employer, if possible. We will take up references after interview but prior to appointment. | | | |
| **Name** |  | **Name** |  |
| **Address** |  | **Address** |  |
| **Telephone** |  | **Telephone** |  |
| **Email** |  | **Email** |  |
| **Position held** |  | **Position held** |  |
| **Relationship to you** |  | **Relationship to you** |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **10. DECLARATION** | | | |
| I confirm the information I have supplied above is, to the best of my knowledge, true and accurate. I understand that deliberate misrepresentation or omission of factual information may lead to dismissal/legal action.  I give my consent for the information contained in this form to be processed in accordance with the policies of Tower Hamlets Law Centre for the purposes of recruitment and employment. I understand that if I am appointed, this application form will form part of my personal file and that if I am not appointed it will be stored for up to a year and then destroyed.  If appointed, I am prepared to accept the conditions set out in the job description and contract. | | | |
| **Signed** |  | **Dated** |  |

**This form must be returned to:** [recruitment@thlc.co.uk](mailto:recruitment@thlc.co.uk)

**Equalities Monitoring Form**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Information in this form is anonymous and treated confidentially. It is collected so that the Law Centre and its funders can monitor how well we are meeting the needs of clients from all sections of the community. We thank you for taking the time to complete this and return to the Law Centre.* | | | | |
| **Date:** |  | | | |
| **Ethnic Background** | | **ü** | **Deaf and Disabled** | **ü** |
| Asian – Bangladeshi – Aba | |  | Blind or Visual Impairment - B |  |
| Asian – British – Abr | |  | Deaf or Hearing Impairment – D/H |  |
| Asian – Indian – AI | |  | Learning Difficulty (LD)&(MLD)&(SLD) |  |
| Asian – Pakistani – AP | |  | Severe Profound and Multiple LD -SPMLD |  |
| Asian – Other – AO | |  | Emotional Behaviour Disorder - EBD |  |
| Black – African – BA | |  | Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder - ADHD |  |
| Black – British – BBr | |  | Downs Syndrome - DS |  |
| Black – Caribbean – BC | |  | Dyslexia - DY |  |
| Black – Other – BO | |  | Autistic Spectrum Disorders - ASD |  |
| Chinese – C | |  | behavioural, emotional and social difficulties - BESD |  |
| Latin American – LA | |  | Global Development Delay - GDD |  |
| Middle Eastern – ME | |  | Epilepsy - E |  |
| White – British – WBr | |  | Mental health - MH |  |
| White – Irish – WI | |  | Mobility - Mb |  |
| White – European – WE | |  | Physical disability - PD |  |
| White – Other – WO | |  | Other disability - OD |  |
| Other – O | |  | Prefer not to say - PNK |  |
| Mixed Ethnicity – ME | |  | **Sexuality** | **ü** |
| Prefer not to say – PNK | |  | Bisexual - Bi |  |
| **Religion/Belief** | | **ü** | Gay Man - Gay |  |
| Agnostic – Ag | |  | Heterosexual - Ht |  |
| Atheist – Ath | |  | Lesbian - Lb |  |
| Baha’i – Ba | |  | Other - O |  |
| Buddhist – Bu | |  | Prefer not to say - PNK |  |
| Christian – C | |  | Age Group | |
| Hindu – Hi | |  | Under 16 - A |  |
| Humanist – Hu | |  | 16-17 - B |  |
| Jain – Ja | |  | 18-24 - C |  |
| Jewish – Je | |  | 25-34 - D |  |
| Muslim – M | |  | 35-44 - E |  |
| Rastafarian – R | |  | 45-54 - F |  |
| Sikh – S | |  | 55-64 - G |  |
| Zoroastrian- Z | |  | 65+ - H |  |
| None – N/A | |  | Prefer not to say |  |
| Other – O | |  | **Gender/Identity** | **ü** |
| Prefer not to say – PNK | |  | Female - F |  |
| **Employment Status** | | **ü** | Male - M |  |
| Client – C | |  | Transgender - Tg |  |
| Staff – S | |  | Other - O |  |
| Volunteer – V | |  | Prefer not to say = PNK |  |
| Management Committee – MC | |  |  |  |
| Job Applicant – JA | |  |  |  |