

**Information pack for prospective employees**

**Post applying for: Housing Caseworker (Erewash)**

**Hours: 35**

**Closing date: 12noon Wednesday 17th January 2024**

**Interview date: Thursday 25th January 2024**

**Interview method: physical**

**For further information, contact Nikki Tugby on 01246 550674.**

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**Welcome**

Thank you for showing an interest in a role at Derbyshire Law Centre. We hope this pack provides you with useful information about Derbyshire Law Centre, the role you are interested in and the application process.

**Please note:** applications must be made on the Derbyshire Law Centre application form available under the News and Events section on our website, <https://derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk/news-events/>

**In line with Derbyshire Law Centre’s Environmental Policy we encourage any interested parties to consider carefully if they need to print this information pack.**

**Overview of Derbyshire Law Centre**

**The Law Centre**

Derbyshire Law Centre is a registered not-for-profit legal charity which was founded in 1989. The Law Centre enjoys support from the public and voluntary sector communities across Derbyshire. Its primary aim is to provide free specialist legal services in areas of social welfare law to individuals and families on low incomes.

Our primary specialist areas are:

* debt,
* discrimination - goods and services,
* housing,
* employment including discrimination,
* immigration,
* one to one specialist services, including homelessness prevention.

We employee 29 staff and have a number of volunteers who work in units (teams). Units are based around specialist areas of law. As an organisation we are a Disability Confident employer and strive to be an equal opportunity employer as supported by our Equality and Diversity Statement on page 8

Day to day management is overseen by a Collective Management Team (Workers Group), that consists of caseworkers and co-ordinators. Overall management is undertaken by a Trustee Management Committee, which is a board of volunteers who represent the communities the Law Centre serves.

**Our Mission**

As a peer led organisation our mission is to increase access to justice for disadvantaged individuals and communities through the provision of quality assured, accessible free and low-cost legal advice, information and representation to individuals and groups across our geographical area.

**Our Core Values**

The following are the values and principles that guide us.

* **Respect**

To treat everyone with integrity and respect, to value each other’s expertise and diversity. To take responsibility for what we do and support each other to succeed.

* **Create**

To respond to changing needs; by being innovative and resourceful.

* **Collaborate**

To collaborate internally and externally. To listen and share. To work as a team using all our expertise and skills together to achieve the best outcomes.

* **Care**

To show that we care by promoting personal wellbeing and adopting a safe and healthy working practice for staff, volunteers and clients.

**Regulation**

The Law Centre holds the Lexcel Legal Practice Quality Mark for all our specialist work, office management and governance. We are affiliated to the national organisation for Law Centres, the Law Centres Network -https://www.lawcentres.org.uk/ .

The solicitors employed at the Law Centre are regulated by Solicitors Regulation Authority and where appropriate the Office of the Immigrations Services Commissioner. Legal Executives are regulated by the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives.

**Delivery of Advice Services**

We use various methods to deliver our services. Central to the approach offered is meeting the client’s needs.

• Face to face advice– we see clients physically in our main office in Chesterfield. Where necessary arrangements can be made to see clients at other venues throughout Derbyshire. Our office is open Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4:30pm.

• Specialist telephone advice – all our legal specialist units provide advice via telephone. Days and times vary depending on the specialism.

• Virtual advice – we have the facilities to provide virtual advice when required.

**Covid 19 information**

Derbyshire Law Centre has recently (June 2022) moved to a hybrid approach embracing a mix of home and office working.

The possibility to work hybrid approach will be stated in the advert and job description.

To assist in the building of relationships with colleagues, the embracing of the organisation’s policies and its ethos new staff are expected to work their hours up to their first probation report (3 months) from the office. On completion of a successful probation staff can hybrid work if they wish (if in line with the job description).

The policy requires staff who work 35 hours or more per week to work 3 days per week from the office and staff who work less than 35 hour per week to work 2 days from the office. Staff who are a member of the Collective Management Team (detailed in the Job Description) will be required to attend the office 1 Wednesday out of every 4 to attend a face to face meeting.

All offices and interview rooms are Covid 19 secure. Full PPE is available to all staff, volunteers and clients and will remain so wherever there is a threat of a new variant. These measures are constantly under review.

**General Employee Information**

**Induction and support**

During your initial week in your new post you will take part in a thorough induction. This allows you an opportunity to meet staff, receive an overview of the organisation and our policies as well as an opportunity to ask any questions.

**Probation period**

All posts are subject to a 6-month probation period. Your probation worker is usually a member of the recruitment panel. Whilst on probation 2 formal review meetings will take place; one at 3-months the other at 6-months. After this period you will be allocated a Support Worker. All staff and volunteers are allocated a Support Worker.

**Hours**

Hours for your role are detailed in the job description. Full time staff work 35 hours per week. All staff are expected to maintain daily timesheets. The centre operates a TOIL policy, which allows staff to take back any time worked over their hours at a time suitable to the staff member and the organisation.

Core hours are 9:30am to 4:30pm, with a minimum of 30 minutes unpaid lunch break. A basic kitchen area (no cooker) is available for staff use.

**Dress Code**

Staff are expected to dress smart casual.

**Annual leave**

Staff are entitled to 31 days' annual leave, plus bank holidays (pro rata for part time staff). The leave year runs from January to December. Staff joining part way through the year will have their annual leave entitlement adjusted to reflect the remaining period of the year. Staff must ensure they have the relevant number of days available to cover the Christmas shut down period. Annual leave is requested and approved through a Sage HR application.

**Salary**

Staff are paid on the 15th of each month by BACS transfer. Expenses, depending on the amount claimed, are paid by BACS or cash. Wage slips are accessible through Sage HR. Staff are automatically enrolled into the Nest Pension Scheme but they can opt out. The current organisation contribution is 8% and is reviewed annually.

**Learning and Development**

Staff and volunteers are allocated an annual training budget. Dependant on the learning and subject to approval staff are entitled to study leave.

**Policies**

Derbyshire Law Centre has the relevant policies to comply with the Lexcel Specialist Quality Mark, as well as additional polices to ensure we remain a family friendly organisation. Additional policies include, but are not restricted to:

* Leave – annual, sick, sick dependant, maternity and foster leave
* Hybrid Working
* Wellbeing
* Menopause
* Bullying and Harassment
* Lone Working
* Flexible working
* Environmental
* Safeguarding

**Employee Assist Programme**

As part of our membership to the Law Centres Network all staff (and their immediate family members\*) of Derbyshire Law Centre have access to an Employee Assist Programme provided by Health Assured. The EAP provides confidential employee benefits designed to help you deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting your home or work life, health and well-being.

*\*defined as spouse/partners and children aged 16 to 24 in fulltime education, living in the same household.*

**Office Location**

Staff are accommodated in 2 offices located in Chesterfield town centre. The postal address for the registered office is:

1 Rose Hill East

Chesterfield,

Derbyshire,

S40 1NU

**Staff are required to:**

* Uphold our core values which include respect, create, collaborate and care
* Maintain confidentiality for clients and the business of the organisation
* Read and adhere to all Derbyshire Law Centre policies
* Use our case management system, currently Advice Pro, to maintain client records and record statistics
* Provide reports, information for reports and case studies when requested
* Work as a team member, this may include providing cover or support in another team when required
* Be responsible for their own learning and development
* Promote the Law Centre and its services externally
* Balance their work commitments with their personal life

**Staff can expect to:**

* Be treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and without discrimination
* Have any inappropriate behaviour, be that from staff or clients, challenged and not tolerated
* Where possible, be given opportunities to enable them to develop and meet their full potential
* Be able to ask questions and develop their knowledge in all areas of the organisation, not just their legal specialism or area of work
* Work in an environment that is free from hazards
* Be consulted on any major changes, issues or decisions within the organisation
* Have a right to balance their work commitments with their personal life.

**Promoting Equality and Valuing Diversity statement**

**Statement of Intent**

Derbyshire Law Centre is committed to achieving social justice and equality through providing free legal services to groups and individuals who, through reasons of disadvantage, have the least access to the law.

The Law Centre is committed to promoting equality and diversity in all areas of its operations:

* Promoting equality of opportunity
* Eliminating discrimination
* Eliminating harassment
* Promoting good community relations / positive attitudes
* Encourage participation
* Favourable treatment / positive action for those from under represented or
* disadvantaged groups
* Increasing community awareness of equality, diversity and discrimination
* issues.

Derbyshire Law Centre recognises that in this society, groups and individuals have been and continue to be oppressed and discriminated against on the grounds of, for example, their:

* Age,
* Association with a person who possess a protected characteristic,
* Caring responsibilities,
* Disability,
* Gender reassignment,
* Race (including nationality, colour, ethnic or national origins),
* Religion or belief (including those that are non-religious),
* Sex (including marital status, pregnancy, maternity and paternity),
* Sexual orientation (including civil partnership status),
* Socio-economic status (class),
* Offending background.

This statement applies to all aspects Derbyshire Law Centre’s operations: membership of the organisation, Management Committee, employment policy and practice, service delivery and working with contractors and suppliers.

Further information, including our most recent Annual Report and Accounts can be located on our website.

**Recruitment Process**

Derbyshire Law Centre is proud to have a robust and fair recruitment policy. Recruitment is conducted by a panel up to of 4 people; usually, 2 Management Committee members (trustees) and 2 staff members.

During the shortlisting process the panel have access to anonymised applications only. Applications are shortlisted against the person specification and candidates who meet the threshold are invited to interview. Please note that due to the demands on the organisation we cannot inform unsuccessful applicants of the outcome. If you have not heard anything within 2 weeks of the closing date please assume that you have not been successful.

**Disability/Accessibility**

If you require any adjustments to the recruitment process, application form or interview, please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss any reasonable adjustments.

**References**

Professional references are only requested once interviews have taken place and the successful applicant has **provisionally** been offered the post. Provision of an e-mail address for your referees will help to speed up this process.

If you cannot provide an employer reference, we will accept references from a named individual at a college where you have studied, or people who have known you in a professional capacity.

Please do not put down family members or people you live with as referees.

The formal offer of a post will be confirmed once we are satisfied with the references received.

**Criminal Convictions**

Derbyshire Law Centre is committed to the fair treatment of its staff and potential staff regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability or offending background.

Having a criminal conviction will not automatically exclude you from the post, much will depend on the type of role you are applying for, the conviction and the circumstances surrounding it.

**Entitlement to work in the UK**

If successful, the post is offered based on you having the right to work in the UK in line with Home Office Guidance and the law relating to the “prevention of illegal working”. We are required to have evidence of your right to work in the UK and will therefore request this information.

**Guidance Completing an Application Form**

Following the guidance below will help you to complete a strong application.

* We accept applications that are typed or hand written. If hand written please use black ink.
* Complete **all sections** of the form. In the ‘Employment History’ section state why you left a position. If possible, please explain any gaps in your work history.
* The last section, 'Why you feel you are suitable for this position' is called your **Supporting Statement.** This statementis the most important part of the application form as it is your chance to tell us how you meet the **essential and desirable criteria** as set out in the **Person Specification** – see below for more guidance.
* Make sure the form is tidy and try to avoid mistakes. Always read through your final version before you send it.

**Supporting Statement** – you should consider the following:

* Applications can only be assessed on the information you provide. You need to clearly demonstrate your capabilities.
* You need to explain how you meet the essential and desirable criteria and provide examples from your previous experience. Experience does not have to be paid work, you can refer to volunteering and other opportunities you may have had. Try to present your experience in relation to the job description.
* Present the information in a clear format, e.g. numbered points that correspond to the person specification.
* Follow the STAR principles – Situation, Task, Action and Result
* Ideally your supporting statement should be a minimum of ¾ of a side of A4 and a maximum of 2 sides.
* Use concise, unambiguous sentences and avoid exaggerations.
* Honesty is always the best policy.
* If you are making a career change, stress what skills are transferable to the role you are applying for.
* Ensure you return your application before the closing date.
* **DO not use your CV as the supporting statement as it will not be accepted.**

If you require an acknowledgement of your application:

* If emailing you can activate a read receipt from your email account.
* If sending by post you must enclose a stamped addressed envelope.
* Please note with limited resources, we cannot verify if we have received your application over the phone.
* Please note with limited resources, only successful applicants will be contacted.

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

**Title of the post**: Housing Caseworker (Solicitor/Legal Executive) (35 hours per week)

**Main purpose of the post:**

The post holder(s) will provide legal advice, information and representation to individuals and groups across the catchment area of the Law Centre. The work will be at a level suited to the post holder(s)'s particular abilities, experience and knowledge. The post holder(s) will specialise in agreed area(s) of law. However, in line with the other team members, the post holder will be flexible and prepared to take on work in other areas of law should the need arise.

**Location of the post:**

The post involves working on project funded work in Erewash and therefore requires a minimum of 2 days a week in Erewash Borough Council offices in Erewash.  The remaining days will be spent either at the Chesterfield Office or home-working, upon completion of the 3-month probation period.

**Responsible for:**

The post holder will not be responsible for any paid staff or unpaid staff.

**Supervision:**

The post holder will report to the Housing Unit.

**Responsibilities:**

* To be responsible for own personal development.
* To maintain confidentiality at all times.
* To maintain effective working relationships and contribute to a working environment which is safe, considerate and supportive of all.
* To demonstrate commitment to DLC’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

**Role Autonomy or Decisions Made:**

The postholder needs to be self-motivated, able to work on own initiative as well as part of a team, and able to manage work priorities.

**Main duties of the post:**

In conjunction with the Law Centre’s other advisers and solicitors,

1. To provide initial legal advice by telephone, in writing and in personon a wide range of legal issues as required.
2. To provide specialist legal services in agreed areas of law including interviewing and advising clients, researching the law, advocacy and negotiation, and representation in specified areas of law.
3. To participate in specialist area of law units including planning work around that area of law, accepting supervision of casework and undertaking training.

In addition,

1. To undertake post holder's own administration including maintaining adequate case records, dealing with legal help issues and word processing.
2. To undertake data collection and monitoring in conjunction with the housing team and partner organisations.
3. To supervise, train and support volunteers as appropriate
4. To provide talks and training to groups as appropriate.
5. To attend and participate in meetings including units, management collective, management committee and other relevant events.
6. To undertake any other duties as agreed between the post holder and management collective or management committee, in consultation with the relevant trade union where necessary.

**PERSONNEL SPECIFICATION**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Requirements** | **Essential** | **Desirable** | **How demonstrated** |
| **Qualifications / Education / Training** | legal training / core training in advice work | qualified solicitor or  Chartered Fellow of Institute of Legal Executives  Area of Law Supervisor status in housing | application form |
| **Knowledge required** | demonstrable interest in housing law | has or could achieve area of law supervisor status in housing  Use of Microsoft 365 packages, including Sharepoint and OnDrive | application form |
| **Experience required** | substantial experience of either housing casework or civil litigation (other than housing)  recent work experience of advising on issues relating to social welfare law | 1 years housing caseworker experience working under a legal aid contract  support and supervision of staff  working with volunteers  giving initial legal advice on a wide range of subjects  experience of acting as a duty advisor under the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme  recent experience of CCMS online legal aid  comprehensive experience of running a legal aid certificated case from start of the case through to the billing of the completed case  negotiation and court representation  using legal aid system (legal help and legal representation) | application form/ interview |
| **Skills and aptitudes** | be prepared to travel to work in Erewash 2 days a week  be prepared to operate under a Legal Aid contract  ability to manage a varied and challenging housing and/or civil litigation caseload  ability to work with and advise the public by phone, in person and in writing  ability to analyse problems and advise on a range of solutions in specialist areas of law  ability to present legal issues in a clear and easily understandable way  ability to organise a caseload and undertake their own administration | understanding of issues affecting not for profit agencies  be prepared to be flexible about work areas | application form/ interview/exercise/reference |
| **Personal qualities required** | willingness to work either co-operatively or independently.  motivation to join and share the ethos of Derbyshire Law Centre  commitment to equal opportunities and anti-oppressive practice |  | application form / interview |
| **Special requirements** | prepared to work some unsocial hours | able to drive or organise own transport to Erewash and around the catchment area | application form |

**What to do next?**

* Download an Application Form and an Equality and Diversity Form (see website under News and Events)
* Complete both, with reference to the guidance above and checklist below.
* Save a copy to your records
* E-mail both the application and equality and diversity information to [nikki.tugby@derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk](mailto:nikki.tugby@derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk)

**If you experience any difficulties downloading the relevant forms or require a hard copy please contact reception on 01246 550674.**

**Contact details:**

* **Telephone: 01246 550674**
* **Freephone: 0800 7076990**
* **Text: 07781482826**
* **Text phone: 18001 01246 550674**
* **e-mail:** [**dlc@derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk**](mailto:dlc@derbyshirelawcentre.org.ukj)
* **website:** [**www.derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk**](http://www.derbyshirelawcentre.org.uk)

**Finally, good luck with your application and thank you for your interest in**

**Derbyshire Law Centre.**

**Checklist for Completing an Application Form**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Section on application form** |  | **Tick** |
| **Personal Details** | * Check the telephone number and e-mail address are correct |  |
| **References** | * Check the telephone number and e-mail address are correct * It is polite to inform your referees of the application |  |
|  |
| **Education History** | * Completed |  |
| **Employment History** | * Included any relevant paid or voluntary experience * Supported statement with 3-5 bullet points outlining the main tasks * Explained any absences. If necessary send a covering letter. |  |
|  |
|  |
| **Personal Statement** | * Proofread to check spelling and grammar * Ask someone else to proofread for you |  |
|  |
| **E-mail / posting application** | * Checked recipient address is correct |  |
| **Deadline** | * Allowed time to submit and address any technical issues that may arise |  |
| **Equality and Diversity Form** | * Completed |  |

**Common mistakes when completing an application Form**

* Spelling and grammar
* Addressing the form to the wrong person
* Not following all the instructions
* Not tailoring the Personal Statement to the job applying for
* Gaps in work history
* Missing the deadline