

March 2022

**Recruitment of Solicitor / Senior Caseworker (specialising in Housing Law)
12-months fixed term**

Dear Applicant

Thank you very much for your interest in applying for the role of full-time Solicitor / Senior Caseworker at the Public Interest Law Centre. It is a very exciting time for PILC as we have recently embarked on the journey towards full independence as a Law Centre. With a number of significant high-profile current cases and some recent major victories for our clients, we now look forward to growing the litigation team to support and develop this high quality and strategic work.

This is an interim appointment, fixed for 12-months, as cover for the incumbent who is going on study leave. In addition to managing an existing caseload that delivers advice to survivors of domestic abuse and their housing matters, the successful candidate will work collaboratively with frontline organisations to promote a rights-based approach through capacity-building, legal representation and strategic litigation.

In this pack you will find:

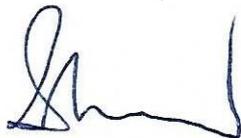
- Background information about the Law Centre
- Role description
- Person specification
- Application form
- Equality & Diversity form

After reading the enclosed information should you have any further questions please visit our website or otherwise contact Dermot Morrow on 07727 609 682 or dermot.morrow@pilc.org.uk.

Make sure to address as many of the points listed in the person specification as you are able. If you need more space, please limit your personal statement to **no more than two additional supplementary pages**. Please do not send CVs as these are not considered. Your completed application form should be returned by email to jobs@pilc.org.uk.

The closing date for applications is **9am on Tuesday 29th March 2022** and we anticipate holding interviews during the week commencing Tuesday 19th April 2022. I wish you the very best of luck!

Yours sincerely



Dermot Morrow
Operations Manager

Encs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



PUBLIC LAW | HUMAN RIGHTS | LEGAL ACTION

The Public Interest Law Centre (PILC) was initially set up in 2016 and registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in England and Wales (No: 1192355) in November 2020. For the purpose of Legal Aid, PILC acts as an agent of Camden Community Law Centre. This hosting arrangement will continue until a new tender is advertised by the Legal Aid Agency.

Mission

PILC exists to challenge systemic injustice. We do this by holding government and public bodies to account and promoting access to justice for dispossessed and excluded groups. PILC specialises in:

- Legal Representation in public law, claims against public authorities and public inquiries
- Strategic Litigation
- Legal Education
- Research & Advocacy

We represent individuals and communities who have been unfairly or unlawfully treated by public institutions. We use the law creatively and assertively through strategic litigation. We work closely with grassroots groups, campaigners and frontline organisations.

Why PILC exists

In the last 10 years, government has enacted politics of austerity which have impacted working class communities. It has also passed legislation to create a hostile environment for

migrants with enormous consequences for individuals and marginalised communities who were already at the bottom of the economic and social scale or on the margins of citizenship.

Welfare provision has been drastically reduced whilst government departments operate as gatekeepers. This is a well-documented practice that has seen vulnerable people die after being told they were 'fit for work'.

Immigration law continues to grow in complexity and many vulnerable people have borne the brunt of a brutal immigration system, whether they were British black people from the Windrush generation or EU homeless people who had fallen on hard times.

Austerity has also forced Local Authorities – who derive much of their budgets from central government - into making substantial budgetary cuts to local services, from social care to housing provision via libraries and youth centres. They have also sold public land and other community assets to compensate and raise necessary funds.

Our Approach

PILC promotes a rights-based approach that does not limit itself to defending ever more restricted rights. Instead we seek to expand fundamental rights for those who struggle to live with dignity and bring about wider social change. We work closely with grassroots groups, campaigns and frontline organisations through a hub model in key priority areas: racial justice and migrants' rights, housing/homelessness, violence against women, the impact of austerity and state surveillance.

Our 'Legal Hub' model includes the following activities:

- Strategic litigation, challenging unlawful policies and practices at local and national levels
- Provision of 2nd-tier advice & complex casework
- Capacity building by providing training and advocacy tools to improve quality of advice work
- Research that includes problem-identifying sessions with partners by reviewing trends and common issues in casework; monitoring policy developments; feeding into legal action
- Strategic Communications – influencing at local and regional level, publicising legal successes and working with sector partners to ensure their implementation, amplifying rights-based methodologies via traditional and social media.

Achievements

Through its litigation work, PILC stopped the arrest and removal of hundreds of EEA rough sleepers (2017), enabled settled migrants to access student finance (2018), prevented the sale of Southall Town Hall, an iconic building used by community groups (2018), forced the Home Office to provide destitute migrants on immigration bail a way to be supported (2019), ended Lambeth Council's deceitful housing scheme that pushed homeless families out of borough (2020). PILC also represented Ricky Tomlinson, Arthur Murray and Brian Williams (members of the Shrewsbury 24) in the Court of Appeal, which saw their 47-year old convictions quashed (2021-22). PILC continues to act on behalf of RAMFEL challenging an amendment to the Immigration Rules, which makes 'rough sleeping' a ground to refuse or cancel someone's right to remain in the UK. PILC also represents a number of individuals and groups in the Undercover Policing Inquiry, including a former Labour MP, anti-racist

campaigners, leaders of the Stop the War coalition and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

About the Project

Since 2019, PILC has worked in partnership with Solace Women's Aid to defend the rights of women escaping domestic abuse to access housing. We have trained and supported 170+ staff across 10 frontline organisations, followed by second-tier advice on 140+ cases to embed training and legal representation on 35+ cases, including to the London Covid-19 Crisis project.

We have also conducted research with frontline staff to spot trends and patterns from which we litigated. We successfully challenged LB Camden's use of mixed-gender accommodation for DV survivors. We issued a letter before claim to MHCLG on behalf of Southall Black Sisters and Solace Women's Aid (supported by 50+ org) to demand a number of changes to legislation and funding for DV survivors during lockdown. This resulted in £76m additional ring-fenced funding to support survivors of domestic abuse and introduced automatic priority need in the Housing Act. We also challenged Student Finance England's discrimination against DV survivors from migrant backgrounds.

Following the award of additional funding for the next 3 years, we plan to further focus our activities to the needs of black, minoritised and migrant women whose entitlements are much more limited by:

- eligibility issues coming from insecure immigration status and/or the NRPF condition,
- discrimination on race, religious and sex grounds.

Through additional training modules on community/social care, we hope to increase knowledge and confidence of frontline practitioners to use legal means to enforce the rights of black, minoritised and migrant women in accessing housing and welfare.

We hope to significantly increase access to safety, housing and welfare for those women by:

- Using the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) to expand the housing rights of women with NRPF via strategic litigation
- Developing a social/community care approach to securing housing for women with NRPF
- Using the Equality Act (2010) to stop vulnerable black and minoritised women being displaced from their community and support networks

We are committed to act as a Legal Hub for the wider legal community and the VAWG sector by coordinating the Domestic Abuse Housing Forum, a network of frontline DV workers, homelessness advice workers, housing and public lawyers and campaigners.

Our People

PILC is co-led by Jean Demars (Director) who oversees strategic, operational and financial management and Paul Heron (Senior Solicitor) who oversees legal matters, which includes casework management, litigation strategy and Legal Aid contract management. He is further supported by Helen Mowatt (Supervising Solicitor) who completes the management team.

PILC currently employs ten staff with a number of volunteers supporting our core work and projects. Most staff have come from grassroots campaigns and continue to be engaged in a wide array of social campaigns and projects outside of work. It is that experience that has helped PILC develop a distinct identity as a community lawyering organisation.

With the recruitment of a Solicitor/Senior Caseworker specialising in Housing Law, we aim to consolidate and build on the successful hub model, providing advice and supporting front line organisations to secure suitable and safe housing for survivors of domestic abuse and their children.

Our Trustees

PILC's board of trustees is made up of eight trustees including six women and four from minority backgrounds. Six trustees bring a rich experience of grassroots campaigning across a range of issues including: immigration, racial justice, housing, disability and labour rights.

Review of staff terms & conditions

At the time of this advertisement, the Law Centre is consulting with staff to improve its contractual terms & conditions and staff benefits. The review is expected to conclude in April 2022 and any changes to terms, conditions and staff benefits will be backdated to this date.

Lexcel accreditation

PILC attained our legal quality mark accreditation in December 2021. For the time being and for Legal Aid purposes we continue to operate as an agent of Camden Community Law Centre through which we have access to Public Law and Claims against Public Authorities contracts. We expect to tender for a LAA contract in Public Law in our own right when the next round of tenders is opened.

Registrations and memberships

PILC is registered with the Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Law Society. We are also a member of the Law Centres Network, AdviceUK and the Legal Aid Practitioners Group.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Solicitor or Senior Caseworker (Housing Law)
SALARY:	£32,000-£35,000 pro rata (depending on experience)
HOURS:	35 hours a week
CONTRACT:	One year fixed-term
BENEFITS	25 days holiday per year with pension contribution
LOCATION:	Bethnal Green, E2 and remotely as required
ACCOUNTABLE TO:	Supervising Solicitor
DIRECT REPORTS:	N/A
MAIN PURPOSE:	To provide legal representation to survivors of domestic abuse in need of housing and coordinate PILC's legal hub in the Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) sector.

Introduction

We represent individuals and communities who have been unfairly or unlawfully treated by public institutions. We use the law creatively and assertively through strategic litigation. PILC promotes a rights-based approach that does not limit itself to defending ever more restricted rights. Instead it seeks to expand fundamental rights for those who struggle to live with dignity and bring about wider social change.

The post-holder will maintain and develop PILC's legal hub in the VAWG sector with a view to strengthen the sector's response, assert a rights-based approach and develop strategic litigation. The post-holder will manage their own caseload and be responsible for facilitating billing. They will be supported by PILC's experienced litigation team.

Main Responsibilities

- Provision of legal representation to survivors of domestic abuse
- Provision of second-tier advice to legal hub partners
- Capacity-building of frontline organisations and grassroots groups by providing training and advocacy tools to improve quality of advice
- Research that includes problem-identifying sessions with partners by reviewing trends and common issues in casework; monitoring policy developments; feeding into legal

action and strategic litigation

- Coordination of the Domestic Abuse Housing Forum

Specific duties include:

Legal Advice and Representation

- Obtain accurate information and instructions from clients, analyse the legal and practical aspects of their claims and obtain the necessary documents/evidence to provide preliminary advice on prospects of success/costs & funding
- Interview clients and witnesses, draft statements, prepare court bundles
- Brief counsel, attend conferences and court with counsel
- Analyse and advise on strategy, tactics, and how best to achieve the most successful outcome for each client according to the particular circumstances of their case
- Enable clients to make informed decisions based on advice on legal and other appropriate considerations e.g. costs, funding and risks of litigation
- Ensure the timely and effective deployment of others involved in the matter e.g. expert witnesses, counsel, cost draftsmen
- Monitor all aspects of the case on behalf of the client and advise on whether subsequent developments affect views previously expressed
- Be aware of deadlines in all cases and adhere to time limits, to take necessary steps to protect the client's position
- Endeavour, where appropriate, to achieve settlement pre-litigation; otherwise to conduct litigation through to trial or earlier settlement and to deal with post trial/settlement considerations such as costs and enforcement proceedings, and to consider whether any decision should be appealed
- If applicable, comply with the Solicitors Regulation Authority's standards of professional conduct and ethics and, in particular, with the strict requirement of confidentiality of client's affairs, at all times.

Capacity Building & Training

- Maintain and develop excellent relationships with frontline agencies and grassroots groups to enable effective joint working.
- Develop and maintain tools and resources to support frontline agencies in working with survivors of domestic abuse in need of housing;
- Deliver training to VAWG organisations part of the Ascent Partnership and others accessing the Domestic Abuse Housing Forum
- Coordinate the Domestic Abuse Housing Forum

Client Care

- Deal with a vulnerable client group in a sensitive, professional and compassionate way
- Identify clients' objectives and seek to further them in a manner consistent with all professional and ethical obligations

- Anticipate as well as respond to clients' needs and demands.

Administration & Billing

- Prepare and manage funding applications to the Legal Aid Agency
- Maintain a full and orderly file with comprehensive attendance notes of all meetings, attendances and telephone calls
- Maintain such financial records and financial information as may be required by the Solicitors Regulation Authority or the Law Centre, including providing calculations of work in progress from time to time
- Facilitate claims for costs on an *inter partes* basis and from the Legal Aid Agency
- Adhere so far as possible to annual billing and performance targets.

Team Working

- Work closely with PILC solicitors to identify matters requiring Judicial Review and strategic litigation
- Provide supervisory casework support to trainee, caseworkers and volunteer advisers as required
- Work effectively with non-legal staff including operations manager and finance officer
- Attend and contribute to regular and special team meetings and discussions.

Social Policy

- Remain alert to the social policy implications of issues presented by clients
- Contribute to taking appropriate action to influence social policy in regard to these issues.

Other duties

- As applicable, complete and maintain as necessary any professional documentation or records (such as a Practising Certificate) as the Solicitors Regulation Authority or any other professional body may require
- Engage in regular managerial supervision
- Attend training internally and externally as agreed with the Supervising Solicitor and maintain a record of all training undertaken and CPD points.
- Undertake other duties which may be regarded within the nature of the post, in discussion with the Director.

Organisational standards

The post holder will be expected to meet the following organisational standards in how they undertake their work and conduct themselves in the post.

Professional Development

The post holder will:

- participate in the PILC team review and supervision processes as appropriate
- attend courses on new legislation, specialist skills and the use of information technology relevant to the role
- keep up to date with the changes in relevant legislation
- undertake such training as is necessary as to maintain the standards required.

Equality and Diversity

The Law Centre's clients are largely on low incomes and come from a diverse range of minority ethnic groups. The post holder will be expected to show a particular interest in working with this client group and to show an understanding of equality and diversity issues.

The post holder will have regard at all times in the planning and execution of their duties to the Law Centre's Equality & Diversity Policy and will implement that policy faithfully.

Review of this role

This job description is to provide guidance and direction. It is not an inflexible document, nor is it intended to limit the range of duties which could reasonably be expected of the post holder.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job ref: PILC/2/2022

SOLICITOR / SENIOR CASEWORKER IN HOUSING LAW

	Requirement	Essential	Desirable
1.	Qualified Solicitor or Senior Caseworker with a minimum of two year's experience across various areas of Housing Law (including homelessness, allocations, possession)	✓	
2.	Experience of acting for clients that are survivors of domestic abuse	✓	
3.	Experience of working with and understanding of the needs of black, minoritised and migrant women	✓	
4.	Demonstrable experience of conducting cases from initial advice to trial, including drafting pre-action protocol letters, instructions and witness statements	✓	
5.	Experience of undertaking publicly-funded work and knowledge of legal aid procedures	✓	
6.	Experience of developing and maintaining relationships with frontline organisations, including providing 2 nd tier advice	✓	
7.	An ability to deal sensitively with and communicate effectively with vulnerable clients	✓	
8.	A demonstrable commitment to access to justice and an interest in PILC's key priority areas	✓	
9.	Excellent time management skills, demonstrated by an ability to organise and prioritise a complex workload and meet tight deadlines	✓	
10.	Good interpersonal skills, including excellent communication skills both verbal and written and	✓	
11.	Extensive experience in file management, including the preparation of accurate attendance notes, time recording and good knowledge of billing procedures	✓	
12.	A commitment to the Public Interest Law Centre's Equality & Diversity Policy	✓	
13.	Ability to be self-servicing with competent use of the suite of Microsoft Office 365 apps as well as online-based case management systems	✓	
14.	Demonstrate willingness to work as part of the Law Centre's team and carry administrative and other duties shared amongst the staff	✓	
15.	Knowledge of Community Care law		✓

16.	Experience and knowledge of the key principles of public law and relevant legal procedures in judicial review litigation		✓
17.	Experience of grassroots campaigning or activism		✓
18.	A willingness and commitment to engaging in work that promotes PILC externally		✓