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**DIRECTOR OF GREATER MANCHESTER LAW CENTRE**

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

Greater Manchester Law Centre started as a protest against cuts and closures and opened our doors to provide legal advice and representation in 2016. We have received generous grants from national charitable trusts which have enabled us to ensure that a law centre exists in the centre of the conurbation; but we need to find ways to sustain this for the longer term future and to continue the challenges to the policies of the hostile environment which affect more and more people.

We have recently launched our Manifesto – Fighting Together for Free Access to Justice – and the Director of the Law Centre is required first and foremost to gain support for the aims it includes.

*We therefore seek someone who shares our political outlook and has the skills and commitment to take the law centre in the direction set out in the manifesto, and who will work together with others, especially “user-led” groups of people directly affected themselves, to change government policies and end the hostile environment.*

We need clear and strategic **senior management** of the law centre, **looking outward and upward,**

* who can use the Manifesto to put forward both policy and service developments,
* who can work with others (especially those groups of people directly affected) to increase our effectiveness with both the local decision-makers and the parliamentarians with whom we have already built good links, as well as with the universities, law firms, media and indeed the general public, and
* who can ensure that there will be financial and managerial sustainability for the law centre for the long-term future.

**Salary/scale:** SCP 33-43 £35,934 - £45,591

**Hours:** 35 per week

**Responsible to:** Chair of the Management Committee

**Role:**

Management

You will have responsibility for the strategic overview and development of the law centre’s core activities, using the Manifesto as the basis for strategic planning, campaigning and external relationships. You will be responsible for developing and managing charitable fundraising activities and organisational effectiveness, including setting the appropriate management processes to ensure the long-term viability of the law centre.

You will report to and work closely with the elected Board of Trustees (Management Committee) and be accountable for the delivery of outcomes as defined by GMLC’s strategic plan. You will have line management responsibility for the law centre’s paid and voluntary workers.

Promotion and Policy Demands

You will lead on the “upward looking” promotion of policy demands to government and other policy and decision-makers, including overseeing volunteers for research and publications.

You will lead on the “outward looking” building of relations with other like-minded organisations, including campaigns, trades unions, voluntary and user-led groups, universities / law schools, funders, GMLC members and others.

You will support and where appropriate initiate campaigns which highlight the difficulties faced by, and the resulting need for legal advice and representation for, people in Greater Manchester.

Fund raising

You will lead on all fundraising opportunities, including through volunteers where appropriate, in the following areas:

1. Public bodies – including health, local authorities, GMCA
2. Charitable trusts and foundations
3. Enterprise and opportunities for sustainable investment
4. Corporate legal sector
5. Individual giving and membership of the law centre, including promoting commitment to the principles of law centres and their continued place within communities
6. Legal aid contracts – with recognition of best practice in maximising income

You will support internal impact measurement systems to maintain high quality service delivery and strengthen the evidence-base of the impact of our work.

Service Development

You will work with the law centre solicitors to identify service development needs, gaps in provision, and opportunities to demonstrate the ways in which legal advice can play a fundamental role in reducing poverty and inequality, promoting people’s rights and entitlements, and access to the law.

You will work with other advice groups, including those led by people themselves directly affected, and with groups in other areas of Greater Manchester, to consider development of direct law centre services across the county.

Securing the base of the organisation.

You will be responsible for ensuring managerial and financial sustainability for the longer term.

**People**

* Managing paid staff at the law centre, including specialist solicitors and legal advisors.
* Ensuring employment and personnelpolicies and practices are in place and adhered to.
* Overseeing the recruitment and retention of paid workers, volunteers, and students.
* Ensuring that systems for supervision and appraisal are implemented throughout the organisation.

**Finances**

* Ensuring systems are in place for managing the day to day finances of the law centre.
* Providing financial reports to management committee.
* Managing the annual budget.
* Liaising with external funders and produce monitoring reports as required.
* Managing together with the supervising solicitor(s) the law centre’s legal aid contracts.

**Premises**

* Ensuring the smooth running and maintenance of the law centre premises.
* Ensuring the health, safety and well-being of law centre service users, staff, volunteers, and visitors through adherence and development of relevant policies and procedures.

**Regulation**

* Ensuring GMLC complies with all legal and regulatory requirements, including Charity and Company Law, Health & Safety, Employment Law, Equalities legislation/regulation,
* (and together with the supervising solicitor(s)) ensuring compliance with Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), and Legal Aid Agency requirements, and the maintenance of Lexcel accreditation.

**Planning and Development**

* Producing, implementing, and organising review of GMLC’s strategic plan, including by assisting the Management Committee to review progress towards achieving our aims.
* Preparing and implementing GMLC’s delivery plans.

**Governance**

* Ensuring that the Management Committee receive appropriate induction and support in understanding and carrying out their governance role.
* Servicing and supporting the Management Committee and its sub-groups.

**Publicity and Communications**

* Actively promoting GMLC and ensuring its continuing positive public profile. This includes the production of materials and social media presence.
* Representing the interests of GMLC to external agencies through ongoing liaison and relationship building.
* Ensuring effective internal communications, including staff and volunteers.

**Equality**

* Working to combat all forms of discrimination, and to ensure that the principles of equal opportunities are implemented in all work undertaken on behalf of the law centre.

To carry out the above, and any other duties commensurate with the responsibilities of the post which may reasonably be required, in a manner which actively supports and promotes GMLC’s aims.

**Person Specification:**

**Experience:**

You will have management experience of running projects or services which deliver tangible outcomes for people and/or communities – and preferably experience in the voluntary sector.

You will have experience of managing paid and/or voluntary workers including providing support, supervision, and training and be accountable for overall development of the staff of the law centre.

You will be able to demonstrate your abilities to fund-raise through multiple income streams.

You will have a track record of developing strong relationships with funders and supporters.

You will have the skills to develop high quality applications and proposals to generate income for service delivery and organisational development.

**Commitment and Abilities :**

You will be able to demonstrate your commitment to legal aid and the principles of fighting together to for free access to justice, as set out in our Manifesto.

You will be able to demonstrate your practical understanding of the experiences of people facing hardship, destitution, and racism – and your support for tackling these problems.

You will be an excellent communicator, presenter, and work well with a team.

You will be capable of working independently with a high level of self-motivation and drive.

You will be innovative, capable of making the most of new ideas and opportunities, and turning them into tangible benefits for the law centre.

You will be creative, well organised and capable of juggling multiple organisational priorities

You will have a high level of education or equivalent work experience with excellent writing skills and you will be capable of drafting high quality grant applications.

You will have the ability to develop and secure income for services in line with GMLC priorities.

You will have the ability to represent and promote the law centre to key partners across GM and the UK more widely.

**[APPENDED FOR INFORMATION]**

**Greater Manchester Law Centre –**

**Promoting the Restoration of Legal Aid and Ending the Hostile Environment**

**Background and Aims**

We started as a **protest** against cuts and closures of law centres in Greater Manchester – and we succeeded in gathering individual and community support, so that we were able to open an office, totally through voluntary energy. Volunteers have always been the backbone of the law centre.

We then became a **provider**, of legal advice and representation, with huge gains for many individual people across Greater Manchester. Since August 2016 we’ve raised the best part of £2 million in reclaimed welfare benefits which the DWP has wrongly refused to local people in need. We continue to emphasise the importance of free (but high-quality), independent, face-to-face access to advice, when so many services have retreated behind the barriers of phonelines or websites.

But **the climate is getting worse** (in every sense). Universal Credit adds to already-record levels of homelessness, while Parliament dithers over Brexit, fuelling escalating racism. We cannot just let this happen. So we now aim to be a **promoter** of the vital importance of legal aid, as a pillar of the welfare state – we seek “strategic litigation” which can raise legal issues affecting many people and not just the individuals in front of us, and we bring people together so as to advocate jointly our demand that government change the policies which cause such injustice for people in the first place.

This is why we recently launched our own Manifesto : “**Fighting Together for Free Access to Justice**”. [Please see [www.gmlaw.org.uk](http://www.gmlaw.org.uk)]

We know that if we don't collaborate to **end the hostile environment** – against both claimants and migrants – then in the next few years (if not sooner) all of us who seek to support disenfranchised people, whether as law centres, advice centres, or community advocacy groups, will be finished.

And this is why we need clear **senior management** of the law centre, **looking outward and upward,** who can use the Manifesto to put forward both policy and service developments, who can work with others (especially those groups of people directly affected) to increase our effectiveness with both the local decision-makers and the parliamentarians with whom we have already built good links, as well as with the universities, law firms, media and indeed the general public, and who can ensure that there will be financial and managerial sustainability for the law centre for the long-term future.

**Activities, Achievements and Ambitions – 2016-2019**

Internally, after three years of operation, we are in a **remarkably viable position** for any voluntary organisation in these difficult times.

We gathered together and maintained a very **strong and experienced Management Committee** (Board of Trustees) as well as taking on new members, specifically young lawyers and those with current finance /management skills. However key founder members cannot be expected to stay on the Board forever. We want to be able to hand over to a new generation.

We have **maximised efficiency and built up reserves**. These can take us well into 2020, if needed. Meanwhile we have gained towards 100 standing orders from individuals and /or lawyers, trades union branches and community groups – and we aim for 150 by the end of this year; but this will not be enough on its own to provide sustainability or security for the quality of work that we need to do.

We continue to **aim for financial self-sufficiency**, not reliant on state funding (legal aid as run by the Legal Aid Agency, or local statutory councils / Greater Manchester Combined Authority), and not reliant in the long term on any one charitable trust alone. Thus we obtained **legal aid contracts**, running from September 2018, in housing/debt/welfare benefits and public law; but we knew that the LAA restrictions would not enable us to cover anything like the degree or scope of legal needs which people present to us. We have sought funding – in fact, we have sought even a decision (or a hint of a decision) on funding – from the GMCA for over three years now, and we continue to discuss with and receive praise from leading members of this body. We have brought nearly £2.5 million into the county (in reclaimed benefits and grants/donations) while this sector has not given us a penny. They are of course under pressure, especially over our own key issues such as homelessness; and we will just keep trying, especially by promoting the Manifesto to them.

We have provided **legal advice and representation**, not just general advice – and by working with other voluntary organisations we have tried to be the **legal voice of the voluntary sector**. This includes legal campaigning (strategic litigation) to help many people not just the few individuals assisted directly, and raising demands together - to end benefit sanctions, stop Universal Credit, gain the legal right to secure homes for all, so as to end the reasons which bring people to us. Our Submission to the Work and Pensions Select Committee, on how “Mandatory Reconsideration” affected benefit claimants, arose from meetings with claimants themselves and gave direct voice to their experiences (our Submission was referenced a number of times in the Committee report).

We have helped to progress the law careers of three years’ worth of **new social welfare lawyers**, arising from our work with local universities. Their students represent law centre appellants and increasingly use this experience to good effect in their own attempts to gain barrister “pupillages”. Other law student volunteers provide us with carefully researched campaign articles for publication on our website. These include for example analysis of the removal of cladding (or not) by housing bodies in Greater Manchester and assessment of the impact of legal aid cuts, locally and nationally.

We work closely with related **services and campaign groups**, notably those who are “user-led”. Especially we have been tremendously supported by **Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit** – with whom we have worked jointly on Windrush and on the linked effects of immigration, asylum housing support and benefits. The Cornerstones scheme, involving GMLC, GMIAU and Caritas, has proved very successful in assisting people with multiple and complex problems across the board. Others such as Greater Manchester Housing Action, Acorn Tenants Union, Disabled People Against Cuts, collaborate and welcome our cutting edge publicity and mobilisation for their own activities.

We have tried to **develop services across Greater Manchester**, not just by offices but by outreach or otherwise – but this clearly needs enough local funding to enable local volunteers to make it as self-sufficient as we have succeeded in being in Moss Side. In the leading local group (in Bolton) there was a clear indication that funding would be provided to start up a fledgling local law centre under the umbrella of GMLC; but at the last minute the funding was undercut by another voluntary group. We encourage groups to collaborate to improve resources for all, rather than compete for dwindling crumbs of local commissioning – and we call for voluntary groups not to take government funding to implement unacceptable schemes such as Universal Credit; this has been particularly well received across the voluntary sector nationwide and our representations were referred by one of our MPs in the Parliamentary debate. But sadly some statutory bodies still use funding to “divide and rule”.

Most of all, while we encourage a **fantastically committed range of volunteers**, this is never to let the government off the hook because we carry out pro bono work. Government Ministers’ support for the “good work” of foodbanks is simply hypocritical. Access to justice should not depend on crowdfunding or car boot sales. We keep up the noise and the pressure.

**Outward and Upward**

**The law centre has gone from strength to strength**. We have been repeatedly shortlisted for prestigious awards, both as a “pro bono” initiative with the local law society and nationally for the student law schemes. [We have just learnt that we are on the shortlist for “**Charity of the Year**” – in the Campaigning and Advocacy section, at the Civil Society Awards on 5th June!] We have money in the bank. We have a team of 7 paid workers as well as over 100 active volunteers (more than 600 volunteers have passed through the centre since we opened). We have regained nearly £2 million in reclaimed benefits and provided advice in employment law (sessional solicitor and barrister) and representation in housing (including the current “squat” in unused NHS premises in Salford). We provided legal support to over 500 people in the last full year (2017-18) – nearly half of these in the nine districts outside Manchester – and over 2500 more received help with their general inquiries.

All this **informs our policy demands**. As a result, Shadow Justice Minister Richard Burgon MP now wants to use our model to develop a wider network of law centres, and local MP and Shadow Immigration Minister Afzal Khan represents our immigration concerns directly to decision-makers. We have the strong support of Salford MP and Shadow Business Secretary Rebecca Long-Bailey who keeps in touch with our developments and, as a former lawyer, [may have!] suggested a “levy” on the corporate law firms operating in the centre of the city of Manchester. Our local councillor Mahadi Sharif-Mahamed – who is a strong supporter of law centres generally, as his family was enabled to remain here thanks to the former South Manchester Law Centre – was the promoter of the successful resolution to Manchester Council to declare their support for ending indefinite immigration detention. We have maintained a constant flow of articles and news on our website and we have sought to influence the parliamentary political processes through our lobbying submissions. And we have made a lot of noise – as most recently with our Manifesto.

**But in the outside world**, **things are getting much worse.** Child **poverty** is at record levels in Greater Manchester. **Homelessness** is increasing still more relentlessly thanks in part to Universal Credit. **Windrush** revelations were tackled directly by the law centre during last year and we continue to work very closely with the **Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit**, on the practical advice to individuals affected as well as the policy implications of government (in)action on these issues. Quite possibly we will find ourselves working together to assist EU migrants too (one of whom is employed by us as half of our Development and Campaign post).

We cannot solve all this. As set out above, we started as a protest, turned provider, and now need to promote positive policy directions to decision makers. We need to work with others to change the current government’s hostility to some of those who are most deprived of justice.

We want to do this in mutually respectful ways, working together, not patronising those who come to us for legal aid, but rather seeking to empower groups of people as well as advising individuals. We offer **solidarity not sympathy!**

We also want to demonstrate our own example in order to help to develop more law centres if we can – we have had contact with possible developments in Lancashire (Fylde law centre, Lancashire Association of Trades Union Councils) and in Leeds (where we spoke to their planned start-up meeting recently) and we produced a Guide – “**How To Build A Law Centre**” which has received some wider publication. Within Greater Manchester we want to encourage the development of services more widely and more locally for people across the county, as well as raising the possibility of providing advice on more legal issues – again this is most possible by working with other organisations – especially those who are “user-led” – and with local elected representatives.

**Support for Strategic Management and Administration**

Consequently we believe that we need clear and strategic **senior management** of the law centre, **looking outward and upward,**

* who can use the Manifesto to put forward both policy and service developments,
* who can work with others (especially those groups of people directly affected) to increase our effectiveness with both the local decision-makers and the parliamentarians with whom we have already built good links, as well as with the universities, law firms, media and indeed the general public, and
* who can ensure that there will be financial and managerial sustainability for the law centre for the long-term future.

We therefore now seek **financial support for the stability of law centre management** for long enough to ensure that the measures we have taken to pursue our own financial sustainability can be fully realised. It is not that we think that our model of raising funds for ourselves has been unsuccessful, though it clearly needs more time to reach fruition.

Likewise we need **management of external service and joint fund-raising initiatives**. We have set up welfare benefits legal advice and representation and have taken on an excellent housing solicitor, and we have created some developments with other agencies which have proved both cost-effective and more useful for all involved than individually-based services. Several other agencies would like to see us provide sessional advice in their immediate service delivery (Mustard Tree is one such, whose work we regard highly; housing input to their own frontline activities could be a real asset).

Such initiatives may be both in **other areas of the county of Greater Manchester** and in other issues of law or with other types of service. Mental health, disability, homelessness are all sectors with whom we have started to work more closely and there is a need to oversee these developments from initiation to successful outcome. It is a “chicken and egg” question – without outward-facing management there is no real time for existing service-deliverers to organise such joint working effectively, and so the needs are presented to each individual service as further pressure, again reducing the chance of them having time to organise…….

A **Law Centre Manager** post will work with the specialist solicitors, for whose posts we have managed to gain enough funds and prospects of funds to ensure future legal advice service delivery for some time to come. They will work with other outside agencies to promote more wide-ranging developments; at the same time ensuring the strategic policy and publicity directions which we have set in place so far. The Centre has survived for most of three years without any paid administrative support; future management of the Centre must enhance this aspect of its structure too.

Financially we should be looking at a **three-way split of income** – our own contributions (individuals, community groups, fund-raising initiatives, affiliations from lawyers, universities and trades unions); the statutory and corporate sectors (LAA, GMCA, law firms and chambers, private sector generally); and, for the next three years, we are requesting ABCT / LEF contributions to our core costs, specifically for enhanced management and administration.

The Manager should then be looking at a similar **three-way split of responsibilities** – outward-looking joint service and fund-raising in Greater Manchester; upward-looking promotion of policy demands to government and other policy-makers; and securing the base of the law centre through strategic management of finances, premises and workforce – so that **while volunteers remain the backbone of the law centre, at their same time the inspiration which they have given for the last three years can result in the longer-term changes which their commitment deserves.**