

April 2021

Recruitment of Paralegal in Public Law

Dear Applicant

Thank you very much for your interest in applying for the role of full-time Paralegal 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.

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 Monday 26th April 2021** and we anticipate holding interviews during the week commencing Tuesday 4th May 2021.

I wish you the very best of luck!

Yours sincerely



Dermot Morrow
Operations Manager

Encs.

SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION



PUBLIC LAW | HUMAN RIGHTS | LEGAL ACTION

The Public Interest Law Centre (PILC) was initially set up in 2016 as a project of Lambeth Law Centre, starting by representing core participants in the Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI). As Lambeth Law Centre became insolvent in July 2019, PILC incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and started to act as an agent of Camden Community Law Centre (CCLC) for Legal Aid purposes. This hosting arrangement will continue until a new tender is advertised by the Legal Aid Agency (circa 2022). In November 2020, PILC became registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in England and Wales (No: 1192355).

Our 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 a politics of austerity and 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, 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 it seeks to expand fundamental rights for those who struggle to live with dignity and bring about wider social change. PILC works in partnership with grassroots groups and larger frontline organisations across various sectors through a 'Legal Hub' model that includes the following activities:

- 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 litigation, challenging unlawful policies and practices at local and national levels
- 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 has 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), compelled government to release £76 million ring-fenced funding to the Violence Against Women & Girls sector during C-19 first lockdown (2020) and successfully challenged LB Camden's use of mixed-gender accommodation for women escaping domestic abuse (2021). Most recently, PILC defended Ricky Tomlinson

and Arthur Murray (members of the Shrewsbury 24) in the Court of Appeal, which saw their 47-year old convictions quashed.

PILC continues to act on behalf of campaigners challenging the low number of social housing being provided as part of the regeneration of the Elephant & Castle shopping centre. PILC has also put the Home Office on notice in regards to its latest 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 continues to represent a number of individuals and groups in the Undercover Policing Inquiry, including the Stop the War coalition and ex-members of the SWP.

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 9 staff with a number of volunteers supporting our core work and projects. We are now planning to strengthen the litigation team with the recruitment of a Paralegal and a part-time Solicitor.

Our Trustees

The Law Centre's Trustees are Suzanne Muna (Chair), Sean Canning (Treasurer) and Niall Mulholland. The Board has ambitious plans to recruit further members during the next year with the requisite skills, experience and diversity to ensure the good governance and stewardship of PILC continues into the next phase of our development.

Lexcel accreditation

PILC are in the process of finalising our operational and compliance procedures ahead of our goal to attain Lexcel accreditation during 2021. Lexcel is a legal quality management standard, and one of the two possible standards that must be obtained in order to tender for a contract from the Legal Aid Agency. For current 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 anticipate being ready to tender for a LAA contract in Public Law in our own right when the next round of tenders are 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 REFERENCE:	PILC/2/2021
JOB TITLE:	Paralegal (Public Law)
SALARY:	£25,000 + statutory pension contribution
HOURS	Full Time 35 hours per week
LOCATION:	Bethnal Green, E2 and remotely as required
ACCOUNTABLE TO:	Supervising Solicitor
DIRECT REPORTS:	N/A
MAIN PURPOSE:	To support PILC's Supervising Solicitor with casework

Introduction

The Public Interest Law Centre 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. We work through legal representation, strategic litigation, research & advocacy and legal education.

PILC has been highly successful since its inception, winning a number of significant cases against government departments, local government authorities and other public bodies. Its successes have changed the law and administrative practices.

The post holder will work at the direction of and under the supervision of PILC's Supervising Solicitor, on cases they have selected for litigation.

Please note: the nature of PILC's litigation work may mean that longer hours may be required to be worked in particular weeks or at particular times. PILC has a flexible work hours policy which provides for this, offering time off in lieu of additional hours worked and monitoring the impact of workload on individual staff members.

Specific duties for the paralegal include:**1. Advice and Casework**

- a) Work on files as directed by the Supervising Solicitor
- b) Initiate files as directed/approved by the Supervising Solicitor
- c) Assist with the preparation of documentation to include Public Funding and liaising with the Legal Aid Agency

- d) Interview witnesses and clients to take statements and instructions, producing statements and summaries
- e) Research points of law, producing reports
- f) Maintain files (own and those of others as directed) in a logical and orderly fashion
- g) Prepare case, evidence and submission bundles in litigation matters
- h) Prepare files (own and those of others as directed) for billing or audit reviews
- i) Manage own caseload, keeping clear, accurate and timely records of all work done
- j) Provide supervisory casework support to volunteer advisers as required.
- k) Attend or arrange attendance at conferences, consultations, or hearings
- l) Attend court to issue proceedings and file documentation.

2. Partnership work and networking

- a) Work with partner agencies to progress cases
- b) Work closely with PILC solicitors to identify matters requiring Judicial Review and strategic litigation
- c) Maintain and develop excellent relationships with frontline agencies and grassroots groups to enable effective joint working.

3. Social Policy

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

4. Other Duties and Responsibilities

- a) Ensure that all advice, assistance and representation comply with Lexcel requirements whether undertaken under an LAA contract or not
- b) Carry out administrative tasks relevant to the post, including report writing where required
- c) Any other duties that could reasonably be expected of a person holding this post.

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 & 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 type of client group and to show an understanding of equality & 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.

Information Technology and Data Protection

The post holder will be expected to use computers on a regular basis. S/he will also be expected to take responsibility for their own word processing, recording keeping, filing and case recording.

The post holder will be expected to follow the Law Centre's data protection policies and ensure the security of client data.

Review of this role

This role 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. The job description will be reviewed at each appraisal in accordance with the Staff Appraisal Policy.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job ref: PILC/2/2021

PARALEGAL (PUBLIC LAW)

	Requirement	Essential	Desirable
1.	Two years' experience working in a legal practice or Law Centre	✓	
2.	Ability to work to instructions on cases at any stage of their development and/or on discrete aspects of cases	✓	
3.	Ability to interview clients and take witness statements and client instructions	✓	
4.	Ability to summarise client statements and complex reports, clearly and accurately	✓	
5.	Ability to manage own caseload and meet agreed targets	✓	
6.	Ability to prioritise your workload with the minimum of supervision	✓	
7.	Good attention to detail, well organised and able to keep accurate records	✓	
8.	Good interpersonal skills, including excellent communication skills both verbal and written	✓	
9.	Experience in preparing legal help forms and legal aid applications with little supervision, including applications for investigative legal aid and full representation as well as both emergency and substantive applications	✓	
10.	Ability to manage and amend legal aid certificates when required (including experience in making requests to increase both the scope and costs limitation under a certificate)	✓	
11.	Experience in file management, including the preparation of accurate attendance notes, time recording and billing	✓	
12.	Understanding of professional advice standards including concepts of conflict of interest and client confidentiality	✓	
13.	A commitment to ongoing professional learning and development of personal professional practice	✓	
14.	Understanding of the social setting and impact of the law and a commitment to achieving change for social justice	✓	
15.	A commitment to the Public Interest Law Centre's Equality & Diversity Policy	✓	

16.	Able to be self-servicing with competent use of Microsoft Office as well as other online-based case management systems	✓	
17.	Demonstrate willingness to work as part of the Law Centre's team and carry administrative and other duties shared amongst the staff	✓	
18.	A law degree or equivalent		✓
19.	Experience of participation in union, social justice or grassroots activism and campaigns		✓
20.	Experience in drafting High-Cost case plans for legal aid funding purposes		✓