



# Social Welfare Law Solicitor Recruitment Pack 2024

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
About Citizens Advice Leeds.....	1
About the role.....	4
Job description/person specification.....	5
Application guidance.....	8

## Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the role of Social Welfare Law Solicitor at Citizens Advice Leeds.

This pack is designed to give you an overview of our organisation and the work we do, details of the role and information on how to apply. If you have any additional questions about the role or application process, please email [jobs@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk](mailto:jobs@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk) and we'll get back to you.

Citizens Advice Leeds is a local charity that has been providing free and independent advice services for over 80 years and in 2024 is the leading provider of free advice in the city, helping around 30,000 people a year.

We are a member of the national Citizens Advice network, which includes around 250 local offices across the country, but we are also an independent charity and limited company, with our own responsibilities for employing staff and meeting relevant legal and regulatory standards. The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees with management responsibilities delegated to the Chief Executive and management team.

In 2024 we are entering an exciting new phase of development to expand the legal advice services we offer to Leeds residents. The legal advice team will be part of our Specialist Services department, working collaboratively with existing caseworkers, to provide clients with holistic advice on the multiple and complex problems they face.

To help us achieve those goals we have already recruited a Senior Solicitor to carry a caseload in Housing and are now seeking to appoint a Solicitor to carry a caseload in any Social Welfare Law subject, ensuring that quality standards and other KPIs are met. Alongside legal advice skills, we're seeking candidates with a commitment to access to justice and an interest in working in the not for profit sector.

I hope you find this recruitment pack helpful in considering your application and look forward to hearing from you.

**Dianne Lyons**

Chief Executive

## Timescale for applications

- **Closing date:** Applications will be considered as they are received, so please apply early.
- **Interviews:** Once your application has been considered we will contact candidates to arrange an initial interview, either in person or video call.

Due to high levels of interest in our roles, we are unable to respond individually to applicants who are not invited to interview. If you do not hear from us within 4 weeks of your application you should assume you are not being invited to interview on this occasion.

## About Citizens Advice Leeds

Citizens Advice Leeds is working for a fairer society where people are free from the effects of poverty and injustice.

We do this by providing free legal advice to individuals and campaigning for policy solutions to the problems we see every day.

In 2022/23 we helped nearly 29,000 people through our advice services:



The majority of problems we help with relate to financial difficulties, with many clients experiencing 2 or 3 related problems in housing or employment issues. The pandemic and cost of living crisis have led to more people experiencing financial problems and demand for crisis help with food and fuel costs has increased tenfold in the last few years. We've recently secured new funding to help us meet this growing demand, and are embarking on a phase of development to expand our legal advice, casework and telephone advice services.

Feedback from our clients shows the positive impact our work can have to improve people's lives, with more than half of respondents saying their emotional wellbeing had improved following our advice. Areas of dissatisfaction are wanting to access more specialist advice through Citizens Advice Leeds, and telephone waiting times.



Our funding comes from local and national sources, with Leeds City Council being our main funder. We also contribute to the delivery of national services such as the Help to Claim Universal Credit project and have developed local and regional services with support from Northern Powergrid and Yorkshire Building Society.

## Background to the role

Leeds has been experiencing a shortage of specialist advice services for a number of years, with cuts to legal aid and other funding leading to the loss of solicitors and caseworkers offering free legal advice in social welfare law.

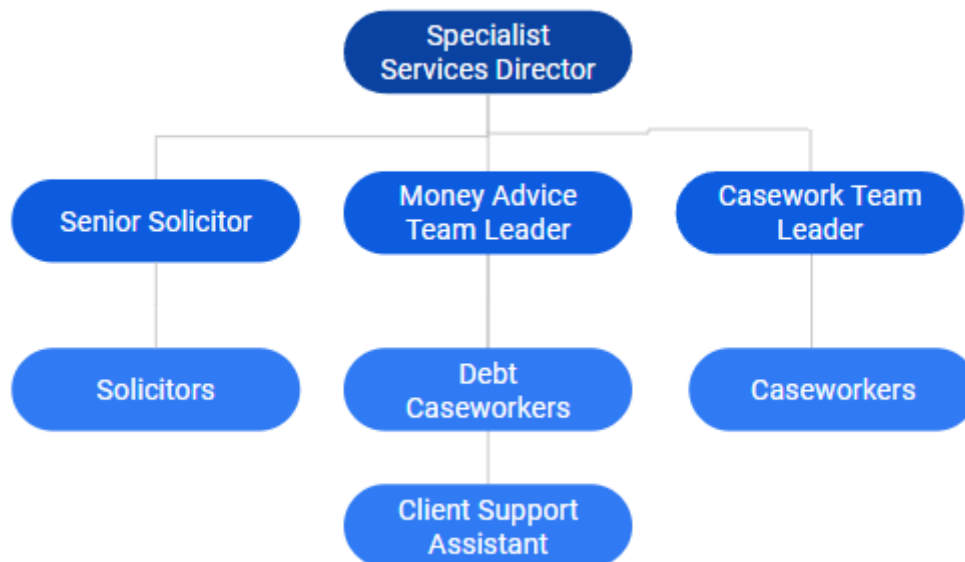
We're therefore very pleased to have been awarded funding that will enable us to increase provision of legal advice and casework services at Citizens Advice Leeds.

Our Specialist Services Director is leading the development of these services with the aim of achieving our ambition of becoming a Law Centre by the end of 2024, and helping a further 1,200 people a year initially, building to 2,000 people a year by 2025. As part of this development we have applied for legal aid contracts to start in September 2024.

We have recruited a Senior Solicitor who can supervise Housing and Debt cases, and are now seeking to appoint a Solicitor with a specialism in any area of Social Welfare law, with our top priorities being Housing, Family, Discrimination, Debt, or Welfare Benefits.

The Solicitor will work with the Senior Solicitor and other colleagues in developing our legal advice team and helping to ensure we're successful in securing and retaining legal aid funding. You will carry your own caseload, ensuring that Specialist Quality Mark, Legal Aid Agency and other relevant requirements are consistently met.

The legal advice team will be part of the Specialist Services department which includes specialist caseworkers, support workers and administrative support. The department is funded through a mix of support from Leeds City Council and the Money and Pensions Service, with legal aid and independent grant funding contributing to future expansion.



We're seeking candidates with recent post qualification experience in any Welfare Law subject. Alongside legal advice skills we're seeking candidates with a commitment to access to justice and an interest in working in the not for profit sector.

## Job description

<b>Responsible to:</b>	Senior Solicitor
<b>Hours:</b>	35 hours per week, some out of hours working, with time off in lieu
<b>Salary scale:</b>	NJC Scale Points 23-25, £32,077 - £33,945 p.a. depending on experience

---

### RESPONSIBILITIES

#### 1. Legal advice services

- 1.1. Provide specialist legal advice and casework in a Welfare Law subject. Maintain an active caseload and represent clients at court where required.
- 1.2. Ensure your work complies with internal and external standards including Specialist Quality Mark (SQM), Solicitors Regulatory Authority (SRA) and Legal Aid Agency (LAA) requirements.
- 1.3. Ensure that work in progress and billing targets are met.
- 1.4. Ensure that case recording is carried out to required standards and maintain accurate records of your work and time.
- 1.5. Work with caseworkers, advisers and other colleagues to deliver holistic advice to clients covering a range of social welfare law subjects.
- 1.6. Participate in regular team meetings and maintain high standards of conduct in the team.
- 1.7. Work proactively as part of the team to ensure KPIs are achieved and to address underperformance where necessary.
- 1.8. Contribute to internal and external monitoring reports as required.
- 1.9. Maintain an understanding of SRA standards and their application to the not for profit sector.
- 1.10. Support the Senior Solicitor and Specialist Services Director in retaining legal aid contracts, SQM and other relevant accreditation.
- 1.11. Comply with quality of advice procedures as set out in the quality of advice manual that ensures compliance with SQM and other relevant standards.

#### 2. General responsibilities

- 2.1. Contribute the delivery of advice services in accordance with organisation plans and the requirements of service contracts and agreements.
- 2.2. Abide by information assurance procedures in the legal advice team.
- 2.3. Attend team and other meetings as required.

- 2.4. Adhere to all the organisation's policies and procedures, including Health & Safety, Confidentiality and Equality & Diversity Policies, and ensure they are implemented in the legal advice team.
- 2.5. Foster good relations with advice agencies and other organisations and individuals with the aim of promoting effective partnership working to meet local advice needs.
- 2.6. Identify own training and development needs and agree with the Senior Solicitor on appropriate training and development activities to be undertaken.
- 2.7. Maintain an awareness of legislative developments, social trends and local issues likely to impact on advice needs and future service development.
- 2.8. Promote the aims, policies and membership standards of the Citizens Advice service.
- 2.9. Present a professional appearance, help maintain an orderly working environment and act at all times to uphold the good reputation of Citizens Advice Leeds.

This job description cannot cover every issue or task that may arise and the post-holder will be expected to carry out other duties from time to time which are broadly consistent with those in this document. This job description does not form part of the contract of employment.

## Person Specification

Essential criteria	
1	Solicitor with significant and recent post qualification experience in a Welfare Law subject.
2	Experience of implementing quality assurance processes.
3	Evidence of the ability to prioritise your work, meet competing deadlines and manage workload in a demanding environment.
4	Proven ability and willingness to meet appropriate targets (quality and quantity) set by funders and the organisation.
5	Excellent written and verbal communication skills and the ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of people.
6	Evidence of a commitment to challenging discrimination and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
7	Ability to analyse and interpret complex information and excellent attention to detail.
8	Ability to work independently and build successful relationships with staff, volunteers and other stakeholders.
9	Confident in using IT to carry out day to day duties (Citizens Advice Leeds uses Google Workspace, and Advicepro will be used by the legal advice team).
10	In good professional standing with the Solicitors Regulatory Authority and not excluded from working on legal aid contracts.
11	Evidence of continuous professional development and learning relevant to this post.
Desirable criteria	
12	Experience of working in legal aid funded services.
13	Understanding of and commitment to the aims and principles of the Citizens Advice service.

## Benefits of working for Citizens Advice Leeds

Citizens Advice Leeds offers a competitive remuneration package with additional benefits that support a positive work-life balance:

- Full-time hours are 35 per week with flexible working and hybrid working policies
- Annual leave entitlement starts at 25 days p.a. (plus 12 bank holidays) and increasing with long service
- Defined contributions pension scheme with an employer contribution of 6.5%
- Employee assistance programme with access to 24/7 telephone support
- We are a Disability Confident Employer and a Mindful Employer
- We are based in modern offices in a city centre location with good transport links

## Our commitment to equality and diversity

Citizens Advice Leeds is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive culture for our employees, volunteers, service users and other stakeholders.

We recognise the positive value of diversity, promoting equality and fairness, and challenging discrimination. We value the benefits of having a diverse workforce and will take steps to recruit from the widest pool of qualified candidates practicable, ensuring that employment opportunities are open and accessible to all on the basis of their individual qualities and personal merit.

Citizens Advice Leeds is a Disability Confident Employer and a Mindful Employer. We are committed to showing a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues and our employee policies and benefits support that commitment.



## How to apply for a role at Citizens Advice Leeds

### The application process

- You will find details about our vacancies and how to apply on our website [www.citizensadviceleeds.org.uk](http://www.citizensadviceleeds.org.uk) on the *Working for us* page. On this page you can download:
  - Job packs for current vacancies
  - Application form
  - Diversity monitoring form (online Google form)



- When you have filled in the application form please email it to us at [jobs@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk](mailto:jobs@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk)
- If you are shortlisted for a role we will contact you to invite you to an interview. Interviews are carried out by a panel of 2-3 people and are usually face-to-face. Interviews may be carried out online if necessary.
- We may also ask you to undertake an exercise as part of the assessment process. This could include providing answers to case studies for advice roles, making a presentation for a management role, or other appropriate activity.
- Following the interview process you will be contacted to inform you if we are making an employment offer or not. This verbal offer will be followed by a written confirmation subject to the receipt of satisfactory references and completion of ID and other checks as required for the role.
- Verbal feedback will be offered to candidates who are unsuccessful at interview but we do not provide written feedback.

## Application form

Download the application form to complete it & return it to [jobs@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk](mailto:jobs@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk)

Return your form no later than the closing date referred to in the advert. There is no requirement to send a hard copy in the post. If you need to submit your application by post or in another format because of a disability please contact us at [jobs@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk](mailto:jobs@citizensadviceleeds.org.uk) to make the necessary arrangements.

The application form plays a key part in our recruitment and selection process. We use the information you provide about your skills, experience, career and education history to decide whether or not to invite you for an interview. It is important that you complete the application form as fully and accurately as possible, ensuring that you give specific examples which demonstrate how you meet the criteria for the role for which you are applying. CVs will not be accepted as a substitute for the application form.

## Disability Confident Employer

As an organisation that values equality, fairness and diversity, Citizens Advice Leeds encourages applications from candidates from all backgrounds. We are a Disability Confident and Mindful Employer. We commit to inviting to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum (essential) criteria for the role. To opt into this scheme, please tick the relevant box on the application form. The essential criteria for the role are shown in the person specification. Please let us know if you have any access or adjustment needs as part of the recruitment process.

Please be assured we will be supportive in discussing reasonable adjustments with you at any stage of the recruitment process, although we cannot guarantee to be able to meet all requests.

## Entitlement to work in the UK

A job offer will be subject to confirmation that you are permitted to work in the UK in accordance with the provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. If you are invited to an interview you will be asked to provide evidence of your entitlement to work in the UK at that time.

## Diversity Monitoring

Citizens Advice Leeds encourages and welcomes applications from suitably skilled candidates from all backgrounds. Monitoring recruitment and selection procedures is one way of helping us to ensure that there is no unfair discrimination in the way that we recruit people. To do this we need to know about the diversity profile of people who apply for posts at Citizens Advice Leeds. This information is given in confidence for monitoring purposes only and is not seen by anyone responsible for making recruitment decisions. However, if you would prefer not to answer any of the questions we ask, please leave them blank.

Names and other identifying details are removed from application forms before they are shared with the interview panel.

## References

All job offers are subject to the receipt of two satisfactory references. One should be from your current or most recent employer. The other should be someone who knows you in a work related, voluntary or academic capacity. Both referees should be able to comment on your suitability for the role. References will only be taken up for successful candidates following interview.

## Criminal convictions

Anyone who applies to work within Citizens Advice Leeds will be asked to disclose details of unspent convictions during the recruitment process.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working for Citizens Advice Leeds but we are not able to employ anyone with a conviction for a sexual offence against a child or vulnerable adult regardless of when the offence took place. All other convictions will be considered on an individual basis.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosures are only requested where proportionate and relevant to the post concerned. If the post for which you are applying requires a DBS disclosure, this will be noted in the job description.