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**Housing Solicitor**

**About the role**

Mary Ward Legal Centre has an excellent reputation in the sector for providing high quality specialist legal advice across London. The impact of our advice work is deep and changes lives.

The Legal Centre is a very friendly and supportive workplace. You will be joining the Centre at an exciting time of growth as we have just expanded our locations and now have a lovely new office in Newham in addition to our office in Holborn, Camden.

You will be part of a friendly and committed team of housing solicitors providing high quality legal advice and casework on housing matters. The team currently consists of a Head of Welfare Benefits and Housing (solicitor), five housing solicitors, three trainee solicitors seconded from Clifford Chance and Linklaters, two welfare benefits caseworkers, three trainee solicitors, and a generalist adviser. The solicitors provide advice, casework and representation where necessary, mostly in the following matters:

* Homelessness – reviews and appeals.
* Defending possession proceedings and warrants for eviction – public and private sector tenants, particularly where there are complex issues of fact or law giving rise to a defence. This includes participating in the Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court Duty Scheme.
* Disrepair as a counterclaim to rent arrears.

We are looking for a housing solicitor with a minimum of two years’ experience of casework and representation in housing law, with experience of working under a Legal Aid Contract. We offer excellent terms and conditions.

Benefits

Salary: up to £40,137

Flexible working.

35 days’ annual leave in addition to statutory bank holidays.

6% employer's contribution to a pension scheme.

The post is 35 hours a week but we will consider requests to work part-time. You will be required to work from our offices in Camden (Holborn) and in our in Newham (Stratford).

# **About Mary Ward Legal Centre**

The Mary Ward Legal Centre is a pan-London charity providing free legal advice, casework and representation to people on a low income who otherwise could not afford to enforce their legal rights. Our vision is a society where everyone should have access to advice and representation to enable them to secure their legal rights and entitlements. Through the provision of free legal advice, we aim to tackle poverty and disadvantage through maximising incomes, reducing debts, saving homes and improving general wellbeing. The Legal Centre is part of the Mary Ward Settlement. The Settlement was established in the late 19th century to provide education and social services for the local community. Free legal advice has been given by the Settlement since this time.

We value working in partnership with other community organisations, including delivering advice through outreach. We have the Lexcel quality mark and have been commended for excellent client care. We have longstanding relationships with key professional partners in the legal sector, including Linklaters and Clifford Chance.

We employ solicitors and caseworkers to provide specialist legal advice and representation in the following areas of law:

* Debt: rent or mortgage arrears; council tax arrears, utility debts; Magistrate Court debts; credit debts; bankruptcy proceedings; Debt Relief Orders; county court claims.
* Housing: homelessness; defending possession proceedings and warrants for eviction; serious disrepair where a tenant’s health is at risk due to poor housing conditions.
* Welfare Benefits: helping people gain their full benefit entitlement through challenging negative decisions.

In addition to our casework service, we run free weekly legal advice clinics, delivered by volunteer lawyers, in the areas of: employment, housing, family and general civil litigation.

Each year we give legal advice and support to over 3,000 new clients. This figure doesn’t include work supporting existing clients.

Over 40 per cent of the people we help report having a disability and/or long-term health condition. Over 60 per cent are from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Clients access the services via face-to-face appointments at our office in Holborn and by telephone and video appointments.

The Mary Ward Legal Centre is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. The only Company member is the Mary Ward Settlement whose Trustees govern the Legal Centre.

The organisation employs 23 paid staff. This includes nine lawyers and four caseworkers, three trainee solicitors, support staff and a director. There are two trainees seconded from Clifford Chance and one from Linklaters – these trainees are seconded for three and six months respectively.

Staff are divided into the following teams:

* Welfare Benefits & Housing
* Debt
* Access to Legal Services
* Senior Management Team

### Funding and Income

The Centre has a turnover of approximately £1.1m. Funders include:

* Legal Aid Agency
* Money and Pensions Service – Debt Free Advice partnership
* London Borough of Camden
* Trust for London
* Henry Smith Charity
* Legal Education Foundation
* London Legal Support Trust
* Access to Justice Foundation

The Legal Centre receives some donations and support from law firms including Linklaters and Clifford Chance.

### **Diversity and equality**

Mary Ward Legal Centre provides services to disadvantaged people of all backgrounds. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the Centre’s practice and policy. We value diversity amongst our paid staff and volunteers.

We are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality and diversity within our policies and procedures. This applies to our professional dealings with clients, all staff (including all volunteers), other legal service providers, experts and third parties.

**Job Description**

**Job Title:** Housing Solicitor

**Hours:** 35 hours per week

**Reporting to:** Head of Welfare Benefits & Housing

**Purpose of the Post**

To provide high quality specialist advice and casework to clients in housing law, including representing clients at Courts.

**Duties & Responsibilities**

* To provide an advice and casework service to clients in housing law. This will include interviewing clients, assessing suitable courses of action, advising clients of their rights and responsibilities and on legal procedures, and preparing cases for and representing clients at the relevant court (including Duty Scheme).
* To maintain an up-to-date knowledge of relevant changes in law and policy and undertake training as required.
* To meet agreed billing targets.
* Manage own workload.
* To ensure prompt billing.
* To ensure that all advice, assistance and representation complies with the requirements of the Legal Aid Agency.
* To keep accurate case records and use the appropriate case management systems.
* To carry out regular file reviews and provide casework supervision as needed.
* To work as part of a team.
* To participate in staff and team meetings.
* Work within the policies of the Centre.
* To undertake other duties as may be identified and which are generally compatible with the functions of the post.

**Person Specification**

**Essential**

1. A qualified solicitor.
2. Minimum of two years’ experience of casework and representation in housing law.
3. Experience of working under a Legal Aid Agency (LAA) contract including Legal Aid Certificates and Legal Help and meeting billing targets.
4. An ability to manage a varied caseload.
5. An ability to raise income by use of LAA funding of cases and cost claims.
6. A commitment to deliver face-to-face advice services to vulnerable and disadvantaged clients.
7. A commitment to diversity and equality.
8. An understanding and commitment to safeguarding.
9. Ability to use Microsoft Office and IT skills to use the case management system.
10. An understanding of and commitment to professional advice standards including the concept of conflict of interest and client confidentiality.
11. An ability to prioritise your workload with the minimum of supervision.
12. Good interpersonal skills and the ability to work well in a team, encourage effective team work and maintain effective working relations with other teams.

**Desirable**

1. Meets the Legal Aid Agency Public Law Supervisor Standard.

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**Application Form**

Please complete the full application form and return to: [recruitment@marywardcentre.ac.uk](mailto:recruitment@marywardcentre.ac.uk)

*(If possible, please return the form in a word document)*

**Application for:**

1. **PERSONAL DETAILS**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Surname: |  |  | Forename(s): |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | Tel (daytime): |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Address: |  |  | Tel (eve): |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | E-mail: |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | NI number: |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | DOB |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Do you have the current right to work in the UK: | YES/NO |
|  |  |  |
| Postcode: |  |  |
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1. **EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS**

**Higher/further education**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Institution | Exams | | |
| (name/address) | Date | Qualification | Grade |
|  |  |  |  |

**Secondary education**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| School | Exams | | | |
| (name/address) | Date | Level | Subject | Grade |
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**Professional training**

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| --- |
| Any technical, professional or occupational training/courses attended (please start with your most recent training) |
|  |

**Membership of professional institutions/societies**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Institution | Admission date | Class of membership/Number |
|  |  |  |

1. **WORK HISTORY**

**Current/most recent employer**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Company: |  |  | Job title: |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Address: |  |  | Date started: |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Date left: |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Reason for leaving: |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Postcode: |  |  | Notice period: |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Responsibilities (brief): |  | | | |

**Other Employment**

|  |
| --- |
| Employer |
| (name/address/tel) | Role & duties | Date started | Date left | Reason for leaving |
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**Voluntary/Community activity/ Public Positions**

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| --- |
| Please give detail of any relevant voluntary / community activity or public positions held |
|  |

**Employment Gaps**

Please give details of any gaps in your employment history record, including unemployment.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **From (Month/Year)** | **To (Month/Year)** | **Reason(s)** |
|  |  |  |
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1. **SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

(Which should state how your experience and achievements meet the job description and the selection criteria given in the person specification for the post for which you are applying. Please use a maximum of three additional A4 sheets if necessary. Short-listing of candidates for interview will be made on the evidence given in the supporting statement).

|  |
| --- |
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1. **OTHER INFORMATION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Are you related to any employee or member of the committee at the Mary Ward Settlement? | YES / NO  *If yes, please give details:* |
|  |
| Where did you see this post advertised? |  |

1. **Criminal Records Disclosure**

Because of the nature of the work for which you are applying, enquiries may be made of the Disclosure and Barring Service to ascertain whether or not your records reveal any criminal convictions. The post is exempt from the provisions of Section 4 (2) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exemptions) Order 1975.

If you are offered a position, you will be required to declare all spent and unspent convictions. The Mary Ward Settlement encourages applicants to disclose any spent or unspent convictions.

Have you ever been convicted, bound over or cautioned in respect of a criminal offence? (Declaration subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) Do you have any prosecutions pending against you?

|  |
| --- |
| Yes / No  *If yes, please provide details in a password protected document* |

1. **REFERENCES**

Please give the name, address, and contact details for two referees – one should be your current or most recent employer. We do not accept personal or character references. Please indicate if we may NOT approach them prior to interview.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **First referee** | |  | **Second referee** | |
| Name: |  |  | Name: |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Address: |  |  | Address: |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| How they know you: |  |  | How they know you: |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Tel: |  |  | Tel: |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| E-mail: |  |  | E-mail: |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Contact: | Before/after interview |  | Contact: | Before/after interview |

**‘This organisation is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of clients and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.’**

1. **DECLARATION**

I declare that the information given is true and correct. I give consent to my referees being contacted as indicated. I understand that the information on this form will be processed by the MWS for the purpose of recruitment and personnel administration. I understand that canvassing or giving false information will disqualify my application, or if discovered after appointment, may be grounds for dismissal.

**[Please note: if you are unable to sign the form online, please print your name in the signature line]**

Signature: Date:

*Your signature on this document gives the Mary Ward Centre the right, under the Data Protection Act 1998, to process the information you have given, including data of a sensitive nature, for processes relating to your application for employment, which have been notified to the Offices of the Information Commissioner. Any processing of the data by the Centre will be in accordance with the Centre’s Data Protection Policy and the processing principles set out in the Act. Application forms of unsuccessful candidates will be destroyed after 6 months.*

**Data Protection Privacy Notice - Job applicants**

The Settlement processes personal data relating to job applicants for vacancies as part of its normal operational activities. Personal data is any information that can be identified to a specific, living individual and processing means collecting, holding or using that information. The Settlement’s registered office is 275-285 High Street, Stratford, E15 2TF. All references to the Settlement apply equally to its constituent parts: the Mary Ward Centre, the Mary Ward Legal Centre and the Blackfriars Settlement.

The Settlement’s Data Protection Officer is the clerk, Beverley Campbell. Beverley can be contacted by email – [beverley.campbell@marywardcentre.ac.uk](mailto:beverley.campbell@marywardcentre.ac.uk).

The reason for collecting this personal data is to fulfil our obligations to you as a candidate. We also have a legal obligation to gather equality data so that we can try to ensure that our recruitment practice is open and fair. This means the legal basis for processing is (a) in order to fulfil our legal obligations, and (b) because it is necessary to fulfil the legitimate purposes of the Settlement. For successful candidates we will keep staff related data for 6 years after the date an individual leaves the employment of the Settlement. This is to enable to offer references that are as full and accurate as possible. For unsuccessful candidates we keep the data for 6 months.

This personal data will only be shared with an organisation that has a legal right to see it. In practice this makes it highly unlikely that the information will be shared with anyone until the individual becomes an employee of the Settlement. At this point they will receive a privacy notice relevant to staff. Equality data is not reported at an individual basis and so no personal data is ever shared. We will not share your personal data with anyone for the purpose of sales or marketing.

Under UK legislation there are a number of principles that apply to all types of personal data. The individual, to whom the data refers, also has a number of rights concerning their data. More information about both of these things can be found on our web-site at [www.marywardcentre.ac.uk/GDPR](http://www.marywardcentre.ac.uk/GDPR). If you are not satisfied that your personal data is being processed properly, and the Settlement has been unable to deal with your complaint satisfactorily, then you have the right to raise your concern with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO). More information about how you can do this is available at the ICO’s web-site www.ico.org.uk.