

# Advising Communities

Dear Applicant,

## **Generalist Legal Adviser**

Thank you for your interest in the above post. I am pleased to enclose the following information:

- About Advising Communities
- Job Description
- Person Specification

The closing date for this application is 5:00pm Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017  
Interviews are scheduled to take place on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018

We will only short-list applicants who have effectively demonstrated they meet the points on the Person Specification. You will note that the application form has been drafted to ensure each point is addressed. Please be aware that we will not be able to make any assumptions, or interpret information that is unclear.

We look forward to receiving your completed application form, which can be emailed or sent to:

Recruitment  
Advising Communities  
17 Oval Way  
London  
SE11 5RR  
recruitment@advisingcommunities.uk

## **About us**

Advising Communities is the legal advice, support and education charity for individuals in need and the essential organisations that support them in their communities.

We provide legal and technical advice, information and support to community organisations, charities and public-sector bodies across the UK. We are community building experts and provide specialist legal advice in all matters across the sector. If you need a lawyer, expert adviser, trainer or quality assurer we're here to help you navigate any challenge.

## **Our Vision**

Communities are happy, confident and capable of solving life's problems and planning a better future.

## **Our Values**

Human – people have unique and often complex stories. We take time to listen and understand before we offer our support.

Responsive – we adapt to changes in policy and the law so that our advice and support is as helpful as it can be.

Practical - our advice and support helps people and their organisations solve urgent challenges.

Enabling - we help people and the organisations that support them develop their skills and knowledge so that they're equipped to solve their own problems and the problems of their communities.

Client-focused – Our priorities are determined by the real needs of the people we serve.

Collaborative - we work with anyone who shares our vision or helps make change happen for communities and the people within them.

Non-judgmental - we focus on giving the right advice rather than judging the people or the organisations who need it.

## **Our work**

Our roots are in Southwark and that's where the core of our work still takes place, but our reach and our influence are extending nationally.

Our work is to advise, educate and support individuals and organisations in need. We aim to improve the wellbeing of the most vulnerable in our society by tackling their most pressing problems and concerns such as work, money, housing and immigration.

- We offer 1 to 1 advice and support through our drop-in clinics, where a conversation with an adviser can help individuals create a plan of action to turn their problem around.
- We produce accessible information and self-help guides around people's everyday affairs such as welfare benefits, housing and employment rights.
- We produce and share a knowledge bank of information and provide affordable legal services to organisations.
- We aim to help individuals who are at risk of common problems to prevent them occurring.
- We aim to work with individuals and organisations at an early stage in their problems to prevent them from becoming crises.
- We understand that problems are often complex and inter-related so we work with clients to identify root causes and take the right actions, in the right order, to find a resolution.
- We take action on behalf of the people we serve, but only where our position and experience will help achieve a better outcome. For example, negotiating debts.
- We offer training to help clients build the skills they need to engage fully in London life or to pass on these skills to others. Topics include employment rights, welfare reform, financial inclusion and digital skills.
- We offer language services so that all of our diverse communities can understand and take action on their problems. These include interpretation and translation services.
- We collaborate with other not-for-profit, public and private bodies to increase our overall impact on the community.

## Job Description

**Job Title:** Generalist Adviser  
**Employer:** Advising Communities (AC)  
**Responsible to:** Generalist Supervisor  
**Contract/Hours:** Flexible

### Job Summary:

To provide a generalist advice service to clients, providing support, education and casework.

### Responsible for

- Helping Advising Communities (AC) achieve its Vision and meet its charitable objectives
- Relief of financial need by the provision of free advice, information and advocacy services for people who would not otherwise be able to obtain such services through lack of means – particularly, but not exclusively in the London Boroughs of Southwark, Lambeth, Greenwich and Lewisham.
- Work with the programme manager and development team to identify opportunities for new services or service improvements.
- Ensuring all services provided by AC are effective and efficient, meet best practice and are of a consistent high quality delivering a high level of customer care and client satisfaction

### Advice giving

- Interview clients using sensitive listening and questioning skills to allow clients to explain their problem(s) and empower them to set their own priorities.
- Use up to date information sources to find, interpret and communicate the relevant information.
- Research and explore options and implications so that clients can make informed decisions.
- Act for the client where necessary by calculating, negotiating, drafting or writing letters and telephoning.
- Negotiate with third parties such as statutory and non-statutory bodies as appropriate.
- Refer internally or to other specialist agencies as appropriate.
- Ensure that all work conforms to AC's Staff Handbook and any external audits such as Advice Quality Mark and Debt Peer Review.
- Maintain detailed case records for continuity of casework, information retrieval, statistical monitoring and report preparation.
- Make referrals, where appropriate, to the specialist caseworkers.
- Deliver the service in accordance with the contract targets.
- Provide advice at outreach sessions as required.

### Social policy

- Assist with social policy work by providing information about clients' circumstances through the appropriate channel.
- Identify Social Policy issues and provide feedback to appropriate bodies.

**Professional development**

- Keep up to date with legislation, policies and procedures and undertake appropriate training.
- Read relevant publications.
- Attend relevant internal and external meetings as agreed with the line manager.
- Prepare for and attend supervision sessions/team meetings/staff meetings as appropriate.

**Administration**

- Use IT for statistical recording, record keeping and document production.
- Ensure that all work conforms to the AC's systems and procedures.
- Provide statistical information on the number of clients and nature of cases in a timely manner.

**Other duties and responsibilities**

- Carry out any other tasks that may be within the scope of the post to ensure the effective delivery and development of the service.
- Demonstrate commitment to the aims and policies of AC.
- Abide by health and safety guidelines and share responsibility for own safety and that of colleagues.

**Location of work**

- Primarily based at Advising Communities Advice Hub, but will include other locations where AC provides advice and services as well as other locations that may become necessary from time to time

**Person Specification****Essential experience**

- Minimum of 2 years paid advice experience of delivering an advice casework service in generalist advice, including areas of social welfare law such as welfare benefits, housing, debt, consumer and employment.
- Experience of working at a busy drop-in service.
- Experience of dealing with complex individuals and legal issues.
- Experience of giving advice objectively and sensitively and a willingness to challenge constructively
- Experience of managing own caseload and prioritising workload.

**Skills & Abilities**

- Understanding of the issues involved in interviewing clients.
- Ability to research, analyse and interpret complex information.
- Good analytical and problem solving skills with the ability to identify and prioritise needs and translate these into action plans.
- Enthusiasm and commitment to providing good customer service in particular when working with vulnerable clients.
- Effective written and oral communication skills with particular emphasis on negotiating.
- Ability to monitor and maintain own standards.
- Understanding of the issues affecting society and their implications for clients and service provision.
- Willingness to learn and develop skills in advice topics.
- Numeracy skills required to understand statistics and check calculations.

- Strong IT skills particularly in Microsoft word, Excel and Outlook and case management systems.
- Strong organisational skills, to meet deadlines and self-motivate with a positive attitude and can do approach.
- Flexibility and willingness to work as part of a team.
- Commitment to upholding the policies, procedures and values of Advising Communities and in particular, a commitment to ensuring Equality of Opportunities in all areas of practice and performance.