Recruitment pack for Caseworker - Welfare Benefits

Central England Law Centre



Central England Law Centre

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Dear Candidate

I am delighted that you are considering joining the Central England Law Centre team. This recruitment pack includes all the information you will need to make your application and also to provide you with some information about the Law Centre. You can also find more information about the work of the Law Centre on our website www.centralenglandlc.org.uk

You will be joining us at an exciting point in our journey. As we enter the second half of our five-year strategy, we are reflecting on what we have achieved so far while focusing on the opportunities and challenges ahead. This role will play a key part in shaping that next chapter. In this pack, you will find an infographic explaining our vision and the three strands of our strategy: people, partnerships, and policy.

Working at the Law Centre is a brilliant opportunity to not only use your existing skills and experience but gives you an opportunity to develop your skills further with our clients, our partners and being involved with policy work. Working at Central England Law Centre is immensely rewarding and you will work with a team of dedicated colleagues.

We provide training and support and a comprehensive induction programme to help you settle into your role. Our terms and conditions ensure that you have a good work life balance, company sick pay after a qualifying period, enhanced maternity leave pay, excellent annual leave allowance and a flexible approach to staff working in general.

We value diversity and warmly encourage applications from disabled and LGBTQIA+ people, candidates who share lived experience with our clients, and people from black, asian, and minority communities. If you require any adjustments to assist you in making your application or at interview (if you are shortlisted) please let us know. We want to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to apply for our roles.
We look forward to receiving your application. For more information please contact recruitment@celc.org.uk

Best wishes
Elayne Hill
Chief Executive



About Central England Law Centre

A fairer, more just society in which an understanding of rights and their power is embedded within communities.

Central England Law Centre is the UK's largest Law Centre. Our size enables us to provide legal expertise across eight different areas of social welfare law including: discrimination; employment; health and social care; housing; immigration and asylum; public law; and welfare benefits. This means that we can offer services that can address all of the interconnected problems people face in their everyday lives.

Our services are rooted in the communities we serve and we are an organisation that uses its legal expertise to improve the lives of those who are often vulnerable and socially excluded due to poverty, illness or disability.

The Law Centre is a charity employing solicitors and advice workers. We currently employ 75+ people across our two offices in Coventry and Birmingham. We receive funding from a variety of Foundations and Trust Funds and also from Coventry City Council for our work in Coventry. We hold a legal aid contract with the Legal Aid Agency in housing, community care, public law, family, welfare benefits (in the Upper Tribunal), immigration and asylum. We offer specialist advice, representation and advocacy and our aim is to use the law to seek change. We take on test cases that may well have an impact beyond the actual case fought. As well as our core advice and legal casework service we deliver a range of projects in partnership. We currently have projects for example with local universities, women's organisations, homeless charities, refugee support organisations and a GP surgery.

The Law Centre is a member of the national Law Centres Network. It is governed by a board of trustees, who are the Directors of Central England Law Centre - a company limited by guarantee. The Trustees meet monthly to monitor the Law Centre's work and give guidance on policy and direction. The Law Centre employs a chief executive officer (CEO), solicitors, caseworkers, admin and reception staff. Staff are organised into teams with a team head to lead and manage them. The CEO is responsible to the Trustees for the running of the Law Centre and advises them on policy issues. Each team covers one or two areas of law. Staff generally work in only one team but we recognise that many cases cross boundaries and staff therefore need to be able to work closely with other teams where their expertise are required. You can find out more about the Law Centre by looking at our website www.centralenglandlc.org.uk

Embedding rights in the community

Central England Law Centre

In 2022 the law centre refreshed its organisational strategy, developed with staff and trustees following the Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. Our rights in the community strategy sets out our vision of a fairer, more just society in which an understanding of rights and their power is embedded within communities.

The key driver for our approach and the biggest volume of our activity will always be our work with individuals to ensure more people are protected by their rights and to build their understanding of where they can use legal rights to protect themselves in the future.





We work alongside our strategic partners so that we can better understand the challenges and issues that local communities face. We share our legal expertise and in close partnerships with other community-focused services we help to place legal rights at the heart of their work and to activate a rights-based approach in their support.



We build alliances with organisations, pooling evidence of service gaps and patterns in clients' needs and using it as the basis of our activity and collaborative campaigns.

We take strategic action at a local, regional and national level to influence change in policy and legislation, ranging from strategic litigation, membership of local statutory steering groups, boards and advisory bodies through to the work of the Strategic Public Law Clinic, work on national campaigns and responding to calls for evidence.

Job description

Central England Law Centre

Job Title: Welfare Benefits Caseworker
Reports to: Head of Welfare Benefits
Department / Team: Welfare Benefits
Work Location: Coventry Office
Contract Type: Permanent
Salary: Caseworker £28,459 - £32,158, Senior Caseworker £33,067 - £34,655 (Depending on experience)
Hours: Full-time (37 hours/week) or Part-time (minimum 30 hours considered)

Role Purpose

To provide high-quality specialist welfare benefits advice, casework and representation to people referred to the Law Centre through CELC's projects and trusted community and voluntary sector partners.

The role will help clients understand and secure their entitlements, challenge incorrect decisions and resolve problems as early as possible, reducing the risk that financial hardship leads to wider difficulties in their lives. Working as part of CELC's wider multidisciplinary team, the postholder will contribute to projects designed to reach people who may otherwise struggle to access advice and ensure that welfare benefits issues are addressed alongside other legal and social welfare needs.

Learning and evidence from casework will be used to support CELC's work to improve policy, practice and systems, helping to prevent problems, strengthen access to rights and achieve lasting change for individuals and communities.

Key Duties & Responsibilities

The Welfare Benefits Caseworker will:

- Provide in-depth welfare benefits advice and manage cases from start to finish through face-to-face appointments, phone calls, and home visits when needed.
- Prepare appeal papers, gather medical and financial evidence, and represent clients at First-tier Social Security Appeal Tribunals. Identify when a decision should be appealed to the Upper Tribunal.
- Help clients resolve benefit problems early through casework and dedicated projects-focusing on issues like the benefit cap, sanctions, bedroom tax, deductions, and right-to-reside rules.
- Maintain high standards of case management, recording and client care in accordance with CELC's quality requirements, Lexcel and Legal Aid Agency requirements.

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Dependent on experience you may also be expected to undertake the following:

- To support colleagues within the welfare benefits team and the wider organisation.
- Provide training and support to frontline staff and stakeholders on key welfare benefits policy and its implementation.
- Prepare and present policy briefs, reports, and position papers to influence decision-making.
- Attend and actively participate in key forums and networks in support of the policy objectives.
- Build and maintain relationships with government agencies, voluntary sector partners and community groups.
- Review colleagues' files and carry out internal quality audits to make sure work meets Lexcel standards.
- Help less experienced advisers with technical questions, case planning, and difficult appeals.
- Draft applications for permission to appeal to the Upper Tribunal, and spot cases that may need judicial review.
- Help assess new enquiries and decide how cases are shared out across the team.
- Help track project targets and report case outcomes to funders.

General Organisational Responsibilities

- To demonstrate commitment to the aims, principles, and social justice objectives of Central England Law Centre, abiding by policies set out in the Staff Handbook and Office Manual.
- To actively champion and embed EDI principles in daily interactions, service delivery, and workplace culture.
- To keep up to date with relevant legislation, regulatory rules, data protection standards, and statutory codes of practice applicable to the role.
- To undertake any other duties reasonably commensurate with the grade and scope of the post as assigned by executive leadership.

Person spec

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Essential

- A demonstrable understanding of social justice and a commitment to the work of the Law Centre.
- Experience of working sympathetically and effectively with a wide variety of clients, including through face-to-face contact.
- An understanding of the common housing and benefits issues experienced by people facing multiple disadvantage.
- An understanding of the importance of confidentiality
- A non-judgemental attitude.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Excellent organisational skills, including the ability to prioritise multiple pending tasks and provide realistic timescales for completion, to ensure that key deadlines are met, and to work effectively when under time pressure.
- The ability to learn quickly and develop new skills.
- Ability to get on with people and be polite under pressure and to work co-operatively as part of a team.
- Able to organise and prioritise workload, ensuring excellent service to clients at all times.
- Self-motivated, able to work independently and on own initiative.
- Experience of using a case management systems and IT systems including Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook.

Desirable

- Experience preparing applications for permission to appeal to the Upper Tribunal or spotting potential judicial reviews.
- Experience reviewing other advisers' case files and checking quality against standards like Lexcel.
- Experience supervising, mentoring, or advising colleagues or volunteers.
- Experience designing and delivering welfare benefits training.
- Experience running advice projects and reporting figures to funders.
- Experience writing reports, briefings, or policy responses.

How to apply

To apply for the post you will need to provide

- An up-to-date CV which should include the names and addresses of your referees.
- A covering letter of no more than two sides of A4 which should include:

    - Please describe how your skills, qualities and experiences will allow you to meet the requirements set out in the Job Description. Where possible, provide examples (which could be from a professional, voluntary or personal context) which demonstrate those skills, qualities and experiences

    - Why do you want to work for Central England Law Centre?

- A completed equality and diversity form (downloadable from our website)

Please email your completed application to recruitment@celc.org.uk

Please do not submit any additional papers. We will only consider the information in the CV and personal statement.

We really want you to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your abilities and skills. We therefore strongly suggest that you pay particular attention to the job description and person specification when completing your application.

We will confirm receipt of your application by email. We will then shortlist applications and successful applicants will be contacted by email and telephone and invited for interviews.

How to apply

Please let us know of any arrangements we may need to make to enable you to attend for an interview. Our Coventry office is wheelchair accessible and has disabled toilet facilities, If you are attending an interview at our Birmingham office please let us know whether you need any assistance prior to coming to your interview.

The interview will last for approximately one hour. The interview panel usually consists of two people which would normally include the relevant team head. You may be asked to provide a short presentation or complete a written test. If this is the case you will be notified prior to your interview and provided with any further information. We will take up references only after interview. We require references from two people who will be able to comment on your suitability for the role. Usually, one should be your previous employer.

We monitor our selection process for compliance with our statement of commitment to equal opportunities. Identifying personal information and the equality and diversity monitoring form are separated from your CV and covering letter prior to shortlisting to ensure a fair selection process.