

SOUTH WESTMINSTER LEGAL ADVICE CENTRE

DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION

JOB DESCRIPTION

About SWLAC

South Westminster Legal Advice Centre is a charity, set up in 1998, which gives free legal advice to people who live or work in Westminster and who cannot afford their own lawyers. We give advice by email, and face-to-face at our clinics at The Abbey Centre, 34 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BU on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Currently, we are giving advice at the rate of about 2,000 people per year. We have about 120 volunteer lawyers, mostly barristers, solicitors, legal trainees and paralegals.

We are a Charitable Incorporated Organisation run by a Board of Trustees. We work closely with Lawworks, the Law Society's pro bono arm.

We are financed by donations, principally from law firms although also from Westminster City Council, some private individuals, and to a small extent by clients.

All our trustees and volunteers are volunteers – no one is paid.

More information is available on our website <https://swlac.org/>

Current administration

Until the start of the pandemic, we advised purely face-to-face from our own premises and used paper files. Our administration systems were very basic, and largely paper based.

A large amount of administration had been handled from the Centre's inception by a lady who was forced to step back to care for an elderly relative. Volunteer records were kept electronically by another lady who retired.

When the pandemic arrived, we initially shut our clinic.

During the pandemic we took the following administrative and related steps;

- Rapidly switched to advising by email;
- Set up an electronic document management system, Intralinks (available to us free through LawWorks);
- Considerably increased the number of volunteers;
- Strengthened and extended our law firm/legal department network, who make donations and encourage volunteers;
- Set up a website;
- Scanned our archived paper files onto an electronic data base;
- Prepared two online booking systems, operating through our website. One is for clients to book appointments. The other is for volunteers to book slots when they will be available. Both will go live soon;
- Made arrangements for our face-to-face clinics to operate from the Abbey Centre, and opened there in March 2022;
- Set about identifying a database/document management system;
- Purchased and set up 10 laptops for use at the Abbey Centre. Six are for use of volunteers attending the Centre. Four are for to enable clients present at the Centre to communicate via Zoom with volunteers working remotely.

Our administrative systems have not kept pace with all the changes over the past two years. Some records are kept by the trustee running the email advice and others by the trustee running the clinics, but they are rudimentary.

To a large extent, our administration needs rebuilding anew.

Our vision

We want to put in a modern administrative system covering all areas except financial administration (which is handled by our Treasurer).

The system will be IT based. We have been looking at combined administrative and document management systems. We have funds for this.

An important feature of the new system is that all our data be on the one system. At present, our data is in several locations, some is still paper based and we are overdependent on the continued availability of a few people.

We believe the best way of achieving this is to appoint a single Director of Administration who will have overall responsibility for achieving this vision.

S/he should build an Administration system and an Admin Team, with volunteers handling discrete functions and which will ensure continuity despite personnel changes.

This role will report through the Chief Executive (or person/s nominated by the Chief executive) to the Board of Trustees. We will aim to provide the successful candidate with full support to settle into the role, including frequent meetings/discussions and easy, quick access to Trustees who can help. We anticipate that from appointment, the Director of Administration will attend Trustees' meetings (which are held every month or so), and that the Director of Administration will in due course become a Trustee.

This is a new role. We are very open to developing it in conjunction with the Appointee as it develops.

As a variant on the above, the role may suit an individual who is looking for a, say 6 month, project in the form of setting up the system but will then hand over the running of the system.

Our target is to have the new systems in place by the end of 2022.

The Candidate

We believe the successful candidate (who need not be a lawyer) will have the qualities and experience listed below.

- Alignment with the aims and ethos of SWLAC.
- Good inter-personal skills, particularly taking onto account that s/he is working with unpaid volunteers who are mostly in demanding full-time jobs: , this requires sensitivity, and different management to paid staff.
- Experience of working as an Administrator at a senior level in a medium to large organisation
- Happy and able to strike a balance as to what decisions s/he may take independently as against these that should be referred to a Trustee.
- Experience of IT systems including - ideally but not necessarily - document management systems.
- Ability to devote a good deal of time, especially over the first six months after appointment to get the system set up.
- Energy and integrity.
- The desire to get involved hands-on in a project that makes a real difference to local individuals' lives.

Terms

The position is unpaid but expenses will be reimbursed.

Time commitment is for discussion/agreement. We hope to make substantial advances in the first six months. We believe the initial focus will be on identifying the database/document management system and getting it up and running.

Either party may terminate the position at any time without notice but will aim in normal circumstances to give not less than three months' notice to the other.

The Appointee will work from home. We do not have an office. Attendance from time to time at our advice sessions at the Abbey Centre, so as to see how things are working (or not working) in real time, will be strongly encouraged.

Specific tasks

The following is a list of what we see as the major elements of the role but it is not, and cannot be, exhaustive. To quite an extent the Appointee will have to create their own detailed job description.

- Identify the IT database/document management systems to be acquired. Advise the Board accordingly. (We have investigated these and can give guidance. Our inclination, for cost reasons, is to use an off the peg system, not anything tailor made.)
- Set up the new system. This will include creating databases of volunteers and clients, ensuring compliance with data protection requirements.
- Building admin team with volunteers.
- Keep the database up to date.
- Troubleshoot.
- Security and malware.
- Put in place and run access arrangements to the system i.e. who can access what.
- Health and safety
- Arrangements with the Abbey Centre
- Organising induction and limited training for new volunteer lawyers.
- Liaising with the Treasurer about insurances e.g. public liability; laptops.
- Overall awareness of and compliance with the requirements of LawWorks and the Bar.
- Supervision of laptops e.g. ensuring all functioning effectively
- GDPR compliance
- Website. Appointing a webmaster with appropriate reporting arrangements
- Running the telephone appointments service
- Some liaison with volunteers and law firms, including rotas for volunteers to attend clinics

- Client appointments system.
- Office supplies e.g. printer ink.
- Fundraising in conjunction with London Legal Support Trust i.e. London Legal walk and other sponsored events.
- System to deal with client emails e.g. forwarding to correct person.

In conjunction with the Appointee, we will work out the priority in which the objectives will be handled.