

Job description

Job title: Immigration advisor

Reports to: Immigration Service Manager

Salary: £36,352 (OISC L2), £38,750 (OISC L3) or £42,192 (with IAAS Supervising Senior Caseworker accreditation) plus benefits

Contract: permanent, full time (35 hours) or contact us for part-time options

About us:

The Cardinal Hume Centre works to prevent and tackle youth and family homelessness. We:

- Provide a home with support for up to 39 young people and adults age 16 -24
- Support children and families in housing or other need
- Offer housing and welfare rights advice to help people keep or find a stable home and to manage their money
- Advise and coach people to find work, learning or training
- Provide immigration advice to help people secure their legal right to remain in the UK to access homes, work and benefits.

Last year we helped over 1300 people including nearly 600 families and over 300 children and young people, aiming to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty from a young age. Our approach is personalised and integrated, with support offered across our services.

The Centre is based within five minutes' walk from Parliament but works in an area where homelessness in nearly all its forms has increased. Around 3,800 children from Westminster experience homelessness and live in temporary accommodation. Over 25% of children live in poverty. Families face unaffordable housing costs, a challenging labour market and rising levels of crime and discrimination.

With an annual income in the region of £3.5 million, the Centre currently employs around 65 dedicated members of staff and around 45 volunteers.

About the role:

Our immigration advice team is made up of six staff including solicitors, advisers and a paralegal. In this role you will help ensure the Centre can provide OISC level two and three advice at a high standard, including cases funded by the Legal Aid Agency. You will also provide support and training to colleagues working at level one and play an active role in maintaining and developing relationships across the sector to help ensure the Centre maximises its impact.

Last year the Centre supported 336 clients through its specialist immigration advice, helping 171 to secure or extend their right to remain in the UK.

Job description:

1. Provide tailor made advice to individual clients. Work in partnership to assist them in problem solving and engage them in making informed choices about their future direction.
2. Act as a point of contact within the Centre for all queries and questions relating to immigration advice, working closely with other teams to provide an integrated support to clients.
3. If you have the IAAS senior caseworker accreditation, act as the key advisor with regards to Legal Aid work, including prioritising Legal Aid cases and ensuring that Legal Aid is used whenever appropriate throughout the team.
4. Provide advice on appeal cases to the First Tier Tribunal and Upper Tribunal (IAC)
5. Work to Office of Immigration Services Commission (OISC), Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) and Immigration and Asylum Accreditation (IAAS) standards.
6. Keep up to date with changes in law and policy relating to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and promote understanding of the reasons why people seek sanctuary or migrate. Share key information across the Centre.
7. Report case outcomes against agreed standards and produce statistical information for management and funding purposes.
8. Maintain information on the client database in order to enable clients to gain timely access to support and legal services.
9. Maintain and develop relationships with partner organisations and act as a key contact point.
10. Manage your own caseload to deadline.
11. Undertake training identified as beneficial and in agreement with your line manager towards CPD requirements.
12. Deliver core work flexibly and undertake other duties as required including working occasional anti-social hours including evenings and weekends for which TOIL will be available.
13. Follow the Centre's safeguarding procedures in line with legal regulatory requirements.

Person specification

Essential:

1. Accredited to work at OISC Level two with at least one year's experience undertaking casework at this level.
2. Experience of providing advice and assistance under the Legal Help and Controlled Legal Representation Scheme.
3. Experience of preparing appeals at the First Tier Tribunal (IAC) and Upper Tribunal (IAC).
4. Up-to-date knowledge of UK Asylum and Immigration Law/procedures and an understanding of legislation that has an impact on migrants living and working in the UK.
5. Proven track record of providing quality casework and representation.
6. Ability to deliver a legal advice/representation service alongside colleagues providing holistic services to vulnerable/homeless client group.
7. Experience of establishing and maintaining working relationships with partner organisations.
8. Knowledge and understanding of equal opportunities and cultural diversity in the context of providing advice.
9. Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
10. Good knowledge of safeguarding procedures.
11. Good interpersonal skills and the ability to motivate vulnerable people.
12. A strong commitment to the Centre's mission, values and behaviours; a strong belief in the value of every individual.

DESIRABLE:

1. Experience of representing clients at the FTT (IAC) and UT (IAC)
2. Accredited to do work at IAAS Supervising Senior Caseworker
3. Experience of Judicial Review
4. Knowledge of other languages in addition to English.
5. Any other legal qualifications or experience.
6. Knowledge and experience of the homelessness and welfare benefits system.
7. Experience of working in a charity or organisation.

More about immigration advice at the Cardinal Hume Centre:

We are delighted you are interested in joining our immigration team. We are passionate about defending the rights of our clients and you will be joining a team that achieve great results. Accredited by OISC, the quality of our service is validated in the feedback we receive from our clients and a variety of external bodies. This includes recognition as a Centre of Excellence by the London Legal Support Trust and being awarded the Specialist Quality Mark by the Legal Aid Agency.

Access to justice, tackling and preventing homelessness:

The most problematic barrier to a secure home and employment can stem from an individual's immigration status. Yet access to quality free legal advice is scarce, leaving adults and children trapped in poverty and at risk of exploitation and abuse. We believe access to justice should not be determined by an ability to pay, and we are proud that we use our own charitable fundraising and a Legal Aid contract to offer free legal advice to some of those who need it most. We work with often complex cases successfully representing clients at all levels including the Upper Tribunal.

Areas of focus:

As an organisation, we prioritise supporting children and families, and triage cases to ensure that we are focusing our resources on those clients where their case is strong and could have a significant and life changing impact. Cases include applications based on:

- Family and Private Life
- Long Stay in the UK
- Domestic Violence cases
- Change of condition application
- Child and parent citizenship
- EUSS complex cases

On individual client cases we often work closely with partner organisations including Latin American Women's Rights Service, Coram, Haringey Migrant Support Centre and Housing Justice.

About the team:

You will join a team that is led by a manager that holds a small caseload alongside supervising four advisors and a paralegal. It is a team that has expanded in recent years including a specialist advisor to work on Child Citizenship cases following the successful appeal on citizenship fees.

Many of our team have worked in other areas of our advice service prior to training in immigration advice. We are recruiting now because two long-standing colleagues have retired and another has secured a civil service legal role. We are committed to the professional development of each of our team supporting colleagues to secure the qualifications to advise on more complex cases – in the last 12 months colleagues have achieved their level two Senior Caseworker Accreditation from the Law Society as well as achieving the level two OISC accreditation.

The Centre recognises the pressure this type of advice can bring, so we offer reflective practice, additional wellbeing leave (two days in addition to annual leave entitlements) and we are working hard to manage case-loads at an acceptable level. Given so much of our funding is unrestricted, we have greater flexibility and work hard to be client rather than contract and target led.

Legal Aid:

We have Legal Aid contract that gives us the ability to take up to 100 cases. We increase access to this contract through partnerships with the Passage and until recently the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens (PRCBC). It was this contract that successfully enabled it to challenge the Home Office's position on Child Citizenship fees. In the medium term we would like to explore the provision of further similar partnerships to support the wider access to free or affordable immigration work, which is why we are keen to hear from experienced advisors with the IAAS L2 senior caseworker accreditation. It would be great if you are also a supervisory senior caseworker, though this is something that we can support you to achieve. You will also need to be able to work under OISC, at a minimum of level two or equivalent.

How immigration advice fits into the Centre's wider services:

The Cardinal Hume Centre starts with a simple belief: Each person matters, each person has potential. That human dignity is innate and not earned.

Yet the consequence of this belief is in living a life free from poverty, it means having a safe and secure home. It means having the opportunity to live a life free from discrimination and the ability to make the most of your potential.

Child poverty and homelessness is inextricably linked. Homelessness and poor housing is a cause and consequence of poverty and inequality. The biggest indicator of future homelessness risk as an adult is poverty as a child.

The Cardinal Hume Centre therefore focuses its efforts on young people, children and families in need. We work to tackle homelessness, poor housing and poverty at an early age and break its cost and cycle into later life.

We offer advice and advocacy in housing, welfare and immigration rights, we provide employment and learning support, emergency accommodation for young people and a specialist family centre for children and parents. For those clients who need it, we provide integrated support across a range of needs to help provide immediate crisis support and avert future housing need.

For the clients our immigration team work with, this integrated and often wraparound provision can offer support before and after a Home Office decision. This can include family support services that can help meet basic needs through access to cooking facilities, play sessions, regular trips to attractions, homework support for children and ESOL support for parents. Alongside this we can provide housing, welfare and employment advice in preparation for and following an immigration or asylum decision. We pride ourselves on being a place of welcome, making it easy for clients to access our support in space they know they are safe and can trust.

In a recent survey of clients, 97% said they felt staff listened to them well, 96% said they felt staff made them feel welcome and relaxed. 88% said they felt better able to meet their family's needs and 82% said they felt clearer about their options for their future. (August 2024)

Our commitment to building a more inclusive Centre

We want to be a Centre that welcomes and includes. For us this means that we want to actively celebrate the diversity found in our local community and strengthen the diversity in our team. We therefore want to do everything we can to encourage people from global majority ethnic and other under-represented groups to apply.

Today, our staff and volunteers are diverse in their backgrounds, their skills and experience. Many have lived experience of the challenges our clients face. But we know this is less true at a senior or Board level and this something we are working to address through recruitment, learning and development and through improved collaboration with our clients. We know this is key to building a welcoming and inclusive Centre and to improving our impact and support.

Our values:

Our values and behaviours describe how we want to work with everyone – within our team, with people from other organisations and most importantly, with the people who use our services or make our home with us.

Our values were agreed by our Board of Trustees in 2020 and were developed in close consultation with staff, volunteers and with feedback from our clients. They are consistent with the Benedictine tradition of our founder, Cardinal Basil Hume and the social teachings of the Catholic Church. At their heart is the belief that each person matters, each person has potential. That dignity is innate and not earned.

Together, our values and behaviours are deliberately stretching. They set a vision for how we want to work and make decisions together. We believe we are most effective when our values and behaviours are embedded in everything we do as staff, volunteers and colleagues.

OUR VALUES, AT THE CENTRE WE WILL:

- Value each person
- Welcome and include
- Encourage potential
- Work together
- Learn, reflect and improve.

In a recent survey of staff 95% said they feel like they make a difference, 94% said they enjoy the work they do and 93% said they enjoy working with people at the Centre. 93% said they are trusted to do their role and make decisions that are relevant to their role. (March 2024)

You can read about the Centre's [Strategy, theory of change](#), our [values](#) and most recent [annual report](#) on our website. You can also see a film about our work [here](#).