



Jesuit Refugee Service UK
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Job description: Legal Officer

JRS mission and work

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation, at work in 50 countries with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. JRS in the UK has a special ministry to those who find themselves destitute as a consequence of government policies and those detained for the administration of immigration procedures. JRS UK runs a day centre, activities (eg refugee gospel choir) and hosting scheme (*At Home*) for destitute asylum seekers and detention outreach services to Heathrow IRC. We work to raise awareness of the situation facing refugees we accompany and serve by enabling their story to be heard. The work of JRS UK is carried out in collaboration with other JRS offices around the world, other Church and secular organisations, which are active in the same field.

JRS values

JRS is grounded in Catholic Social Teaching and draws on the charism and principles of Ignatian spirituality. Staff and volunteers share a common set of values concerned with justice and the dignity of the person. As a Jesuit work, participative discernment and reflective practice are part of our ethos. If the successful candidate is not familiar with the spirit and charism of the Jesuits, there will be the opportunity to develop it through training, workshops and days of retreat. We seek to offer safe and welcoming places where strong relationships of trust are established, and opportunities to participate and to flourish are sought.

Job Title: Legal Officer

The JRS Legal Project is an exciting new venture for JRS UK. The Legal Officer is a full or part-time post on an 18month contract (potentially renewable subject to funding and an evaluation of the project), joining a small team at the JRS UK offices in Wapping. We are looking for an experienced and qualified immigration solicitor, barrister or advisor (accredited at IAAS level 2, Supervisor; or OISC level 3), dedicated to refugee protection and human rights, who is attracted to our mission, values and spirit.

The JRS UK Legal Project will seek to support asylum seekers to gain permission to stay in the UK through the provision of intensive support, research and case preparation, and close working relationships with other immigration law representatives. The project will benefit from the strong relationships that have been built with asylum seekers through the Day Centre, hosting scheme and other projects run by JRS UK. The Legal Project, in keeping with our ethos, will be personal and tailored to offer care to the individual.

The asylum seekers coming to our day centre are destitute, prohibited from working and ineligible for asylum support, following rejections of applications for asylum and other grounds to stay in the UK. Many decisions have been poorly made and the day-to-day hardship of destitution (insecure living arrangements, lack of financial resources for food, access to the internet and phone and high levels of anxiety) along with the limitations of the legal aid scheme act as effective barriers to accessing justice.

The JRS Legal Project proposes to provide detailed research, intensive casework and legal advice, primarily as an adjunct to legal support available elsewhere. It will investigate cases inquisitively in order to find routes whereby they can be brought up to legal aid 'merits test' standards, preparing cases and individuals

so that their claims can be taken forward, following referral, to a legal aid solicitor or adviser or other projects, such as those working on statelessness applications. We envisage that this work will mainly focus on fresh claims for international protection but also to enable successful applications for exceptional case funding under the legal aid arrangements such as on article 8 grounds.

In addition, the project will offer support by liaising with other immigration solicitors and advisers already working on claims and, where appropriate, through background research and casework support. Close liaison is particularly expected in cases prepared by the JRS UK Legal Project itself and referred onto an immigration solicitor or adviser. While the project will largely involve preparation and support for referral on to legal aid advisors, ongoing caseworking may be required on some cases where referral isn't possible.

The Project will look to support and inform our advocacy and policy work on decision-making processes and refugee protection; it will participate in our communications work and inform and support our services to those destitute or in detention.

The Project will be staffed by the supervising Legal Officer (immigration solicitor, barrister or OISC level 3 advisor) and a part-time Legal Caseworker (OISC 2), and supported by volunteers where appropriate. Additional part-time support for the project will be provided by JRS UK's Head of Accompaniment, who in addition to his main role of providing one-on-one emotional support for those attending the Day Centre, has also been accredited by OISC to level 1 (asylum and protection).

The project will initially run for 18 months and funding has been secured. It is not dependent upon legal aid or other statutory funding.

Specific responsibilities

Role

As this is a new project, the post holder will take a leading role in advising on developing and managing the project. JRS UK has been accredited by OISC as an organisation authorised to provide advice at level 1 (asylum and protection). Working closely with the Operations Manager, the post holder will assist and advise in the drafting and review of any required policies and procedures to ensure that the Jesuit Refugee Service UK can upgrade their registration with OISC to level 3 in order to begin the new Legal Project as quickly as possible. These standards, policies and procedures will need to be compatible with the ethos of JRS UK. S/he will be responsible for the establishment, monitoring, and development of policies and standards.

S/he will be responsible for managing and maintaining the overall caseload of the project through providing legal advice, supervision and direction to the Legal Caseworker, and project specific support from others, and ensuring effective running of the JRS UK Legal Project. The post holder may provide immigration advice and representation services to asylum seekers and others.

The post holder will also look for opportunities to inform the advocacy, policy and communications work of JRS UK and so promote the rights and interests of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

The post holder will report initially to the Operations Manager during the set-up phase, but will require close working with other team members, including the Country Director, Destitution Services Manager, Head of Accompaniment, Communications and Development Manager and Detention Outreach Manager. The Legal Officer will work closely and collaboratively with the Legal Caseworker and supervise the immigration advice provided by the Legal Caseworker and Head of Accompaniment.

Responsibilities

Developing and establishing the project

- Advise on and assist the drafting of standards, policies and procedures and their implementation to ensure JRS UK can upgrade its registration with OISC and meet any audit it conducts
- Establish and ensure compliance with systems of working so as to meet with OISC, LAA and SRA/BSB regulations, as required
- With JRS colleagues, raise awareness of the project, particularly with identified immigration lawyers
- Initiate, develop and maintain good working relationships with other immigration law solicitors and advisers to allow for referral of cases prepared for legal aid merits test and to allow for applications for exceptional case funding from the Legal Aid Agency following preparation by the project
- Facilitate effective referrals to legal aid, pro bono or paid lawyers so as to enable asylum seekers to access substantive representation

Co-ordinating, supervising and managing the casework and legal project

- Assist identification of potential referrals to the project
- Interview and develop positive relations with and provide legal advice to asylum seekers referred to the project, in line with the ethos of JRS UK
- Process referrals into the project and undertake a legal diagnosis of the work required in each case and identify ways forward
- Identify and undertake the casework, research and preparation required for cases or direct and work with the project caseworker to ensure such work is conducted, liaising with external experts for reports where appropriate
- Manage the Legal Caseworker (OISC level 2)
- Supervise project specific legal advice provided by the Head of Accompaniment (OISC level 1 asylum and protection)
- Manage volunteers, as appropriate
- Provide onward referral to other solicitors and immigration advisers, as appropriate
- Provide ongoing liaison and support to other immigration solicitors and advisers working on behalf of clients referred by the project
- Ensure ongoing support and liaison with asylum seekers served by the project
- Provide regular reports to the Operations Manager and Country Director
- Work with the Legal Caseworker to coordinate the successful progress of cases and the project and its direction
- Comply with and ensure the project complies with accreditation and professional standards
- Train or ensure the ongoing training of the Legal Caseworker and volunteers working on the project
- Ensure that own legal expertise and training is up-to-date and excellent in required fields

Other

- Work with JRS UK colleagues so that the project can contribute positively to the advocacy and communications work of JRS in support of refugees and other forced migrants.

Person specification

Essential

- Sympathy and congruence with the values of JRS and enthusiasm for JRS' mission of accompaniment, service and advocacy on behalf of refugees
- Detailed knowledge of the situation facing asylum seekers in the UK
- A minimum of 3 years' experience of providing face-to-face immigration advice on asylum and protection matters
- Qualified Solicitor or barrister with valid practising certificate; or accredited immigration advisor (see below)
- Accreditation at level 3 OISC, or IAAS level 2 (Supervisor); or demonstrable ability to achieve accreditation rapidly
- Outstanding interpersonal skills and the ability to build strong relationships with asylum seekers and others within and without the organisation
- Experience of managing staff and track record of doing so effectively.
- Personal resilience for working closely with people in distress
- Ability to work flexibly and cooperatively as part of a small diverse team
- Outstanding communication skills in person and excellent written skills
- Experience of working with people from varied backgrounds and faiths
- Able to reflect on experience, learn from it and share insights with humility with others
- Up-to-date DBS clearance certificate

Desirable

- 5 years' experience of providing face-to-face immigration advice on asylum and protection
- Experience of working in the voluntary or community sector
- Experience of managing volunteers
- Experience of managing a budget

The person must be permitted to work in the UK; (JRS UK is not able to obtain a work visa for this post).

Duration	Full or part-time fixed term contract of 18 months, potentially renewable subject to funding; flexibility on contract to include self-employed workers may be considered
Salary	£31,000 to £36,000 pa full time (or pro rata as appropriate)
Pension	Additional 10% of salary of employer's contribution

To apply for the job, please send a **cover letter and CV, addressed to the Director of JRS UK, Sarah Teather**, and send it by email to Aidan.cantwell@jrs.net. The letter should detail your relevant experience and **demonstrate clearly how you meet the person specification listed in the job description**. CVs without cover letters will not be considered. *Only short-listed candidates will be notified.* **The closing deadline for applications is 5 pm Friday 31 August 2018.**