



Job description

Post:	Immigration Advisor
Accountable to:	Director of HMC (new post)
Salary:	NJC Scale 25 to 27 plus LW. Starting at point 25 i.e. £33,146 pa
Hours:	35 hours per week
Qualification:	OISC L3 or solicitor or IAAS Level 2*

**please note that if qualified at IAAS Level 2, it will be necessary to take the OISC L3 exams to transfer the qualification and register with OISC*

BACKGROUND

Hackney Migrant Centre (HMC) delivers a free, weekly advice and support service for vulnerable migrants who have immigration, housing, welfare and health problems. We support visitors to resolve their immigration status and move out of homelessness and destitution in the long-term, as well as assisting to address immediate issues in the short term, such as access to healthcare. HMC's work is informed by a vision of a UK where no one is forced into destitution, exploitation or vulnerability as a result of their immigration status.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been providing remote advice and casework support by telephone. We also offer face to face appointments (at St Mary's Church in Hackney). Each week we see between 6-10 new visitors. Just over half our visitors lack leave to remain or are appeal rights exhausted asylum seekers, an additional fifth are in the asylum system and a similar number have some form of precarious status (e.g. Limited Leave to Remain, Discretionary Leave to Remain). Most are destitute as a result of their immigration status and the Hostile Environment

HMC currently employs 1.5 destitution, housing and welfare caseworkers, an Access to Justice co-ordinator, a part time volunteer co-ordinator and a casework support assistant.

They are supported by a full-time Fundraiser and managed by the Director and Operations Manager. HMC is supported by over 50 dedicated volunteers who work across the Housing and Welfare and Access to Justice teams. In addition, HMC works closely with a number of partner organisations to ensure visitors can access specialist legal advice and long-term support with immigration, housing, destitution, health and wellbeing. For example, Together with Migrant Children, Refugee Action, Islington Law Centre, JCWI and Coram Children's Legal Centre.

PURPOSE OF THE ROLE

HMC currently provides immigration advice via outreach sessions with external immigration advisors from Islington Law Centre, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and Coram Children's Legal Centre. Following the initial immigration advice appointment, the Access to Justice Team assists people to progress their immigration case, including making Exceptional Case Funding applications for legal aid, securing appropriate legal representation, assisting to gather evidence, and providing general advocacy and support, as necessary, to help people navigate the immigration system. The team supported almost 200 visitors to access legal representation and support for their immigration case in 2020/21.

The availability of good quality legal advice and representation under legal aid has been steadily declining due to cuts to legal aid, which has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Investing in in-house legal capacity is a long-term strategic priority for HMC. By employing an in-house Immigration Advisor, the aim is to provide advice and legal representation for visitors who would otherwise struggle to access the legal advice they need or where further delay to find a representative would be particularly detrimental.

We have secured funding for three years from Trust for London to employ an Immigration Advisor and have prepared an application to register with OISC (Office of the Immigration Service Commissioner).

The Immigration Advisor will provide immigration advice and assist visitors to make immigration applications. The post holder will supervise the work of the Access to Justice team, which includes the Access to Justice Coordinator and a team of 4-5 experienced volunteers. They will be managed by the Director and will receive case work supervision from an external immigration specialist

The postholder will work alongside external advisors to provide initial immigration advice on matters including human rights based applications, citizenship, asylum, family reunion, trafficking and the rights of EU nationals and family members.

They will work with the Access to Justice Coordinator to coordinate the next steps for visitors after they have had initial immigration advice.

MAIN DUTIES

1. Advice and casework

- Provide high quality advice and representation, up to and including appeal-stage casework, for visitors with complex or urgent cases, specific vulnerabilities or those who would otherwise face particular difficulty in accessing representation from legal aid providers.
- Supervise the work of the Access to Justice Coordinator and Access to Justice volunteers.
- Provide training to HMC's volunteers on immigration issues and maintain up to date resources.
- Provide immigration advice and support to the Housing and Welfare staff team where available housing options and routes out of destitution are dependent on future immigration applications.

2. Collaborative working

- Work with HMC's existing external advice partners to ensure effective, co-ordination of advocacy and casework support on a wide range of issues.
- Develop links and partnerships with other organisations to enable effective joint working.
- Provide information, statistics and case studies to external and internal stakeholders to support campaigning, advocacy and research relevant to HMC's visitor group.
- Work closely with partner organisations to identify legal issues affecting HMC's visitor group and, where appropriate, contribute to litigation and strategic policy work undertaken by external stakeholders to address these matters.

3. Compliance and Regulation

- Ensure HMC is meeting the standards required to maintain OISC accreditation.
- Keep up to date with legislation and guidance required to provide immigration advice at OISC L3 and meet the relevant OISC competence requirements, including maintaining a Personal Competence record of personal objectives regarding training and development.
- Ensure accurate record keeping using HMC's case management system.
- Work with the Access to Justice Coordinator to ensure an effective monitoring system for the work and outcomes of the Access to Justice team for funding and reporting purposes.
- Administrative tasks relevant to the post.

OTHER DUTIES

The post holder will be expected

- To implement sensitively HMC's policies and procedures, especially with regards to confidentiality and equal opportunities
- To work collaboratively with other HMC staff, volunteers and professional advisors
- To participate actively in staff meetings, and other meetings as may reasonably be required
- To attend HMC Trustees' meetings as required
- To support HMC's fundamental aim of providing a safe and caring environment for our visitors.
- To work in line with the ethos of HMC.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Position: **Immigration Advisor**

Items marked **E** are essential and **D** are desirable

<u>Education/ Training</u>	E - Accredited to OISC Level 3 / solicitor / Level 2 IAAS
<u>Experience</u>	<p>E - At least years practicing at OISC Level 3 or equivalent level</p> <p>E - Experience of providing immigration advice and undertaking legal casework on immigration matters for people with a range of often complex immigration issues, including but not limited to people with no immigration status, Refugees, people seeking asylum and people with Limited Leave to Remain</p> <p>- Experience of providing immigration advice and legal representation for people experiencing destitution and people with mental and physical health vulnerabilities</p> <p>D - Experience of working with volunteers</p> <p>D – Experience of providing immigration training to legal and non-legal practitioners</p> <p>D - Experience of using and managing effective systems for recording and reporting casework outputs and outcomes</p>
<u>Knowledge</u>	<p>E – Knowledge of immigration, asylum and nationality law, and their application in practice at the standard of OISC L3</p> <p>E – Awareness of UK immigration processes and UK government policy in relation to immigration and asylum issues</p> <p>D - Awareness of housing and benefit entitlements, asylum support provision and community care support for people with precarious immigration status</p> <p>D - Understanding of the issues affecting destitute migrants in the UK</p>
<u>Qualities</u>	<p>E – Demonstrable commitment to migrants’ rights and an approach to working that fosters solidarity, empowerment and anti-racism</p> <p>E – Passion in working collaboratively with staff and external advisors to examine difficult immigration cases and identify options and potential solutions</p> <p>E - Demonstrable commitment to the principles of equal opportunities</p>
<u>Skills and abilities</u>	<p>E – Ability to communicate clearly and effectively, orally and in writing, including communicating with those whose first language is not English</p> <p>E – Ability to work with people facing issues related to their immigration status and experience of destitution, including possible exploitation and trauma, with cultural sensitivity and awareness</p> <p>E - Ability to work independently and take responsibility for delivering and reporting on set targets</p> <p>E - Ability to think creatively, and adopt proactive and holistic responses to address complex issues</p> <p>E - IT literate. Experience of using standard office applications and databases</p>

	<p>E - Ability to work in a diplomatic, efficient and professional manner both verbally and in writing, ensuring accuracy of information given and received and client understanding</p> <p>E - Excellent administrative and organisational skills to operate administrative and record-keeping systems</p>
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