



Job description

Post:	Immigration Advisor
Accountable to:	Director of Services
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 IAAS Level 2*

** if qualified at IAAS Level 2, it will be necessary to qualify and register for OISC Level 3 within the first 3 months*

BACKGROUND

Hackney Migrant Centre (“HMC”) delivers a free, weekly advice and support service for vulnerable migrants on immigration, housing, welfare and access to health (our “visitors”). We support visitors to resolve their immigration status and move out of homelessness and destitution in the long-term, as well as assisting them to address immediate issues in the short term. The majority of visitors lack secure immigration status or have a pending asylum claim and are destitute as a result of their immigration status and the Hostile Environment.

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.

HMC currently employs a Destitution Casework Coordinator, a Caseworker for Families and Young People, an Access to Justice Coordinator, a Volunteer Coordinator and a Casework Support Assistant. The team of caseworkers are supported by a full-time Fundraiser and managed by the Director of Services and the Director of Operations. Our work is supported by over 50 dedicated volunteers and we work closely with a number of partner organisations to ensure visitors can access specialist legal advice and long-term support.

PURPOSE OF THE ROLE

This is a new role as investing in in-house legal capacity is a long-term strategic priority for HMC. 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).

HMC currently provides immigration advice via weekly outreach sessions with external immigration advisors from Islington Law Centre, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and Coram Children’s Legal Centre. They will continue 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.

The Immigration Advisor will have their own case load, providing immigration advice and assisting visitors with their immigration applications. Just over half of HMC 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).

It is anticipated that the Immigration Advisor's casework will focus on those who may be eligible for leave to remain based on their right to a family and private life both within and outside of the Immigration Rules. We increasingly support people advised to make an application based on their Article 8 rights under ECHR, including the barriers they would face to re-integration in their Country of Origin. They are often highly vulnerable individuals and therefore HMC's holistic model of destitution, housing and immigration casework can be effectively utilised.

Where we are able to obtain legal representation from immigration solicitors under legal aid for our visitors HMC will not take on such casework except in exceptional circumstances.

Additionally, the Immigration Advisor will supervise and support the casework of the Access to Justice team, which includes the Access to Justice Coordinator and a team of 4-5 experienced volunteers. The main role of this team is to make Exceptional Case Funding applications for legal aid on behalf of our visitors, to secure legal representation and to support evidence gathering.

This role is line managed by the Director of Services and will receive regular casework supervision from an external experienced immigration advisor.

MAIN DUTIES

1. Advice and casework

- Provide high quality advice to visitors at HMC, 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 casework of the Access to Justice team.
- Provide immigration advice and support to HMC caseworkers 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.
- Provide information, statistics and case studies to external and internal stakeholders to support campaigning, advocacy and research relevant to HMC's visitor group and for reports to the post's funder.
- 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.
- Develop networks with other advocacy and legal advice organisations in the migrants' rights sector to enable such effective joint working.

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.
- Supervise and support 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 provide training to HMC's volunteers on immigration issues and ensure up to date resources are maintained.
- 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 for Immigration Advisor post

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 3 years practising at OISC Level 3 or equivalent level</p> <p>E - Experience of providing immigration advice and casework including but not limited to people with no immigration status, Refugees, people seeking asylum and people with Limited Leave to Remain</p> <p>E - Experience of providing immigration advice and legal representation for people experiencing destitution and for people with mental and physical health vulnerabilities</p> <p>E – Experience of providing immigration advice to people with complicated immigration histories, for example people with previous criminal convictions</p> <p>D - Experience of working with volunteers</p> <p>D – Experience of providing training on immigration matters.</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 its application in practice, relating to asylum-seekers, refugees, undocumented migrants and EEA nationals 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 – Commitment to working collaboratively with colleagues 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, ensuring accuracy of information given and received.</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 diplomacy, 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 complex issues</p> <p>E - IT literate. Experience of using standard office applications and databases</p> <p>E - Excellent administrative and organisational skills, ability to operate administrative and record-keeping systems</p>