



Recruitment Pack: PILS Legal Support Officer (part-time)

JOB DESCRIPTION

Key information:

Job title: Legal Support Officer (part-time)

Salary: £37,280+ 8% pension (pro rata)

This corresponds to pay point S02 Point 26 on the current [National Joint Council pay scale](#); this is widely used in the voluntary and community sectors.

Reports to: PILS Director

Direct reports: None

Background:

Public Interest Litigation Support (PILS) is a [Belfast-based non-profit](#) committed to supporting local organisations to use the law in a creative way to protect human rights and equality.

PILS is a membership organisation, offering a range of free legal and financial supports to our solicitor firm and NGO members to help them take strategic human rights & equality cases in the public interest. Public interest litigation refers to legal cases that will create positive change for vulnerable or disadvantaged groups of people in Northern Ireland.

Since PILS was founded in 2009, our membership network has grown to over 180 NGOs and solicitor firms. Through collaborating with these organisations, and connecting them with pro bono lawyers, PILS has been part of major legal success stories: from

[‘game-changing’ judicial reviews](#) on integrated education, [seismic climate justice challenges](#), and multiple examples of holding [public bodies to account](#).

From our origins as a pilot project, PILS has matured into Northern Ireland’s dedicated support service for litigation in the public interest.

“Through the groundbreaking cases in which it has been involved, PILS has raised awareness of critical issues affecting Northern Ireland and has challenged the status quo.”

- Lady Chief Justice, Dame Siobhan Keegan

Now, PILS is looking for a Legal Support Officer to coordinate PILS’ membership network of law firms and NGOs, help them develop and submit applications for PILS’ services, and assist the PILS Director with legal casework.

PILS is a member of the NI Human Rights Partnership and is an equal opportunities employer.

Job purpose:

To work to secure improvements in the protection and promotion of human rights and equality in Northern Ireland.

The Legal Support Officer will be the key contact point for the local NGOs and solicitor firms in PILS’ membership network.

They will help build members’ capacity to use the law to effect change; will deal with queries on human rights and equality issues; will encourage dialogue and information sharing among PILS members; and will keep abreast of issues which would benefit from public interest litigation.

Main duties:

The Legal Support Officer (p/t) will:

- Respond to inquiries from PILS members on public interest litigation and proactively assist PILS members to develop their issues into strategic public interest cases
- Assist PILS members with applications for legal and/or financial support
- Alongside our Director, manage applications for support, assessing them against our criteria and prepare recommendations for support, including reports for our Board on applications for financial support
- Coordinate and grow the PILS Pro Bono Register of pro bono barristers, solicitors and legal academics
- Identify and match practitioners from our Pro Bono Register to applications for pro bono support
- Drafting and preparing briefs/instructions in collaboration with the applying PILS member
- Identify the needs of PILS members and work with the PILS Director to develop legal information resources or training opportunities to help PILS members engage in public interest litigation
- Occasional delivery of training and/or seminars as part of legal clinical education work
- Keep PILS' case recording system up-to-date and generate regular reports for colleagues/PILS' Board/funders as required
- Assist the PILS Senior Engagement Lead with development and organisation of PILS events
- Carry out any other reasonable duties as required by the PILS Director

Terms and conditions:

One-year fixed term contract with potential for extension subject to funding.

Salary: £37,280 pro rata (NJC Point 26) plus 8% employer's contribution to pension.

Scope: Part-time equivalent to three days per week

Office Location: Belfast city centre. PILS operates a hybrid working model which allows staff members to work from home for up to 60% of their working week. We aim to

ensure that the whole team is in the office together for at least one day a week. Staff are welcome to work as much of their week in the office as they need to.

Working week: 21 hours, Monday to Friday, on a pattern to be agreed with the PILS Director. There may be occasional evening and weekend work (for which time off in lieu can be taken). Flexible working will be available subject to approval by the Director.

Holidays: The Legal Support Manager will be entitled to 30 days' annual leave pro rata, in addition to statutory holidays. The PILS office is also closed between Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Applicants must have the right to work in the UK at the time of application.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

We have set out below the essential and desirable experience and skills which we consider relevant to this vacancy. In order to be eligible for interview, your application form will need to evidence each of the essential criteria. Please note that in the event of over-subscription, we may also apply the desirable criteria in order to shortlist candidates for interview.

For those candidates who are shortlisted for interview, the depth and scope of your experience and skills, as outlined in your application, will be further assessed through a presentation, a written exercise and the interview itself. The assessment instructions will be sent out with invitations to interview.

ESSENTIAL EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

Area	The experience/skills we are looking for	Why is this required?
Education and Qualifications	A law degree or a degree in humanities or social sciences plus a minimum of three years' experience carrying out casework in a legal environment OR At least five years' experience carrying out casework in a legal environment.	The Legal Support Officer (p/t) will be required to critically analyse applications for support. The Legal Support Officer (p/t) will be required to consider applications for support in legal cases and their strategic value. They must be able to effectively apply their legal knowledge to real life scenarios.

Experience and knowledge	An understanding of the legal landscape in Northern Ireland or a demonstrable ability to gain and develop such an understanding.	The Legal Support Officer (p/t) will be considering applications in terms of their strategic value within the Northern Irish jurisdiction.
Experience and knowledge	An understanding of human rights and equality issues in Northern Ireland or a demonstrable ability to gain and develop such an understanding.	The Legal Support Officer (p/t) will be considering the strategic value of using legal action to protect or defend human rights and equality rights in Northern Ireland.
Skills and aptitude	Ability to work on own initiative and as part of a team.	PILS is currently a small but busy team, requiring those who can work on their own initiative and who can also work as part of a team.
Skills and aptitude	Excellent written communication skills. Experience of giving guidance and/or advice in person or by telephone/video calls.	The Legal Support Officer (p/t) needs to clearly and effectively communicate with PILS' members and stakeholders.
Skills and aptitude	Ability to carry out high-quality legal research and analysis, including searching and applying relevant case law and legislation.	In order to assess applications for support and later to prepare instructions to solicitors and/or barristers, the Legal Support Officer (p/t) will need to understand the legal framework and relevant factors. This may include areas of law which are completely new to the Legal Support Officer and the role requires curiosity and an enthusiasm for engaging with unfamiliar material and topics.

Skills and aptitude	Ability to prioritise and meet deadlines. Excellent organisational skills.	Applications to PILS are often time sensitive and the Legal Support Officer (p/t) will have a varied workload. They will need to take responsibility for managing that workload and ensuring that tasks are carried out in a timely manner.
Skills and aptitude	IT literacy	The Legal Support Officer (p/t) will be expected to work confidently with MS Office tools including SharePoint, Outlook, Word and Excel on a day-to-day basis.
Commitment	Commitment to issues of rights, equality and social justice. Commitment to work in a non-partisan way with all sections of society.	PILS is dedicated to protecting and advancing human rights across Northern Ireland. Our public interest focus leads to change for wider society, across multiple communities.
Working arrangements	Available for occasional evening and weekend work. Available for occasional travel. Ability to work in the Belfast office for a minimum of 40% of the working week.	The Legal Support Officer (p/t) may be required to travel or work outside their typical office hours (for casework or other purposes, eg: PILS events). PILS operates a hybrid working model which allows staff members to work from home for up to 60% of their working week. We aim to ensure that the whole team is in the office together for at least one day a week. Staff are welcome to work as much of their week in the office as they need to.

DESIRABLE EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

These criteria may be taken into consideration during shortlisting for interview and will be taken into consideration in decision-making post-interview.

Area	The experience/skills we are looking for	Why might this be useful?
Experience and knowledge	Experience in human rights law, judicial review and/or public interest litigation. Experience, knowledge and understanding of issues of rights, equality, social justice.	Experience of human rights law, judicial review or public interest litigation will assist the Legal Support Officer (p/t) in the analysis of public interest points and potential wider societal impact of prospective strategic cases on human rights or equality issues.
Experience and knowledge	Experience of writing applications to trusts and/or foundations for funding.	The Legal Support Officer (p/t) will assist the Senior Engagement Lead and the Director with funding applications from time to time.
Experience and knowledge	Experience of delivering training or seminars (not limited to legal topics).	The Legal Support Officer (p/t) will have opportunities to provide capacity-building training to PILS' members and wider network.
Skills and aptitude	Familiarity with legal technology/case management software.	PILS uses AdvicePro and a cloud-based file storage system to work collaboratively on documents – in the Belfast office and while working remotely.
Skills and aptitude	Excellent public speaking skills.	In addition to opportunities to deliver training, the Legal Support Officer (p/t) may also be asked to speak at events on behalf of PILS.