



## **Welfare Benefits Advisor (Westminster)**

Permanent contract – Salary 27,400, pro rata

Hours: 14 hours per week

In 2016, Asylum Aid merged with Migrants Resource Centre. We have now rebranded as Consonant to better reflect the broad scope of our work and emphasise our mission to help build a society where everyone feels they belong, regardless of their background. Over the past two years, we have significantly broadened the scope of legal support we provide our clients. We now offer legal advice on all immigration and asylum matters as well as generalist advice on a full range of welfare, housing, and debt issues. We deliver our services with a team of more than 10 solicitors, caseworkers, and advisers as well as a growing network of pro bono lawyers and volunteers. The team operates from two offices and several outreach centres across London.

As Welfare Benefits Advisor (Westminster), you will manage an active caseload providing a one-off only comprehensive advice service to local people on all matters relating to Welfare Benefits. This will include advising clients on entitlements to Welfare Benefits in order to increase their income, assist and support in the application of relevant claims and to effectively challenge adverse decisions. Advice sessions will take place by face to face appointments at our offices, at outreach sessions and on the telephone.

For further details, please see attached recruitment pack:

Applications should be sent to [wayne.myslik@consonant.org.uk](mailto:wayne.myslik@consonant.org.uk)

**Closing date: Applications are due by 5pm on 13 December 2019**

We encourage interested applicants to apply as soon as possible.

**Consonant encourages applications from people with migrant or refugee backgrounds**

Consonant is an equal opportunities employer.

Reg. charity no. 291789

## About Consonant

At Consonant, our roots are in the migrant communities that we serve. Many of our services are delivered by a wide range of skilled and dedicated volunteers who come from all over the world. And most of our staff are themselves migrants or the children of migrants. Many started as service users or volunteers before joining the staff, and therefore understand the challenges our clients face.

### Our vision

Our vision is of a society that is inclusive and free of prejudice; that celebrates diversity; and that supports the rights of all people to enjoy freedom from persecution, danger and oppression.

### Our mission

Our mission is to enable people of diverse origins to make the UK their home; and to enrich our society by building community through mutual respect and partnerships.

### What we do

Consonant will support migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to settle, integrate, and build new lives in the UK. We will help migrants and their families to truly prosper by enabling them to:

- Overcome the barriers that hold them back
- Develop the skills they need to build positive new lives, and
- Transform their communities and society to work for all who live here

Consonant's offices are in Tottenham, next to Tottenham Hale underground and rail station and convenient for various public transport links.

## The Role

You will manage an active caseload providing a one-off only comprehensive advice service to local people on all matters relating to Welfare Benefits. This will include advising clients on entitlements to Welfare Benefits in order to increase their income, assist and support in the application of relevant claims and to effectively challenge adverse decisions. Advice sessions will take place by face to face appointments at our offices, at outreach sessions and on the telephone.

## The Candidate

The post requires someone who has demonstrable experience and knowledge on a range of issues such as social care, housing and welfare benefits.

## Summary of Terms and Conditions of Employment

Full-time staff are entitled to 28 working days' holiday per leave year (excluding bank holidays). Then one additional day is granted for each year of service to a maximum of 33 days. Following a successful probationary period, a full-time employee will be entitled to up to 10 sick days on full pay in the first year of employment and an additional 2 days for each subsequent completed year of employment up to a maximum of 20 working days. After five years' continuous employment, an employee may apply for up to one year's sabbatical leave without pay, if suitable conditions can be agreed with the Chief Executive. The charity will contribute up to 6% of each employee's gross salary to the Group Pension scheme or the individual's own stakeholder scheme, following a successful probationary period. The level of contribution from the charity is dependent on the level of contribution the employee makes to the pension scheme. The charity will double the percentage of company contribution compared to employee contribution up to a maximum of 6%.

## Consonant Job Description

### Welfare Benefits Advisor (Westminster)

<b>Reporting to:</b>	Advice Manager
<b>Location:</b>	Consonant offices in Westminster, London
<b>Main purpose of the job</b>	To deliver a welfare benefits legal advice service in the borough of Westminster.

### Key Responsibilities

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The post-holder will:

- Be part of a generalist advice service, with special emphasis on language support, as part of the Westminster Advice Services Partnership (WASP), a collaboration of advice agencies – Consonant (formerly Migrants Resource Centre), Westminster Citizens Advice, Age Concern Westminster
- Deliver a specialist advice, information and casework service, in a community language and English, to migrants on welfare benefits issues
- Deliver a generalist/specialist advice, information and casework service, in a community language and English, to migrants on all areas of social welfare law (welfare benefits, housing/homeless, employment, debt) in accordance with Consonant's contract within the WASP partnership

### Advice giving

- Interview clients using sensitive listening and questioning skills in order to allow clients to explain their problem(s) and empower them to set their own priorities.
- Interview clients with the support of language volunteers/interpreters if appropriate
- Use up to date information sources to find, interpret and communicate the relevant information.
- Research and explore options and implications so that clients can make informed decisions.
- Act for the client where necessary by calculating, negotiating, drafting or writing letters and telephoning.
- Negotiate with third parties such as statutory and non-statutory bodies as appropriate.
- Accept referrals from and act as an information resource to other agencies
- Refer internally or to other specialist agencies as agreed with WASP.
- Ensure that all work conforms to Consonant's Office Manual and LEXCEL standard.
- Maintain detailed electronic case records (Advice Pro) for the purpose of continuity of casework, information retrieval, statistical monitoring and report preparation.
- Conduct eligibility checks for Consonant's general immigration service, including an asylum and domestic violence contract with the LAA, and make referrals, where appropriate, to the relevant caseworkers.
- Deliver the service in accordance with the contract targets.
- Deliver the service in outreach locations as specified in the contract
- Provide cover for the Coordinator, other advice workers and volunteers when needed.
- Identify appeals, procedures and time limits in social welfare law and co-ordinate with WASP partnership for referral using My Office diary.
- Keep up to date with protocol procedures and changes within social welfare law (such as universal credit, Westminster housing changes)

### Social policy

- Assist with social policy work by identifying social policy issues and referring them to appropriate channels
- Providing information about clients' circumstances through the appropriate channels for wider take-up.

## **Professional development**

- Keep up to date with legislation, policies and procedures and undertake appropriate training within a set budget.
- Read relevant publications.
- Attend relevant internal and external meetings as agreed with the line manager.
- Prepare for and attend supervision sessions/team meetings/staff meetings as appropriate.

## **Administration**

- Use IT for statistical recording, record keeping and document production.
- Ensure that all work conforms to Consonant's systems and procedures.
- Provide electronic statistical information and case studies as required for the contract.

## **Other duties and responsibilities**

- Cascade information and developments in social welfare law and immigration to the volunteers who will assist with the gateway service.
- In the absence of the Volunteer Coordinator, support and assist the volunteers and other staff.
- Carry out any other tasks that may be within the scope of the post to ensure the effective delivery and development of the service.
- Demonstrate commitment to the aims and policies of Consonant.
- Abide by health and safety guidelines and share responsibility for own safety and that of colleagues.

## **Consonant**

November 2019

## Person Specification

### **Essential criteria**

The post-holder will meet the following **essential criteria** for the post:

### **Experience & Knowledge**

#### Essential

1. Experience of working face to face with clients to deliver advice in different areas of law
2. Experience of working with interpreters
3. Knowledge on a range of issues including health and social care, housing and benefits.
4. Experience of working with disabled people or vulnerable client groups
5. Experience of building effective relationships through which issues can be identified and resolved
6. A thorough understanding of social security and welfare benefits legislation (including recent policy changes) in health and social care
7. A thorough understanding of the impact social security and benefits legislation is having on people with disabilities and long-term conditions
8. Experience of supporting people to fill in forms and meet deadlines
9. Experience of preparing people for appeals and tribunal
10. Understanding of the issues and barriers that people of migrant background face in the UK
11. Experience of writing and presenting reports and dealing effectively with correspondence.
12. Experience of successfully operating and negotiating with external & internal services and agencies to ensure optimum delivery of services
13. Understanding of confidentiality, data protection issues and safeguarding issues
14. Excellent working knowledge of MS word, outlook and other applications

#### Desirable

Knowledge of a second language

### **Skills & Abilities**

1. Organised and can work to deadlines
2. Resilient and tenacious
3. Empathic approach
4. Time management and task prioritisation
5. Able to work independently as well as part of a team
6. Excellent written and verbal communication skills
7. Report writing skills
8. Networks and keeps others informed
9. Action orientated and can-do approach

### **Other requirements**

Enhanced CRB that permits working with vulnerable adults and children.

## JOB APPLICATION FORM

Please complete this application form (and the Equal Opportunities monitoring form enclosed / attached separately) and return them to:

[Wayne.myslik@consonant.org.uk](mailto:Wayne.myslik@consonant.org.uk)

Please mark your email 'Job Application – Welfare Benefits Advisor (Westminster)'

**Closing date: Applications are due by 5pm on 13 December 2019**

Consonant wishes to encourage electronic applications,  
but applicants preferring to submit a hard copy may send it to  
Consonant, Berol House, 25 Ashley Road, N1 9LJ

### Senior Caseworker / Solicitor

#### 1) Personal Information

Full name:

*(Please underline your surname or family name)*

Address:

Telephone no:

(Home)

(Work)

Email address:

**2) Education** (please note, if you submit a CV there is no need to fill out sections 2-4)

Dates	Name and location of school/college attended	Exams passed/qualifications obtained

**3) Professional Qualifications and Training** (please note, if you submit a CV there is no need to fill out sections 2-4)

Dates	Type of training course and name/location of provider	Qualifications obtained

**4) Employment history** (please note, if you submit a CV there is no need to fill out sections 2-4)

Dates	Name and address of employer	Job title, main duties, present/final salary and reasons for leaving/wanting to leave

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**5) Please explain how your work experience (both paid and unpaid), skills and abilities help you to meet the selection criteria set out in the person specification for this post.**

A decision on whether to interview you will be based on your ability to provide evidence here of your suitability for the post in relation to the person specification criteria. A final decision on who to select for the post will be based on this form as well as on your interview and on your references.

Therefore, you should use this section of the application form to demonstrate how you meet the different selection criteria. This includes explaining the nature and scope of any relevant employment or voluntary work. It is important not to assume that your experience or qualifications speak for themselves. You may add additional sheets if you wish to continue your answer and use a CV to replace parts 2 to 4 of this form, but not part 5. Please do not include any other supporting documents, as these will not be considered.

**6) Further information**

How did you find out about this post?

How long is the notice period for your present post?

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

If yes, please indicate any aid(s)/adjustments required at interview or if  
appointed \_\_\_\_\_

Have you any current disciplinary warnings outstanding from your current employment?

If yes, please provide brief details

## 6. References

Please provide the names and details of two people able to provide a reference for you. **One should be your current or most recent employer.**

### *Reference 1*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Connection with you \_\_\_\_\_

### *Reference 2*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Connection with you \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Declaration

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 I give my consent for the information contained in this form, including any defined as 'sensitive personal data', to be processed in accordance with Migrants Resource Centre's recruitment and employment policies. I understand that if I am appointed, this application form will form part of my personal file and that if I am not appointed it will be stored securely and confidentially for up to a year and then destroyed.

I confirm the information I have supplied above is, to the best of my knowledge, true and accurate.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_