

South Westminster Legal Advice Centre

Name of project	South Westminster Legal Advice Centre CIO ("SWLAC")
Delivered by	As above
Type of work / opportunity	SWLAC is a free, face-to-face, legal advice centre operating by appointment from premises in Westminster, London on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
Topic area	SWLAC provides advice on all legal issues which might be encountered by the clients who consult us but do NOT cover the areas listed below: • Social housing (save for a few, discrete, areas) • Landlord and Tenant • Immigration • Welfare benefits and • Debt restructuring
What is it?	An advice centre which provides in person first level legal assistance to clients to identify their legal issue and give practical advice to them about how to begin to resolve their problem. SWLAC cannot conduct correspondence for clients or represent them in courts or tribunals although we can point them in the right direction if this is what is needed. Volunteers give advice only on the evenings on which they volunteer and do not bring work away with them.
Where is it?	The Abbey Centre in Great Smith Street, Westminster.
Duration	Between 6.30 and 9pm on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
Frequency	This depends on what works for the volunteer, but SWLAC asks for a minimum commitment from volunteers of one evening per month.
Who is the opportunity open to?	Any English qualified lawyer can volunteer as a Legal Adviser. Trainees, paralegals and students can volunteer as Support Volunteers or Clinic Administrators. It is not necessary for volunteers to have a current practising certificate. Registered Foreign Lawyers are welcome to volunteer. As with all our volunteers, their experience of legal practice will be taken into account when allocating clients to them.
What expertise does the lawyer need to have?	Lawyers do not need any particular legal specialisms but the ability to think clearly and practically about the client's issues. If the client needs specialist advice in areas such as employment, family and low-level crime, subsequent appointments can be made with our cohort of volunteers who specialise in these areas.
What do the pro bono volunteers do?	Legal Advisers sit with the clients and provide the advice they need. Support Volunteers sit with the Legal Adviser and the client and assist in the meeting - perhaps doing research or looking for Court Forms on the internet. Also preparing a note of the meeting for the client's file.

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	Clinic Administrators greet the clients, check that they have appointments and manage those who do not have appointments as well as providing practical help to the volunteers if needed in using SWLAC's case management system, printing and sending documents etc. We are also looking for more senior lawyers to supervise our clinic sessions.
Insurance position	SWLAC has professional indemnity cover which provides protection to the charity and also to the volunteers.
Other support from organisation/charity	Each session is presided over by two senior lawyers who can provide assistance to volunteers and who ensure that the session runs smoothly. Volunteers are only asked to advise in situations in which they feel comfortable. The lawyers supervising the session will explain the client's need for advice and the Legal Adviser can decide whether to advise the client or not.
Fee/cost	None
Contact	Please contact NPBC In House Pro Bono lead mary@dobsonsmith.consulting for a direct introduction
Background to project/scheme	SWLAC has been operating in Westminster for over 26 years and provides a much-needed free legal advice service to those living in Westminster and the surrounding areas. We have no geographical qualification. We see between 15 and 20 plus clients per evening and they are welcome to come back when they have done what they have been advised to do. Many of the issues which clients have can be resolved by the application of a good legal mind – such as explaining the legal environment the client is in, providing some common-sense advice, helping them to fill in a form, helping them to understand a document they have received or helping them to draft something. As mentioned above, we have specialist volunteers to advise in areas which require specialist advice such as employment, family and crime.