

FRU



Free Representation Unit



Recruitment Pack

Assistant Legal Officer -
Employment

August 2026

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the role of Assistant Legal Officer (ALO) at the Free Representation Unit (FRU). We hope that you will apply for this important role in our organisation.

FRU is a unique organisation with a dual mission; to relieve poverty by representing those who otherwise couldn't afford a lawyer, and to train the lawyers of the future.

Background information

FRU offers representation in social security, criminal injuries compensation and employment cases to those who cannot afford a lawyer. Since 1972 we have helped our clients gain access to justice in the tribunals. In the current environment, with all forms of legal aid and free advice under pressure, our work is needed more than ever.

The majority of FRU's work is done by our volunteers, most of whom are students or recently graduated and looking to start their legal career. Volunteers are supervised by FRU's staff, including our Principal Legal Officers, Legal Officers and Assistant Legal Officers. A small number of volunteers are lawyers in practice. These lawyers volunteer for FRU because of a sense of social responsibility and/or to develop their practice. Primarily our volunteers are working towards qualification

Each year FRU staff and volunteers represent hundreds of people in First and Upper Tier tribunals, the Employment Tribunal and Employment Appeal Tribunal. We also refer cases on into the higher courts through other agencies. Most cases are referred by a network of frontline advice agencies, trade unions and law firms. Some come to us directly through our self-referral project. Our First-Tier and Employment Tribunal work is mostly in London and the south and east of England. We take EAT, Upper Tier and higher courts cases from across the UK. The cases we take on are at varying stages of their development. Volunteers take conduct of the case on instruction and undertake the 'traditional work' of solicitor and advocate.

FRU is based at our office at Field Court in Gray's Inn in central London. We have a successful partnership with City, University of London where City students take on cases as part of their academic and professional qualifications. We benefit in several ways from support by Linklaters LLP, a 'magic circle' law firm. One of the elements of that support is that we host a Linklaters secondee for 6 months each year. The secondee is a trainee solicitor in their final seat before qualification. The secondee takes on employment cases and assists with the running of the Unit. This provides experience that they cannot gain in other seats, particularly in advocacy.

FRU is coming towards our 55th year of operation. Many senior judicial and legal figures are FRU alumni, and we enjoy a strong reputation for the quality of our work with the judiciary, chambers and law firms. Our funding comes from a range of sources including corporate donations (from organisations such as the Bar Council, the Inns of Court, the Employment Law Association and Linklaters LLP), grant making trusts, partnerships, individual fundraising and fees from our trainees and referral agencies.

More details about our service can be found in our recent [Annual Reports](#).

Our employment work

Our employment tribunal cases are referred directly by the client, or through a range of community organisations, trade unions and law firms. Cases are only referred once a hearing date has been set including case management, preliminary or final hearings. Our clients have frequently not had the benefit of early legal advice when submitting their tribunal application. As litigants in person, they often have difficulty in complying with case management orders. Therefore, the cases that reach us often require remedial action and applications to amend the claim before they can be properly argued. Cases have become more complex and frequently contain claims of discrimination and/or whistleblowing. Increasingly we are prioritising representation at preliminary hearings to litigate issues that ensure the case can proceed and increase opportunities for negotiation with the respondent.

We offer full representation at the tribunal hearing and all the associated preparation of the case, including drafting witness statements, schedules of loss, applications, preparing hearing bundles and the drafting of submissions. Our staff and volunteers also negotiate settlements with respondents and attend judicial mediation. So far during 2026 we have secured £277,458 in judgments and settlements.

The volunteer is expected to prepare the case, with the guidance and oversight of the FRU legal officer. This supervision is often intensive because our volunteers are inexperienced.

We also represent clients at the Employment Appeal Tribunal in cases which develop or clarify the law for all workers and employers. Some EAT cases are taken to appeal a point of law arising out of a FRU case and others are referred by the tribunal or other agencies. We have developed a project with Cloisters Chambers where Cloisters barristers sift the referrals and take on cases pro bono where they have the capacity, working with FRU legal officers or volunteers or with Advocate, the Bar's pro bono charity.

Our Assistant Legal Officers

As an Assistant Legal Officer, you will make a vital contribution to FRU's work, but the post is also part of our efforts to give aspiring lawyers and junior practitioners training and experience.

We expect you to develop as a lawyer and advocate. With our help you will have significant responsibility for supervising volunteers. You will also have your own caseload and will be expected to make a substantial contribution to FRU's overall casework, especially in complex cases.

You will be supervised and supported by our Principal Legal Officer for employment.

What will you do?

You will spend most of each day supervising volunteers. Common situations include:

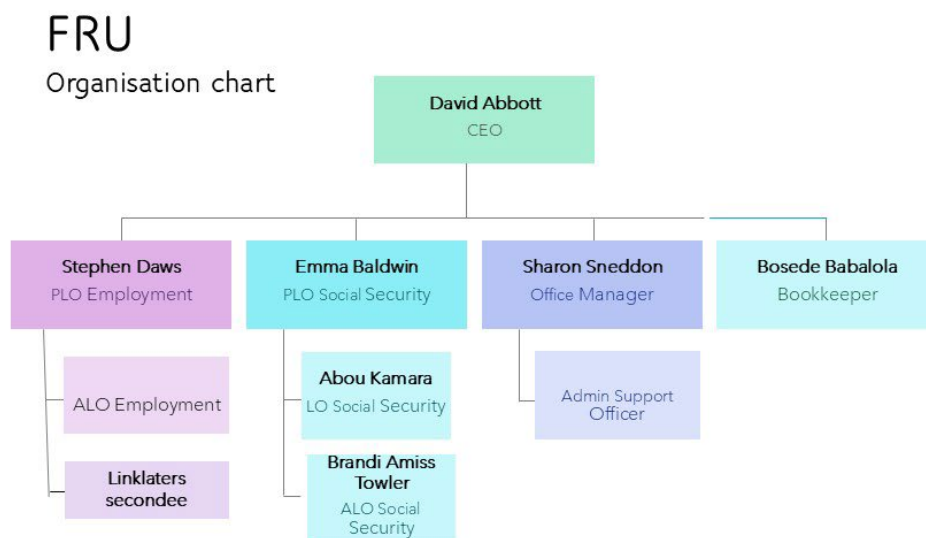
- Discussing a case with a new volunteer, who needs to demonstrate that they will be able to conduct it properly.
- Advising a volunteer on a difficult legal point.
- Guiding someone through a difficult client handling situation or point of professional ethics.
- Helping a volunteer to prepare written submissions, giving detailed firm feedback on drafting and ensuring that the case strategy is sound.

- Updating our case management system Salesforce and allocating cases to volunteers.

When you are not supervising volunteers, you will work on your own cases. You can identify cases that develop your skills or match areas of interest. ALO's frequently develop their practice to take on Employment Appeal Tribunal cases.

You will be expected to manage your work to balance your casework with the supervision of volunteers.

Organisational chart



What are we looking for?

An enthusiastic, committed and able candidate.

We expect candidates to have some interest and experience of working in employment law, whether that be at FRU, as a volunteer in another advice agency or in paid employment. If you have other relevant legal experience, for example as a litigation paralegal, providing a service at a court duty desk or advocate in other areas such as immigration then that may give you useful transferable skills. We are primarily interested in finding candidates with ability and potential.

Part-time or job share applications will be considered.

We are committed to equal opportunities and to selecting the best candidate for the post. We will make reasonable adjustment required for people with a disability.

Why apply?

FRU takes on a wide range of complex employment law cases. The ALO will gain substantial employment law experience in a short space of time through training and supervising volunteers and taking on their own cases. The quality of our work is recognised by the judiciary, chambers and law firms. We are a small friendly and collegiate team, and you will receive excellent training and support. In recent years FRU legal officers of different levels have gone on to become an employment judge, run a network for employment law agencies, become a trade union legal manager or secure pupillage.

Application Process / Timetable:

- Complete the Application Form to be found on the website vacancy page. **Please note that we will shortlist based on the applicants who provide specific examples of having the skills and experience set out in the person specification. Simply stating that you have the skill or experience is not enough.**
- Complete the Information for Administrator Form to be found on the website vacancy page

The deadline for applying is 09.00 a.m. Wednesday 2 September. Unfortunately we will not be able to accept applications submitted after that time because shortlisting will take place immediately.

The selection timetable will be:

- Stage I: Applications submitted by 09.00 a.m. Wednesday 2 September 2026
- Stage II: Shortlisted candidates invited to an interview by Friday 4 September.
As part of the process, you will be given a case to study which you will need to be able to discuss at interview.
- Stage III: Interviews on Tuesday 8 September. If you are shortlisted and cannot make this date, we can't guarantee to interview you at another time. If you aren't free on this date please explain on the information for administrator form, ensuring that you give your name.
- Stage IV: Job offered subject to references
- Stage V: Start date: as soon as possible thereafter, subject to discussion of successful candidate's availability. We would hope the candidates could take up post in October 2026

If you have questions about this role please contact David Abbott, Chief Executive at chief.exec@thefru.org.uk.

Job Details

Job title:	Assistant Legal Officer, Employment
Reporting to:	Principal Legal Officer, Employment
Hours of work:	35 hours a week, pro rata if part-time or job share. Normal working hours will be 10.00 to 18.00 with an hour for lunch. Other working patterns are also possible.
Salary:	£30,264 p.a. (pro rata if part-time or job share)
Annual Leave:	25 days (pro rata if part-time or job share) + Public and Bank Holidays + period between Christmas and New Year
Location:	The post-holder will need to be available to volunteers and will therefore be based in FRU's offices in central London with some agreed hours spent working from home, dependent on business needs. The post-holder will be expected to travel to tribunal hearings when necessary.
Duration:	Permanent
Other:	Optional contributory pension scheme (employer 5% employee 3%), Interest free loan for travel season ticket

Job Purpose:

1. To support delivery of FRU's pro bono legal service. This will include training and supporting volunteers, undertaking your own casework, facilitating case referrals from referral agencies and self-referrals from clients, and other activities connected with the running of FRU.
2. You will be supported by our Principal Legal Officer who have primary responsibility for our employment service, but you will be expected to exercise your own judgment within agreed parameters.

Duties:

The Assistant Legal Officer will be responsible for assisting the Principal Legal Officer, including the supervision and training of volunteers. The Assistant Legal Officer role will include:

- Supervising and supporting the work of volunteer representatives;
- Representing clients in employment tribunals themselves (including cases where the original volunteer is unavoidably unable to complete the handling of a case which they had taken on);
- Grading cases referred to FRU according to their suitability for different FRU representatives;
- Supporting self-referral systems to allow clients to refer themselves directly to FRU for representation;

- Dealing with clients who wish to refer themselves to FRU for representation including assessing whether the case in question is suitable for referral to a FRU volunteer;
- Contributing to processing EAT case referrals;
- Advertising and publicising FRU's work to potential clients, volunteers and to stakeholders;
- Contributing to the evaluation of the effectiveness of FRU processes and collecting relevant data;
- Returning monitoring information required by project funders;
- Dealing with clients and volunteers in general;
- Contributing to training FRU volunteers;
- Delivering office induction talks to potential volunteers;
- Contributing to the maintenance of the FRU library;
- Assisting with general administrative tasks, bearing in mind that the FRU is a small, busy charity with limited administrative support.

This list is not exhaustive and is subject to amendment based on the requirements of the business.

Person Specification

Applicants for the post should demonstrate that they have the following:

	Essential	Desirable
A. Knowledge, experience and qualifications	1. A law degree, a GDL or equivalent qualification 2. Some knowledge of employment law 3. Some experience of conducting casework and advocacy in the employment tribunals	1. Detailed Knowledge of and experience in employment law and practice
B. Skills and abilities	1. Ability to analyse and understand complex legal issues 2. Ability to explain complex legal issues to different audiences 3. Ability to take responsibility and make sound judgment 4. Ability to learn skills and information quickly 5. Ability to work in a busy environment with competing demands 6. Good oral and written communication skills 7. Ability to work as part of a small team	

C. Personal qualities	1. Commitment to helping people obtain access to justice and to equal opportunities and valuing diversity 2. An interest in developing the skills and knowledge of others	1. Ability to attend occasional evening and weekend meetings and events (which are planned in advance).
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