

# FRU

Free Representation Unit



## Recruitment Pack Principal Legal Officer – Employment

December 2021

## **Principal Legal Officer – Employment**

### **Recruitment pack 2021**

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for your interest in the role of Principal Legal Officer (PLO) – Employment at FRU, I hope that you will apply for this crucial 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. The PLO role needs someone who has excellent legal skills, the ability to transfer their skills to others and who can play an important leadership role in the organisation.

This is an exciting time to join our senior team. We have recently moved into new office accommodation in central London, and we are making important governance changes that will make us more effective. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that we can work well remotely, and we now need to plan how our service should develop based on that experience.

#### **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 and Assistant Legal Officers. A small number of volunteers are lawyers in practice. These lawyers volunteer for FRU from a sense of social responsibility and/or to develop their practice.

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 take cases into the higher courts with the assistance of barristers in practice. 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.

FRU is based at our office in Gray's Inn in central London. We have a partnership with Nottingham Trent University, which provides a FRU service at its Legal Advice Centre delivered by NTU students supervised by LAC staff. We also 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 a number of 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 are not able to gain in other seats, particularly in

advocacy. In recent years FRU has also benefited from a scheme linked to Outer Temple Chambers which offers an extended pupillage. This involves 6 months at FRU doing primarily employment casework, followed by a formal first six month pupillage at OTC, and then a practising second six month pupillage doing OTC and FRU casework.

FRU is about to commence our 50th 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](#).

### **About the Principal Legal Officer role**

The PLO employment is a senior manager in our small staff team. The postholder will contribute to the effective running of the organisation, helping to set direction, respond to challenges and identify opportunities to improve and develop our service.

The main job of the Principal Legal Officer is the training and supervision of the volunteers and Assistant Legal Officers when undertaking employment cases. Most of an average day is spent speaking to volunteers, helping them prepare cases and reviewing their work. FRU cases cover the whole spectrum of employment law, but much of our work is in unfair dismissal, wrongful dismissal, wages and holiday pay. We take on cases after they are presented to the ET and once there is a hearing date. But, in most cases, there is significant preparation for the hearing required. Volunteers routinely draft schedules of loss, deal with disclosure, prepare bundles and write witness statements, in addition to appearing at the hearing.

As Principal Legal Officer you will be ultimately responsible for the conduct of FRU's employment cases and the most challenging issues – legal, ethical and practical – will come to you. As well as dealing with volunteers you will supervise and mentor staff dealing with employment work, in particular the Assistant Legal Officers, but also seconded trainees from Linklaters. You may need to develop and manage specially funded projects to deliver our service.

There is also the opportunity to maintain / develop your own advocacy skills in the Employment Tribunal, Employment Appeal Tribunal and high courts. You will also contribute to FRU's policy work, such as drawing on our practical experience to inform consultation responses. In recent years we have applied our practical experience to a wide range of Parliamentary select committee inquiries and government consultations.

## Next step

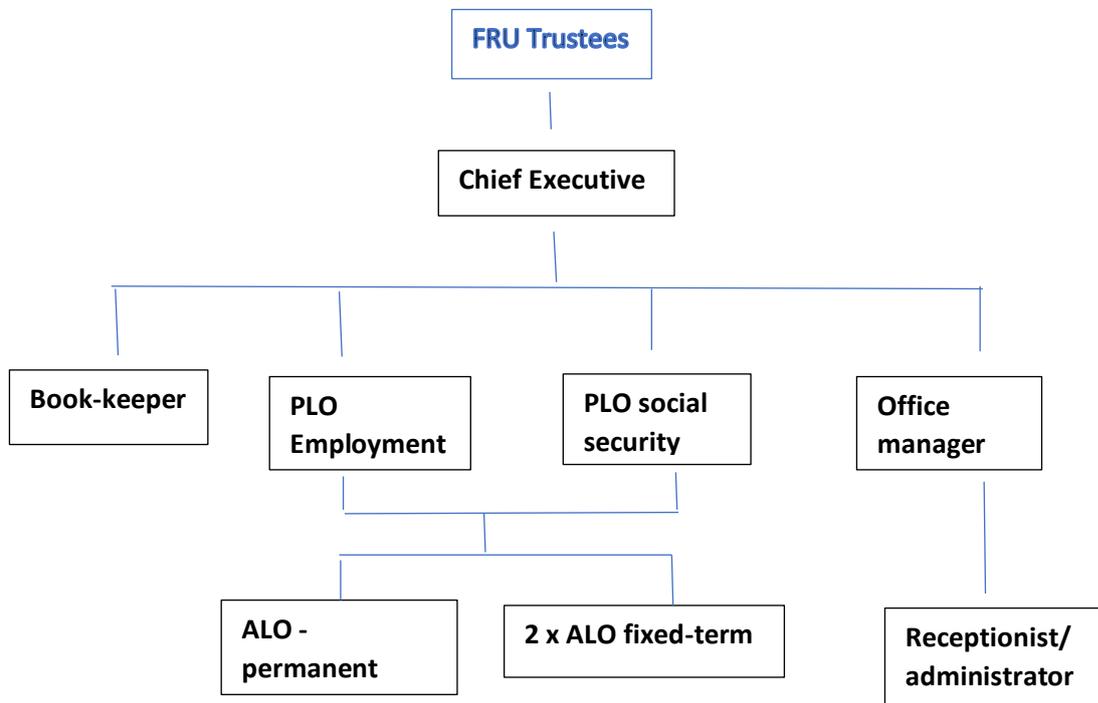
If you would like an informal discussion about the role with the current postholder, Michael Reed, or I please email me at [chief.exec@thefru.org.uk](mailto:chief.exec@thefru.org.uk). Please ensure that you submit your application by the closing date of 5.00 p.m. on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

I look forward to receiving your application to join our small organisation with a big reach.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Abbott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Abbott  
Chief Executive

## FRU Organisational structure



## Job description

Job title: Principal Legal Officer – Employment

Reporting to: Chief Executive

Responsible for: management of assistant legal officers and secondees

Hours of work: 35 hours a week. Normal working hours will be 10.00 to 18.00 with an hour for lunch. Part-time, flexible working and job share requests will be considered.

Salary: £42,087 p.a.

Annual Leave: 25 days + 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 home working, subject to Covid restrictions and dependent on business needs. The post-holder will be expected to travel to tribunal hearings, events and meetings when necessary.

Duration: Permanent

Other: Interest free loan for travel season ticket

Purpose of the role: To be an effective member of FRU's senior management team, ensuring that FRU provides a high quality advocacy service to our clients and a high quality experience to our volunteers. To take the lead on FRU's employment work.

### Main duties

- As a member of a senior management team, to contribute to the strategic and operational management of FRU and development of its services
- To lead FRU's employment work
- To ensure that FRU clients are empowered to make decisions about their case and receive a good service from FRU
- To promote the achievement of professional standards in all aspects of FRU work
- To ensure that FRU volunteers receive appropriate support, supervision and guidance to perform effectively
- To put in place systems, policies and approaches that ensure the quality of casework, benchmarking with other providers
- To promote best practice in clinical legal education at FRU, benchmarking with other providers
- To promote equality and diversity in all aspects of FRU work
- To manage relevant staff and secondees in accordance with FRU policies
- To maintain the postholder's own legal and professional knowledge and skills
- To represent FRU professionally to external stakeholders and to build appropriate professional networks to further FRU's objectives

- To develop and manage projects to deliver their objectives, as necessary
- To support funding applications and to contribute to reporting, monitoring and evaluation of our service

## Person Specification

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

	Essential	Desirable
A. Knowledge, experience and qualifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A law degree, a GDL or equivalent qualification</li> <li>2. Experience of employment law advice and tribunal advocacy</li> <li>3. Experience of training, supporting or supervising others in legal casework and advocacy</li> <li>4. Experience of public speaking</li> <li>5. Experience of managing or organising projects</li> <li>6. Experience of meeting relevant regulatory requirements (including data protection, health &amp; safety and professional standards)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Lawyer with a current practising certificate</li> <li>8. 5 year's PQE</li> <li>9. Experience of running a student based legal clinic</li> <li>10. Knowledge of and experience of social security or criminal injuries compensation law and practice</li> <li>11. Experience of analysing data to evaluate policy and service delivery</li> <li>12. An understanding of the Qualifying Work Experience element of the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE)</li> </ol>
B. Skills and abilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ability to analyse and understand complex legal issues</li> <li>2. Ability to explain complex legal issues to different audiences</li> <li>3. Ability to work in a busy environment with competing demands</li> <li>4. Good oral and written communication skills</li> </ol>	
C. Personal qualities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment to helping people obtain access to justice and to equal opportunities</li> <li>2. Ability to take responsibility and make sound judgements</li> <li>3. An interest in developing the skills and knowledge of others</li> <li>4. Ability to work flexibly as part of a small team</li> <li>5. Ability to attend occasional evening and weekend meetings and events (which are planned in advance).</li> </ol>	

## Application and selection process

Please complete both the **application form** and **information for administrator** form by no later than 5.00 p.m. on 17 January 2022. It will not be an acceptable alternative to submit a CV.

We are committed to equal opportunities, valuing diversity and to selecting the best candidate for the post. We will make any reasonable adjustment required for people with a disability. Completion of the equalities monitoring information on the information for administrator form is optional, but we would appreciate it if you would complete it to help us to monitor the effectiveness of our advertising and appointment processes. The information you provide will not be made available to the appointment panel before the appointment decision is made.

We will shortlist those applicants who provide the best evidence that they possess the skills and experience outlined on the person specification. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview where their skills and experience will be explored in greater depth. Legal skills will be assessed by a case study at the interview stage. Further details will be provided to all those who are shortlisted.

Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to provide feedback to applicants who aren't shortlisted. Anyone who is shortlisted but unsuccessful can request feedback.

The selection timetable will be:

Stage I: Applications submitted by 5.00 p.m. 17 January 2022

Stage II: Shortlisted candidates invited to an interview by 26 January 2022

Stage III: Interviews on 31 January 2022. Please indicate on the form if you are unavailable on this date. We may not be able to accommodate an alternative date. The interview may be in-person or virtual. The decision will be made nearer to the time considering government guidance on Covid-19.

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 March or April 2022