

# FRU



## Free Representation Unit



### Recruitment Pack

### Project Support Officer

January 2024

## Project Support Officer Recruitment Pack 2024

### **Introduction**

Thank you for your interest in the role of Project Support Officer (PSO) at FRU. I 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**

The FRU is one of the UK's leading providers of free representation in legal hearings. We have been providing free representation in social security and employment tribunals since 1972. We help Individuals who are ineligible for legal aid and financially incapable of hiring legal representation to enforce their legal rights. We train and supervise hundreds of volunteers each year – mostly law students and professionals at the early stages of their careers – in order to provide this important work.

FRU is based at our office 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 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.

FRU is coming to the end of our 51st 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](#).

### **The Trust For London project**

In 2023 FRU received a grant award for 3 years from Trust for London (TFL). The grant was provided under TFL's Decent Living Standards Programme. The funded project has a number of workstreams including the recruitment of additional legal officers to expand our capacity to represent clients, updating our website to provide a better service to clients and

stakeholders and conducting research into current and future demand for representation in social security tribunal hearings.

In terms of the research project, we want to conduct research into the reasons why social security case referrals to FRU have significantly reduced and continue to remain low following Covid-19. We have spoken to some of the other agencies offering social security tribunal representation and they report the same pattern: a large and sustained reduction in cases being referred. By way of example, FRU had 1324 new cases were referred in the financial year to April 2019, compared to only 200 new cases in the year to April 2022. That is a drop of 85%. While there are some anecdotal suggestions as to the cause, there is no hard research.

While there are some new providers of representation in our geographical area, applications to the tribunal have steadily recovered and we don't believe the need has significantly reduced: certainly not the extent reflected by our experience.

We want our research to identify the barriers for clients seeking representation and, to a lesser extent, advice about social security tribunals. We envisage that the research will include undertaking surveys and conducting interviews with a range of clients and staff from our existing referral agencies, as well as sister agencies operating in the field. We have an existing network of contacts. We will commission an experienced researcher to design and deliver the methodology required in order to gather sufficient evidence to form the basis of the report, from which they will be able to draw some reliable conclusions. The report needs to be completed within an agreed timetable of six months, from commissioning to delivery of a report of findings.

We hope to identify the reasons behind the drop off in referral activity to FRU and other agencies, and to implement measures to remove identified barriers to referral, in order to increase the number of referrals to FRU. This may include introducing a self-referral pathway if the evidence from the report shows that it would be desirable, and we are open to any other suggestions the report might identify.

In terms of wider use and dissemination, we will want to share our learning with advice, legal pro bono networks and the academic and public sectors, for information purposes and to assist stakeholders to design better and more integrated services. This is because we suspect there are some systemic issues affecting the sector more widely. We will disseminate our findings widely, including via a seminar and report, to ensure that the whole sector can adapt their services.

The Project Support Officer will help to deliver across the workstreams, particularly in helping to facilitate better access to our service for clients and helping us to manage the project by collecting and analysing data and drafting reports.

### **Project Support Officer Role**

We are a small, hard-working team looking for someone with a friendly and positive attitude to join us at our central London office. You will need enthusiasm and highly developed

interpersonal skills as you will be the first point of contact with stakeholders in this exciting role.

You will be responsible for facilitating the deliver and reporting of our Trust for London funded project to increase representation in tribunal hearings for those on low incomes.

You will also be responsible for assisting us to understand and subsequently improve referral pathways which will include liaising with clients and building relationships with referral agencies. Creating processes for data collection and reporting and drafting project reports in collaboration with the Legal Officer and the Chief Executive.

Previous experience with Salesforce or another client database is useful but not essential. As a member of a small team, you will need to be flexible and able to make good decisions about when to follow guidance and when to ask a colleague. Because the Project Support Officer quality assures data entered by others and enters case data into our database, this is a role where attention to detail is absolutely essential.

The post is ideal for someone who is looking for excellent experience in a fast-paced environment in a short space of time. Training for the post will be provided as there is a lot of information and process to understand.

At FRU we are passionate about equal opportunities and welcome applicants from diverse backgrounds.

If you would like to be part of this team, please apply now. If you have any questions about the post, please email me on [chief.exec@thefru.org.uk](mailto:chief.exec@thefru.org.uk).

More details about our service can be found on our website [www.thefru.org.uk](http://www.thefru.org.uk) and in our recent [Annual Reports](#).

We look forward to receiving your application, please fill in all sections of the form and don't forget to give us examples of how you've already used the skills we are looking for.

Please ensure that you submit your application by the closing date of Midnight on 07 January 2024

Yours faithfully

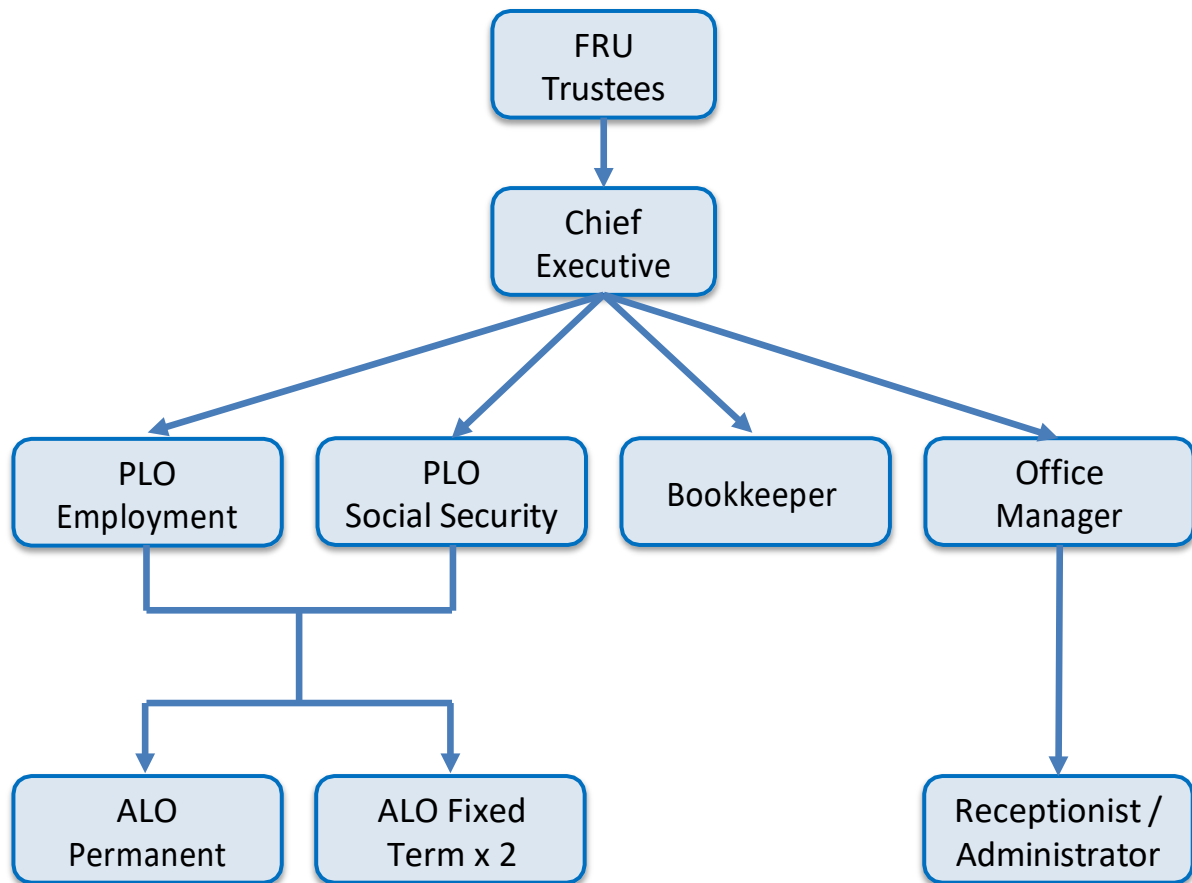


David Abbott  
Chief Executive

Funded by the Trust For London Decent Living Standards Programme



## FRU Organisational Structure



## Job Description

### Job Details

Job title:	Project Support Officer - increasing representation in tribunal hearings for those on low incomes project
Reporting to:	Chief Executive
Hours of work:	15 hours a week. Normal working hours will be 9.00 to 17.30 with an hour for lunch. The precise working pattern will be for discussion and agreement as we do have flexibility
Salary:	£11,571 actual p.a. (£27,000 p.a. pro rata)
Annual Leave:	25 days pro rata + Bank Holidays + period between Christmas and New Year
Location:	The post-holder will need to be available to users of the office and will therefore be based in FRU's offices in central London. Home working will also be available by agreement
Duration:	Fixed term post: 30 months [details to be confirmed at start of project]
Other:	Interest free loan for travel season ticket

**Job Purpose:** To support the Trust for London project to increase representation in tribunal hearings for those on low incomes

The PSO will be responsible for carrying out the following duties:

#### 1. Understanding and improving referral pathways

- 1.1. Receive the learning and conclusions from research into why case referral patterns have changed as a result of Covid-19, barriers for clients to having their case referred for representation and how case referrals can be increased in the future. Disseminate widely in the advice, pro bono legal, public sector and academic communities
- 1.2. With colleagues identify how FRU's service can be changed to maximise the ability of appropriate clients to have their social security case referred in a user-friendly way and make recommendations
- 1.3. Implement agreed actions by redesigning FRU's referral pathways as necessary, identifying new ways to reach potential FRU clients, continually communicating pathways to all relevant stakeholders and promoting FRU's service as necessary

#### 2. Client Support

- 2.1. Liaising with clients who are suitable for self-referral to assist them in making the referral including obtaining key information and documents, explaining the terms of the referral and entering data onto systems
- 2.2. Create processes to maintain contact with clients who have had their case referred, collect data and deliver reports on data and outcomes
- 2.3. Work flexibly with the FRU admin team to facilitate client referrals including through any new referral channels

### **3. Project Support**

- 3.1. Collecting and analysing monitoring data as required by the evaluation plan
- 3.2. Creating processes and facilitating dissemination of information to partners about the project
- 3.3. Producing two interim and final project reports for sign off by the Chief Executive
- 3.4. Processing grant payment applications

Alongside responsibility for particular areas of the Free Representation Unit's activity in line with the above, the Project Support Officer will assist the chief executive, office manager and Legal Officers as required.

## Person Specification

### PROJECT SUPPORT OFFICER

#### PERSON SPECIFICATION

##### KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

###### Essential

1. Experience of drafting project reports or similar documents
2. Experience of disseminating information to a wide range of organisations
3. Experience of developing operational policies and practices

###### Desirable

4. Some prior experience in project management or implementation
5. Knowledge of the legal academic sector and or social welfare, ideally you will be well networked in one of these areas
6. Experience of using Salesforce or other CRM databases
7. Experience of arranging events and seminars
8. Experience in a customer service role
9. Experience of legal/casework administration
10. Understanding of the context and environment in which FRU works

##### SKILLS AND ABILITIES

###### Essential

1. Ability to extract and analyse operational data, in line with project reporting requirements
2. Ability to draft clear reports, meeting the requirements of the project funders as set out in the evaluation plan
3. After induction, ability to use all FRUs IT systems including CRM database, website, social media, document storage system, phone system and any other office systems used to perform your role
4. Ability to accurately follow FRU administrative processes, ensuring close attention to detail
5. Ability to carry out duties and assist others without constant supervision, following guidance for routine issues and knowing when to refer to colleagues
6. Ability to work in a busy environment and prioritise between competing demands, ensuring that responsibilities are covered overall
7. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills on the phone, face to face and in writing

##### PERSONAL QUALITIES



***Essential***

1. Ability to work as part of a small team, understanding that you will need to undertake other duties to ensure the smooth running of the office
2. Flexibility and willingness to learn new skills
3. Ability to deal with a wide range of people from a variety of backgrounds, some of whom may be anxious or stressed

***Desirable***

4. Interest in access to justice issues

**CIRCUMSTANCES*****Desirable***

1. Occasional evening/weekend attendance at meetings and events with notice

## Application And Selection Process

1. Please complete the Application Form at [this link](#) by no later than midnight on 07 January 2024.
2. Please complete the Information for Administrator Form at [this link](#) with the details about interview availability, unspent convictions and visa requirements.

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.

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.

### Timetable

The selection timetable will be:

**Stage I:** Application closing date: Midnight on 7 January 2024

**Stage II:** Shortlisted candidates invited to an interview by 10 January 2024

**Stage III:** Interviews on 16 and 17 January 2024. Please indicate on the information for administrators form if you are unavailable on these dates. We may not be able to accommodate an alternative date.

**Stage IV:** Job offered subject to references

**Stage V:** Start date: as soon as possible thereafter, subject to discussion of successful candidate's availability.