

Advice Workforce Development Programme

Call for tenders to undertake research investigating the pay and conditions of social welfare advice workers in London.



1. Introduction

The social welfare advice workforce occupies a unique space in the not-for-profit sector and we warmly welcome your interest in this tender. We believe this is an exciting opportunity to help better understand the needs of advice workers so that we attract and retain talented and experienced staff. The impact of this research could really change things for our workforce and help us to keep doing what we do best: supporting people who come to us at the most difficult times of their lives.

The social welfare advice sector encapsulates a diverse group of people and organisations. It ranges from specialist law centres, to a lone adviser located within a small charity. It also includes networked organisations like Citizens Advice charities and larger teams inside local and national employers. People doing this work might have different job titles: perhaps they are a caseworker, a lawyer or a welfare rights advisor. The social welfare advice sector has many different names and places for the work that we do, but wherever we are and whatever we are called, we face the same challenges: demand for services is increasing, while the resources remain the same, or in some cases, are decreasing.

Our preliminary research has identified the difficulty for the advice sector to develop an effective and sustainable career pathway which attracts and builds the workforce. One of the recommendations to remedy this, is to develop and advocate for improved pay scales and conditions. This document outlines a call for tenders to undertake research into current salaries and conditions within the advice sector and produce a report with draft pay scales and conditions which can be used to inform activities within the advice sector, funding sector and beyond.

We welcome tenders from organisations and consortia, as well as individuals. We are interested in researchers who have the appropriate skills, experience and expertise - including not-for-profit organisations, private companies, and universities.

2. Who we are

Our work falls under the [Advice Workforce Development Programme](#) (AWDP) - a programme supported by a London-wide funder initiative, [Propel](#), which seeks to address the root causes of the issues facing civil societies in London. The AWDP focuses on addressing the multitude of workforce issues impacting recruitment, training, progression, and retention across the advice sector.¹ We invite you to read more about the background to the AWDP in the appendix [below](#).

This tender is being overseen by a task and finish group of the AWDP, made up of sector experts, funders, and members who have joined us for their specific knowledge and experience in research and/or pay and conditions.

¹ By advice sector, we mean civil society organisations providing practical support, assistance, advocacy, or representation to people facing various challenges including legal, financial, and social issues. Many of the individuals and families these organisations work with are facing the effects of discrimination, poverty and inequality. Advice organisations will often also seek to identify emerging themes in their caseload, so they are able to use the law in more strategic ways to address an issue at a wider level.

What we mean by social welfare advice?

For the purposes of this research, we mean organisations that provide free social welfare advice² on the following topics³:

- Welfare benefits: eligibility and access to welfare benefits, income maximisation (which focuses on promoting the uptake of welfare benefits).
- Money and debt: advice and guidance on how to avoid debt and how to deal with it when it becomes a problem.
- Immigration: the provision of advice on immigration issues, which is subject to its own regulatory framework.
- Employment: rights at work, for example, around unfair dismissal, unfair treatment, withheld pay.
- Housing: access to social housing, advice on housing rights and eviction (including around the management and condition of accommodation), access to assistance when facing or experiencing homelessness.
- Disability, discrimination and social care advice.
- Additional forms of social welfare advice not described above.

This piece of work will require you to conduct research, using a representative sample of the capital's advice sector workforce. Many (but not all) advice organisations belong to networks and/or membership bodies, and a number will hold accreditation or quality marks relevant to the advice they provide.

These networks, membership bodies and accreditation schemes may be a useful starting point when identifying your research sample, and include the following:

- [Advice Quality Standard](#) (AQS) – by Advice Services Alliance
- [Advice UK](#)
- [London Citizens Advice](#) – making up 28 Citizens Advice charities in London
- [Law Centres Network](#)
- [Advice Workforce Development Fund](#) partners

3. What we are looking for

There are two elements to this research: pay (salaries) and conditions.

(1) Pay

The purpose of this part of the tender is to conduct research into pay in the advice sector ('sector' hereafter), drawing upon a representative sample of the diverse workforce that makes up the advice sector in London and wider charity sector in London.

The researcher will also need to consider other relevant parts of the charity sector and local government pay scales. This research will require the ability to obtain and understand representative datasets and unpack the narrative behind them. The researcher will then be required to use their findings to produce a paper with a draft pay scale for the advice sector. We invite researchers to propose appropriate methodologies in relation to the task of obtaining, collating and analysing data about pay in the sector.

(2) Conditions

² The scope of this research is restricted to advice provision on the social welfare law topics listed, as opposed to advocacy services.

³ We have drawn upon the seminal report into advice provision, gaps and strategic challenges in London, [Advising Londoners](#) (ASA, 2020), to determine the scope and definitions of this research (at p.11).

The second part of this research is to produce a report on the conditions for people working in the advice sector currently, and explore how these conditions can be improved. This may involve primary and secondary research looking at conditions in the sector.

We are keen in this part to find out about key pressures of advice work, as well as what we might call standard conditions, and we envisage the research covering the following:

- Statutory conditions (such as maternity leave; workplace pension scheme, etc.);
- 'Extra conditions' (such as caseloads; additional leave above statutory entitlement; compressed hours, etc.);
- Benefits (distinct from conditions and covers things such as a bike scheme or discounted gym membership);
- Reasonable adjustments and access to work; and
- Wellbeing (initiatives which are separate from Employee Assistant Schemes which may be used in the sector to help manage stress, address vicarious trauma, etc.).

We would also be keen to learn the impact of multiple intersectionalities on advice workers' conditions.

The researcher should propose appropriate methodological approaches commensurate with the size and scope of the project.

How we will use the research

These two key pieces of work will enable the wider AWDP to produce onward guidance: (a) for advice organisations on how their approaches to pay and conditions may improve their ability to recruit and retain staff and how they can make the case to funders for supporting this; and (b) for funders and commissioning bodies on the role they can play in addressing a particular challenge in the recruitment and retention of staff within the sector.

Finally, your work will contribute to the wider activities of the programme, including the building of organisational capacity, and development of a London-wide Advice Strategy.

4. Budgets

We are providing **two** budget ranges for this tender. You may choose to base your proposal on one or other of the budget ranges, or outline what you believe would be possible with budgets from each range.

The ranges are as follows:

	Lower amount	Upper amount
1	£17,500	£25,000
2	£25,000	£40,000

As part of your application we will require a breakdown of costs and number of days you will need to complete the work.

5. Timeline

We expect this research to commence from the week commencing 30 September. We have outlined, below, an illustrative timeline which we are working towards. Final dates for deadlines will be discussed with the successful researcher.

Milestone	Date
Call for tenders	Monday 8 July 2024
Deadline for tender submissions	Midday on Monday 12 August 2024
Shortlisted applicants notified	By Monday 17 August 2024
Interviews with shortlisted applicants	Between Wednesday 28 August 2024 and Wednesday 4 September 2024
Researcher appointed	By Monday 16 September 2024
Work begins	w/c 30 September 2024
Presentation of methodology to the task and finish group	By Thursday 7 November 2024
Presentation of research findings to the task and finish group followed by workshop on conditions and benefits	w/c Monday 27 January 2025
Written feedback on first draft	By Monday 24 February 2025
Deadline for final draft	Monday 17 March 2025
Final reports published	April/May 2025

6. Criteria

We are looking for a researcher(s) with the following skills, knowledge, and experience:

- Extensive research experience in both quantitative and qualitative research methods, including experience of working on projects from inception through to completion;
- Ability to write in a clear, concise, and accessible manner;
- Knowledge of the not-for-profit sector and advice organisations;
- Understanding of the diversity, complexity of advice organisations and sector;
- Experience of working in or with civil society organisations, or able to demonstrate an understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing such organisation;
- Ability and willingness to develop and maintain relationships with organisations and funders committed to improving access to justice;
- Ambitious, with the ability to dream big whilst remaining focused on the potential change which could happen in the present;
- Experience of presenting at and facilitating meetings/workshops in an engaging way;
- Ability to give and receive honest and constructive criticism on a project;
- Ability to reflect individually and in a group on actions and approach; and
- Exceptional organisational skills and experience of project management.

Eligibility to tender

We welcome tenders from individuals, organisations and collaborative research partnerships with the appropriate skills, experience and expertise, including not-for-profit organisations, private companies, and universities.

The contract for this research will be between the London Legal Support Trust and the successful applicant. Full terms and conditions will be provided upon offer of the contract.

7. Process for tendering

To tender for this contract, we require you to send us the information below by midday on Monday 12 August 2024:

1. Proposal

The proposal must be no more than 2000 words and should address the following:

- your interest in this research and your motivation for tendering;
- a summary of your understanding of our requirements for this research;
- proposed approach to undertaking this research. Please cover how you will use quantitative and qualitative research methods for this project and give examples of the datasets you will examine;
- skills and experience. Outline your skills and experience as a researcher and how it is relevant to this tender, focusing on the requirements provided in the criteria above;
- details of proposed research team, their roles and relevant experience;
- any specific risks or challenges you foresee and how you might mitigate these;
- any actual or potential conflicts of interest you/research team members may have;
- questions for the London Legal Support Trust. Please tell us what questions you have for us or what additional information you would need from us to be able to undertake this research.

Your proposal should also include links to previously published research reports you have produced.

2. Budget

A preliminary breakdown of costs and number of days you will need to complete the work. Where appropriate, please explain the rationale behind your allocation.

3. CVs

The CVs of all the people who will be involved in this work.

4. References

Details of two referees who can comment on your experience relevant to this tender. This should include their name, contact email, their profession, and your relationship to them. We will request references as part of the due diligence process before any contract is drawn-up.

The documents at 1-4 above should be sent as separate files in one email to Chris Scutt at christopher@llst.org.uk by midday on Monday 12 August 2024, with the subject line “Pay and Conditions research tender – [name of applicant]”.

Any Questions?

We would be very happy to hear from you with any questions you might have about the research and what we are looking for. Please contact Chris Scutt at the London Legal Support Trust via email at christopher@llst.org.uk in the first instance. We aim to respond to questions within one week of receiving them.

**The London Legal Support Trust
July 2024**

Appendix – Background information to the Advice Workforce Development programme

In 2020, a report commissioned by Advice Services Alliance, [Advising Londoners](#), highlighted rapidly increasing demand for advice services (even before the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis) which were not matched by advice provision. The report also identified key strategic challenges including workforce, funding infrastructure gaps, and recommended coordinated investment in the supply of personnel, and London-wide approaches.

This report was followed by a further piece of research, in 2022, commissioned by LLST, called [Mind the Gap](#) which made a number of recommendations for addressing workforce gaps, including developing 'Grow our own', community-based advice training, apprenticeship schemes backed by the Apprenticeship Levy, and more. It also recommended development of sector-wide strategy.

In 2023, Propel funders including the City Bridge Foundation, and Trust for London, responded to the two reports by pooling £4.15m of funding via its "Robust Safety Net" mission to support eight community-led partnerships to test and scale up recruitment, training and development initiatives to attract new people into the advice sector and for existing staff to have clear progression pathways.

You can find out more about the Advice Workforce Development programme via our website: AdviceWorkforceDevelopmentFund.org.uk.