Release is the UK's national centre of expertise on drugs and drug law. Established in 1967, it is an independent, registered charity providing free, non-judgmental, specialist advice to the public and professionals on drug use and related legal issues. Our policy work is driven by the experiences of our clients, and we advocate for evidence-based drug policies grounded in public health, human rights, and social justice.

Legal Adviser – Application Guidance

We are seeking a Legal Adviser to join our amazing social justice legal team in London. The ideal candidate will be committed to championing the legal and human rights of individuals affected by drug use and drug policy.

Key Responsibilities:

- Deliver at two legal outreach services a week at treatment centres in London, and with training, our virtual outreach services nationwide.
- Complete casework for assistance provided at the services on welfare benefits, housing, and debt issues.
- Provide legal advice on drug-related issues (training provided).
- Contribute to our specialist publications and policy responses.
- Support the development of our website and digital services, ensuring legal compliance.

Essential Requirements:

- Completion of LLB, GDL. or SQE Level 1 (or equivalent qualification)
- Minimum **six months'** experience in legal advice and casework in areas such as crime, housing, benefits, or debt.

Details:

- **Salary:** £30,160 + 5% pension
- **Contract:** Permanent, 35 hours/week
- **Holidays:** 29 days + public holidays
- **Location:** Hybrid - Spitalfields, London / Remote (minimum 3 days in the office)
- **Closing Date:** 5:00 pm, Friday 20 November 2026
- **Interviews:** Week commencing 23 November 2026.
- **Start Date:** As soon as possible.

An **enhanced DBS check** will be required for the successful candidate.

As a registered emergency services provider, you will be able to register for a **Blue Light Card** | access our employer assistance scheme provided by TELUS Health | professional social welfare law training to enhance your knowledge and development | in-house training with our excellent drugs team | team socials and events.

To apply, please send your CV and a supporting statement referencing **LA1126** to **recruitment@release.org.uk**.
Use your supporting statement to clearly demonstrate how your skills align with the role.

Important Notice: For this job, Release will only consider applications from those who already have the **right to live and work in the UK**. See the Home Office Immigration & Nationality Directorate (www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk) for information on the UK Government's immigration policy.

For an informal discussion, contact:

- Tamara Smillie: 020 7324 2990 | tamara@release.org.uk
- Liam Carmody: 020 7324 2986 | liam@release.org.uk

Release is committed to equal opportunities.

Overview

This is a full-time position (35 hours per week), based at our office in Spitalfields, London for a minimum of three days per week, with the option to work remotely for the remaining two days. Working hours are 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday to Friday, with a one-hour lunch break.

The successful candidate will join Release's social justice legal team, delivering two legal outreach sessions weekly—both in-person and virtually—to clients accessing alcohol and drug treatment centres. The role focuses on providing legal advice, assistance, and representation in areas such as **welfare benefits, housing (including homelessness), and debt**.

Following induction and training, the post holder will also provide legal advice through Release's national helpline on criminal law and drug-related offences, and through our Harm Reduction Hub drop-in service. In addition to direct client work, the role includes contributing to the organisation's policy and advocacy efforts.

Release has recently expanded its legal services to include immigration advice. We have also secured a legal aid contract in Public Law, offering potential future opportunities for involvement.

Main Objectives

- Deliver high-quality legal services under supervision, both in-person and virtually with training.
- Provide advice, casework, and representation in welfare benefits, housing, and debt.
- Offer legal support via the national helpline and Harm Reduction Hub to individuals affected by drug laws or drug use.

Delivery of Legal Services

1. Provide legal advice, casework, and representation in social welfare law, including welfare benefits, housing, homelessness, and debt. This includes issues such as benefit cessation, appeals, overpayments, backdated claims, homelessness applications, rent arrears, disrepair, and debts (including court fines and commercial creditors).
2. Represent clients at Social Security Tribunals where appropriate.
3. Manage casework independently, referring clients to external agencies or legal firms when necessary.
4. Stay informed on relevant legal developments through research and training.
5. Deliver legal advice via the national helpline and Harm Reduction Hub as required.
6. Participate in project-based work, training sessions, and public information initiatives.
7. Maintain accurate and compliant documentation in line with the Specialist Quality Mark and/or Advice Quality Standard.
8. Conduct regular reviews of new and ongoing client cases.

Volunteer Programme

9. Support the legal volunteer programme by delegating tasks and providing day-to-day supervision.
10. Offer guidance, oversight, and training to legal volunteers to ensure high-quality service delivery.

Policy Work

11. Assist Team Leads, Head of Legal Services, and Executive Director in developing and implementing operational and strategic policies.
12. Contribute legal insight and commentary on developments in drug legislation and related policies.
13. Participate in public consultations that impact drug policy and the rights of people who use drugs.

General Responsibilities

14. Work collaboratively and supportively with colleagues at Release and partner organisations.
15. Maintain professional standards in all communications and ensure accurate, up-to-date record-keeping.
16. Represent Release in a positive and professional manner at all times.
17. Undertake any additional duties reasonably requested by senior management.

We **particularly welcome applications** from people from Black and racialised communities, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, people from working-class backgrounds, and people with lived experience of the issues we work on. We are committed to building a team that reflects the communities we serve, and we know that lived experience and diverse perspectives strengthen our legal practice and our work for systemic change.

Applicants are advised to use their ***supporting statement*** as the opportunity to relate their skills to the ***job description*** (above) and the ***person specification*** *(below)*.

Person Specification

Shortlisted candidates will be assessed against the following criteria. The primary methods of assessment are:

- **(C)** Curriculum Vitae and Covering Letter
- **(I)** Interview
- **(E)** Essential
- **(D)** Desirable

Experience

Criteria	Essential /Desirable	Assessed By
1. Educated to graduate level or equivalent	Essential	C
2. LLB, GDL, or SQE1 **with at least 6 months' experience** delivering legal advice and casework in one or more of the following areas: crime, welfare benefits, debt, or housing	Essential	C, I
3. Willingness to train in additional areas of law beyond current experience	Essential	C
4. Experience providing legal advice in a professional setting	Essential	C, I
5. Experience in civil and human rights work	Desirable	C, I
6. Experience developing written materials for clients and professionals	Desirable	C, I
7. Strong organisational skills with the ability to plan, prioritise, and manage time effectively	Essential	C

Skills & Abilities

Criteria	Essential /Desirable	Assessed By
8. Excellent written and verbal communication skills	Essential	C, I
9. Ability to work independently and collaboratively within a team	Essential	C, I
10. Proficient in using computers and digital tools	Essential	C
11. Commitment to safeguarding and promoting the civil and human rights of people who use drugs and other marginalised groups	Essential	I

Knowledge & Understanding

Criteria	Essential /Desirable	Assessed By
12. Understanding of current drug laws	Desirable	C, I
13. Awareness of drug use and drug policy issues	Desirable	I
14. Commitment to equal opportunities in both workplace and service delivery	Essential	I
15. Ability to remain calm and composed under pressure	Essential	I

RECRUITMENT OF EX-OFFENDERS POLICY

To ensure the Release is fully compliant with the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and best practice in its recruitment of staff with a criminal record.

Applies to: All applicants to Release, and all staff.

INTRODUCTION

(a) The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 was introduced to ensure that ex-offenders, who have not re-offended for a specified period of time since their date of conviction, are not discriminated against when applying for a job.

(b) The policy sets out the basis on which the Release will seek information from prospective employees about spent and unspent (current) convictions and how this information will be used. The policy will be made available upon request to all disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.

(c) The policy sets out the commitment from the Release that all applicants will be treated fairly.

PRINCIPLES

(a) Applicants, and members of staff with either a spent, or unspent conviction will not be unfairly discriminated against.

(b) Release uses the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Disclosure Service to check the history of applicants and assess their suitability for posts.

(c) Release complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice

(d) Information obtained from the DBS will only be used to assess an individual's suitability for employment, where relevant, and will not be used to discriminate in any way.

(e) Release is committed to the fair treatment of its employees and potential employees regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability or offending background.

(f) Where appropriate, adverts and job descriptions will clearly state that a DBS check is a requirement of the job. This will provide a basis for the applicant to decide whether or not to apply for the post.

(g) Disclosure of the information received from the DBS will only be made available to staff who have a specific need to access it in the course of their duties.

(h) Release will use all reasonable endeavours to ensure that DBS disclosures are only requested in accordance with the eligibility criteria of relevant positions or employment.

MAIN STEPS

(a) Obtaining information from applicants

(b) During our recruitment process the Release will normally only ask about unspent convictions as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act.

(c) For jobs which are exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, an applicant will need to disclose both unspent and spent convictions. (For further information please refer to the Exemptions Order of the ROA). Release is legally entitled to ask applicants of the details of any spent and unspent conviction.

(d) The recruiting manager must ensure the DBS requirement is clearly stated on the job description.

(e) The Finance & Operations Manager will ensure that relevant wording is included in the online advert and job description advising that the successful applicant will need to satisfy DBS requirements and undertake a DBS check.

DECLARING PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS

(a) Where an individual has disclosed a conviction, or a conviction is revealed through a DBS check, a discussion will take place with the applicant regarding the offence and its relevance to the position to assess the suitability of the applicant for the job.

(b) When considering the matter, the following examples may be taken into account:

- The seriousness of the offence and its relevance to the safety of other employees, clients, the public etc.
- The length of time since the offence occurred.
- Any relevant information offered by the applicant about the circumstances which led to the offence being committed.
- The nature of the job and any opportunities that may present the applicant to re – offend
- The Country in which the offence was committed – for example, some activities are offences in Scotland and not in England and Wales, and vice versa.
- Whether the offence has since been decriminalised by Parliament.

(c) Having carefully considered these matters, a decision should be taken as to whether the individual should be appointed. If the decision is not to proceed with the appointment, then the applicant will be written to, formally withdrawing the offer of employment. Release will undertake a discussion regarding the content of the disclosure with the applicant before withdrawing any offer of employment.

(d) Failure to reveal information relating to unspent convictions (and spent convictions in the case of excluded jobs and professions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act) could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment or disciplinary action which could lead to termination of employment.

(e) It is the responsibility of the applicant and employee to clarify whether a conviction is spent or unspent. The length of time required for an ex-offender to become rehabilitated depends on the sentence received and the age when convicted. To note, custodial sentences of more than two and half years can never become spent.

(f) Release should seek a Disclosure where the position to be filled involves a greater degree of risk or where there is a legal requirement to do so (e.g. direct contact with children/vulnerable adults). Disclosures should not be used as a blanket requirement in all circumstances and should meet the criteria set out in the DBS Policy.

EXISTING STAFF WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD

(a) If a member of staff is convicted of a criminal offence whilst in employment, they must report this to their manager immediately. The facts of the case will be considered to determine if there are sufficient grounds to warrant any formal action to being taken, in line with the Release's Disciplinary Procedure.

(b) Managers will be expected to carry out a risk assessment, comparing the skills, experience and the circumstances of the conviction against the risk criteria identified for the job.

Managers should take an objective approach, and advice should be sought from Head of Finance & Operations, if required.

(c) If a member of staff is concerned about a conviction, they should speak directly with their line manager or Finance & Operations Manager. For specific roles, regular DBS disclosure renewals will be required, and it is expected that individuals would have disclosed any new convictions.

RECORDS

(a) All relevant information will be held under secure cover on the individuals Personal Record file.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy Statement

(a) As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking service to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, Release complies fully with the Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a DBS check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

(b) Release is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependents, age, physical/mental disability or offending background.

(c) We have a written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, which is made available to all DBS applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.

(d) We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.

(e) A DBS check is only requested after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a DBS check is required, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that a DBS check will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

(f) Where a DBS check is to form part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process, except for certain spent convictions and cautions which are 'protected' so not subject to disclosure to employers and that cannot be taken into account. We request that any information not subject to this filtering is sent under separate, confidential cover, to a designated person within Release and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.

(g) Unless the nature of the position allows Release to ask questions about your entire criminal record, except for certain spent convictions and cautions which are 'protected' so not subject to disclosure to employers and that cannot be taken into account, we only ask about 'unspent' convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

(h) We ensure that all those in who are involved in the recruitment process have at Release have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

(i) At interview, or in a separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

(j) We make every person subject of a DBS check aware of the existence of the Code of Practice and make a copy available on request.

(k) We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a DBS check with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.