



Personal Support Unit

Trustee recruitment pack

March 2019

Our Client James's Story

When my daughter was only three months old, her mother stopped my contact and gave me no reason. I was desperate, as I thought I would never have contact again with my daughter. In order to spend time with her, I had to start court proceedings. For two and a half years, I have come to court and each time I've had help from the Personal Support Unit.

The PSU volunteers helped me all the way through. They helped me complete the C100 form to start the process; explained court proceedings; then helped me write at least three statements, and find a contact centre for me to spend time with my daughter. They also accompanied me into court where they explained what was happening and helped me remember what I was going to say. Finally, they helped me talk to the guardian and social services.

Without the help of the PSU, I would have been totally overwhelmed and given up. I am dyslexic and would not have been able to write my statement or read through the mother's statements. The mother consistently ignored the judge, social services and the guardian. I thought enough was enough but the help of the PSU gave me the strength to continue to fight to see my daughter. Despite the mother having several aides supporting her in court, I have been successful with my case. I now see my daughter on a weekly basis including overnight stays. I am thrilled.

What more can I say but thank you, PSU.

Our Volunteer Gemma's Story

I volunteer at the PSU in the Royal Courts of Justice, where there is a wide variety of cases, so the experience and knowledge that I've gained is invaluable. When I help a client and feel I've really made a difference, the reward is fantastic and this is a real highlight of volunteering at the PSU.

Many of the clients I have met are very anxious about attending court, which is an unfamiliar and daunting process. I believe it is extremely important that financial resources are not the overriding factor in access to justice, and as the allowance for legal aid has dropped, more people are having to represent themselves. With PSU support, everything is easier.

Before volunteering, I had little knowledge of how to conduct interviews with clients. My confidence has increased and I've learnt to engage clients in a professional yet empathetic way, dealing with the client's problem as quickly as possible, while still allowing them to express their feelings and be heard.

I have also learnt a great deal more about the court system and the various forms and associated fees. I have no doubt that volunteering at the PSU has increased my likelihood of finding work as this experience has definitely improved my CV.

"Remarkable is perhaps the best word to describe so many aspects of the PSU's Work" **Rt Hon Sir Terence Etherton, Master of the Rolls and PSU Patron**

Welcome from Peter Crisp, Chair of the PSU

Thank you for considering making an application to be a Trustee of the PSU. I hope that this pack will give you the information you need to decide whether to put your name forward to support the wonderful work that our CEO, Leadership Team, staff and volunteers carry out every day that the Civil and Family Courts in England and Wales are open.

James, whose story you have just read, is just one of thousands of men and women who rely on the support of the PSU to navigate the intricacies of the legal system without the support of a lawyer. The PSU is a charity for people facing court alone. Our volunteers and staff are there for these litigants-in-person, providing practical and emotional support so that they can represent themselves to the best of their ability.

Since the changes to Legal Aid provision that came into effect in 2013 through the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO), the need for our work has increased immensely. We have grown significantly in this time to meet this need having increased our income by 250% over this period, increased the number of contacts per year five-fold and nearly tripling the number of locations at which we provide a service.

Reform to the courts, including the increasing digitisation of court process and procedure, bring particular challenges to our clients as well as opportunities for us to shape provision so that it is more attuned to the needs of litigants-in-person. We must continue to use our expertise and knowledge of the needs of our clients to influence.

With the departure of one of our longest serving Trustees at the end of March 2019, we are looking to fill this vacancy on the Board as well as to recruit a further two Trustees to support the next phase of the charity's development. We are almost one year into our new Three Year Strategy and have reached several milestones already. Our Trustees aim to support the continued implementation of the Strategy to increase revenue and public support for our mission as well as developing new and imaginative business models to enable us to meet more of this need. The new Trustees will be joining an active and dynamic Board who offer their time and expertise to the PSU freely.

If you feel that you have the attributes that will allow you to support the charity to thrive and develop please do put in an application.

If you would like to speak with me informally about the role of Trustee please do get in touch with me directly.

Professor Peter Crisp
Chair

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About the PSU

Recent Achievements

Some of our achievements in the current financial year include:

- Providing help to litigants-in-person on close to 75,000 occasions, an increase of 15% on 2017/18 and 7,000 ahead of target
- Maintaining positive client feedback rates that meet our KPIs
- Expanding our network to 24 locations including new service provision in Southend
- Opening a National Phone line pilot with the support of Birmingham City University
- Raising an expected £800,000+ of voluntary income, including over £300,000 from Trusts and Foundations
- Continuing to attract funding of £539,000 from the Ministry of Justice through the Litigants in Person Support Strategy
- Working to ensuring that every PSU is receiving funding from at least one of its partner universities
- Working with the Home Office and Ministry of Justice and achieving funding for a 15-month discreet Domestic Abuse project within the court system
- Reviewing and improving digital presence of the Charity
- Following the introduction of the New three year strategy, reporting on a successful year 1 and planning for year 2
- Reviewing governance of the charity and implementing change including increasing the number of trustees to support succession planning
- Adding the new Lord Chief Justice to our list of distinguished patrons

Size and location

The PSU operates in the Civil and Family Courts of England and Wales. We have offices in 24 locations in 19 cities, from Cardiff to Chelmsford and from Newcastle to Exeter. We have 52 staff, just over 700 volunteers and an annual expenditure budget of circa £1.25 million for 2018/19. Thanks to the generosity of Her Majesty's Courts' and Tribunals' Service (HMCTS) we are provided with free accommodation in court premises, where this is available.

Much of our is related to the family courts and the four biggest areas of support are with arrangements for children, housing, money claims and divorce.

Our volunteers include people of all ages, though the majority are either retired or undergraduate and post-graduate law students. Our volunteers at each office are supported by a service manager and we also have support and fundraising staff based in our office at the Royal Courts of Justice in London.

More information about us can be found in our Annual Report for 2018 (available on our website).

Our Governance

Our Board has 10 trustees, two of whom must be serving volunteers. Our trustees include a senior legal educationalist, the former CEO of HMCTS, magistrates, experienced charity managers, a retired professor of health economics and a banker. They have considerable governance experience. Having reviewed our succession planning process, we feel we should increase the Board to twelve trustees.

Amongst the Trustees there are three Officers: Chair, Deputy Chair, and Treasurer. The CEO holds the role of Company Secretary.

We have four sub-committees: Risk and Audit, Finance, Fundraising, and Pay and Remuneration.

Our Board meets five times a year and works to a clear and pre-determined set of agendas that have standard items including reviewing the financial management accounts, reviewing delivery against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), receiving a reports from the Chief Executive, along with service and fundraising updates. Board meetings take place in central London.

The Role of Trustee

Role overview

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| Post title: | Trustee |
| Responsible to: | Chair of the Board of Trustees |
| Salary range: | Voluntary Post |
| Commitment: | Up to two three-year terms of office |
| Time Commitment: | Five Board meeting of two hours per annum Membership of at least one sub-committee, 4 meetings each of 2 hours Visiting the PSU attached to your role as Trustee Ad Hoc support at events and other activities |
| Location: | Board and Subcommittee meetings are generally held in London |

Post description

Duties of trustee

The PSU is a charity for people facing court alone. We operate in 24 court centres throughout England and Wales and help over 70,000 unrepresented litigants-in-person each year. We are made up of over 700 volunteers and 52 staff members, including a senior leadership team of the CEO, the Head of Service, the Head of Fundraising and Development and the Head of Finance and Resources. Trustees provide strategic direction and support the CEO; allowing good operational management in delivering the Charity's aims and objects.

The duties of a trustee include:

- Ensuring that the organisation pursues its stated objects (purposes), as defined in its governing document, by developing and agreeing a long-term strategy
- Ensuring that the organisation complies with its governing document; the memorandum and articles of association, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
- Ensuring that the organisation applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its charitable objects (i.e. the charity must not spend money on activities that are not included in its own objects, however worthwhile or charitable those activities are) for the benefit of the public
- Ensuring that the organisation defines its goals and evaluates performance against agreed targets
- Safeguarding the good name and values of the organisation
- Safeguarding the staff, volunteers and clients of the organisation
- Ensuring the effective and efficient administration of the organisation, including having appropriate policies and procedures in place
- Ensuring the financial stability of the organisation including monitoring reserves and taking action when necessary
- Protecting and managing the property of the charity and ensuring the proper investment of the charity's funds
- Following proper and formal arrangements for the appointment, supervision, support, appraisal and remuneration of the chief executive
- A commitment to attending Board Meetings (Up to 5 per annum).
- Willingness to actively participate in one or more sub-committees to support the decision making processes within the organisation

In addition to the above statutory duties, each trustee should use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the board of trustees reach sound decisions.

This may involve scrutinising board papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues, providing advice and guidance on new initiatives, or other issues in which the trustee has special expertise.

An understanding of the law as it relates to litigants-in-person and an interest in the needs of litigants-in-person would be an advantage, though the right skills base across the PSU Board is of paramount importance.

Person specification

Core competencies

- A commitment to the organisation
- A willingness to devote the necessary time and effort required of a Trustee
- Strategic vision
- Good, independent judgement
- An ability to think creatively
- A willingness to speak their mind and challenge constructively
- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
- An ability to work effectively as a member of a team
- A commitment to Nolan's seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership

Specific competencies

In addition to the above core competencies, the PSU is looking for candidates who can demonstrate at least one competency from the list below:

- Legally-qualified, ideally with experience of practice
- Fundraising and income generation in the voluntary sector
- Finance or banking
- Marketing and strategic communications

Application Process

Whether your background is in the private, public or not for profit sector, we welcome applications from candidates who can demonstrate that they will bring strategic vision and energy along with fresh thinking. Through your commitment to addressing the issues faced by people facing legal processes without a lawyer you will help the organisation understand how it can grow further, in an ever changing legal world, to meet our clients' needs.

The deadlines for applications is 5 pm on Thursday 28th March 2019. Please provide a CV and a concise covering letter of no more than two pages explaining how your skills, knowledge and experience fit the core competencies and at least one of the additional specific competencies in the person specification.

In addition, the Board is currently undergoing a skills audit and we would ask that you complete the skills audit form below and return it with your application.

All applications will be reviewed by our Trustees, a panel of whom will interview shortlisted candidates. First and second interviews will take place in London in early April, dates to be confirmed.

Shortlisted candidates will be offered the opportunity to meet or have a conversation with the Chief Executive and/or Chair of the Board before their interview date.

A formal offer to join the Board will be made to the successful candidate once approved by the full Board.

Please submit your CV and covering letter addressed to the Chair and Reach skills audit to

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