



Legal Aid
Agency

Candidate Information Pack

**What it's like to work at
the Legal Aid Agency**

May 2023





© Crown copyright 2023

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

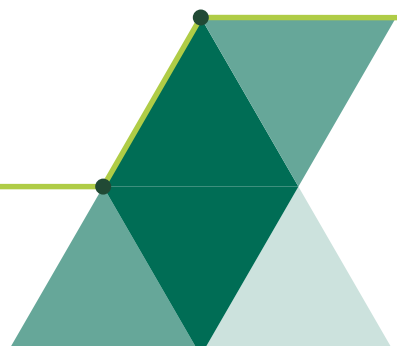
Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/official-documents

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at LAARecruitment@justice.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction from our Chief Executive	1
The LAA strategy	2
Our values and culture	3
Staff experiences	5
Our benefits	8
Learning and development	10
Staff networks, working groups and champions	12
LAA staff networks and working groups	13
MOJ networks	13
Civil Service networks	13
Champions	14
Recruitment and selection	15
Frequently asked questions	18



Introduction from our Chief Executive



At the LAA we help the most vulnerable people in society to get access to legal representation. We help people deal with difficult and stressful legal issues, which can include domestic abuse, being evicted from rented property, or securing support when facing criminal legal proceedings.

The LAA is an agency of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ).

The MOJ is responsible for criminal justice, prison and probation services, civil courts, tribunals and family law hearings, safeguarding victims and regulating our legal services.

Working at the LAA means you will be helping those who otherwise may not be able to access the legal support they need.

The LAA employs approximately 1,200 colleagues across England and Wales – all with different mindsets and skills.

We welcome people from all backgrounds with the dedication and skills to build a career with us.

Our people are guided by our values of purpose, humanity, openness and togetherness. Our supportive culture encourage constant learning and development. We listen to our people and are proud to be one of the most engaged agencies in the Civil Service.

This pack will help you see what it's like to work with us, understand what we're looking for in a candidate, and give you more information on the recruitment process so you can decide whether the LAA is right for you. We've included hints and tips to help you submit a great application.

I hope you will join us and help make a real difference to the lives of everyday people who need access to legal aid.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Harbottle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the start.

Jane Harbottle
Chief Executive Officer

The LAA strategy

As an executive agency of the MOJ, the LAA is responsible for the provision of civil and criminal legal aid and advice for citizens living in England and Wales.

As an agency we work together towards our vision: to support access to justice through working with others to achieve excellence in the delivery of legal aid.

To continue to build confidence and trust in our services, we have set out our ambition and approach to delivery with four guiding principles in mind. We want to be:

- user-centred
- right first time
- open and transparent
- responsive, diverse and encouraging of learning

Our three strategic objectives are our framework for delivering and shaping our plans.

1. Deliver access to justice through legal aid services that meet the needs of our users.
2. Modernise our services, delivering value for money for taxpayers.
3. Become a truly diverse and inclusive employer of choice.



Our work is informed by the MOJ's strategic aims and objectives, demonstrating that we have a critical role to play in contributing to a modern justice system.

It is important that everyone understands how their work plays a part in the delivery of team, LAA and MOJ objectives. We often refer to this as the 'golden thread', detailing what we do and why we do it. Everyone should be able to trace the thread from the MOJ priorities and strategy, to our LAA strategy and strategic objectives, and finally their personal objectives.

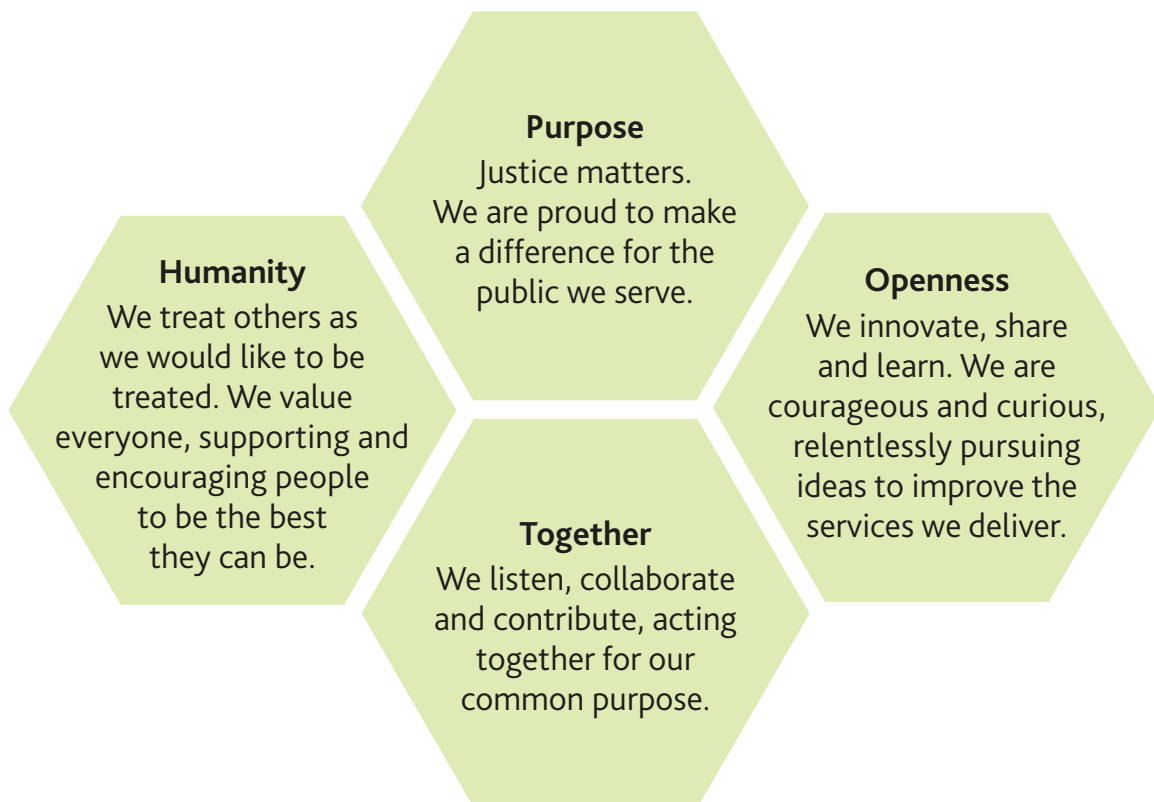
Our values and culture

Our vision is to achieve excellence in the delivery of legal aid and contribute to a world-class justice system that works for everyone in our society. Our values are how we bring this to life.

Our values are important and lasting shared beliefs. They define who we are and what we stand for and have a major influence on our attitude and actions. They serve as broad guidelines for all situations, including our behaviour, judgement, decision making and much more.

Our values are what makes us different to any other government department. They send a clear message, both internally and externally, about what is important to us as an organisation, what our expectations are, what we are willing to support, and what we will and will not tolerate.

Our values are what makes us unique, and they are the foundation stones of our collective success.



Our approach to belonging and inclusion is all about giving you the right support, the right skills, and the right working environment. While we're all about teamwork, we also give you the freedom to achieve your own goals and to be yourself. Because with the right mix of minds, anything is possible.

We have a truly inclusive community spirit demonstrated through the feedback given by our staff in our People Survey. The percentage of staff who believe we are an inclusive organisation has been 86% or over for the last 6 years (2017-2022).

We trust, support and care for each other, always valuing each other's unique and diverse contributions. We inspire each other to be the best we can be and to thrive.

Our executive and senior leaders individually sponsor protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010.

At LAA, we:

- actively engage with all staff through a series of bi-annual 'change chat' discussion forums, wellbeing surveys, and our annual People Survey
- have a passion for learning and development
- solve problems that others think are impossible and value neurodiversity
- all have our own diversity, inclusion and wellbeing objectives
- constantly look to improve our workplace by making the best use of people and technology
- involve staff in decision-making processes wherever possible to ensure we listen to and value the contribution of all the unique and diverse voices in our organisation
- encourage and support our staff to engage in our department and wider Ministry of Justice (MOJ) staff networks
- have personal objectives for all staff to increase our sense of belonging and inclusion
- recognise and reward individuals and teams for their excellent contribution and customer service
- have a wellbeing programme of events to help staff thrive and perform at their best
- have specific action plans for diversity and inclusion, including for race, disability, wellbeing and LGBTQIA+
- consider and implement requests for reasonable workplace adjustments to support disabled staff and those with long-term health conditions

Staff experiences

Staff member video

Hear from Catherine Henderson, a supervisor in the Civil Means Case Management Team from the South Tyneside Office, about her work and the importance of ensuring access to justice for legal aid clients.



Recent new starters share their stories of joining the LAA.



Tayyiba Khanum

Caseworker,
National
Criminal
Applications
Team

What attracted me to the LAA was my interest in the law and the flexibility which allows for a good work-life balance.

I did not know much about the LAA at all before joining. But I received extensive support once I joined and during the first 6 months. I received several calls to check on my progress and could ask questions at meetings with my supervisor. I was also given buddy/mentor support, including regular feedback sessions.

I am looking forward to taking on more responsibilities. I like helping others and would love to be in a position where I can support other newcomers.



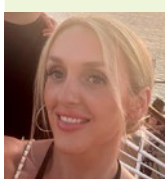
Joseph Lucas

People
Governance
Officer,
People &
Capability

Firstly, the warm welcome I received from my new line manager, along with everyone in the team, really put me at ease and reinforced why the LAA scores so highly in their People Survey.

The organisational commitment to ensure that the LAA is an inclusive and diverse workplace, making it safe and enjoyable for all, is an added motivation to succeed and do well personally. Moving into this role, I have seen an improvement in my work-life balance.

There is clear scope for career development in my role. I can see the impact that I am having, and I feel that the value I am adding is being acknowledged and appreciated.



**Shannon
Harris**

Case Worker,
Criminal
Cases Unit

I was interested in applying for a role at the LAA due to the promotion of flexible working and feeling valued in the workplace.

I quickly learned that the LAA was a great place to work, and I now understand why employees enjoy their roles so much.

Before I started, I was regularly contacted with updates by my new line manager, which really put me at ease. The support also continued once I joined as my colleagues made me feel welcome and reassured that I could reach out to them at any time.

The training I have received in my short time with the LAA has been very informative and has given me greater insight into the importance of the LAA.



**Deanne
Bowman**

Culture and
Capability
Officer,
People &
Capability

Scanning through job vacancies one afternoon, one in particular caught my eye, it read – “Are you passionate about making a positive difference to people’s experience at work?” – “Absolutely!” I thought. But as I continued to read, I realised I didn’t know the first thing about the Legal Aid Agency. But knowing that there is a clear focus on creating a supportive and inclusive environment for their staff was all I needed.

Moving to a new role during a pandemic was worrying, but before I’d even left my previous role in HMCTS, I was welcomed by my new line manager which helped put me at ease. Having worked in various roles across the MOJ for 16 years, I can honestly say the support I’ve received since starting has been unparalleled. From regular check-ins with my team, one-to-one ‘get to know you’ sessions, and even a buddy to help me settle in, it’s clear that the LAA values a culture of inclusion and belonging.

When the recent People Survey results were released, I wasn’t surprised to see such positive scores. Knowing I’m part of such a people-focused organisation makes me feel proud to have joined the LAA.

Our benefits

Hybrid working

For most of the roles within the LAA we work in a hybrid way, allowing staff a choice of where to work. Everyone is required to attend the workplace 40% of their time. For a typical full time employee this means 2 days a week in the workplace, usually their contracted base location. Staff can then choose where to work the rest of the time, this could be the office or home. Business need always comes first. For example, various roles require staff to be with a client in a police station or court, or staff who need to visit legal aid providers their role may mean they need to be in the workplace more than 40%. The way in which you are expected to work will be clear within the job description of the role you're applying for.

Flexible working

We offer a working environment that supports a range of flexible working options to enhance your work-life balance. These include part-time, part-time job share, term time working, hybrid working, and flexible working times.

Family friendly

If you're eligible, you could receive up to 26 weeks full maternity pay, or 2 weeks paternity pay. We also encourage shared parental leave and will support you along your journey – no matter if this is pregnancy or adoption.



Generous holiday

We offer 25 days annual holiday. This rises to 30 days after 5 years as a Civil Servant. In addition to this, you are entitled to 8 public/bank holidays, plus an additional privilege day for the King's birthday. The leave allowance for part time staff is pro-rated. There is also a scheme to allow qualifying staff to buy or sell up to three days leave each year. As part of the flexible working scheme there is an opportunity to take additional flexi leave.

Pension

We offer a pension as part of your remuneration and reward package which helps to provide an income for you and your dependants when you retire. Comprehensive information on all aspects of your Civil Service pension can be accessed online at www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk

Other benefits

Other benefits that staff can take advantage of include season ticket loans to help you fund travel costs, cycle to work schemes, and access to special deals on holidays, food, electrical items and entertainment.



Emma Green,
Supervisor,
Complex
Crime Unit,
shares
how these
benefits have
helped her.

I have saved nearly £300 in a year using retail cards to make purchases on groceries and holiday bookings. I have even saved money on my mobile phone contract just by being a civil servant.

Learning and development

We are committed to your development and offer an extensive range of opportunities. On joining, you will be assigned a 'buddy' to help you get to grips with everything. You will start by having a full induction to the organisation and your team to help you settle into your role and understand the culture and values of the agency. Your manager will support you and create a timetable to enable you to complete any mandatory training and on-the-job learning.

At the LAA we have over 15 qualified coaches and over 30 mentors available for everyone, regardless of grade or directorate. The benefits of coaching and mentoring are numerous and can be life changing.

Learning and development can range from apprenticeships, development programmes, and mentoring and shadowing through to signing up for a Civil Service online training course. An MOJ-wide learning platform hosts a whole spectrum of courses. The following page shows examples of how staff have benefited from these opportunities.



	<p>Eliana Rooks</p> <p>Head of People Governance, People & Capability</p>	<p>A different approach to learning and development</p> <p>I applied for an apprenticeship scheme and was offered a role based at the LAA in South Tyneside.</p> <p>Initially, I was in two minds about accepting the role. I'd done over a year of sixth form and my A-levels were approaching, and I was concerned that not having a degree or A-levels would be a disadvantage. It was a risk leaving sixth form, but it paid off! Since joining the LAA in 2019, I've completed a Level 4 Business Administration apprenticeship and have worked in three roles within the People and Capability team, most recently being promoted to Head of People Governance. I'm really grateful I've had the opportunity to learn on the job – it definitely suits my learning style!</p>
	<p>Rebecca Johnson</p> <p>Senior Caseworker, Criminal Cases Unit</p>	<p>Completing the Building Skills Academy</p> <p>I began my journey as a civil servant in March 2020 at the start of the pandemic. I was immediately struck by the workplace culture and the amazing learning and development opportunities. My line manager asked me if I wanted to join the Building Skills Academy. I hadn't been in an educational environment for many years and was intrigued.</p> <p>I was supported fully by the course leaders and was assigned a mentor. The course is also an excellent opportunity for networking as you meet colleagues from different areas of the MOJ.</p>

Staff networks, working groups and champions



Our staff networks collaborate to raise awareness of the strengths and challenges faced by minority groups to ensure that we listen and act on the collective voice of their members. In doing so we remove barriers, reduce the empathy gap and increase engagement. Our staff can join the MOJ and Civil Service staff networks. All networks provide a safe space to meet with colleagues who share similar characteristics, increase awareness of challenges, and influence change.

LAA staff networks and working groups

- LAA Gender Equality Network
- disABILITY Network
- BeUnique Race Network
- Age Working Group

MOJ networks

In addition to our LAA networks and working groups, you can get involved with wider MOJ and Civil Service networks too.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| • ABLE Network | • MOJ Muslim Network |
| • Carers Network | • Parents' Network |
| • Christians in MOJ | • PROUD Race Network |
| • Frontline Staff Network | • Safe Space Forum |
| • Gender Equality Network | • Spirit LGBT+ Network |
| • Humanists in MOJ | • Supporting the Workplace in Menopause |
| • Job Share Network | • The Civil Service Jewish Network |
| • MOJ EU Nationals Network | |

Civil Service networks

[A full list of networks across the Civil Service can be found here.](#)

Champions

We have dedicated champions for a number of important topics.



Jeanette Walker,
Mental Health Ally

Our dedicated team of volunteer mental health allies support colleagues and signpost to sources of support within the agency.



Tracy Ilsley,
Engagement Champion

Engagement is about every single communication and interaction that we make. As an Engagement Champion, it's about making people feel that they belong.



Tammy Goddard,
Wellbeing Champion

Supporting workplace wellbeing is very important. Being a wellbeing champion enables me to help make our working environment inclusive and not 'one size fits all'. It's about supporting people and ensuring they are happy, healthy and well looked after.



Christine Peters,
Capability Champion

I chose to become a Champion for Learning and Development as I love learning new things, so I'm keen to promote learning for others. The LAA regularly promotes staff joining courses and allows you time out of your job to complete these.



Recruitment and selection

Our recruitment process

We will be using the Success Profile Framework to ensure our recruitment process is fair and open. [More detailed information on Success Profiles can be found here.](#)

Success Profiles

The Success Profile Framework was introduced to attract and retain people of talent and experience from all walks of life, in line with the commitment in the Civil Service Workforce Plan. The selection approach and assessment method will be carefully designed to test whether you are likely to perform well in the role and enjoy it. How you will be assessed will always be outlined in the job description and advert.

There are five elements of Success Profiles which candidates might be assessed against:

- **Behaviours** – The actions and activities that we do which result in effective performance in a job. These can be assessed at sift and interview.
- **Experience** – The knowledge or mastery of an activity or subject gained through regular involvement in or exposure to it.
- **Ability** – The aptitude or potential to perform to the required standard.
- **Strengths** – The things we do regularly, do well and which motivate us. These can only be assessed at interview.
- **Technical** – Evidence of specific professional skills, knowledge or qualifications.

How to complete your application form

Applications will always be fully anonymised prior to any shortlisting activity to prevent any possible impact of bias in scoring. The system will automatically restrict any of your personal or identification details. However, it is important not to include any of this information in the body of your application answers.

There are different types of application you could be asked to submit. The job description will explain what is being asked of candidates. Typically, these could include the following.

- **General examples of behaviours** – Each behaviour description can cover a number of examples. For instance, understanding customer needs and keeping colleagues informed are both examples of the Managing a Quality Service behaviour. Try to cover as much of the behaviour as you can in your answer.
A full list of Civil Service behaviours can be found here.
- **Specific behaviour questions** – The question will always be framed to help you demonstrate the relevant behaviour. Make sure you are also answering the question put to you.
- **Statements of suitability** – You will be asked to provide a statement about why you are suitable for the role, and this will usually be assessed against the essential criteria listed in the job description. Go through the job description essential criteria and check that you have demonstrated everything that you can.
- **Statements of suitability and a CV** – This is usually used for more specialist or senior roles within the LAA. If you are writing a CV for the first time (or the first time in a while), try to apply the 'so what?' principle. When listing an experience or activity on your CV, ask yourself: 'Why did I do it? What did I achieve?' It is also useful to prioritise experiences and skills which match up against the essential criteria listed for the job role.

Providing evidence of your skills and knowledge

At both application and interview, it is important you draw on real examples of previous behaviours, experiences and achievements you have had in order to demonstrate your suitability for a role. In other words, it is not enough to simply state you have good communication skills. Rather, tell us about a time when you have used your communication skills in order to achieve a desired outcome. Consider the following.

- What was the situation?
- What did you do, why did you do it, and how did you do it?
- Did you overcome any challenges? If so, how?
- What was the result?

It is important you talk about the work you did and the impact your actions had. It's easy to slip into using 'we' to describe what a team achieved, but try to use 'I' and concentrate on what you as an individual achieved. If you worked with others, try to think about the role you played and the difference you made.

Examples can be drawn from your current or previous work experiences but can also be taken from your school or college work, your home responsibilities, or your leisure activities or voluntary work.

At the application stage, you will always be provided with a word limit for your answers. It is recommended that you make full use of the suggested word count, as this indicates the level of detail we are looking for. To help keep your examples within the allocated word count, you can make use of some of the following tips.

- Keep your descriptions clear and concise.
- Remove any descriptive words that do not add meaning – for example, words like 'very' or 'incredibly'.
- Reduce word count by using bullet points instead of full paragraphs to list the actions you took.
- Make use of contractions to reduce your word count. For example, instead of writing, 'I have', you can write 'I've'. You will not be marked down for use of contractions.

You may wish to draft your application offline and ask someone to read over it before submitting. This can help you get feedback on the structure of an answer, highlight any important evidence you've forgotten to include, and act as a final quality check before you submit your application.



Frequently asked questions

What should I do if I have special requirements or need a reasonable adjustment at interview?

When completing the online application there is a question regarding reasonable adjustments where you can share details. If you are unsure of what can be done to help you, please contact LAARecruitment@justice.gov.uk.

You will also have an opportunity to let us know your requirements when you are invited to an interview.

How long will it take for you to decide if I've got an interview?

This can vary depending on the number of applications we receive for each vacancy. Generally speaking, we try our best to make a decision and contact applicants invited for interview within two weeks of the closing date.

Will I be notified if my application is unsuccessful and will I receive feedback?

You will receive an email via the recruitment system confirming whether or not you have been successful in getting to the interview stage. We know how much time and effort goes into an application and we really appreciate the time it takes to apply for a job with us. However, due to the volume of applications we receive, we're unable to provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates at the shortlisting stage.

You will also be contacted via the recruitment system following your interview to let you know if you have been successful. If you would like feedback after this stage, please contact LAARecruitment@justice.gov.uk.

Why are you asking for my equality information?

Candidates are selected on merit only, therefore all applicants will be afforded equal opportunities in employment irrespective of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion or belief. We're committed to monitoring equality information, but we need your help to do this.

Candidates who consider themselves to be disabled will also be given the opportunity to attend an interview if they meet the essential criteria for the role under the Disability Confident scheme.

What about part-time or flexible working?

Most roles are suitable for part-time or flexible working arrangements (including job share partnerships). If you wish to discuss your needs in more detail, please get in touch with the named point of contact in the job advert.

Is security clearance required?

Yes. If successful you must hold, or be willing to obtain, security clearance to BPSS or DBS (standard) level, depending on the role. A higher level of clearance will be needed if you will be based in a Home Office building e.g. our Liverpool office.

You can find more information about the vetting process here.

Do you offer a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled applicants?

The LAA, along with the wider Civil Service, guarantees to interview any person with a disability defined by the Equality Act 2010 as part of the Disability Confident scheme. This means that where a candidate has provided evidence within their application that demonstrates they meet the minimum criteria or competencies specified, including meeting all the essential qualifications, skills or experience defined in the job description, they must be invited to interview.

At interview all applicants will be marked solely on merit. The scheme only guarantees an invite to the interview; it does not guarantee a job. **More information on the Disability Confident scheme can be found here.**

Do you offer a guaranteed interview scheme for veteran applicants?

The Making the Civil Service a Great Place to Work for Veterans initiative includes a guaranteed interview scheme for those who meet the minimum criteria to provide eligible former members of the Armed Forces with opportunities to secure rewarding jobs. **More information on the initiative can be found here.**

Working with others to achieve
excellence in the delivery of legal aid