



The Hoxton Legal Advice Clinic: Law Firm Partnership Opportunity

About the Hoxton Trust

The Hoxton Trust was established in 1983 as a community development initiative to address the physical environment of the local area. Three buildings on Hoxton Street were renovated and rented to local businesses at favourable rates, while the area next to the buildings was landscaped and turned into The Hoxton Trust Community Garden. A free legal advice service began in 1993.

The Hoxton Trust is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is run by a Board of Trustees, made up of residents and members of groups interested in the work of the Trust. The day to day running of the Trust is carried out by the Executive Director.

The charity's overarching objectives are defined as:

- (1) The relief of financial hardship by the provision of free legal advice and assistance to persons who would otherwise be unable to obtain such advice.
- (2) To advance the education and training of the public in the subject of horticulture and in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of Hoxton.
- (3) To develop the capacity and skills of the members of the socially and economically disadvantaged community of Hoxton/Shoreditch so they are better able to identify, and help to meet, their needs and to participate fully in society.
- (4) The promotion of urban regeneration in areas of social and economic deprivation for the benefit of the public.

Local Need

The Hoxton Trust is located on Hoxton Street, in the middle of the Ward of Hoxton East and Shoreditch. This is one of the most deprived Wards in the country, ranking 14th out of 21 Wards in Hackney, according to the Local Government Association's calculation. It falls within the 20% most deprived Wards in London, ranking 121 out of 654 Wards and within the 15% most deprived Wards in England.

Hoxton is a densely populated residential area with some of the highest rates of child poverty and unemployment in Hackney. Despite being adjacent to Shoreditch, Hackney's most active economic centre with high levels of investment and continued rapid growth, the differences between opportunities, rates of growth and socio-economic context in Shoreditch and Hoxton are stark.

As a result, many people within the Ward face real struggles including debt, inequality, limited housing options, food poverty and unemployment. This creates



social isolation and potential tension. These are the people who come to the Hoxton Trust in need of free legal advice.

Hoxton Trust Legal Advice Clinic

The Hoxton Trust currently provides free legal advice charge during two drop in sessions per week, aiming to support at least 10 clients per session on a first come first served basis. The service is delivered by two part-time advisors and facilitated by four volunteer receptionists.

Due to the high demand in the area, the Hoxton Trust seeks to establish a new pro bono service, additional and separate to the existing advice provision. The format for the clinic is open to discussion with interested firms; however the current idea is that:

- the pro bono clinic will adopt a drop in model with no advance triaging;
- legal focus primarily on matters of welfare, housing and consumer law;
- limited to initial advice and form filling, and the possibility for case work if interest from the firm, but no representation;
- once a week either between 5.30pm and 7.30pm on Wednesday or between 11am and 1pm on Saturday.

Law Firm Partnership Opportunity

The Hoxton Trust is looking for a law firm partner that can help support the local community through a pool of qualified solicitors, who can advise on welfare, housing and consumer law one evening or Saturday morning per week.

The Hoxton Trust does not employ any qualified solicitors who could supervise the work but our part-time advisors have over a decade of experience each in the types of cases that come through the door and would be happy to provide training.

Why get involved in legal pro bono work? Aside from it just being the right thing to do, there are many different reasons for a firm and its solicitors to get involved in pro bono. A few of the compelling reasons are:

- It allows for lawyers to maximise and diversify their skills and expertise
- It is an attractive professional development opportunity for junior lawyers
- It opens the door to a great variety of networking opportunities.

In the words of the Hoxton Trust's Executive Director, Paul Fleming:

"You never know who will walk through the door, with what problem and what complexity. If that appeals to you, you are exactly the volunteer we are looking for. Hoxton and Shoreditch are very diverse, multi-cultural, colourful, unequal parts of Hackney and we deal with all that that produces!"