

# Research Lawyer

Job Description and Person Specification  
July 2021



**Job title:** Research Lawyer

**Type:** Fixed term contract to 31 March 2022

**Salary:** In the region of £40,000 p/a (London) or commensurate market rate for candidates based elsewhere

**Location:** London, UK (remote working arrangements considered)

**Reports to:** Head of Legal

**Application deadline:** 22 July 2021

**Interviews:** Week beginning 26 July 2021

**Ideal start date:** As soon as possible

## Organisation Overview

The Human Dignity Trust (the Trust) is a legal charity based in London, UK that supports local lawyers and human rights defenders to uphold human rights and constitutional law in countries where private, consensual same-sex sexual conduct is criminalised. At present, more than 70 jurisdictions worldwide maintain these criminal laws, a figure that is gradually decreasing due to a combination of litigation and legislative reform. Legal provisions that criminalise lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people put them beyond the protection of the law, fostering a climate of fear, stigma and violence. These provisions also violate constitutional and international human rights law, including a person's right to dignity, equality, non-discrimination and privacy.

The Trust provides pro bono technical legal assistance and advisory services at the request of, and in collaboration with, local human rights defenders, their lawyers and other partners who wish to use the courts to challenge the laws that discriminate against and persecute LGBT people. Since our inception in 2011, we have worked with local partners in 21 countries in all regions of the world. As a key component of our work, the Trust also works with local partners to provide specialist strategic media and communications technical assistance, in order to support them to build skills, confidence and capacity in managing local and international communications around any litigation they decide to pursue.

The Trust also supports the legislative reform of laws that criminalise, discriminate against or fail to protect LGBT people and other vulnerable groups. Laws criminalising LGBT people in the Commonwealth are often part of a wider set of sexual offence laws that discriminate against and do not adequately protect women, children, LGBT people and other vulnerable groups, such as laws relating to rape, sexual assault and ages of consent. Many of these are rooted in colonial-era laws that have long since been reformed in the UK. Building on pan-Commonwealth legal analyses that the Trust has been spearheading since 2016, and on request from governments, the Trust provides technical assistance to governments seeking to deliver legislative reform.

## Purpose of the post

This is an exciting opportunity for an outstanding and passionate lawyer, who will work closely with the Head of Legal and other Trust staff, stakeholders from civil society, the public sector, the pro bono legal community and international experts, to support the implementation of the Trust's programme on legislative reform of laws across a range of Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean, Africa and the Pacific. The focus of this work is on sexual offences and hate crimes legislation. The purpose of this post is to support and manage the legal research components of this programme, which include technical comparative legal research, particularly on matters of criminal law, across multiple common law jurisdictions.

This post will suit an experienced common law lawyer with a passion for human rights, equality and justice and an ability support and manage elements of a multi-faceted programme and to deliver highest quality work to Commonwealth government and to civil society stakeholders.

The ideal candidate will therefore bring experience of managing, editing and ensuring high standards of quality control of comparative legal research in a criminal law context in common law jurisdictions.

Regrettably, as a consequence of the nature of the work that the Trust carries out, Trust staff members are subjected to distressing critiques of LGBT identities and the Research Lawyer will have to tolerate this with tact and professionalism.

Full details of the post can be found on the attached job description or on our website here: <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/who-we-are/jobs-internships>.

## Responsibilities of the post

Under the direct supervision and guidance of the Head of Legal, and in close collaboration with the Trust's Senior Lawyers, the Research Lawyer will carry out the following duties:

- Support the design, management and review of legal and contextual research by consultants and pro bono lawyers
- Critically review and analyse research and recommendations of expert consultants on human rights compliant criminal law provisions pertaining to sexual offences and hate crimes
- Ensure consistency, quality and technical integrity of technical legal research, to enable its use by legislative drafters and legal teams in developing draft legislation for Commonwealth governments
- Develop content for training civil society organisations in several Commonwealth jurisdictions on the technical legal elements of legislative reform initiatives
- Ensure the delivery of high quality and timely research products on legislative reform across the Trust's departments, in close collaboration with the Head of Legal, the Senior Lawyers and the Senior Advocacy Advisor, in particular
- Procure and contract consultants (with the administrative support of Programme Officers and other Trust staff)
- Contribute to activity and financial reporting, internally and externally
- Provide material for the Trust's website
- Any other tasks/duties as reasonably required by the Head of Legal

## Person Specification

### Skills, Experience and Qualifications

#### Essential skills and experience

- Demonstrated experience working as a practising lawyer or technical legal researcher, with experience in the fields of criminal law or human rights law in common law jurisdictions
- A proven understanding of international human rights law and its application to domestic legal frameworks
- Very high attention to detail and ability to critically assess and edit technical legal documents, research reports and papers
- Ability to manage research projects with a consistently high level of quality and legal accuracy
- Ability to manage effectively multiple workstreams in a fast-paced technical environment
- Fluency in English with excellent writing and editorial skills
- Demonstrated ability to work well in a diverse multi-cultural environment and with sensitivity to diverse local cultures and contexts
- Proven ability to work well in a small team
- Pleasant, diplomatic manner and disposition in interacting with senior management and colleagues at all levels
- Ability to work well both independently and with others
- Integrity, professional discretion and ability to handle confidential matters
- Strong commitment to diversity, inclusion, equality and human rights

#### Desired skills and experience

- Experience in legislative reform programmes
- Knowledge and experience in sexual offences and/or hate crimes legislation
- Experience in managing multi-country legal and human rights programmes
- Familiarity with any of the geographic regions in which the Trust works
- Experience of working in different legal systems in addition to common law systems, in particular Sharia environments
- Knowledge and experience of the global LGBT human rights movement and developments

#### Qualifications

- Law degree
- Advanced degree in criminal law, human rights law or equivalent experience
- Admitted to legal practice in a common law jurisdiction (not necessarily in the United Kingdom) or qualifications as a legal academic, particularly in criminal law

## To apply

Closing date for applications: 22 July 2021

Interviews to be held: week beginning 26 July 2021

To apply please send a CV of no more than three pages along with a covering letter of no more than two pages, using the person specification as a guide, explaining why you are an ideal candidate for this role to: [administrator@humandignitytrust.org](mailto:administrator@humandignitytrust.org).

If you meet the essential criteria, have a disability and would prefer to apply in a different format or would like us to make reasonable adjustments to enable you to apply, attend any interview and complete any tests, please let us know.

Please note that due to the volume of applications we receive we are only able to contact those candidates who are shortlisted for an interview.

The Trust's head office is located in London, as is the legal team and the role in question; but we would consider any location, subject to local law compliance and operational viability.

We recognise that everyone is different and value the diversity of the people who work for us. We are committed to maintaining and building an inclusive culture in our workplace. To help us achieve this, we ask applicants to complete the attached, optional, [diversity monitoring form](#). If you would prefer not to do so, then please select that option when filling in your form.

## Equal Opportunities

The Human Dignity Trust is an equal opportunity employer and we are committed to diversity and inclusion. We welcome applications from all suitably qualified persons and are particularly seeking applications from LGBT people and People of Colour / BAME people. Our aim is to create a safe and secure working environment where a commitment to diversity, opportunity, quality and excellence is part of our guiding values.

Our employees and any job applicants will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability (including HIV status), gender identity and expression, intersex status, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.