

Volunteer information pack

Thanks for your interest in finding out more about Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West and volunteering with us.

This pack will give you more information about our volunteer roles and how to apply.

If you have any questions or need this pack in another format please email: training@citizensadvicessw.org.uk



What does Citizens Advice do?



Citizens Advice gives independent, impartial, free and confidential information and advice to **help people overcome the problems they face**, such as benefits, debt, employment, housing, relationships and immigration.



We use our knowledge about our clients' problems to identify trends and campaign to **improve the policies and practices** that affect peoples' lives.



At Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West we also have **specialist services** such as pension advice, debt advice and outreaches.



The Citizens Advice service has over **18,000 trained volunteers** and 7,000 paid staff in 284 local Citizens Advice across England and Wales who provide an advice service to over 2.4 million people a year in over 2,500 locations in a range of ways including face to face, over the phone, by email and web-chat.

Why volunteer?

Our volunteers come from a range of backgrounds and communities and volunteer with us for a range reasons, including to:

- make a **positive impact on peoples' lives,**
- gain **new skills and knowledge** and build **experience** for employment
- use and develop **existing skills** in varied and rewarding roles
- improve **health, wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem**
- meet **new people** from a range of backgrounds and ages, and **make friends**
- get to know the local community and **give something back**
- experience **good training** and **support** and to feel part of a **team**

We reimburse travel expenses so you won't be out of pocket from volunteering.

Our roles

As a volunteer at Citizens Advice you don't need any specific qualifications or experience.



You'll need to be friendly and approachable and have a respect for views, values and cultures that are different to your own.



Some roles may require you to have a basic IT skills, be a good listener, or have good written skills.



As a volunteer you'll receive an introduction to the service and training for your role, as well as support and supervision from our supervisors during your time volunteering with us, and opportunities for development.



Many of our public-facing roles take place in the day time (Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm) but we can be flexible with some of our other roles, which you could do in the evening or weekends. **Have a look at the volunteer roles in this pack for more information.**

How to get involved:

- Read through our volunteer roles and decide which one(s) you're interested in.
- Complete a short application form: attached
- We'll invite you for an informal interview to discuss the role.

This is nothing to worry about, it's a chance for you to find out more about the role, and Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West and decide if you'd like to volunteer with us.

It's also a chance for us to find out more about you and to see if the role you're interested in is a good fit for you.

Inclusive volunteering

Citizens Advice believes that the skills, experience and satisfaction that come from **volunteering should be available to everyone.**

We have a diverse workforce and **we actively encourage applications for volunteer roles from all parts of the community**, including Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) volunteers, disabled volunteers, volunteers with physical and mental health conditions, LGBT+ and non-binary volunteers.

Citizens Advice has 4 network groups:

- 1) BAME
- 2) Disability
- 3) Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual
- 4) Trans & Non-Binary

Our network groups raise awareness and promote inclusivity within Citizens Advice. The network groups also provide an opportunity to talk and support each other in a confidential environment.

We encourage **inclusive volunteering** by focusing on matching volunteer roles available with your qualities, skills and interests. **We challenge discrimination, promote equality and value diversity.**

For more information see our [What you can expect from Citizens Advice](#) (see bottom of the page) and the Citizens Advice [equality and diversity policy](#).

Disabled volunteers

We want to make sure that you don't feel that your health condition or impairment is a barrier to volunteering with us.

We actively welcome disabled volunteers and volunteers with long term health conditions, including mental health conditions.

Talk to us at any stage of the recruitment process about what support or equipment would enable you to volunteer with us, including physical requirements, time commitment or role flexibility.

Visit the national Citizens Advice [website](#) to find out about the experiences of some our disabled volunteers

Adviser



Our volunteer advisers talk to clients over the phone, face to face and online to explore what problems they've come for help with and find information about possible options. Advisers then help clients to understand the information, and support them to take action.

Some examples of what you could do:

- help a client with debts work out a reasonable amount to pay back, and make a phonecall to an organisation they owe money to.
- explore what benefits a client is entitled to and help them to complete a benefit application form.



Time commitment: 8 hours per week spread over one or two days, for 12 months. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

What's in it for you?

- Helping people directly
- Positive community impact
- Learning about a range of issues indepth such as benefits, debt, housing etc.
- Problem solving and communication skills
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding
- Full training given

"I really enjoy helping people with their problems. I feel a real sense of achievement when a client leaves feeling that there's a way forward, and a clear weight has been lifted off their shoulders - it's amazing!"

Advice Assistant



Our volunteer advice assistants help clients face to face with specific problems.

Some examples of what you could do:

- complete an online or paper form with a client to help them claim a benefit
- call a utility company with, or on behalf, of a client, to find out how much money they owe
- discuss income and spending with a client and together draw up a personal budget



Time commitment: 6 hours per week spread over one or two days, for 6 months. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

What's in it for you?

- Helping people directly
- Positive community impact
- Learning in depth about a few key issues such as benefits and debt
- Communication skills
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding
- Full training given

"I'm learning new things all the time, everyone is really supportive and I feel like I'm making a real difference to peoples' lives, as well as making new friends!"

Assessor



Our volunteer assessors talk to clients over the phone, face to face and online to explore what problems they've come for help with. Assessors find out information about the problem and help clients to understand this information.

Some examples of what you could do:

- find the information online that explains how to apply for Housing Benefit in a client's local area and explain it to them
- help a client find and understand what steps they can take to deal with their rent arrears



Time commitment: 6 hours per week spread over one or two days, for 6 months. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

What's in it for you?

- Helping people directly
- Positive community impact
- Learning about a range of issues such as benefits, debt, housing etc.
- Communication skills
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding
- Full training given

"Volunteering has really improved my confidence and I'm feeling happier in myself. I really like the social aspect of volunteering, as well as improving my problem solving skills.

The training was fantastic and I feel really well supported!"

Digital / Information Assistant



Our digital / information assistants help clients find information, and help them carry out an activity on a computer to help solve their problems.

Some examples of what you could do:

- find information online that explains how to check a client's state pension age and help them to do this
- find information online about how to renew vehicle tax and help a client to do this
- help a client find and understand steps they can take to deal with their rent arrears



Time commitment: 4 hours per week spread over one or two days, for 3 months. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

What's in it for you?

- Helping people directly
- Positive community impact
- Learning about benefits, debt
- Digital and communication skills
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding
- Full training given

"The best thing about volunteering at Citizens Advice is that it's given me lots of new skills and really good experience that's valuable for my CV"

Customer service volunteer



Our customer service volunteers are the first person a client sees when they come into the local Citizens Advice in person.

Customer service volunteers greet clients and explain to them how long they might be waiting and what will happen. Customer service volunteers also answer the phone, reply to email or post and type up information.



Time commitment: We can be flexible about the time spent and how often you volunteer so come and talk to us.

What's in it for you?

- Positive community impact
- Communication and IT skills
- Teamworking
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding
- Full training given

"I really enjoy working as part of a team and talking to clients to help them feel at ease. I've built on some of my IT and communication skills and feel more confident in myself"

Fundraising volunteer



Each local Citizens Advice is a registered charity reliant on money from local authorities, companies, charitable trusts and individuals.

Fundraising volunteers may help with researching fundraising opportunities, writing funding applications, organising events, or creating materials or presentations that could be used at events to raise the profile of the local Citizens Advice and raise money.



Time commitment: We can be flexible about the time spent and how often you volunteer so come and talk to us.

What's in it for you?

- Positive community impact
- Communication and fundraising skills
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding
- Full training given

"I really enjoy talking to people in other organisations and members of the public to raise money to keep the service going.

I feel like I'm making a really big impact in my local area"

Research and Campaigns volunteer



Our research and campaigns volunteers identify trends in the problems experienced by our clients, to see where policies and practices are negatively affecting our clients.

Research and campaigns volunteers may do research, such as client surveys, to find out more about the issues, and then organise a campaign to bring about change. This might be writing a press release for the local paper, writing to an elected official like a local councillor, holding a public awareness raising event, or using social media.

Volunteers may also get involved in campaigns with national Citizens Advice, such as [Universal Credit](#).



Time commitment: We can be flexible about the time spent and how often you volunteer so come and talk to us.

What's in it for you?

- Positive community and wider impact
- Learning about issues with benefits, housing etc. and how they affect people
- Researching, communication and project skills
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding

"I feel really passionate about social justice so this role is perfect for me. I can use the information we have about our clients' problems to identify trends and campaign for positive change to help improve peoples' lives"

Trustee



Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West trustees are volunteers who use their skills, knowledge and experience to help guide and govern their local Citizens Advice.

This might involve making sure that the local Citizens Advice delivers high quality services, securing money to meet current and new demands, promoting the service locally and complies with the law around insurance, recruitment and premises.

Trustees work with the Chief Executive and other staff to shape strategy and give direction.



Time commitment: Trustees usually meet 4 times a year in the evening although you may need to work on key projects over the year that would involve more time. Talk to us to find out more!

What's in it for you?

- Positive community impact
- Strategy and leadership skills
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding

"I run a small business and really enjoy using my skills and knowledge to help lead the organisation to make sure it financially sustainable, whilst also ensuring that we can meet the needs of our communities, projects and funders"

Ex-offenders

Citizens Advice have an ex-offenders policy to ensure that ex-offenders are treated fairly.

Having a criminal record is not in itself a barrier, and we will only take relevant convictions or sexual offences into account. We consider each offence individually, looking at issues like risk to the client, how long ago it took place, the circumstances and whether they are relevant to the volunteer role. Some roles may require DBS checks.

Anyone with a caution or conviction for a sexual offence against a child or vulnerable adult is considered unsuitable to volunteer.

We will ask about unspent convictions as part of the application process. If you're concerned or would like to discuss your individual circumstances further, please contact Dee Nicol by email:
dee.nicol@citizensadvice.org.uk

Expenses

Expenses are paid for volunteers travel to and from Citizens Advice Staffordshire South West on the day the volunteering takes place, and for any training courses. This includes parking.

So volunteering with us will not leave you out of pocket.

Only actual out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.

Talk to Dee Nicol or Jayne Rowley, if you have any questions about expenses.

Will volunteering affect my benefits?

Volunteers who receive benefits, including means-tested benefits, are allowed to volunteer.

You may need to notify the provider of the benefit (e.g. Jobcentre Plus or HMRC) about volunteering.

You will need to continue to meet the conditions of your benefits claim.

There is more detailed information about specific benefits on the national Citizens Advice website in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section.

Come and join us!

To get involved, complete our online application form with details of what roles you're interested in and someone will be in touch.



Alternatively, you can contact us:

training@citizensadvicessw.org.uk if you'd like to:

- Discuss a role that you're interested in that isn't in this pack
- Discuss individual support or equipment needs
- Discuss flexibility around time commitment
- Discuss flexibility around what the role involves
- Find out more about the training
- Ask us any questions about volunteering!

We look forward to hearing from you!