

# Volunteer information pack

Thanks for your interest in finding out more about Citizens Advice Woking 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 [roz.ferguson@wokingcab.org](mailto:roz.ferguson@wokingcab.org)





# 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 Woking we also have specialist services such as debt, benefit and housing advice, as well as outreach services.



The Citizens Advice service has 22,000 trained volunteers and 7,000 paid staff in 284 local Citizens Advice across England and Wales who provide an advice service to over 2.6 million people a year in over 2,500 locations in a range of ways including face to face, over the phone and by email.

# 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 people's 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 and parking 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 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.



Most of our public-facing roles take place during the day (Mon - Fri 10am - 4pm) but other roles, such as trustee, are more flexible. **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.
- 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 CitizensAdvice Working 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](#).

# 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 of 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 repay 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: 1 day a week in our offices plus training for a minimum of 2 years.

[Full role description available](#)

## What's in it for you?

- Helping people directly
- Positive community impact
- Learning about a range of issues in-depth 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!

# 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.

Assessor 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: 1 day a week in our offices, plus training, for a minimum of 12 months.

[Full role description available](#)

## 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.

# 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: One half day a week in our offices for a minimum of 12 months.

[Full role description available](#)

## 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 speaking 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.

# Trustee



Citizens Advice Working 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 typically meet at least 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's financially sustainable. And also that we can meet the needs of our community - that's really important to me.

# 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 are concerned or would like to discuss your individual circumstances further, please contact: [roz.ferguson@wokingcab.org](mailto:roz.ferguson@wokingcab.org), Citizens Advice Woking.

# Expenses

Expenses are paid for volunteers travel to and from Citizens Advice Woking 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.

# 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](#).

# Come and join us!

To get involved, complete our application form

Contact [roz.ferguson@wokingcab.org](mailto:roz.ferguson@wokingcab.org) 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!

