

Volunteer Adviser - Role Description & Personal Skills

Reporting to

Advice Session Supervisor

Summary of the role

Working within the Citizens Advice Team, advisers are critical in providing a high quality, free, independent and confidential advice service for the local community. By listening to the community and reporting on the effects of social policy, advisers can help inform and influence policy makers at local and national level.

About the role

Giving advice

- Talking to clients over the phone, face to face, or online to explore the problems they are seeking help with.
- Finding information about the clients' rights and helping them to understand their options
- Supporting clients to take action to resolve their problems. This might include drafting or writing letters, making phone calls, or referring the client to another organisation
- Writing a clear case summary of the clients' problems and the actions your client will take and also the actions you will take to support them, taking full account of governance relating to the use and recording of information.
- Acting for the client where necessary by contacting other agencies, negotiating on behalf of your client, drafting letters, or referring your client on.

Supporting Research and Campaigns

- Identify research and campaign/social policy issues and record information from case work to contribute to Citizens Advice social policy work.
- Keep up to date with local and national research themes and identifying relevant evidence from case work.

Undertaking Training and Development

- Complete an induction and training programme to obtain the skills needed to become an adviser.
- Commit to regular training updates to maintain and develop knowledge and skills.
- Participate in regular reviews of progress and identifying new learning needs.
- Keep informed about local/national issues, developments and changes.
- Once experienced, support new trainees in their learning and initial stages of advice work.

Other duties and responsibilities

- Ensure the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are followed in all aspects of the service, in both the work environment and the services provided to clients.
- Ensure an accessible service is available to clients irrespective of any factor.
- Use IT for statistical recording, record keeping and document production.
- Ensure that all work confirms to CA Somerset's policies and procedures.
- Undertake administration duties relevant to the role, for example, photocopying.
- Contribute to discussions about the overall planning & policy of the Citizens Advice service.

This role is purely voluntary and this arrangement is not meant to be a legally binding one or an employment contract.

About you

Core

- A friendly, open and non-judgemental approach
- Ability to communicate well verbally and in writing
- Experience in seeking out information
- Confidence using computers and the internet
- Basic mathematical skills, including percentages.
- Good time management
- Respect for views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- Willingness to undertake training and commit to continuous self-learning
- Commitment to follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies
- Ability to follow confidentiality and data protection law.

Role specific

Essential:

- Ability to interpret and summarise data accurately and clearly
- Excellent communication skills including active listening
- Dealing sensitively with clients with complex issues
- Confidence with numbers

Desirable, but not essential:

- Skills in providing advice to others in a professional capacity
- Previous experience in a related area e.g. law, finance, housing, social work, advocacy

Time commitment

We ask volunteers to commit to a minimum of 4 to 8 hours per week, which can be on one day or spread over two days. This will include time required to keep up to date with news and updates from Citizens Advice.

The training period to become an adviser usually lasts 12 weeks (on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday) plus some home learning/self-study. After this, trainee advisers provide advice in a supported capacity. Due to the in-depth training volunteers receive before becoming a qualified generalist adviser, we do like candidates to commit to at least one year.

Development opportunities

Volunteers have an opportunity to develop in a number of ways, such as training to become an adviser, supporting our research and campaigning work, training and mentoring others, fundraising, media or promoting the work of Citizens Advice in the wider community.

Many of our volunteers have also moved into paid roles as a result of the skills and knowledge gained.

Valuing inclusion

Citizens Advice values diversity, promotes equality, and challenges discrimination. We encourage volunteer applications from people of all backgrounds, age, disability, gender, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation.

You will receive

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| ▪ Full training before you start | ▪ Out of pocket travel expenses reimbursed |
| ▪ The support of a supervisor team | ▪ Peer and/or mentor support |

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