



Volunteer information pack

Thanks for your interest in finding out more about Citizens Advice Cheshire 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: recruitment@citizensadvicecw.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 Cheshire West we also have **specialist services** such as pension advice, Help to Claim, debt and benefit advice.



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, 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 and training 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.



You will need to have basic IT skills and be a good listener.



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.



Our service is available in the day time (Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm).

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 Citizens Advice Cheshire 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.

Contact recruitment@citizensadvicecw.org.uk for an application form.

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

Generalist 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 phone call 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: 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 in depth such as benefits, debt, housing
- Problem solving and communication skills
- Increased employability
- 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!

Information Assistant



An Information Assistant is a new and important role for us, requiring minimal training, and specifically tasked with conducting Initial Assessments for clients who access our services. It can be done in our face-to-face settings or over our telephone Adviceline.

Some examples of what you could do:

- help a client with a complex benefits issue by referring them to a specialist adviser.
- Complete an Initial Assessment Form to determine the suitable next step of advice by evaluating clients capabilities.



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?

- Make a difference to people's lives
- Learn about a range of real life issues such as debt, benefits, or housing
- Gain and build on valuable skills and experience and increase your employability
- work with a range of different people
- Have a positive impact on your community
- Full training given

The best thing about volunteering is the variety of problems to help people with and the knowledge that you are helping other people.

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 Nicki Berg (nicola.berg@citizensadvicecw.org.uk)

Expenses

Expenses are paid for volunteers travel to and from Citizens Advice Cheshire 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 us 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, please complete our application form

Contact us on 01606 668925 or recruitment@citizensadvicecw.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!

