

Volunteer information pack

Thanks for your interest in finding out more about Citizens Advice Croydon 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 volunteer.line@croydoncab.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 Croydon we also have **specialist services** such as debt and welfare benefits and the Macmillan service for people affected by cancer.



The Citizens Advice service has **22,000** trained volunteers and 7,000 paid staff in 284 local Citizens Advice across England and Wales. We 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 receipted 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.



Most roles will require you to have a basic IT skills, be a good listener and 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.



All of our public-facing roles take place in the day time (Mon - Fri 9.45am - 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 Croydon 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, and 4) Trans & Non-Binary, who 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.**

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 at **www.citizensadvice.org.uk** to find out about the experiences of some of our disabled volunteers.

Assessor



Our volunteer assessors talk to clients over the phone, face to face and via email 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 information from our public site on a range of issues such as benefits, employment and debt, explain basic information to the client and assess whether they need a follow on appointment to see an adviser.
- Signpost them to other organisations who may be able to assist.
- Write up the case on our case recording system



Time commitment: A minimum of one day per week, but preferably two. Our volunteer day is 9.40am until 4.00 pm. Extensive training is provided. Volunteers must complete Assessor training before moving on to Adviser training.

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.

What's in it for you?

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

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 to work out a reasonable amount to pay back, and make phone calls to organisations they owe money to.
- explore what benefits a client is entitled to and help them to complete a benefit application form. Help with benefit appeals.
- Help with housing or employment issues.
- Liaise with other organisations on behalf of clients.



Time commitment: Minimum of two days per week.

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!

What's in it for you?

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

Fundraising volunteer



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

We have an active friends and fundraising group who organise fundraising events.

Fundraising volunteers may help with researching fundraising opportunities, organizing and running 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: This is an ideal role for someone who does not wish to commit to a regular volunteering day and can help us on an ad hoc basis. We can be flexible about the time spent and how often you volunteer, so come and talk to us.

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.

What's in it for you?

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

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.

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.

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

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 the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Expenses

Expenses are paid for volunteers' travel to and from Citizens Advice Croydon on the days volunteering takes place, and for any training courses, so volunteering with us will not leave you out of pocket.

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

Talk to the Operations Manager 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, email us and we will send you an application form.

Contact us at volunteer.line@croydoncab.org.uk if you'd like to

- Find out more about the training
- Ask us any questions about volunteering
- Get an application form

We look forward to hearing from you!

