

# **Citizens Advice Bristol - Volunteer information pack**

Thank you for your interest in finding out more about Citizens Advice Bristol and volunteering with us. This pack will give you more information about our volunteer roles and how to apply.



## 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 Bristol we also have **specialist services** such as pension advice, debt advice, welfare rights advice, advice for young people in crisis, the Macmillan project for people who have been diagnosed with cancer, and outreaches in GP surgeries.



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**

## **Our roles**

As a volunteer at Citizens Advice you don't need any specific qualifications or experience, but we are looking for certain skills and values:

- You'll need to be friendly and approachable and have a respect for views, values and cultures that are different to your own.
- You'll need 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 in the day time (Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm).

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, available at: [www.bristolcab.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer](http://www.bristolcab.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer)

We will then get in touch with you. You may be invited for an open day, or an informal interview. This is nothing to worry about, it's a chance for you to find out more about the role, and Citizens Advice Bristol 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.

## 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. To include an occasional Saturday morning.



Search #CABSUCCESSSTORIES on Twitter to see what our advisers get up to

For a full role description, application form and FAQs go to:

[www.bristolcab.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer](http://www.bristolcab.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer)

### 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!**

## Reception and Information volunteer

Our reception and information volunteers are the first people a client sees when they come into the local Citizens Advice in person. The role is a challenging but great opportunity to gain experience of all aspects of reception administration, information support and customer service.

You will be involved, amongst other things in:

- greeting new clients
- processing client information
- signposting people to other local organisation's and services
- assisting people to access computers
- supporting clients to complete forms
- scribing letters
- supporting the general administration of the organisation.



Time commitment: One full day or two half days per week, for a minimum of 4 – 6 months.

For a full role description, application forms and FAQs go to:

[www.bristolcab.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer](http://www.bristolcab.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer)

### What's in it for you?

- Positive community impact
- Communication and IT skills
- Team working
- 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.**

## **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.

**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.**

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 human resources at [admin@bristolcab.org.uk](mailto:admin@bristolcab.org.uk).

## **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....we look forward to hearing from you!**