

Volunteer Information Pack

Thanks for your interest in finding out more about Citizens Advice Liverpool and volunteering with us.

This pack will give you more information about Citizens Advice, our volunteer roles, some answers to frequently asked questions and how to apply.

If you have any questions or need this pack in another format please contact volunteers@caliverpool.org.uk



Our Aims and Principles. 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.



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.

Citizens Advice Liverpool



Citizens Advice Liverpool is part of the Citizens Advice network. We are the leading provider of advice and advocacy services in Liverpool. We are a local, independent charity and our services are free, confidential and impartial. We have offices in Belle Vale, Walton, Garston and Wavertree and more than 30 outreach locations.



Our General Advice team provides advice over the phone, webchat and in person. We also have a number of specialist teams such as the Money Advice Team, help to Claim Universal Credit, Pension Wise, European Union Settlement Scheme, LGBT+ Hate Crime support and Advice on Prescription.



We have a team of over 150 staff and volunteers who last year helped 22,650 people and their families with 69,530 issues.

Why volunteer?

Our volunteers come from a range of backgrounds and communities and volunteer with us for a range reasons, including to:

- make a **real difference to 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 expenses so you won't be out of pocket from volunteering.

Expenses

Expenses are paid for volunteers travel to and from Citizens Advice Liverpool on the day the volunteering takes place, and for any training courses you may attend as a volunteer.

Volunteering with us will not leave you out of pocket.

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

Please email volunteers@caliverpool.org.uk if you have any questions about expenses.

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.



The roles require you to have a 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.



Many of our public-facing roles take place in the day time (Mon - Fri). **Have a look at our current volunteer roles in this pack for more information.**

At Citizens Advice Liverpool we also offer other opportunities to support people engaging with our service and develop their skills and gain experience.

We offer student placements in partnership with universities and colleges, work experience requests from individuals, and short term volunteering projects.

Get in touch if you want to find out more about these on volunteers@caliverpool.org.uk

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.** We welcome applications from people from all ethnic minorities, disabled people, people with physical and mental health conditions, LGBT+ and non-binary people.

At Citizens Advice we have 4 network groups: BAME; Disability; Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual and 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.

Citizens Advice Liverpool also coordinates an **Equalities Programme to support volunteers from minoritised ethnic backgrounds.** This programme is integral to the work of the volunteering team so we can fully support our volunteers.

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.

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.**

Generalist Adviser



Some generalist advisers talk to clients over the phone to explore what problems they've come for help with and find information about possible options. Others speak to clients in face to face appointments to help them deal with a specific problem they face. In both cases, advisers help clients to understand the information they have, and support them to take action.

Some examples of what you could do:

- explore what benefits a client is entitled to
- help identify priority debts and refer to the appropriate service to help client deal with debt issues
- help a client who has problems with their landlord to understand their housing rights
- identify problems' that are common, or are unfair, and use our systems to highlight these problems



Time commitment: 8 hours per week spread over one or two days, for 12 months. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

What's in it for you?

- Helping people
- Positive community impact
- Learning about issues such as benefits, housing, energy and debt
- 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!

Benefits Form Filler



Our Benefits Form Fillers deliver appointments over the phone or face to face, to help clients complete their applications/forms for sickness and disability benefits.

Some examples of what you could do:

- help clients complete relevant forms such as;
 - Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
 - Child Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
 - Attendance Allowance
- explore clients' health conditions and issues
- summarise the contents of interviews, explaining to them how long they might wait and what will happen



Time commitment: 4 hours per week for at least 6 months.

What's in it for you?

- Helping people directly
- Positive community impact
- Learning in depth about benefits
- 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.

Receptionist/ Customer Service volunteer



Our receptionist/ customer service volunteers are based on our sites across Liverpool and they are the first person a client sees when they come into the local Citizens Advice in person.

Some examples of what you could do:

- maintain the reception area by keeping information leaflets and paperwork up to date
- welcome all clients and other visitors to Citizens Advice Liverpool
- check in visitors and clients with appointments
- assess the level of support needed for clients without appointments
- provide information on services to clients
- type up information from the client into our systems



Time commitment: 4 hours per week for at least 6 months.

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.

Administration and Switchboard Volunteer Role



Our Administration and Switchboard volunteers are based at our Walton and Wavertree offices. They are the main point of contact for people looking to for basic information about Citizens Advice and to manage their appointments with the organisation.

Some examples of what you could do:

- Complete an induction to Citizens Advice and training for the role.
- Receive calls via the Switchboard and direct calls/provide basic information such as telephone numbers or opening hours.
- Respond to calls from clients seeking to cancel/reschedule adviser appointments.
- Make outbound calls to clients to check and confirm attendance for appointments.
- Support the processing of referrals by entering client information onto our record system.
- Print and process outgoing post, scan and distribute inbound post.



Time commitment: 8 hours per week for at least 12 months.

What's in it for you?

- Gain valuable skills and experience relevant to the modern workplace.
- Contribute to the administration team's service and smooth running of Citizens Advice Liverpool.
- Make a real difference to peoples' lives,
- Work with a range of different people, independently and in a team.

Training

We offer the training needed for you to carry out your volunteer role.

All volunteers complete an **induction** when they start volunteering with us. The induction training is a mix of **online learning and sessions** with a member of the volunteering team and your supervisor. Induction helps you find out about the service and what you will be doing as part of your role.

After induction each volunteer will follow a learning plan relevant to their role. The **core training** is delivered in two main stages. Initially, you will be working through an **online learning course** which will balance **self-study** and **assessment** with support from your supervisor and the volunteering team. Subsequently, you will complete, **observations, mentoring** from other volunteers and staff, and **supervised work** and feedback from your supervisor. The training is designed to build your knowledge and skills in areas including; **benefits, employment, debt, immigration, case recording, and interview/telephone skills.**

When all training is completed and you are able to carry out your role independently, we do a **final review** to award you a **certificate of achievement** for your role. If you are an adviser, this marks the stage when you complete your Adviser Learning Plan that recognises your competencies as an adviser.

All our training is recognized by Citizens Advice and therefore transferrable to any local Citizens Advice.

Volunteers are fully supported and supervised throughout their time at Citizens Advice. When you join Citizens Advice Liverpool you will get more details about who is supporting you day to day, and the specific training you will be doing. Citizens Advice Liverpool will work with you to help ensure that you find volunteering with us rewarding.

Can I volunteer if I have a criminal Record?

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.

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 volunteers@caliverpool.org.uk

Can I volunteer if I am not a UK citizen?

Please note that you are only allowed to volunteer if your immigration status permits it. Many will, but please do check that you are entitled to volunteer, to avoid breaching the terms of your status. You can find further information about different visa rules on this [government webpage](#).

Irish citizens, EU/EEA citizens with settled or pre-settled status, and refugees and asylum seekers are fully entitled to volunteer.

I've recently been a client or accessed the Citizens Advice service, can I volunteer?

Former clients can, and do, make excellent volunteers in a range of roles. Having lived experience can give you really valuable insight into what it's like to access the Citizens Advice service.

Depending on when you last accessed the service, we may suggest a break before you become a volunteer, but they can discuss this with you when you apply.

What age restrictions are there on volunteering?

The minimum age for Citizens Advice volunteer advisers is 16.

There are many other volunteer roles that may be suitable for under 16s such as placement or work experience. Contact us so we can discuss these with you.

There is no upper age limit for volunteers.

Will volunteering affect my benefits?

Volunteers who receive benefits, including means-tested benefits, are allowed to volunteer.

You may need to notify the department administering the benefit provider of the benefit (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, DWP, local authority) about volunteering.

You will need to continue to meet the conditions of your benefits claim.

Because local Citizens Advice reimburse only out of pocket expenses, volunteering should not affect your state benefits.

We can help you by providing a standard letter confirming that the role is a volunteer one, the number of hours you are volunteering, that these hours are unpaid and that you're only receiving actual out-of-pocket expenses.

If you need more details information please contact volunteers@caliverpool.org.uk

Come and join us!

- ✓ Have you read through this pack?
- ✓ Are you familiar with the roles we offer and decided the one you are interested in?

- **Check what roles we are currently recruiting for** on our website and if the role is right for you **complete a short application form and your monitoring 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 Liverpool 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 us 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!

volunteers@caliverpool.org.uk

Pat Breslin & Jimmy Jenkins - Volunteer Support Team

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