

# 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](mailto:volunteers@caliverpool.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.



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 when we resume face to face training.

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](mailto: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 9am - 5pm). **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](mailto: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 all ethnic minorities.** 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.**

## Telephone Adviser



Our volunteer telephone advisers talk to clients the phone to explore what problems they've come for help with and find information about possible options. Telephone Advisers then help clients to understand the information, 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.



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.

Form Fillers volunteers will help client complete the relevant forms such and Personal Independence Payment (PIP), capability for work forms (ESA/UC 50), Child Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance.

Form fillers explore client's health conditions and issues, summarise the content of the interview, clients and explain to them how long they might be waiting 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
- Teamworking
- 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



Our Administration and Switchboard volunteers are based on our sites across Liverpool. They support our Admin team with the day to day running of the service and provide support to all teams.

Some examples of what you could do:

- Take and transfer calls as appropriate/leave messages
- Contact clients to confirm appointments
- Help with administration of our referral system
- Input information into our systems
- Help with the administration of our post



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

### What's in it for you?

- Positive community impact
- Digital and communication skills
- Increased employability
- Experience in contributing to the running of the advice service which makes a real difference to peoples' lives
- Full training given

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.

# Research and Campaigns volunteer



By using evidence that Citizens Advice Liverpool gets from its clients, our Research and Campaigns volunteers can help bring about changes in local and national policies and services which can benefit everyone.

Some examples of what you could do:

- Gather clients evidence to identify common, or unfair, problems
- Monitor the use of our sources of evidence and support others in finding out about issues and help the organisation gathering evidence
- Carry out client surveys, to find out more about the issues,
- Help to organise campaigns to raise awareness of the problems and bring about change. This might involve creating materials, such as reports or presentations, which could be used to explain the problems to others (such as local councillors, or members of the public)
- Volunteers may also get involved in helping carry out research and campaigns with national Citizens Advice.



Time commitment: We can be flexible about the time spent and how often you volunteer so come and talk to us.

## 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

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.

## Trustee



Citizens Advice Liverpool trustees are volunteers who use their skills, knowledge and experience to help guide and govern Citizens Advice Liverpool.

This might involve making sure that the local Citizens Advice delivers high quality services, securing money to meet current and new demands, promoting the service locally and complies with the law around insurance, recruitment and premises.

Trustees work with the Chief Executive and other staff to shape strategy and give direction.



Time commitment: Trustee boards usually meet in the evenings and you'll likely need 4 hours per month. You may also need to attend other meetings if you're involved in specific projects or meet with volunteers and staff occasionally within the local Citizens Advice. We can be flexible about the time spent and how often you volunteer, so come and talk to us.

*“Being a Trustee at CAL will give you the opportunity to play an active part in offering valued services to the people of our City.*

*The provision of trusted and independent advice and support is our aim and in 2019 we helped more than 26,000 citizens and their families.*

*We work closely with other third sector organisations and a wide variety of partners including Liverpool City Council to address the problems people face in these difficult times.*

*The Trustee Board provides policy and strategic direction, sets realistic targets and monitors performance. We work closely with staff and volunteers to ensure that every penny of our income is spent on delivery of quality services.*

*Trustees can feel that they are making a positive impact on the lives of people facing challenges in their everyday lives.*

*We want Trustees who understand governance responsibilities, can show leadership and help the Board develop a forward-thinking inclusive strategy for the future.*

Frank Hont  
Chair CAL Trustee Board.

# 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 through **online learning, observations, mentoring** from other volunteers and staff and **supervised work** and feedback from your supervisor.

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 [susana.carvalho@caliverpool.org.uk](mailto:susana.carvalho@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.

The minimum age to become a trustee is 18.

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](mailto: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](mailto:volunteers@caliverpool.org.uk)

Pat Breslin- Volunteer Support

**Phone:** 0151 522 1400 Ext: 1732

