citizens advice Blackpool

Volunteer information pack

Thanks for your interest in finding out more about Citizens Advice Blackpool 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 Lorraine.Fisher@blackpoolcab.org.uk or call 01253 308401

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 Blackpool we also have **specialist services** such as debt advice, Help to Claim 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 webchat.

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 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.

Some roles may require you to have 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) but we can be flexible with some of our other roles, which you could do in the evening or weekends**. 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
- ➔ 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 Blackpool 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

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

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.

Advisers don't need to know it all! We provide all trainee advisers with a comprehensive, accredited training programme that will give you the skills you need to deliver a high-quality service to our clients. Our up to the minute electronic information system contains most of the information you will need when advising clients. Once you have qualified as a Generalist Adviser, you will have the opportunity to develop further skills and increase the depth and breadth of your knowledge.

What will you do

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and training for your role
- talk to clients over the phone, face to face, or online to explore what problems they've come for help with
- find information about the clients' problems and help them to understand their options

- support clients to take action to resolve their problems. This might include drafting or writing letters, making phone calls, or referring the client to another organisation
- write a summary of the clients' problems and what action you've taken
- look out for problems' that are common, or are unfair, and write a short report about the problem or a letter to an elected official like an MP, or local councillor

Some examples of what you could do:

- help clients 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.
- help a client who has problems with their landlord to understand their housing rights.

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 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.

Time commitment:

6 hours per week spread over one or two days. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills, but you'll need to:

- be friendly, approachable, and patient
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- have good listening skills
- have excellent verbal and written communication skills
- have good math's and IT skills

- be able to understand information and explain it to others
- be willing to learn about and follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies, including confidentiality and data protection
- be willing to undertake training in your role

Information Assistant

Our Information Assistant volunteers are the first person a client sees when they come into the local Citizens Advice in person.
Information Assistant volunteers greet clients and explain to them how long they might be waiting and what will happen. Information Assistant volunteers also help clients find information online and may assist clients with filling in forms.

What will you do?

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and training for your role
- welcome all clients and other visitors to the local Citizens Advice
- explain to the client how long they might be waiting and what will happen and give out a form for clients to fill in.

- talk to clients face to face, to help them find information online that can help them solve their problems
- help clients carry out an activity online to solve their problems

Some examples of what you could do:

- Help a client find the information online that explains how to check their state pension age.
- find the information online about how to renew vehicle tax and help a client to do this
- Act as a scribe for clients who need to complete a form e.g., a benefit application.

What's in it for you?

- make a real difference to people's lives
- learn about a range of issues such as benefits, debt, and housing
- build on valuable skills such as communication, listening, supporting others to use the internet
- increase your employability
- work with a range of different people, independently and in a team.
- have a positive impact in your community.

Time commitment:

4 hours per week spread over one or two days. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills, but you'll need to:

- be friendly, approachable and patient
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- have good listening skills
- have excellent verbal and written communication skills
- have good IT skills

> 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.

- be able to understand information and explain it to others
- be willing to learn about and follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies, including confidentiality and data protection
- be willing to undertake training in your role

Debt Assistant volunteer

Our Debt Assistant volunteers talk to clients over the phone and face to face to explore what money problems they require help with. Debt Assistant volunteers find out information about the problem and help clients to understand this information. We provide all trainee debt assistant volunteers with a comprehensive training programme that will give you the skills you need to deliver a high-quality service to our clients.

What will you do?

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and training for your role
- find information about the clients' problems and help them to understand their options

I'm learning new things all the time, everyone is really supportive, and I feel like I'm making a real difference to peoples' lives, as well as making new friends!

- write a summary of the clients' problems and what action you've taken
- assist clients to calculate their income and expenditure and identify ways in which their income can be increased, and their expenditure reduced.
- assist clients to identify priority and non-priority debts and create an appropriate payment plan

Some examples of what you could do:

- find the information online that explains how to apply for a council tax reduction in a client's local area and explain it to them
- help a client find and understand what steps they can take to deal with their rent arrears
- help a client to calculate a monthly budget

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?

- make a real difference to people's lives
- learn about a range of issues such as benefits, debt, employment, and housing

- build on valuable skills such as communication, listening and analysing
- increase your employability
- work with a range of different people, independently and in a team.
- have a positive impact in your community.
- Full training given with further opportunities to expand your knowledge and skills

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills, but you'll need to:

- be friendly, approachable, and patient
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- have good listening skills
- have excellent verbal and written communication skills
- have good math's and IT skills
- be able to understand information and explain it to others
- be willing to learn about and follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies, including confidentiality and data protection
- be willing to undertake training in your role

Fundraising volunteer

Each local Citizens Advice is a registered charity reliant on money from local authorities, companies, charitable trusts and individuals. Fundraising volunteers may help with researching fundraising opportunities, organising events, creating materials or presentations that could be used at events to raise the profile of the local Citizens Advice and raise money.

What will you do?

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and training for your role
- explore different ways of fundraising to help the local Citizens Advice obtain money, either for specific things, or for ongoing running costs of the local Citizens Advice

Some examples of what you could do:

- help to organise fundraising events to raise money from the local community and encourage volunteers and staff to get involved
- create materials, such as newsletters or presentations, which can be used to raise the profile of the local Citizens Advice and for raising money

- explore other ways of fundraising, including identifying new sources of funding from organisations
- help to build relationships with local organisations or businesses

What's in it for you?

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

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.

Time commitment:

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

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills, but you'll need to:

- be friendly, approachable, and patient
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- have good listening skills
- have excellent verbal and written communication skills

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.

What will you do?

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and training for your role
- identify common, or unfair, problems that clients come for help about
- help volunteers and staff in the local Citizens Advice understand the cause of the problem, how it affects

clients, and what change would solve the problem (by talking to them, or writing a summary)

Some examples of what you could do:

- help to organise a campaign with the aim of raising awareness of the problem. This might involve creating materials, such as newsletters, or presentations, or writing something for social media or newspaper, which could be used to explain the problems to others (such as local councillors, or members of the public)
- help to organise a campaign with the aim of getting the organisation (person or elected body such as MP, AM or local councillor) that is causing the problem, to change the way they do things. This could mean meeting with the organisation, person, or elected body, writing to them or holding an event
- help national Citizens Advice carry out research about how certain issues affect clients in your local area. This might involve doing a survey with clients to find out how a change in a benefit is affecting them

What's in it for you?

- make a real difference to people's lives
- learn about a range of areas such as benefits, debt and housing, and how problems in these areas can affect clients
- build on valuable skills such as communication, research, campaigns, how to engage with a range of audiences and working with clients
- increase your employability
- have a positive impact in your community and on broader society

> 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.

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

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills but you'll need to:

- be friendly and approachable
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own

- have excellent verbal and written communication skills
- be able to understand complex information and explain it (verbally and writing) so that others understand it
- have good IT skills
- be willing to learn about and follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies, including confidentiality and data protection
- be willing to undertake training in your role

Trustee

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

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.

What will you do?

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and training for your role
- set the overall direction and support the development of the bureau

- ensure the bureau meets the needs of the local community and the Citizens Advice membership standards
- employ CAB staff and control bureau finances
- earn and retain the respect of important and influential people and organisations in the community, including funding bodies
- ensure the bureau complies with relevant laws

What's in it for you?

- Positive community impact
- Strategy and leadership skills
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding

> I run a small business and really enjoy using my skills and knowledge to help lead the organisation to make sure it's financially sustainable. And also, that we can meet the needs of our community - that's really important to me.

Time commitment:
Trustees usually meet once a month, although you may need to work on key projects over the year that would involve more time. Talk to us to find out more!

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills, but you'll need to:

- be friendly and approachable
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own

- have excellent verbal and written communication skills
- be able to understand complex information and explain it (verbally and writing) so that others understand it
- have good IT skills
- be willing to learn about and follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies, including confidentiality and data protection
- be willing to undertake training in your role

Young CA Adviser

Our Young Adviser volunteers are typically aged between 16 - 18 years old. They advise other young people of a similar age face to face at outreach sessions and online. Our Young Advisers find information about the young person's problems on the Citizens Advice public site and then help them to understand the information and support them to take action.

What will you do?

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and training for your role
- talk to clients face to face, or online to explore what problems they've come for help with

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.

- find information about the clients' problems and help them to understand their options
- support clients to take action to resolve their problems. This might include drafting or writing letters, or signposting the client to another organisation
- write a summary of the clients' problems and what action you've taken

Some examples of what you could do:

- help a young person with a mobile phone debt work out a reasonable amount to pay back.
- Help a young person whose train was cancelled get a full refund
- help a young person who has problems with their landlord to understand their housing rights.

What's in it for you?

- Helping young people understand their rights and responsibilities
- Inspire other young people to contribute to society
- 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

Time commitment:

6 hours per month spread over two or three days. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills, but you'll need to:

- be friendly, approachable, and patient
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- have good listening skills
- have excellent verbal and written communication skills
- have good IT skills
- be able to understand information and explain it to others
- be willing to learn about and follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies, including confidentiality and data protection
- be willing to undertake training in your role

Young CA Trustee

Young Citizens Advice Blackpool trustees are volunteers aged between 16 - 18 years who have a keen interest in ensuring young people have a voice and are heard in helping to guide and govern their local Citizens Advice. This might involve making sure that the local Citizens Advice delivers high quality services to all members of the local community, promoting the service locally and supporting the recruitment process.

What will you do?

Some examples of what you could do:

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and training for your role
- support the overall direction and development of the bureau
- ensures the bureau hears the voices of local young people and supports the development of the bureau to meet the identified needs of young people
- ensure the bureau meets the needs of the local community and the Citizens Advice membership standards

- earn and retain the respect of important and influential people and organisations in the community, including funding bodies
- ensure the bureau complies with relevant laws

What's in it for you?

- Positive community impact
- Help develop your local community
- Represent a voice of young people
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding

> 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.

Time commitment:

Trustees usually meet 4 times a year although you may need to work on key projects over the year that would involve more time. Talk to us to find out more!

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills, but you'll need to:

- be friendly, approachable and patient
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- have good listening skills

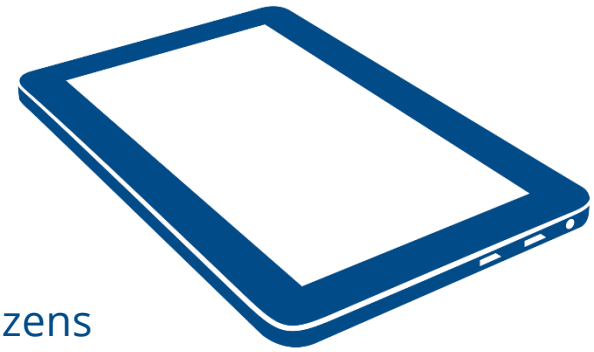
- have excellent verbal and written communication skills
- have a passion to make a positive contribution to your local community
- be able to understand information and explain it to others
- be willing to learn about and follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies, including confidentiality and data protection
- be willing to undertake training in your role

Media & Materials Champions

Young Citizens Advice Blackpool Media & Materials Champions are volunteers typically aged 16 - 18 years, they talk to other volunteers about their roles and their experiences volunteering. They create leaflets, posters, presentations, websites, videos, and social media accounts to promote current campaigns and volunteering opportunities and help to identify which recruitment methods have been successful and consider the reasons why.

Media & Materials Champions may also help to create learning resources that can be used to engage other young people and help them to understand their rights and responsibilities.
They may also assist staff to arrange a talk or event to promote the local Citizens Advice to people at community events, colleges/universities, local companies, groups (disability, social, charity, religious), volunteering fairs etc.

What will you do?



Some examples of what you could do:

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and training for your role
- create a short film to help young people understand their consumer rights
- create a banner to display at local educational facilities advertising current volunteering opportunities available at Citizens Advice Blackpool
- create a quarterly e-bulletin to send to local young person focused organisations that provides relevant, timely info regarding Citizens Advice Blackpool and its current work, aims and achievements.
- earn and retain the respect of important and influential people and organisations in the community, including funding bodies

What's in it for you?

- Positive community impact
- Increased employability
- Challenging and rewarding
- Increased confidence
- Have your ideas heard

> 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.

Time commitment:

6 hours per month spread over two or three days. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills, but you'll need to:

- be friendly, approachable, and patient
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- have good listening skills
- have excellent IT and written communication skills
- basic design knowledge to create marketing resources
- an understanding of how to interact on social media
- have a passion to make a positive contribution to your local community
- be able to understand information and explain it to others in a condensed, easy to understand format

- be willing to learn about and follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies, including confidentiality and data protection
- be willing to undertake training in your role

Ex-offenders

Citizens Advice have an ex-offender's 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 Helen.McAlpine@blackpoolcab.org.uk

Expenses

Expenses are paid monthly in arrears for volunteers travel to and from Citizens Advice Blackpool, and to and from 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 Helen.McAlpine@blackpoolcab.org.uk 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, complete our enclosed application form.

Contact us on 01253 308401or email us at Helen.McAlpine@blackpoolcab.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!

citizensadvice.org.uk
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