

# Volunteer Information Pack

Thanks for your interest in finding out more about Citizens Advice East Berkshire 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 our [Recruitment](#) team



# 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 East Berkshire we also have **specialist services** covering benefits, debt & tax, and help with disability benefit applications and benefit appeals



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 of 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 will need to be friendly and approachable and have a respect for views, values and cultures that are different to your own.



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



As a volunteer you will 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 daytime (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 (attached to the email)
- We will invite you for an informal interview to discuss the role.

This is nothing to worry about, it is a chance for you to find out more about the role, and Citizens Advice East Berkshire and decide if you'd like to volunteer with us.

It is 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)

# Disabled volunteers

We want to make sure that you do not 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

# Available Roles with Citizens Advice East Berkshire

## 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 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.



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.

[Full role description available here](#)



## 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!

# Assessor



Our volunteer assessors talk to clients over the phone, face to face and online 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 the information online that explains how to apply for Housing Benefit 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



Time commitment: 6 hours per week spread over one or two days, for 6 months. We can be flexible so come and talk to us.

[Full role description available here](#)

## What's in it for you?

- Helping people directly
- Positive community impact
- Learning about a range of issues such as benefits, debt, housing etc.
- 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.

# 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 our [Recruitment](#) team

# Expenses

Expenses are paid for volunteers' travel to and from Citizens Advice East Berkshire on the day the volunteering takes place, and for any training courses. This includes parking.

Volunteering with us will not leave you out of pocket.

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

Talk to our [Recruitment](#) team 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 application form included in your email

Contact our [Recruitment](#) team if you would 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!

