

# CITIZENS ADVICE HARROW

## VOLUNTEER APPLICATION PACK



## Information for Prospective Volunteers

### Which role is right for me?

More information about each role appears towards the end of this document but an important factor is how much time you are able to give.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Length of initial training</b>	<b>Minimum commitment (days per week)</b>	<b>Minimum commitment (length)</b>
Reception & Administration	3-4 weeks	one half day per week	6 months
Information Support Assistant	10-12 weeks	one full day or two half days per week	12 months
Adviser	Around 18 weeks (after gateway training)	Two full days or Four half days per week	2 years
Research & Campaigns	2-3 weeks	one half day per week	6 months

Other roles may be more flexible.

### How to apply

You can submit a completed application pack to [volunteer@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk)

# About the Citizens Advice Service

## Introduction

**Our core principles are: Confidentiality of our client's information, impartiality, free advice and independence from authority.**

We aim:

- to provide the advice people need for the problems they face
- to improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

## What does the Citizens Advice service do?

### To provide advice....

The Citizens Advice service is a network of charities offering information and advice through face-to-face, phone, email, webchat and online services.

Every year the service helps over 2 million people with more than 7 million problems relating to issues including debt, benefits, employment, housing and immigration. Advisers help clients to fill out forms, write letters, negotiate with creditors.

### Influence policy....

We are not just here for times of crisis - we also use clients' stories anonymously to campaign for policy changes that benefit the population as a whole.

The sheer number of clients we see each year means that if there is a recurring injustice out there, it is inevitably being played out in our interview rooms and recorded on our database of client evidence. This database is analysed by the national policy team, who are then able to bring problem areas to the attention of those who are - often inadvertently - causing them.

## About Citizens Advice Harrow

At Citizens Advice Harrow, volunteers are at the heart of the service we provide to people in the local community.

*Our office is open to the public between **9:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday.***

*Our telephone service is available between:*

*Mon & Tues: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm*

*Thurs & Fri: 9:30 am – 1:00 pm*

Most of our volunteers provide generalist information and advice, but we offer specialist services in debt and money. We are fortunate to have engaged the services of a number of local solicitors offering free initial legal advice.

### **Volunteering at Citizens Advice Harrow**

You are reading this booklet because you have expressed an interest in volunteering with us. This is a worthy intention, and one which could change your life, as well as the lives of the clients you work with. But it is not a decision which should be undertaken lightly. The impact on our clients of the advice we give is immeasurable, and that means the quality of advice must be of the highest standard. All advisers are highly trained and supported by experienced supervisors. The Citizens Advice Learning Programme is highly regarded because it is rigorous and demanding, and as such the information support assistant & adviser roles require a level of commitment over and above that of most volunteering roles. But those who rise to the challenge find it worthwhile and rewarding beyond their expectations.

If you are looking for a less demanding role, but one which is nonetheless stimulating and rewarding, you may be interested in a supporting role such as administration or reception. These roles are vital to the smooth running of the service and to ensure that our clients have a positive experience of their visit.

There is more information about the various opportunities available, and any questions you may have about them, in the following pages.



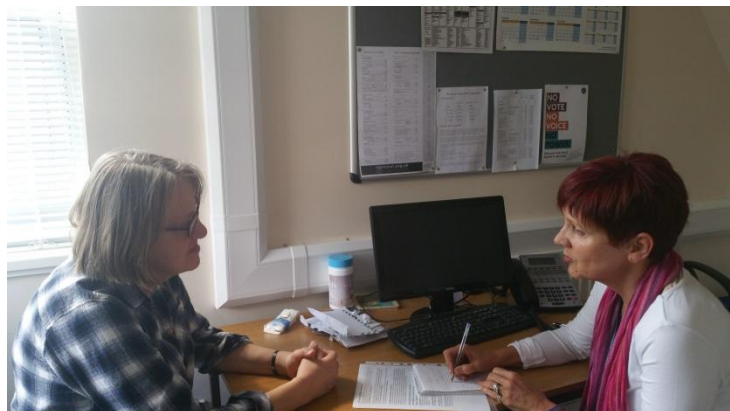
## **Volunteer roles: Information Support Assistant**

Information Support Assistants see clients face to face and speak to them over the telephone.

They provide an initial diagnostic service, identifying the issue and the most appropriate next steps the client can take towards

resolving it. An information support assistant will typically see up to five clients in a morning or afternoon session, using information on the Citizens Advice public website [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) as well as other resources, to assist the client. At the conclusion of the interview, the client will have been given information to help them progress their enquiry, signposted to another organisation for further help, or made an appointment for generalist or specialist advice.

Information support assistants can also work on supporting AdviceLine and email to provide a similar service to clients who make contact with us this way.



## **Volunteer roles: Adviser**

Advisers explore the client's problem in more detail, providing in-

depth advice which often requires extensive research. An adviser will help the client identify their rights and responsibilities, the options available to them, and the most appropriate action to take. Advisers are trained to use a comprehensive information system exclusive to Citizens Advice, and have access to specialist support in all the main enquiry areas. An adviser will typically see two clients in a morning or afternoon session, with each interview lasting 45 minutes to an hour.

### **How long does it take to train to be an adviser or information support assistant?**

At Citizens Advice Harrow, all our advisers undertake information support assistant training initially. Some volunteers will then continue in the information support assistant role, while others will undertake further learning to become advisers.

The Learning Programme is a competency based modular programme, comprising individual study, observation activities, group sessions and external training courses. A variety of methods is used to assess competence at various points during the programme, and a certificate is issued on completion.

At Harrow we deliver the programme over a 10-12 week period of weekly group sessions supported by individual study. This is followed by a further period of learning while working with clients. The time it takes to complete the learning programme depends on how much time each volunteer is able to commit. As a guide, an information support assistant volunteering for one day every week could be fully trained in nine months, and adviser training will typically take a further year of study and working with clients before full competence is reached.

### **What skills and experience do I need?**

Our volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures; they bring a wealth of different skills, knowledge and experience with them. We celebrate the diversity of our volunteers, which reflects the community we serve. We do not prescribe any previous knowledge or experience, because we provide comprehensive training and support; however, much of the work we do is computer based, so a reasonable level of proficiency in using information technology is required.

## How much time do I need to commit?

Being a volunteer adviser or information support assistant is a serious commitment, and we ask all prospective volunteers to carefully consider whether their individual circumstances are compatible with a regular, long term volunteering role before applying. We invest considerable resources in training and developing volunteers in these roles, in the expectation that they will make a long term contribution to the service we provide to our clients.

For the information support assistant role, we ask our volunteers to be available on a regular weekly basis for at least one day per week (or two half day sessions) for a minimum period of one year. For the adviser role the requirement is two days a week but for a minimum of two years. During the initial stage of the training programme you may find that the volume of learning requires a little more of your time than this, but the learning materials are online and some can be completed at home.

If you would like to volunteer but you can't make a long term commitment, you can still make a valued contribution to our service. Please see below for more information about the other volunteering opportunities available at Citizens Advice Harrow.

## Volunteer roles: Receptionist/Administration Assistant

Receptionists are the public face of Citizens Advice Harrow, and play a key role in determining our clients' experience of their contact with us. They welcome visitors and explain how the service operates. They liaise with other roles within the service, manage the reception area, support vulnerable clients, input confidential client data and respond to general enquiries.

Receptionists do not give advice, but they can help clients find information on the tablet computers in the reception area.

There are a wide variety of admin tasks which support



the work of the service, from the inevitable filing to answering the telephone, calling clients to confirm appointments, and supporting specialist advisers and caseworkers.

### **Other volunteer roles**

If none of the above roles appeal to you but you have a particular interest or skill which you would like to put to good use, you can still offer your services as a volunteer and we will try to match you with a suitable opportunity. Some examples would be people with marketing or fundraising experience could help us with publicity or fundraising events. People with experience in communications could help us develop and maintain our social media presence, and someone with an interest in research and campaigns could get involved with some of our campaigning or policy work.

If you can't commit to regular or long term volunteering but you feel you have a contribution to make, ask us how you could help and we will work with you to develop a suitable opportunity for you.





## Citizens Advice Volunteer Application form

### Personal details

<b>Surname:</b>	
<b>First name:</b>	
<b>Address and postcode:</b>	
<b>Email address / contact telephone number:</b>	
<b>Preferred method of contact:</b>	

### Volunteer role, skills and experience

<p><b>1. Are you interested in any particular type of volunteer role(s)?</b> For example, Adviser, Receptionist, Digital assistant, Trustee, Administrator, Research and Campaigns, PR and Marketing, Fundraiser, Information Assistant, Adviceline Assessor, Webchat and Email assessor, Mentor etc. [Please note that applicants must be 16 or over to undertake the Adviser role].</p>

**2. Describe any skills you have that would be useful for the role you're interested in:**

For example, talking to people face to face or on the phone, IT skills, helping people learn, speaking / writing in a language other than English or Welsh, British Sign Language, good verbal / written communication skills, problem solving, co-ordinating teams, social media skills, etc.

**3. Is there anything you have done over the past few years that you would like to tell us about?**

For example, employment, work experience, volunteering, community activity (involvement in tenants' associations, school activities, support groups), caring for children, other relatives or friends, classes, training courses etc.

**4. Why do you want to volunteer for Citizens Advice? What do you hope to get from the experience?**

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**5. What do you think are some of the main problems facing your community?**

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**6. If you have any direct experience that would help you in the role you have applied for, please write it here. (Optional).**

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### **Availability**

It's useful to know when you will be available to volunteer. Please indicate below the times when you are generally available:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning 9:15 am - 1:15 pm					
Afternoon 12:30 pm - 4:30 pm					

**7. How many days per week, or hours per week, would you like to volunteer for?**

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<b>8. How long into the future to you envisage volunteering for?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> 6-12 months <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 years	<input type="checkbox"/> more than two years <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____
<b>9. Are there any times that you're unlikely to be available, e.g. school holidays?</b>	

<b>10. Is there anything else you would like to say about yourself?</b>

<b>11. Are there any adjustments we can make to assist you in your application and / or interview?</b> For example, application in large font, wheelchair access, afternoon interview, etc. This information will be treated as confidential.

<b>12. Is there any equipment or support that we can provide to help you carry out the volunteer role itself?</b>
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For example, screen readers, flexible volunteering pattern, wheelchair access, etc. This information will be treated as confidential. Please be assured that we will be supportive in discussing any adjustments with you at any stage of the recruitment and selection process.

## References

Please give the names and contact details of two people, who know you in a work related, academic or professional capacity. This could be an employer, teacher, tutor, a colleague, or former-colleague where you have worked or volunteered before. It could also be someone who knows you well (but not a member of your family).

### Referee 1:

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Address and postcode:</b>	
<b>Email address / contact telephone number:</b>	
<b>In what capacity do they know you?</b>	

### Referee 2:

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Address and postcode:</b>	
<b>Email address / contact telephone number:</b>	
<b>In what capacity do they know you?</b>	

## Our policy on convictions

Having a criminal record is not in itself a barrier to volunteering, and we will only take relevant convictions or sexual offences into account. Our policy is in place to make sure ex-offenders are treated fairly. 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.

### Please answer the question below:

<p>Have you had any previous convictions not regarded as spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974?</p> <p>For more information see:  <a href="http://hub.unlock.org.uk/knowledgebase/a-simple-guide-to-the-roa/">http://hub.unlock.org.uk/knowledgebase/a-simple-guide-to-the-roa/</a></p>	<p>Yes / No</p>
<p>If YES please provide details of the offence and the date of conviction:</p>	

If you are concerned about this and would like to discuss your individual circumstances further, please contact [volunteer@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk)

## Entitlement to work or volunteer

If you are not a UK or Irish citizen, it's important you check you are permitted to volunteer or carry out 'unpaid work' in addition to your main reason for entering the country, to avoid jeopardising your visa status.

If you cannot find the answer clearly on your immigration documentation, contact the UK Border Agency ([www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk](http://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk))

EU/EEA nationals from other countries are entitled to volunteer if they have one of the following statuses to volunteer:

- Pre-settled status
- Settled status
- A visa status that allows volunteering (as outlined on the NCVO website: [www.knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/your-team/volunteers/recruiting/volunteers-from-overseas](http://www.knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/your-team/volunteers/recruiting/volunteers-from-overseas))

### Declaration

All the information I have provided above is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signed:

Date:

**If you have given us any information about your health, disability or access requirements, under data protection law we need your explicit consent to hold or use that information.**

**We will only use it in order to allow us to make reasonable adjustments and/or to keep you safe, and it will be held securely.**

I give my consent for this information to be used by Citizens Advice Harrow

Signed:

Date:

**If you are under 16, please also ask your parent or legal guardian to sign the consent form below.**

I understand the volunteer role and possible time commitment and give

permission for.....[volunteer's name] to undertake this role if successful.	
Signed:	Date:
Relationship to applicant:	

<p><b>How did you hear about this opportunity?</b>  For example, national Citizens Advice recruitment campaign, local Citizens Advice website, another website, word of mouth, through your local community or volunteer centre, through your university or college, through the Open University, at a volunteering fair or event, through your own experience accessing the Citizens Advice service, or other?</p>
<p><b>When did you last use the Citizens Advice service?</b>  Former clients can, and do, make excellent volunteers in a range of roles and having been a recent user of our services isn't necessarily a barrier to volunteering. There can be times where we might feel a gap between using our services and becoming a volunteer would be appropriate, but this is something we would discuss with you.</p>

**Please return this form to:**

**Citizens Advice Harrow, Civic 6, Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow HA1 2XY**

**Or email to:**

[volunteer@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk)

**How we will use your information**

The information you give us on this form will be used to help us decide whether to recruit you as a volunteer - this is our 'legitimate interest' under data protection law. It will only be seen by staff involved in the recruitment process, and will be stored securely. We will retain unsuccessful application forms for up to 1 year from the date



the application form was received.

If you are recruited we will retain your contact information in order to involve and support you. We will also collect additional information, such as next of kin details, and over time records of training, support meetings and where relevant, appraisals. Again, it will be kept securely, and only those people who need to see your information in order to involve you will have access to it.

All use of volunteer information will be relevant to their involvement, and may include:

- Contacting volunteers when necessary
- Making changes to role, support or equipment to improve accessibility
- Monitoring statistical details of our volunteers
- Providing ongoing support to volunteers
- Monitoring the quality of advice given to clients
- Addressing problems or complaints

You have legal rights over your data, including access to it, and the right to ask that it is corrected, restricted or deleted. There is more information on these rights on the Information Commissioner's Office website: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

If you have any questions about the use of your data, please contact:  
Citizens Advice Harrow, Civic 6, Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow HA1 2XY  
Or email to:  
[volunteer@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk)



## Volunteer diversity monitoring information

### Background

Citizens Advice values diversity, promotes equality, and challenges discrimination. We welcome and encourage volunteer applications from people of all backgrounds, age, disability, gender, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation.

Monitoring recruitment and selection procedures is one way that helps us to ensure that there is no discrimination in our recruitment process. To do this we need to know about the diversity profile of people who apply for volunteer roles at Citizens Advice Harrow.

### Data protection overview

**If you are happy to provide it, we will use this information for the sole purpose of allowing us to monitor equality of opportunity and treatment as necessary to maintain or promote equality within Citizens Advice Harrow.**

**The information you give us will be kept securely, won't be shared outside the service and is confidential.**

**It will not be seen by anyone responsible for making recruitment decisions or have any impact on you directly.**

**If you are successful in your application and we require this information for other purposes, you will be asked to provide it separately - i.e. this form will not be used for other purposes.**

**If you would prefer not to answer any of the questions we ask, please leave them blank. If you would like us stop using the information you provide, please contact us.**

Note on accessibility: If you are using keyboard only and need to put a cross in the relevant box, you should be able to arrow across, and type in the box. If this is not

possible put a cross next to the relevant box. If you need this form in another format please contact Citizens Advice Harrow.

## Diversity Monitoring Form

<b>Applicant ref. number (local Citizens Advice use only):</b>	
<b>Which volunteer role are you applying for?</b>	

## Age

Which age bracket do you fit into? Put a cross in the relevant box.

Under 25	
25 - 34	
35 - 44	
45 - 54	
55 - 64	
65 and over	
Prefer not to say	

## Gender

What term best describes your gender? Put a cross in the relevant box or write in a preferred term.

Female	
Male	
I prefer to use another term Please write in.....	
Prefer not to say	

## Sexual orientation

What is your sexual orientation? Put a cross in the relevant box or write in a preferred term.

Heterosexual/Straight	
Gay Man	
Gay Woman/Lesbian	
Bisexual	

I prefer to use another term Please write in.....	
Prefer not to say	

## Ethnic origin

How would you describe yourself? Choose **one** section (A to E) and put a cross in the relevant box within it.

<b>A. White</b>	English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	
	Irish	
	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	
	Any other White background Please write in.....	
<b>B. Mixed/multiple ethnic groups</b>	White & Black Caribbean	
	White & Black African	
	White & Asian	
	Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background Please write in.....	
<b>C. Asian/Asian British</b>	Indian	
	Pakistani	
	Bangladeshi	
	Chinese	
	Any other Asian Background Please write in.....	
	African	

<b>D. Black/African/ Caribbean/Black British</b>	Caribbean	
	Other Black/African/Caribbean background Please write in.....	
<b>E. Other ethnic group</b>	Arab	
	Any other ethnic group Please write in.....	
<b>Prefer not to say</b>		

### Disability

A disabled person is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as someone with a **'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'**

Do you consider yourself to be disabled under the Equality Act 2010?

Yes	
No	
Prefer not to say	

*The information on this form is for monitoring purposes only. If you require any reasonable adjustments to be made in the recruitment process or at work subsequently if appointed, please make sure you tell us separately from this form. We follow the social model of disability which believes that it is the barriers created by society which disable people. We will use reasonable adjustments wherever possible to remove those barriers.*

### Gender Identity

Do you identify as \*Trans?

Yes	
No	
Prefer not to say	

**\*Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose identity is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the trans umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms – including transgender.**

### **Religion or belief**

Which group below do you most identify with? Put a cross in the relevant box.

No religion	
Christian (including all denominations)	
Buddhist	
Hindu	
Jewish	
Muslim	
Sikh	
Any other religion or belief	
Please write in.....	
Prefer not to say	

### **How did you hear about this opportunity?**

Please include details below:

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