

# Notes on application form to become a Citizens Advice Adviser

Please read these **BEFORE** completing the application form

- **What do advisers do?**
  - **Interviewing**

All kinds of people come into the bureau with all kinds of problems. The adviser helps clients to explain their problems and asks questions to clarify the situation.
  - **Giving information**

Advisers have access to a comprehensive information system to help clients. A supervisor is on hand to help out with difficult problems.
  - **Giving advice and practical help**

The adviser has to explain the choices that the client has, so that the client can decide what to do. Advisers help clients by filling in forms, drafting letters, making phone calls and calculating benefits.
  - **Case recording**

It is very important that all clients' cases are recorded so that the bureau can offer an efficient service if the client comes back or the case gets more difficult. Your supervisor will show you how the case recording is done in your bureau.
  - **Preventing problems**

Citizens Advice collect a lot of information on the different problems that clients have. This information is used to influence government policy or a company practice.
  - **Administration**

Advisers may be asked to help out with some basic office work, for example keeping the information files or local information up to date, amending stocks of leaflets, typing letters etc.
- **What support and training do I get?**

All CA advisers complete a comprehensive four-stage training Programme. This can last from 4 weeks to 18 months depending upon the amount of time you can give. The Certificate programme includes:

  - training packs and observation on the advice process (interviewing)
  - training packs on the main enquiry areas (debt, employment, benefits etc.)
  - a training course to explore and practise aspects of advising clients
  - interviewing clients with close support and supervision and attending further courses as needed.
- **What we want from advisers**
  - **Impartiality**

Whatever your views are, you will be expected to advise all kinds of clients on any kind of problem they have. You will need to be prepared to examine your own views and feelings to make sure that you are able to give an equally good service to everyone.
  - **Equal opportunities**

All advisers are expected to carry out the CA policy of equal opportunities. This means actively opposing all forms of discrimination and ensuring that the service is equally available to all people.

- **Confidentiality**

Everything that you see and hear at CA is private. Every adviser must sign an agreement to observe a strict rule of confidentiality before they start volunteering.

- **A commitment to training**

A willingness to learn and develop is central to being an effective adviser. Learning to be a generalist adviser involves a great deal of commitment to training and learning. All advisers periodically assess how they are performing via a set of competences specifically adapted for the role of adviser. This helps identify training and development needs.

Things are always changing and you will need to spend some time reading in order to keep yourself up to date. All kinds of training courses, sessions and self-study material are available for advisers to develop their skills and knowledge.

- **CA staff meetings**

As part of your continuing development it is a priority to attend the bureau staff meetings. They provide a forum for training, case discussion, explanation of policy and practice, and mutual support.

- **Time**

To run an effective service we generally need advisers to volunteer a minimum of 10 hours per week.

- **Do I get expenses?**

It is CA policy that volunteers should get out-of-pocket expenses. You should talk to the manager about the arrangements locally.

- **What happens after I have filled in the application form?**

Return the form to the manager, who will explain how the selection procedure works.

**Note:** To ensure the safety of our clients, the Citizens Advice service requires that all volunteers who have direct access to clients, where any part of the work is primarily targeted at legally defined vulnerable adults or children, have their criminal records checked. However, the Citizens Advice service is committed to the promotion and delivery of equal opportunities to volunteers and so has a policy to ensure ex-offenders are not discriminated against.

**Please keep these notes**