



Volunteer role description and attributes

Advice assistant

Citizens Advice Sheffield provides generic and specialist advice services at twelve main sites and numerous smaller outreach sites, and via our telephone advice line. We seek to empower our clients and support them to improve their confidence and capability, including in relation to finance. We advise mainly on welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment, immigration and consumer. We provide advice in numerous languages. We offer bespoke services for people with mental health problems, the Deaf community, people in hospital, and refugees and asylum seekers. We provide mental health advocacy services. We undertake specialist casework, including debt services and that undertaken by our legal service. We have well established partnerships and referral pathways including with social landlords and statutory services and at foodbanks.

We aim for excellence. Our ambition is to be among the best advice services in the country, and one of the leading voluntary and community organisations in Sheffield. We campaign for change to social policy to improve the well-being of the people and communities we support.

Purpose

Our volunteer Advice Assistants work alongside our volunteer and paid advisers to carry out a wide range of practical tasks of immediate benefit to our clients and to support clients to develop their own skills.

In this role you will be providing essential support to the client to enable them to navigate through bureaucracy, access services, enable them to put their point of view to a third party or complete forms, including on-line application forms-digital skills and awareness are becoming increasingly important to people in accessing essential services.

By performing this role, you increase the advice-giving capacity of the volunteer and paid advisers and also where ever possible, empower the clients to do tasks for themselves in the future. The role is critical in providing practical support to a diverse local community. Increasing numbers of claims are expected to be completed on line in English and your role will be critical in enabling our clients to tackle these these.

Volunteer advice assistants work as part of a team at one of our offices across the city. You will be supported at all times by a named supervisor. We will provide you with a warm welcome, training and on-going support so that you can carry out your role effectively. There are opportunities to work with specific communities, for example with mental health in-patients or with the Refugee community.

Volunteer advice assistants complete a training programme which on-line self instruction packs and on-the-job mentoring as well as some taught courses. It will provide you with an understanding of the range of help provided by our various services and an overview of the main advice topics such as welfare benefits, debt and housing. Volunteers are required to work in line with all our policies and procedures.

Tasks

The advice assistant may carry out the following practical tasks, the list is not exclusive.

- Complete induction and training. (Includes on-line e-learning and assessments as well as some essential taught course sessions.
- Interview clients and agree the tasks to be undertaken.
- Contact third parties such as Jobcentre Plus or HM Revenue and Customs, to update them on the client's situation or obtain information.
- Complete straightforward forms, either paper or on line versions, for example, to claim benefits or apply for charitable help.
- Complete more complex benefit forms (with additional training)
- Support and encourage clients to develop the digital skills and confidence to engage with essential on-line applications essential for accessing services.
- Collect information from creditors and utility companies to support the work of the adviser.
- Drawing up a personal budget of the client's income and expenditure
- Helping clients switch their utility provider
- Where you have the language skills, providing interpretation and translation support.

Attributes

Our volunteer advice assistants are expected to be:

- Punctual and reliable
- Willing to learn and attend training and supervision.
- Able to communicate effectively with clients – including skills to coach and encourage others.
- Able to work constructively as part of a team.

- Maintain boundaries
- Keep confidentiality.
- Good computer skills.
- Ability to support and encourage others to develop their skills
- Community language skills are very useful, though not essential

Time commitment

Volunteer advice assistants will need to be available for a minimum of six hours a week for approximately six months.

Advice Assistant – Deaf Advice Service

This is a specific role to work with our Deaf Advice Team which provides a bespoke service for the Deaf community in Sheffield. The Deaf Advice Service advice assistant will themselves be fluent in British Sign Language (BSL) and have a good understanding of Deaf culture. The role is predominately to provide one to one digital training and support to Deaf clients. You will receive bespoke induction and training with the Deaf Advice Service, as well as an induction to the Organisation, to enable you to carry out this role including observing other Deaf Advice Service staff and participating in supervision.

Tasks and Attributes- as above