

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with the Citizens Advice Bureau Service. Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau Service is a registered charity, and volunteers are our lifeblood. We really appreciate the skills, ideas, time and enthusiasm that each of our volunteers bring to the service.

I hope the information in this pack will encourage you to apply to join us. Our volunteers come from all walks of life, and we aim to reflect the communities we serve in the make-up of our staff and volunteers. We welcome people of all ages and from all backgrounds and communities.

Volunteering is not just about being considerate and charitable about helping others – our volunteers also get a great deal out of their involvement with us. Many CAB volunteers say that the experience is both challenging and rewarding. As a volunteer, you would have the chance to develop new skills and use existing ones, gain experience, meet a wide range of people and make new friends in your local community.

But above all, CAB are there to help. In Birmingham the service helps people with thousands of problems every year on a huge variety of different issues, from welfare benefits and housing to community care, and uses that information to campaign for change to national and local policies and services. We want to provide and expand our service to even more people in more accessible ways – by telephone and email, and in outreach sessions in places like hospitals and courts and therefore we are looking to recruit more volunteers.

Should you wish to proceed with your application, then I would ask you to complete the form with as much detail as you can.

Please also supply us with the names of two referees.

Upon receipt of your completed application form, we will take up references and once we have received a satisfactory reference from at least one of your referees, you will be invited to spend one day (9.30 am to 4.30 pm) per week for a number of weeks in one of our five bureaux so that you can discover exactly what is involved in our work and whether it is something you would like to do.

During this period we will ask you to assist us in a number of ways, including helping on our reception and with certain tasks such as photocopying training material. There will also be an opportunity to sit in and observe interviews with existing advisers.

For those who wish to become advisers, the Organisation offers comprehensive training to enable you to fulfil the role and that is likely to take about 3 to 4 months to complete the initial stages. We ask that you attend two days each week in order to achieve these timescales.

Before you start completing the application form please read the accompanying notes very carefully, especially the paragraphs in bold on Pages 2 and 3 which explain our requirements about time commitment and our policy on travel expenses.

We hope you'll take this opportunity to join us and help us continue to provide help at the heart of your community.

Yours sincerely,

Birmingham CAB Service

Enc. Volunteer Application Pack

The Citizens Advice Bureau Service in Birmingham.

Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau Service is staffed mainly on a voluntary basis by members of the community in and around the Birmingham area. We are proud to be part of a local and national network of Citizens Advice Bureaux providing a service that ensures that all individuals in every city and town have access to free independent legal advice in a wide area including benefits, debt, employment, housing, immigration and nationality, family and personal matters to name but a few.

The service nationally has almost 80,000 volunteers making up 80% of its workforce many of these volunteers use their skills developed over a period of years, to move on to paid full time employment.

The demand for our service is growing year by year and we need more volunteers to help us with those demands in the future. We currently have walk in offices at:-

City Centre CAB

Ground Floor, Gazette Buildings, 168, Corporation Street, Birmingham B4 6TF

Kingstanding CAB

392-394 Kingstanding Road, Kingstanding, Birmingham B44 8LD

Northfield CAB

734 – 740 Bristol Road South, Northfield, Birmingham B31 2NN

Handsworth CAB

171 Churchill Parade, Birchfield Road, Birmingham B19 1LL

Tyseley

744 – 746 Warwick Road, Tyseley, Birmingham B11 2HG`

Adviser Training within the CAB.



There are three main stages of training within the CAB. These are Volunteer Trainee, Volunteer Trainee Adviser and Volunteer Adviser.

Trainees.

To ensure that the CAB standards are always kept high and clients given a good, professional service, and to support them in the knowledge required for the role, a new Volunteer is always asked to complete a number of training modules before they are allowed to interview the public alone for the first time. These modules include interviewing skills, aims, policies and principles of the organisation, the main subject areas that will be required and the skills required to undertake case recording. Completion of these modules is supported by the central training team and with the support of a tutor, and is recorded in booklets called Records of Learning (RL). Once the first and second RL booklets are completed, a Trainee completes a four-day course (usually here in the City) called the Certificate Programme. Alongside this learning it is important that a trainee “sits in” on interviews, observing experienced advisers in their work. Successful completion of this module moves trainees onto the next step of their training and they are then known as Trainee Advisers. We ask also that you are willing during this period to help us on reception and with admin duties such as photocopying training material.

Trainee Advisers.

At this stage the Trainee Advisers (TA) work toward the completion of their Record of Learning 4 portfolio of evidence and start to interview clients for the first time. The TA completes the module and undertakes assessed interviews, which once completed and competence is demonstrated, lead to the TA becoming a fully qualified Adviser.

Advisers.

Once the initial learning is completed, the training does not stop! We ensure that all advisers keep up to date with changes in legislation etc. All Bureaus encourage their Advisers to attend at least six training courses per year.

These training courses can be held in-house or with an external supplier such as Citizens Advice, or the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) etc. These are run at no cost to the Adviser and can often be counted as CPD (professional development) hours.

With further experience and training, Advisers can become part of the specialist teams, undertaking casework initially as a volunteer but this can lead to paid work for those who become suitably qualified and are applying for jobs. This casework can include work at Social Security Tribunals, or at the County Court.

NOTE:

The most important thing for you to consider is whether your personal circumstances allow you to commit time to CAB work.

During the initial 3-4 month training period, we do require you to attend for at least two days per week (from 9.30 am to 4.00 pm) subject to arrangements we make with you personally (e.g. due to child care and caring responsibilities).

After training we ask that you attend at least one full day per week and that you remain with us for at least one year.

Please note that training takes place on weekdays only.

Travel expenses are limited to £3.30 per day.

Role Title: Volunteer Adviser

Support & Supervision: Training Officer
Bureau Service Supervisor



Commitment: To gain the most from your volunteering we hope that you will be able to undertake a minimum of one day per week plus additional days for training for a minimum period of one year

Purpose of the role: To help provide an advice service to the public in Birmingham.

Working within the aims, principles and policies of the Citizens Advice Bureaux Service:

- to provide an effective and efficient generalist advice service
- to help influence government and other organisations by informing them of the effect of their actions on the lives of clients (Social Policy work).

The adviser is a member of a team of voluntary and paid bureau staff who provide a free, confidential, impartial and independent service to the public.

Main Tasks and Responsibilities

Ways of working

- Give a service that complies with Citizens Advice principles
- Actively support Citizens Advice equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policies
- Contribute towards a safe and positive working environment
- Give a service which meets the need to maintain quality

Working with clients

In response to enquiries, to interview clients in a way that is both confidential and impartial:

- Interview clients enabling them to explain, explore and clarify their problems.
- Using the CAB electronic information system and other sources, research and explain information and give advice in explaining choices and consequences.
- Give practical help and assist clients in taking action by giving them support to plan and take action and by acting on their behalf including where appropriate: Negotiating with third parties, either by telephone or by drafting and or writing a letter; making calculations of entitlements. Refer clients to other agencies if they are better placed to help.
- Concluding the interview in a positive manner by making appropriate agreements and electronic case records.

Working to influence Social Policy change

Contribute to the bureau's work of exercising a responsible influence on Social Policies, both local and national, which affects the lives of clients by:-

- identifying enquiries which have policy implications for a number of clients

- raising issues of concern with colleagues
- participating in exercises undertaken by the bureau
- identifying national and local social policy issues likely to affect clients

Equal Opportunities

Contribute towards the Association's Equal Opportunities and Positive Action policies by providing an impartial and non-judgemental service to all clients:

- identifying possible breaches of Equal Opportunities legislation, policy and practice and advising the client accordingly
- taking part in Social Policy exercises focused on Equal Opportunities issues
- challenging behaviour which indicates discrimination
- assisting the bureau in making the service accessible to all clients irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation and disabilities

Developing your own practice

- Assessing own practice to identify own training and development needs
- Being assessed by the Recruitment & Training Officer, Guidance Tutor and Learning and Advice Session Supervisors.
- Learning through training and reflecting on practice
- Keeping up-to-date with the information resources, including changes and additions
- Keeping informed about the local community, local or national issues, developments and changes

Development of the Service

Contribute to the development of the team by

- Participating in staff meetings
- Contributing to the discussions about the overall planning and policy of the bureau service, both nationally and locally

Administration

Share in the necessary administration, as requested (eg, ordering leaflets/photocopying) and domestic tasks. Also to help at the Reception desk.

Further Opportunities within the Service

The adviser has the opportunity to develop in ways that may include any of the following:

- developing a wider or deeper level of advice skills for a particular enquiry area
- Social Policy work, eg, writing reports, letters and articles, working with other organisations and individuals, including councillors, MPs and the media
- helping with training, eg, tutoring, in-bureau training, supervising trainees representing the service, e.g., publicity, giving talks on the work of CAB, working with local community groups, representing bureau workers on committees.

Personal requirements.

1. Good communication skills - oral and written.
2. Basic numeracy, literacy and Information Technology skills.
3. Demonstrate understanding of the needs of other in a non-judgmental way.

4. Ability to comprehend information and explain to others.
 5. Commitment to work within the Aims, Principles and Policies of the CABx Service, within the equal opportunities policy and comply with health and safety guidelines..
 6. Awareness and willingness to learn.
 7. Interviewing skills, i.e. questioning, listening, summarising and evaluating.
 8. Using InformationTechnology for accessing information and recording individual client records and details.
- attendance of 4 days at CABx foundation course training (normally held in Birmingham between 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m.) over a period of 2 weeks.
 - regular assessment / review meetings with the Bureau's Guidance Tutor / nominated Training Supervisor during training period.

Please retain these notes for your information.

Role Title: Volunteer Receptionist

Support & Supervision: Bureau Service Supervisor
Senior Administrator



Commitment: To gain the most from your volunteering we hope that you will undertake a minimum of 1 day (6 hours) per week plus additional days as required, for training.

Purpose of the role: To help provide a reception service for advice sessions

Main Tasks:

- Greeting clients and maintaining their confidentiality.
- Arranging and maintaining the appointments diary.
- Completing relevant documentation both electronically and paper based.
- Assisting with preparation work for client appointments, including photocopying.
- Answering the telephone.

Personal Requirements.

1. Good communication skills - oral and written..
2. Reasonable level of numeracy, literacy and Information Technology skills.
3. Demonstrate understanding of the needs of other in a non-judgmental way.
4. Ability to comprehend information and explain to others.
5. Commitment to work within the Aims, Principles and Policies of the CABx Service, within the equal opportunities policy and comply with health and safety guidelines..
6. Awareness and willingness to learn.
7. Interviewing skills, i.e. questioning, listening, summarising and evaluating.
8. Using Information Technology for accessing information and recording individual client records and details.



Role Title: Volunteer Administrative Assistant

Support & Supervision: Bureau Service Supervisor
Senior Administrator

Commitment: To gain the most from your volunteering we hope that you will undertake a minimum of 1 day per week plus additional days for training.

Purpose of the role: To help provide assistance with administrative and clerical tasks within a bureau.

Main Tasks:

- Typing letters etc, either copy or audio typing.
- Photocopying, - sending and receiving faxes
- Maintaining information files and keeping local information up to date.
- Amending and ordering stocks of leaflets or training materials using telephone, internet and postal systems.
- Filing in accordance with bureau's systems and procedures.
- Telephone and reception work.
- Any other relevant administrative duties

Personal Requirements.

1. Good communication skills - oral and written..
2. Reasonable level of numeracy, literacy and Information Technology skills.
3. Demonstrate understanding of the needs of other in a non-judgmental way.
4. Ability to comprehend information and explain to others.
5. Commitment to work within the Aims, Principles and Policies of the CABx Service, within the equal opportunities policy and comply with health and safety guidelines..
6. Awareness and willingness to learn.
7. Ability to deal with people, i.e. questioning, listening, summarising and interpreting their requirements.
8. Using Information Technology for accessing information and recording individual client records and details.

Role Title: Volunteer IT Support Co-ordinator



Support & Supervision: Bureau Service Supervisor
Senior Administrator

Commitment: To gain the most from your volunteering we hope that you will undertake a minimum of 1 day (6 hours) per week plus additional days for training.

Purpose of the role: To help provide assistance, support and development support to the IT Manager within bureau.

Main duties:

- Supporting and training users in day to day use of IT systems.
- Troubleshooting hardware and software problems
- Maintaining and developing networks
- Designing spreadsheets, databases and websites.
- Maintaining the local information system.
- Any other relevant IT and support duties agreed to ensure the smooth running of the bureau.
- Keyboard skills/Information Technology skills are essential.
- Supportive site visits

Personal Requirements.

- Ability to understand and work within the aims and principles of the CAB.
- Ability to understand and work within the equal opportunities policy.
- Good verbal and written communication skills.
- Reasonable level of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Flexible approach and willingness to work as part of a team.
- Willingness to learn.

Requires experience of the following:-

- Microsoft XP or VISTA
- Microsoft Office 2003 and /or 2007
- Installation of software
- Knowledge of active directory would be useful.

Role Title: Volunteer Social Policy Co-ordinator

Support & Supervision: Area Manager
Bureau Service Supervisor



Commitment: To gain the most from your volunteering we hope that you will undertake a minimum of 1 day (6 hours) per week plus additional days for training.

Purpose of the role: To use information from problems brought to the bureau by clients to help to bring about real change by influencing local and national policy..

Main duties:

- Completing and collating evidence forms that record information about the problems clients experience.
- Identifying and raising issues in the bureau and at meetings.
- Training staff and volunteers in spotting particular issues and completing evidence forms.
- Conducting research and writing reports on local issues.
- Media campaigning and liaising with other bureau and agencies to provide a voice for clients.

Personal Requirements.

- Ability to understand and work within the aims and principles of the CAB.
- Ability to understand and work within the equal opportunities policy.
- Good verbal and written communication skills.
- Reasonable level of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Flexible approach and willingness to work as part of a team.
- Willingness to learn.
- Keyboard skills/Information Technology skills would be an advantage.

For any administrative role we will discuss with you all the opportunities that may be available for training after you have commenced volunteering - this will mainly be experience in the administrative systems in the Bureau.

We will ask you to study some of the training materials that will help you to understand the aims, principles and policies of the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Should you decide that at any time you may wish to discuss the opportunity to become an adviser please do not hesitate to contact either the Training Officer or Bureau Supervisor.

Notes on application form to become a CAB adviser

Please read these BEFORE completing the application form

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

All kinds of people come into bureaux with all kinds of problems. The adviser helps the client explain their problem and asks questions to clarify the problem.
 - **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 they want 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**

Bureaux collect a lot of information on the different problems that clients have. This information is used to influence a 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 CAB advisers complete a comprehensive four stage training programme lasting about 12 months – (the initial period lasts 3-4 months).
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 practice aspects of advising clients
 - Interviewing clients with close support and supervision and attending further courses as needed.
- **What we are looking for from an adviser**
 - **Impartiality**

Whatever your views are, you will be expected to work with all kinds of clients and 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 support the CAB's policy of equal opportunities. This means an active opposition to all forms of discrimination, and to make sure that the service is equally available to all people.

- **Confidentiality**

Everything that you see and hear in the bureau has to be private and every adviser has to sign an agreement to observe a strict rule of confidentiality before they begin work in the bureau.

- **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. **We do require attendance of two days per week during the initial training period.**

All advisers periodically assess how they are doing using competences for their role. This is to identify training and development needs.

Things are always changing and you will need to spend some time reading in order to keep yourself informed.

All kinds of training courses, sessions and self-study material are available for advisers to develop their skills and knowledge.

- **Bureau Workers Meetings**

Attendance at these meetings is a requirement. They provide a forum for training, case discussion, explanation of policy and practice, identifying preventative work and mutual support.

- **Time**

To make the most effective use of your time we would like you to attend bureau a minimum of two days per week during the training period and at least one day per week thereafter for a minimum of one year.

- **Do I get travel expenses?**

It is CAB policy that bureau workers should get travelling expenses for working in the bureau. You should talk to the bureau manager about the arrangements locally.

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

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

Please Keep These Notes for Future Reference.

- **Note:** The following applies only to advisers, and not to other roles. Sections 25 and 26 (1) (d) or (g) of the Immigration Act 1971 are concerned with the following offences: assisting illegal entry, falsifying documentation or obstructing the authorities investigating immigration offences. If you have committed one of the offences above you may still be able to be an adviser: however, we would have to contact the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner in order to discuss the issues.

AIMS OF THE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX SERVICE.

- to ensure that individuals do not suffer through ignorance of their rights and responsibilities, or of the services available, or through an inability to express their needs effectively.

and equally

- to exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services, both locally and nationally.
-

PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES OF CAB WORK.

- FREE:** Clients are not expected to pay for any part of the service.
- INDEPENDENT:** Advice to clients is given solely in relation to their needs and is not influenced by other interests.
- CONFIDENTIAL:** The nature of the enquiry and the fact of the visit to the CAB are confidential to the CAB staff and every worker has to sign a confidentiality pledge.
- IMPARTIAL:** Impartiality does not mean neutrality - we act in the interests of each individual client. All clients should have equal access to CAB services and should be given non-judgmental advice.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL.

The CAB Service:

- Recognises that many people experience injustice and inequality in the daily lives due to discrimination and prejudice.
- Resolutely opposes discrimination. It aims to ensure that its employment and service delivery policies and practices are equitable and just.
- Resists and challenges discrimination and correcting imbalances that result from it.
- Has adopted policies to combat institutionalised and individual discrimination faced by:- black people and ethnic minorities - disabled people - women - lesbians and gay men, bisexual and transsexual clients and employees.
- Accepts that there are other groups of people who experience discrimination and is working to develop policies for these groups.

Application to become a CAB Volunteer or helper.



Please read the accompanying information before completing this form.

Please feel free to continue answers to any question on a separate sheet if necessary. If you find the form difficult to understand or complete, please call your local bureau.

1. **Name:** Mr/Ms/Other (please state) _____

2. **Address:** _____

_____ **Postcode:** _____

3. **Date of birth:** _____

4. **Telephone:** _____

5. **Email (if you have access):** _____

6. **Are you interested in any particular type of volunteer role(s)?**

e.g. adviser, administrator, social policy co-ordinator, trustee board member

7. **Describe any skills you have that would be useful for the role you wish to do.**

Some we have thought of include: dealing with people face-to-face or on the phone, speaking/writing a language other than English, sign language, filing, research, using a calculator, using a computer, helping people to learn.

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

e.g. employment, work experience, volunteering, community activity (involvement in tenants associations, school activities, support groups, etc); caring for children, other relatives or a friend; classes, training courses.

9. Why do you want to volunteer for CAB?

What do you hope to get from the experience?

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

11. It is useful to know when you will be available to volunteer.

Please indicate below the times when you are generally available:

Monday

am _____

pm _____

Tuesday

am _____

pm _____

Wednesday

am _____

pm _____

Thursday

am _____

pm _____

Friday

am _____

pm _____

Please indicate approximately how many hours or days per week you would like to volunteer for:

Are there any times that you are unlikely to be available, e.g. school holidays?.....

12. Is there anything else you would like to say about yourself?

13. Volunteers who wish to train as advisers only:

Have you ever committed an offence under section 25 and 26 (1) (d) or (g) of the immigration act 1971? (These offences concern assisting illegal entry, falsifying documentation or obstructing the authorities investigating immigration offences. If you have committed one of the offences above you may still be able to be an advisor: however, we would have to contact the Office of Immigration Services Commissioner in order to discuss the issues.)

Please tick as appropriate. Yes No

14. References

Please give the names and addresses of two people, other than your family, who can tell us about you – for example, an employer, teacher or someone who know you well

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Name: _____ | Name: _____ |
| Address: _____ | Address: _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| Postcode: _____ | Postcode: _____ |

** Please note we will be contacting your referees prior to inviting you for interview.*

15. Please tell us about any specific needs you would like us to take into account, either at the interview or if we offer you a volunteer role:
e.g. mobility, childcare responsibilities. This information will be treated as strictly confidential.

Signed _____

Date _____

Please return this form to:-

Training and Recruitment
Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau Service
Ground Floor, Gazette Buildings
168 Corporation Street
Birmingham
B4 6TF

Monitoring Information

The CAB Service aims to provide equal opportunities and fair treatment for all people applying to be volunteers regardless of race, sex disability, sexual identity or marital status.

As part of the policy of reaching out to excluded communities and groups, the service is committed to ensuring that bureau staff and volunteers reflect the community that we serve.

In order to achieve these aims we have a policy of monitoring the composition of bureau staff and volunteers. As part of this monitoring process we ask for your co-operation in completing the questions in this section. We wish to give you the following assurances:

- ◆ The information provided will not form the basis of any part of selection.
- ◆ All information in the application form will be regarded as confidential.
- ◆ This monitoring information will only be used for statistics.
- ◆ If you choose not to complete this section, this will not affect your application.

Please tick as appropriate

Age 18-24 25-34 35-49 50-59
 60-64 65-70 70+

Gender Female Male

Would you describe yourself as disabled? Yes No

Please indicate your ethnic group by ticking one box

White

- British
- Irish
- Other –please specify

Mixed

- White/Black Caribbean
- White/Black African
- White/Asian
- Other – please specify

Asian or Asian British Group

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Other – please specify

Black or Black British

- Caribbean
- African
- Other – please specify

Chinese or other Ethnic Group

- Chinese
- Other – please specify

What prompted you to apply to be a CAB Volunteer?

e.g. newspaper article, advert, poster, through a friend or relative, using a CAB yourself

Data Protection Act 1998

As part of the recruitment procedure we may collect and store sensitive personal data about you. We are required by law to obtain your consent to such data being recorded. It is our policy to store data relating to recruitment procedures for up to a year after the date on which it is submitted. Any information of this nature will be treated confidentially.

Sensitive personal data is defined as information relating to any of the following: racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, health, sexuality or sex life, offences and/or convictions.

For the purposes of the Act the Data Controller - Chief Executive Birmingham CAB Service.

I declare the information given on this form is correct to the best of my knowledge and acknowledge that by signing this form I have given my consent to sensitive personal information being recorded and stored.

Signature _____ Date _____