

Adviser

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Citizens Advice Stroud and Cotswold District (CA-SCD). The following information will provide you with an overview of Citizens Advice, our local CA office Stroud & Cotswold Districts and the adviser role.

Citizens Advice

Our values

We're inventive. We're not afraid of trying new things and learn by getting things wrong. We question every idea to make it better and we change when things aren't working.

We're generous. We work together, sharing knowledge and experience to solve problems. We tell it like it is and respect everyone.

We're responsible. We do what we say we'll do and keep our promises. We remember that we work for a charity and use our resources effectively.

3 things you should know about us

1. We're local and we're national. We have 6 national offices and offer direct support to people in around 300 independent local Citizens Advice services across England and Wales.

2. We're here for everyone. Our advice helps people solve problems and our advocacy helps fix problems in society. Whatever the problem, we won't turn people away.

3. We're listened to - and we make a difference. Our trusted brand and the quality of our research mean we make a real impact on behalf of the people who rely on us.

Overview of Citizens Advice

The Citizens Advice service is made up of Citizens Advice - the national charity - and a network of around 300 local Citizens Advice members.

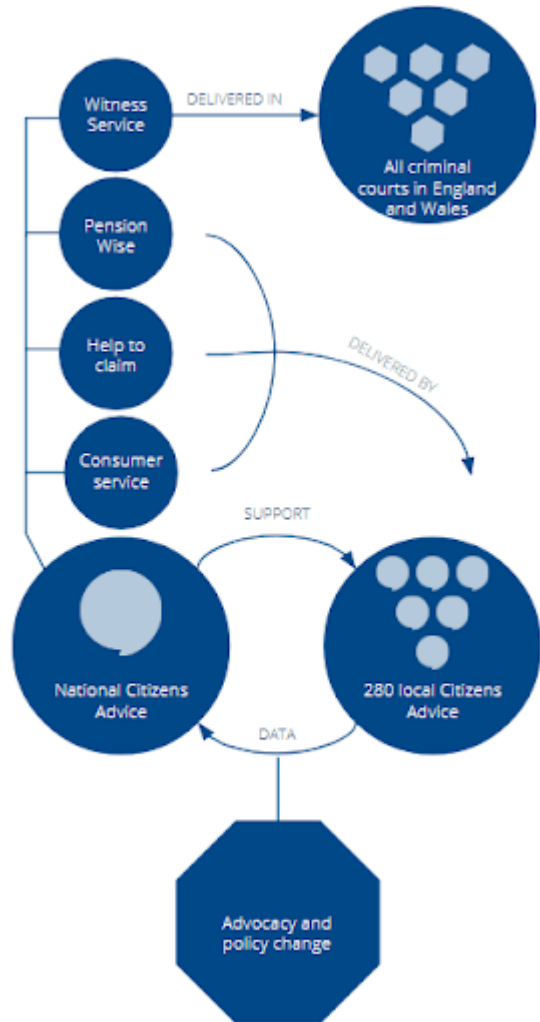
This role sits within a network of independent charities, delivering services from

- over 600 local Citizens Advice outlets
- over 1,800 community centres, GPs' surgeries and prisons

They do this with:

- 6,500 local staff
- over 23,000 trained volunteers

Our reach means 99% of people in England and Wales can access a local Citizens Advice within a 30 minute drive of where they live.



How Citizens Advice Stroud and Cotswold Districts works

Citizens Advice Stroud & Cotswold Districts Ltd is a local charity; it was established in 1958 in Stroud and took over responsibility for the service in the Cotswolds in December 2013. As a local, independent charity, we are members of a national network which collectively is the Citizens Advice Service.

The service is delivered by a team of about 60 volunteers assisted by a small team of paid staff. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, we have been delivering most of our advice through our freephone telephone advice line and email. We are also seeing some clients face-to-face, in our offices and outreach surgeries across the Stroud and Cotswold districts. Whilst volunteering over the last two years has mostly taken place from home, we are now returning to working from our offices and outreaches.

We help people to resolve their legal, financial and other problems by providing information and advice and by influencing policymakers. Generalist advice is provided by a team of staff and volunteer advisers who have all undertaken extensive training for the role. We also provide a range of specialist casework and targeted services including debt and energy issues.

The service is free, confidential, impartial and independent. It is open to everyone. Almost half of the population will use a Citizens Advice service at some time, and we are the largest provider of debt and money advice.

The demand for advice is consistently high and we are always looking for more volunteers to help us to expand the service. Volunteers undertake a variety of roles including reception, administration and IT support as well as benefits, debt and employment casework.



Purpose of the role

- To help provide an effective and efficient advice service to members of the public
- To help influence government and other organisations by informing them of the effect of their actions on the lives of clients

What will you do?

- complete an introduction to Citizens Advice and a training programme for your role
- talk to clients over the phone, face to face or online to explore what problems they've come for help with
- find information about the clients' problems and help them to understand their options
- support clients to take action to resolve their problems. This might include drafting or writing letters, making phone calls or referring the client to another organisation
- complete clear and accurate case records using our case recording system
- keep up to date on important issues by attending the appropriate training, by essential reading and attending volunteer meetings.

Some examples of what you could do:

- help 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.
- help a client who has problems with their landlord to understand their housing rights.



What's in it for you?

- make a real difference to people's lives
- learn about a range of issues such as benefits, debt and employment
- build on valuable skills such as communication, listening and problem solving, and increase your employability
- work with a range of different people, independently and in a team
- have a positive impact in your community

And we'll reimburse expenses too.



What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or experience, but you'll need to:

- be friendly and approachable
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- have good listening skills
- have excellent verbal and written communication skills
- have good maths skills
- have good IT skills and the ability to use email, Word and other applications
- be able to understand information and explain it to others
- be willing to learn about and follow the Citizens Advice aims, principles and policies, including confidentiality and data protection
- be willing to undertake intensive training for your role, and to keep up your skills through continuous learning



How much time do you need to give?

The time commitment for during and after the training period is 8 - 10 hours per week, over one day or spread over two days, for a minimum of two years.

We can be flexible so come and talk to us.



Timeline for the application process

We offer two **information sessions** where we'll tell you more about CA-SCD, the training process and the role itself. Please get in touch to register your interest so that we know how many people to expect.

- Wednesday, 18 October 2023, 2 – 3.30 pm, Stroud
- Wednesday, 8 November 2023, 1 – 2.30 pm, Cirencester

Please attend one of the information sessions or arrange a 1:1 meeting or a telephone conversation with our learning & development officer (if you cannot make the sessions) before completing the application form. This role requires a high level of dedication and commitment so it would be beneficial for you to get a clear idea about what is involved before applying.

The **deadline for applications is 19 November 2023**. Interviews will take place in our Stroud and/or Cirencester offices in early/mid December 2023.

The new training programme will **start on 24 January 2024**.

Training programme

The initial training will take about about six months. You will be required to

- attend weekly in-person training sessions in the Cirencester office on Wednesdays, 9.30 am to 1 pm
- plus spend approximately four hours per week learning through study time (either at home or in one of the offices), observations or advice

sessions (flexible, in the office - at a day of the week to be confirmed with you)

A big chunk of the training is delivered through our online training platform in the format of either interactive or text-based lessons. We come together regularly as a group to deepen the learning with sessions delivered by our in-house experts.

Our trainees undertake the Adviser Learning Pathway and the MaPS accredited debt pathway. Although this means a long time of study, it equips you to deliver advice in the various enquiry areas (benefits, employment, immigration, debt, housing, family & personal and energy).

You will gain confidence and a greater depth of understanding through giving email advice from relatively early on in your training. Towards the end, you will observe experienced advisers before taking your first steps in delivering telephone and face-to-face advice. You will be supported throughout by our Learning & Development Officer and then later by the Advice Session Supervisors.



Valuing inclusion

Our volunteers come from a range of backgrounds and we particularly welcome applications from racially minoritised people/people of colour, disabled people, people with physical or mental health conditions, LGBTQ+ and non-binary people.

If you are interested in becoming an adviser and would like to discuss flexibility around location, time, 'what you will do' and how we can support you please contact us.



For more information please contact:

Learning & Development Officer, training@ca-scd.org.uk, 01285 425543