



# **Volunteering at York & District CAB**

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***[www.yorkcab.org.uk](http://www.yorkcab.org.uk)***

***Charity registration no: 509600***

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**blem. Whoever you are, whatever the problem. Whoe**

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## **Aims of the CAB**

The Citizens Advice Bureau is an independent charitable service founded in 1939 working to fulfil twin aims:

***To ensure that individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities or the services available to them or through an inability to express their needs effectively***

and

***To exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services, both locally and nationally***

## **The CAB works to:**

### **Inform**

Inform people about the law, how it affects them and their rights & responsibilities

### **Advise**

Advise people on the options available to them & the potential consequence of different courses of action

### **Support**

Support people as they consider and decide what to do, listening to their concerns & helping them move forward

### **Assist**

Assist people in pursuing their chosen course of action by negotiation, representation & referral to other sources of help

### **Influence**

Influence those responsible for policies & services, bringing to their notice problems people experience & recommending changes

## **What we are looking for:**

- 16 or over
- Enthusiasm
- Willingness to learn
- Reliability and commitment
- An open mind and an interest in people
- NO degree or qualification - our training and induction programme will teach you everything you need to know
- Diversity – we welcome volunteers from all backgrounds regardless of sex, race, disability and sexual orientation

## **What you get from us:**

- The opportunity to meet a wide variety of people
- Training and induction for whichever post you take up
- Full support and guidance through your training
- Valuable learning experience
- A nationally recognised certificate if you decide to be an Adviser
- Travel expenses
- Childcare expenses

## **Volunteering roles available at York and District CAB**

### **Adviser**

You will be at the front-line of bureau work. This involves interviewing clients, advising them on possible solutions to their problems and sometimes negotiating on their behalf.

### **Social Policy Work**

You could get involved in the proactive work that the bureau does: Identifying issues, carrying out research and creating reports to lobby for changes in policy.

### **Reception**

You will work in a vital role at the bureau overseeing the waiting room, greeting clients and organising appointments.

### **Administration**

You will assist in the day to day running of the office i.e. performing essential tasks such as typing letters, answering the phone, photocopying and filing.

*Volunteering in the bureau also opens up opportunities for involvement in working groups looking at the development of the bureau, Regional Committee and national bodies such as the Black Workers Group, the Disabled Workers Group and the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Group*

# Adviser

As an Adviser you can expect to:

## **Interview**

All kinds of people come into the bureau with all kinds of problems. One of the first things you will learn is to listen. It is important to let clients explain their problem, then you will need to talk to them and ask questions to make the issues clear.

## **Give Information**

Information files, reference books and other organisations can all help give the information a client may need. You will learn to use these sources including our electronic information system.

## **Give Advice**

The CAB Adviser has to explain the choices available to the client so that the client can decide what they want to do.

## **Give Practical Help**

This can be drafting letters, making phone calls, filling in forms. You will need to do calculations, for example, for benefits, tax, rent arrears or debt. You do not need to be good at maths but be willing to utilise packages in-bureau to do this for you.

## **Case Record**

It is very important that all clients' cases are recorded so that the bureau can offer an efficient service. Our case recording is done using a computer package. You will be trained to use this.

# Adviser training

## How is the training structured?

The training is competencies based, with the focus on the trainee adviser evidencing their ability. It is done in 3 stages with 4 learning journals to be completed (these are like a diary of your progress through the training).

**Stage 1:** (first two learning journals). Completed in bureau, supported by information packs and in-house skills practice.

Journal 1 focuses on grounding the trainee's knowledge within the CAB service, looking at aims and principles, the advice model and its legal framework. Journal 2 focuses on building knowledge of 7 advice areas offered by the CAB service; debt, family and personal, housing and homelessness, benefit, employment, consumer and immigration and nationality.

Whilst working on the first 2 journals and associated work books trainees get to observe the working practices of the bureau and develop an understanding of how the organisation functions.

**Stage 2:** Involves attending 5 days of training over a 5/6-week period. Training is focused on developing your interviewing skills. Whilst on this course the 3rd learning journal is completed.

**Stage 3:** At this stage you are introduced to advising, first by supported interviews and then solo interviews. This final stage is all about evidencing competence to obtain the generalist adviser certificate.

## How long does the training take?

The pace of the training is set by the trainee, the training has been completed in periods of time varying from 6 to 12 months.

## What support is available?

General support is available from all advisers and trainees in the bureau, with specific support and guidance available from a specific member of staff or volunteer.

## What information is available to help me train as an adviser?

Throughout the course there are a number of workbooks on different topics to help the trainee understand the basics of each topic.

We also have a current information system that covers all our areas of advice. As a trainee you are taught how to use this in the advice process.

# A day in the life of an Adviser

Arrive at the Bureau: Have a chance to talk to colleagues and read the notices before the doors open at 9.30am

**Case 1:** Buying own home. Wanting information on grants available. Checked in information files. Advice given on general position and Local Authority details. Advised client to telephone for local information. Recorded case

**Case 2:** Aged 20, expecting a baby in June. On Job Seekers Allowance only, cannot afford baby things. Benefits Agency has refused help. Checked her benefits entitlement -discussed situation with another worker, explained position to client. Tried to find alternative sources of help and identified voluntary agency able to provide baby things. Typed case sheet.

**Case 3:** Wanting help in completing form to naturalise as a British Citizen. Eligibility checked from information files and Immigration Service and form completed. Typed case sheet

Made coffee for people. Was asked if a trainee could sit in on my next interview

**Case 4:** Has received solicitor's letter re: non-payment of credit instalment. Cannot pay off the amount due as a lump sum. Found out this is the only thing they can't pay – wasn't sure what to do, discussed case with consultant duty person. The bureau will negotiate on client's behalf. Wrote draft letter to credit company. Agreed content with consultant and client. Talked to trainee about case, sent letter for typing with case sheet.

**Case 5:** Client whose first language wasn't English - used Language Line, a telephone translation service. The client had bought faulty item of clothing from chain store. Shop refused to exchange goods. Explained rights to client – wrote note for him to take to shop. If shop still refuses to co-operate he will return and leave item for Trading Standards Officer to examine.

**Case 6:** Is pregnant, would like an abortion, but does not want to go see family GP. Listened and then made appointment for client to see counsellor at BPAS. Other problems with family discussed. Recorded case.

Spent ten minutes talking about how I felt about the last case, over a cup of tea, with fellow Adviser, before going home.

# Social Policy Work

## What is Social Policy?

Sometimes we do things because of other people, rather than because it will be best for us. At other times the law causes problems for us rather than helping to make our lives better. Social policy is about understanding how other people influence what we do so that things don't work in our own best interests.

At the CAB we spot where these 'social policy' issues come about because of how the law works. We collect evidence to bring about changes.

When you volunteer as a Social Policy adviser at York CAB you'll help to make changes by spotting the issues and writing up the evidence, trying to suggest changes which will bring about a real difference.

The Social Policy Working Group is a team. You'll become part of that team. Your work could include:

- Explaining about social policy to paid and unpaid workers.
- Dealing with the administration that results in effective management of the evidence.
- Monitoring and evaluating trends and statistics.
- Write reports on social policy evidence and research.
- Write articles for the media on topical social policy issues.

Recently, the Working Group has:

- Completed a study on our clients, their health and access to the CAB.
- Researched the impact of housing benefit on finding accommodation, and used that information to develop our rent guarantee scheme.
- Begun the groundwork for our next survey, on employment and our clients.

*Some Social Policy workers are students, working towards their university degrees. Other workers are just interested in making systems work better for all of us.*

*There's lots of social policy work to do, so you'll easily find a subject that interests you. And you can be sure of support from your social policy colleagues.*

## **Reception**

The receptionists at the bureau play a very important role in our service. Your duties will consist of:

- Overseeing the waiting room
- Welcoming clients and others at the door
- Giving information about the bureau to enquirers
- Answering the appointments booking line
- Some basic administration
- Accepting deliveries
- Occasional sign-posting

As support for this position a member of staff will always be supervising each advice session. Your training will involve an induction and, after this, in-house training to ensure you are able to carry out the duties asked of you.

## **Administration**

As an administration volunteer at the bureau you will be involved in the day to day running of the office. It would be helpful if you are experienced in an office environment. Your duties can be performed between 9-5 any day and will consist of:

- Typing letters
- Answering the telephone
- Filing
- Stationary management
- Photocopying and shredding
- Database management

As support for this position, there are paid admin workers to look after you. Your training will consist of an induction plus ongoing in-house training to assist you in your duties.

# The Application Process

So you are interested in volunteering at the CAB – what happens next? Well, lets go through the steps of the process so you know exactly what to expect:

- 1) Fill in the application form and send it back to the bureau (forms are available from the address on the front page).
- 2) You will then be invited to attend an interview at the bureau. References will be taken up.
- 3) The bureau will inform you if you are successful in your application within a few days.
- 4) If successful, you will be invited to attend an induction session where the training and job you have selected are explained further.
- 5) At any point during the process you can decide you don't wish to volunteer or change direction within the bureau.

## The Interview

The interview is an important part of the selection process, as much as to determine if the bureau is right for you as your suitability for the bureau. All the information you need is in this booklet. Study it before you attend, you may also want to think about what skills would be good for the role you have chosen and your commitment to the policies mentioned in this booklet.

***We hope to see you soon***

# Equality of Opportunity

The CAB service is committed to equal opportunities for everyone.

CAB equal opportunities policies aim to ensure that those facing discrimination feel welcome within the CAB service and feel able to use its services and participate in its processes.

The CAB service has recognised that disabled people, people with HIV/Aids, black people and ethnic minorities, women, Irish people and lesbian and gay men do, in their daily lives, experience discrimination.

The CAB service is developing its equal opportunity policies for other groups of people who also experience discrimination. York CAB has an active equality working group.

**At York CAB you will find the following:**

- **Equal opportunities policies**
- **National support groups for women, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, black, disabled, paid and voluntary workers**
- **A commitment to recruiting volunteers that reflect the diverse nature of our community**
- **Language Line – a translation service for 29 languages**
- **An induction loop for people with hearing difficulties**
- **Accessible premises - plus an Access Working Group constantly working to make the bureau as accessible as possible**

## **Confidentiality and the CAB**

The CAB offers confidentiality to all enquirers. Nothing learned by the bureau from enquirers, including the fact of their visit, will be passed onto anyone without their express permission.

A full copy of the confidentiality policy and agreement that you will have to sign are available from the bureau.

You are able to discuss cases within the bureau, thus enabling you to seek support and advice on difficult or stressful cases.

The bureau operates a conflict of interest policy to identify any previous requests for advice. This is important to prevent the bureau advising both parties in a dispute and to protect impartiality of advice.

Where a third party request information on behalf of another, for example a friend or relative, the bureau strives to ensure the appropriate and accurate information is passed on. In all third party cases written confirmation of authority is requested. Third party guidelines exist as part of confidentiality policy.

## What our Volunteers say:

The training we receive is really well planned and comprehensive. I've really gained a lot from the last few months in the bureau, especially in terms of self-confidence, knowledge and satisfaction from helping other people manage their problems or improve their lives

"At first it seemed so confusing - many experienced workers, so much to learn - how could I remember who to ask about what & where to look things up rather than struggle with it? There is always someone around who can help & you're never left to struggle on your own"

***"THE SUPPORT YOU RECIEVE IS EXCELLENT BE IT FROM OTHER VOLUNTEERS OR THE PAID STAFF HERE. THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE WITH THE ANSWER OR JUST AN OPEN EAR"***

**"I DIDN'T HAVE ANY QUALIFICATIONS. THEY SAID LOTS OF EXPERIENCES WERE USEFUL. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO BE ABLE TO WORK WITH PEOPLE AND TO BE WILLING TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW"**

THERE ARE LOTS OF DIFFERENT THINGS YOU CAN DO AT THE CAB; IF YOU DON'T FEEL YOU WANT TO BE AN ADVISER, WE COULD REALLY DO WITH YOUR HELP IN THE OFFICE - 'OILING THE COGS' AS THEY SAY

**"Working in some buildings can be difficult in a wheelchair. The CAB aim to make their premises as accessible as possible.**

**To help me in my work they moved the notices ensuring I could read them and organised a special table I could use with my wheelchair"**