



## ***Volunteer Welcome Booklet***

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Thank you for joining us at Wealden Citizens Advice.

We provide free, confidential, independent and impartial advice and campaign on the big issues affecting people's lives. Our goal is to help everyone who contacts us to find a way forward, whatever the problem they face.

People come to us with all sorts of issues. They may have money, benefit, housing or employment problems, they may be facing a crisis or just considering their options.

Our volunteers make a real difference to people's lives. Every year we help: people avoid homelessness; claim millions of pounds in previously unclaimed benefits or tax credits; enforce their employment and consumer rights and manage millions of pounds of debt. We also campaign for change in the policies and practices that adversely affect people's lives.

We simply could not do what we do without our volunteer team and in return for the commitment we ask from you, we can promise you a rewarding and challenging volunteering experience which really benefits your community.

Thank you and I look forward to meeting you.

**Jan Townsend,**  
**Chair of the Trustees**



# ***Why Volunteer with us?***

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Our work makes a difference to people's lives.

You will work with a great team of volunteers and staff.

You will have the opportunity to learn new skills.

You can contribute to changing the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

What we do benefits the wider community.

## ***Our values***

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- We respect the individuality and diversity of all. We are opposed to and will challenge all forms of discrimination.
- We treat everyone with respect and dignity.
- We will be transparent, responsible and collaborative.

We want all our volunteers to feel **confident** and **well supported**.....

.....and have an experience that is **positive and enjoyable**.



# *How can you help us?*

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**Adviser** – Stewart helps clients both face to face and on our telephone system Adviceline



**Reception** – Humphrey is the face of our service and greets clients at our Crowborough office



**Outreach** – Carol takes information and advice out into the community



**Research & Campaigns** – Thea gathers evidence to support campaigning



**Fundraising** – Alex did a sponsored swim to raise funds for us



**Administration** – Caroline does admin in our Uckfield office



**IT** – Paul helps to support and troubleshoot the IT systems at all three of our offices



**Money Adviser** – Sandra provides advice to clients in financial difficulty



**Finance** – Stephen is our bookkeeper and looks after the money



# ***What can you expect from us?***

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**Whatever your reasons for volunteering with us we think you have a right to expect:**

- to be respected and valued.
- the support, advice and guidance you need to fulfil your role effectively.
- a safe working environment.
- to have a say in how the service is run along with feedback on your ideas and concerns.
- to receive the training you need to undertake your role with confidence.
- to know what's expected of you in your role and be comfortable that you can achieve it.
- reimbursement for expenses.
- that any personal information you give us will be treated in confidence.
- any complaints and grievances to be taken seriously, with a clear confidential procedure in place.
- opportunities to develop your skills.
- clarity on what the service achieves and how your role contributes to our successes.

**We want you to have a real sense of pride in our service and what you contribute to it.**

## ***Meet our Volunteers – Annette Woods***

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I became a volunteer to give something back to the community, to keep me in touch with what's going on and to help people with the problems they are trying to sort out. The relief on a client's face can be overwhelming, as if a huge worry has been lifted from their shoulders.





# ***What can we expect from you?***

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## **We ask you to:**

- commit the equivalent of a day a week of your time.
- treat all clients and colleagues with respect.
- respect the confidentiality of our service.
- uphold the values of our service, remaining impartial and independent at all times.
- support our equality and diversity policy and challenge discrimination.
- fulfil your role to the best of your ability, including undertaking training.
- abide by our policies and procedures, especially with regard to health & safety, information assurance and data protection.
- tell us when you have a problem, and work with us constructively to resolve it.
- be reliable and punctual, letting us know if you can't attend as soon as possible.
- ask for help when you need it.
- be a part of the team, participating in regular staff meetings and using the opportunities offered to have your say on how the service is run.

## ***Meet our Volunteers – Emma LeTeace***

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I volunteered at Wealden Citizens Advice (WCitA) for two years, on and off around my time at university and I enjoyed it immensely. The experience helped me to get an interview for my current job and the confidence that I gained through volunteering still helps me every day.

All members of staff at the office, paid or volunteers, made me feel incredibly welcome. They were extremely supportive and always thanked me for the work that I did. I got to meet so many interesting people every day, no two days were ever the same. I really looked forward to coming into work and it was a great feeling of satisfaction when I was able to help a client.

I learned a lot of general office skills and much more. I would wholeheartedly recommend volunteering at WCitA to anybody. Not only do you learn a lot of practical skills but you gain a much wider social knowledge and get to meet people who you probably wouldn't meet in your usual day to day life.

# ***Practical Information***

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## **Support and Training**

Your main contact will be your office manager. They are there to help you with any questions you may have, whether it be regarding a particular client's needs or about your role generally.

Training is conducted through a mixture of: formal face to face training sessions, e-learning, supervised interviews, one to one coaching and workshops. Training can go at a pace to suit you – we recognise that not everyone learns in the same way or at the same pace and we want you to be confident in what you do.

Every year you will have a formal appraisal with your manager. This is your chance to have a discussion about: how you are doing, what training needs you may have and any ideas you have for developing your role or indeed the service.

## **Expenses**

Your volunteer role with us is unpaid, but we do pay your travel expenses both to your regular office and for training and meetings. Expenses are paid direct into your bank account, although we can make payment by cheque if necessary. Given our limited resources we can only reimburse home to office expenses within the Wealden District.

## ***Meet our Volunteers – David Sudbery***

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I like working in a team, you feel well supported... You learn how the system works and you can use this information to support people who are sometimes really up against it.

## **Health & safety**

We treat the health & safety of all our volunteers and clients extremely seriously. We have trained first aiders in every office. You will receive a health & safety briefing when you arrive with us and we expect all our volunteers to abide by our health & safety policy, including responding to drills and reporting any incidents or concerns. Your role can involve working with vulnerable people. We ask all our volunteers to familiarise themselves with our policies for safeguarding young people and adults.

## **Insurance**

All our volunteers are covered by our insurance. This covers health & safety on Citizens Advice premises and business and on any claims arising from the information and advice you give to clients.

## **Data Protection**

We ask you to sign a confidentiality agreement when you join us. We only keep essential personal information about our clients and volunteers. The information we hold is covered by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and any successor legislation. It is only used where it is directly related to our service or your volunteering with us. Information is never disclosed to any third party without your explicit consent.

## **References**

We are happy to provide references for those who have volunteered with us for at least 3 months.

## ***Meet our Volunteers – Michael David***

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I really enjoy volunteering at CAB and being part of such a great team of people. It's lovely to see clients leave looking less worried and with a smile on their faces.

## Having your say

We recognise that no one knows more about our service than the volunteers who deliver it. Each of our offices has a volunteer representative who acts as the voice of our volunteers on our Trustee Board. There are also regular staff meetings at each site, where our volunteer representatives have an open invitation to discuss ideas or areas of concern. We undertake a volunteer survey every year too.

## Complaints

We hope your experience with us will be a rewarding and enjoyable one, but we recognise that sometimes things go wrong. We take any complaints very seriously and have a complaints procedure to deal with these situations. Your first port of call should always be your manager, unless your complaint relates to them when you can talk to the Chief Executive or your volunteer representative. Any matters you raise will be treated in the strictest confidence.

## Leaving

We know that your circumstances may change and that you may not volunteer with us for ever. When a volunteer leaves we do ask you to complete a short exit survey so we can learn from your experience to improve our volunteer offer whenever we can.

## *Meet our Volunteer Representatives*

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*Left-Right in photo*

*Carola Coles, Hailsham*

*Elaine Cox, Crowborough*

*Mike Tollit, Crowborough*

*Nicola Dawkins, Uckfield*

For more information about volunteering with Wealden Citizens Advice:

Email: [da@wealdencitizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:da@wealdencitizensadvice.org.uk)

Visit: [www.wealdencitizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.wealdencitizensadvice.org.uk)

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