



**Sedgemoor**

**Help at the heart  
of your community**

**Volunteer  
at  
Citizens  
Advice  
Sedgemoor**

**Citizens Advice Sedgemoor is a registered charity and we always need more volunteers.**

**By joining us you will become part of a well-established advice bureau which really values its volunteers.**

# Volunteering with a disability



Within Citizens Advice Sedgemoor, equal opportunity in volunteering means offering access and equivalent treatment to our volunteers across the whole range of our voluntary recruitment practices.

Our aim is to enable all our volunteers to make their distinctive contributions to the benefit of the people who use our service.

Citizens Advice Sedgemoor is determined to develop a working culture that is fair and inclusive.

We regularly review the effect of our volunteer recruitment practices to make sure that they accord with our equality and diversity policy.

We encourage our volunteers and staff to welcome diversity, to respect the individuality of each person and value their contributions.

## **Our commitment to you**

Citizens Advice Sedgemoor is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive culture for our volunteers.

We recognise the positive value of diversity, promote equality and fairness, and challenge discrimination.

Volunteers contribute significantly to the diversity of our service and can expect to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect and without discrimination.

We are committed to developing a working environment that will enable disabled people to gain the appropriate skills and become a valued volunteer within the service.

## **What can you expect**

Citizens Advice Sedgemoor practices and promotes the equality of opportunity in volunteer recruitment and training.

We have committed to and continuously strive to meet the additional needs of disabled staff, arising directly or indirectly because of their volunteer work.

We work hard to create an open and welcoming volunteering environment that values and respects your individuality.

# Volunteering with a disability

## Training

Disabled volunteers are given full and fair consideration in all available training and networking relating to their volunteering role.

The recruitment and selection process is undertaken by appropriately trained staff and aims to offer information to assess whether the volunteer opportunities available match the potential volunteers skills, qualities and needs.

## National Disabled Workers Group

The National Disabled Workers Group (NDWG) is funded and supported by Citizens Advice to provide guidance, support and to promote equal opportunities for all disabled workers whether they are paid staff or volunteers.

They are a resource for disability related issues, acting as a source of information, training and support to Bureaux.

The NDWG's membership is open to all disabled people who work within Citizens Advice, member bureaux and affiliated organisations.

The NDWG is non-political, independent and provides free, confidential and impartial advice. They have open meetings regularly and can be contacted directly.

Contact details: [www.ndwg.net](http://www.ndwg.net)

# What do Citizens Advice Sedgemoor do?

The logo for Citizens Advice, featuring the words "citizens advice" in white lowercase letters inside a dark blue speech bubble shape.

## Give advice

Citizens Advice Sedgemoor is independent and provides free, confidential and impartial advice to everybody regardless of race, sex, disability, sexuality, or nationality. We help in excess of 6,000 people every year, in the bureau, by phone, by email and at outreach sessions.

Our clients and volunteers come from all walks of life. We are committed to providing an independent advice service, and volunteering opportunities to the whole community.

Advisers provide up to date advice and information using our unique electronic information system, link clients up with other services and agencies, help write letters and complete forms, negotiate with creditors, make phone calls on clients' behalf and represent them at tribunals.

The problems we are most often asked about concern employment, debt, housing or benefits, but we will help people who come to us with any enquiry including consumer rights, legal matters, and immigration.

Advisers don't tell clients what to do, but explain their options and the possible outcomes of different courses of action. Clients are encouraged to make their own decisions and act on their own behalf. We enable clients to manage their own problems by focusing on their needs as individuals.

## The CAB Service is based on four principles. It is:

- **Independent** – We will always act in the interests of our clients, without influence from any outside bodies
- **Impartial** – We don't judge our clients or make assumptions about them. Our service is open to everyone, and we treat everyone equally
- **Confidential** – We won't pass on anything a client tells us – or even the fact that they've visited us – without their permission
- **Free** – No-one has to pay for any part of the service we provide

Putting these principles into action enables us to provide a vital service to the millions of people who turn to us for help each year.

**You can help us to make a real difference to people in your community**

**Volunteer with Citizens Advice Sedgemoor 01278 459009**  
**[www.sedgemoorcab.org.uk](http://www.sedgemoorcab.org.uk)**

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## **Campaign for changes in policies and services**

Citizens Advice Sedgemoor make a record of every enquiry brought to them. This adds up to a huge wealth of information about the problems people experience. We work proactively to prevent similar problems happening to others.

## **National campaigning**

We use this evidence to highlight the effects that policies have on real people in the real world, and to suggest where improvements can be made to the policies and services of national and local government and businesses. We aim to stop problems at their source, using the direct experience of the communities that we serve.

Each bureau sends information about the problems brought to them (but not about their clients) to the national Citizens Advice organisation. Evidence is collated to help social policy officers identify national trends. We can then present evidence to policy makers by writing reports and submissions and participating in consultations to improve policies.

## **Local/regional campaigning**

With local or regional issues, bureaux may act individually or join forces with other bureaux and outside agencies, using their client evidence to lobby MPs, Assembly Members (AMs), councillors, local authorities and others, as well as presenting their findings in the media.

## **Turning evidence into action**

The Citizens Advice Service is respected for its impartiality and independent analysis and is listened to at all levels of government. Councillors, MPs, AMs and Ministers all consult the Citizens Advice Service on a wide range of issues. This enables us to effectively campaign for social justice and get laws and policies changed for the better.

We have recently campaigned on issues as diverse as:

- **Unethical landlords**
- **Agency worker employers**
- **Rural transport**
- **Universal Credit and changes to benefit system**

You can help us make life better for everyone

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# What do our volunteers do?



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## Advisers

### As an adviser you will:

Interview clients at drop-in sessions and appointments in the bureau, over the phone and at outreach sessions.

Give information from the Citizens Advice electronic information system and other sources.

Give advice in explaining the choices and consequences the client faces.

Give practical help by writing letters, making phone calls, completing forms, doing calculations.

Refer clients to other agencies if they are better placed to help.

Keep records of all clients' cases.

Prevent future problems by identifying issues that affect a lot of clients.

### You don't need any particular qualifications or experience to train as an adviser. All sorts of people are advisers. You need to:

Be good at listening.

Be able to work in a team.

Be able to read and write English, and do basic maths.

Be open-minded and non-judgemental.

Enjoy helping people.

### Support every step of the way

Advisers don't need to know it all! We provide all trainee advisers with a comprehensive accredited training programme that will give you the skills you need to deliver a high quality service to clients. Our up-to-the-minute electronic information system contains most of the information you will need when advising clients.

You won't be left alone after you are trained. There will always be a more experienced adviser, who will give you support, advice and guidance.

All advisers are insured in case mistakes are made.

Once you have qualified as a Generalist Adviser, you will have the opportunity to develop further skills and increase the depth and breadth of your knowledge.

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# What do our volunteers do?

## Administrators

Administrators ensure that the bureau systems run smoothly. Good support is essential for the running of any organisation. There are many different administrative roles – we can match your skills and time available to the bureau's needs.

Tasks may include:

- Using spreadsheets, databases and word processing packages.
- Maintaining and developing administrative systems.
- Stock control of leaflets and materials and updating information.
- Helping to arrange events.
- Receiving and sending faxes, mail, email and telephone calls.
- Taking notes and minutes at meetings.

## Receptionists

Receptionists are the public face of the bureau. They are the main link between the public and the bureau. This role would suit people who are methodical, organised and patient.

As a receptionist, you would:

- Greet clients and make them feel comfortable.
- Answer phone calls.
- Provide information on opening times and contact methods to clients.
- Look after the waiting room.
- Keep client records.

# What do our volunteers do?

## Trustee Board Members

We are an independent charities, governed by a board of trustees, who are ultimately responsible for the quality and range of the service. Day-to-day control is delegated to the Chief Officer. Trustees:

Set the overall direction and support the development of the bureau.

Ensure the bureau meets the needs of the local community and the Citizens Advice membership standards.

Employ staff and control bureau finances.

Earn and retain the respect of important and influential people and organisations in the community, including funding bodies.

Ensure the bureau complies with relevant laws.

We need people from all sections of the community with a wide range of different skills, experience and perspectives. A full induction into the trustee board's role and responsibilities will be provided.

## Campaigners

Campaigners, or Research & Campaign Co-ordinators, use information from problems brought to the bureau by clients to help bring about real change by influencing local and national policy. This is a flexible role, which can sometimes be partly carried out away from the bureau and outside normal opening hours. It can involve:

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 bureaux and agencies to provide a voice for clients.

We also involve volunteers in other roles, such as press and PR and fundraising.

# What do our volunteers say?

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‘Every session is different. You can actually make a difference for people, and you are valued for who you are’

‘I have increased confidence, much more knowledge, lots of new friends and respect from my children’

‘It’s a vital service run for and by people of all ages’

‘The training was extremely thorough. The support is fantastic from everyone in the bureau.’

‘I find being an adviser rewarding, stimulating, at times humbling, and very enjoyable’

‘The other volunteers are very friendly, and we work as a team helping each other’

‘It’s great being able to help people in so many different ways, being able to learn from and appreciate what others are experiencing, and there’s a real co-operative spirit in the bureau’

‘I’ve become more aware of what my rights are and got to meet some great people. It helps you to better yourself and it helps on your CV to get a job and further your career.’

I get a real feeling of satisfaction from making a difference, especially for people less able to stand up for their rights’

‘I get a sense of being involved - I like being part of the bureau activities and keeping up with issues. I feel proud of the CAB and being part of it – and we have a laugh too’

# Why volunteer for us?

The logo for Citizens Advice, featuring the words "citizens advice" in white lowercase letters inside a dark blue speech bubble shape.

All sorts of people volunteer for many different reasons, but one thing that unites them all is that they find it challenging, rewarding and varied. Volunteering provides an opportunity to learn new skills and to develop existing ones.

Adviser training is accredited by the Open College Network, and is respected and valued throughout the advice sector. Each role will enable you to develop specific expertise. For example, you might improve your IT and organisational skills as an administrator, or learn how to deal with the media and develop research skills as a campaigner.

In any role, you will develop your skills in a number of valuable areas, like communication and dealing with the public, as well as increasing your self-confidence through practical hands-on experience. There are opportunities for everyone to develop – you never stop learning!

It is also a chance to put the skills and experience you have to good use helping others. We need people of all ages and backgrounds. For many people, the best thing about volunteering for Citizens Advice is getting to meet a wide range of people and make new friends. There is a real team spirit, and we provide a supportive environment to make sure that you get the most out of your time with us.

Some roles are more flexible than others. We'll do our best to find a role for you that fits in with your interests, and we'll be as flexible as possible in enabling you to volunteer at the times that suit you best.

You may find that we deal with issues close to your heart. For example, more people from black and minority ethnic communities cited us as their first port of call when seeking advice on discrimination than any other agency (Commission for Racial Equality survey, 1999).

Above all, it's a chance to make a real difference. By volunteering with us you'll be playing an active part in improving the lives of millions of people and influencing the development of national and local policies and services.

And you won't be out of pocket – we will cover any travel costs incurred by volunteering.

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# What should I do next?



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**We hope that what you've read so far has answered some of your questions about volunteering with Citizens Advice Sedgemoor– and of course that you're still interested in joining us!**

You should then fill in the enclosed application form and send it back to us. We will make contact with you and invite you for an interview, which will give you both the opportunity to decide whether the role you've chosen is right for you.

If you are successful after interview you will receive a full induction.

Thanks for your interest in volunteering with Citizens Advice Sedgemoor, and for taking the time to read this information. We look forward to welcoming you to the service.

**Citizens Advice Sedgemoor is committed to equal opportunities for everyone.**

**We actively welcome volunteers of all ages from a wide range of different backgrounds.**

## **Contact details:**

**Citizens Advice Sedgemoor  
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High Street  
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# Citizens Advice Sedgemoor aims to:

- Ensure that individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities or of the services available to them or through an inability to express their needs effectively.
- Exercise a responsible influence on the development of social policies and services both locally and nationally.

**Citizens Advice Sedgemoor is independent and provides free, confidential and impartial advice to everybody regardless of race, sex, disability, sexuality or nationality.**