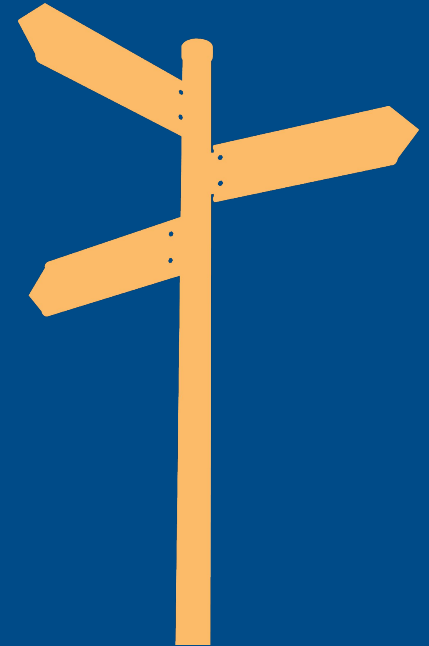
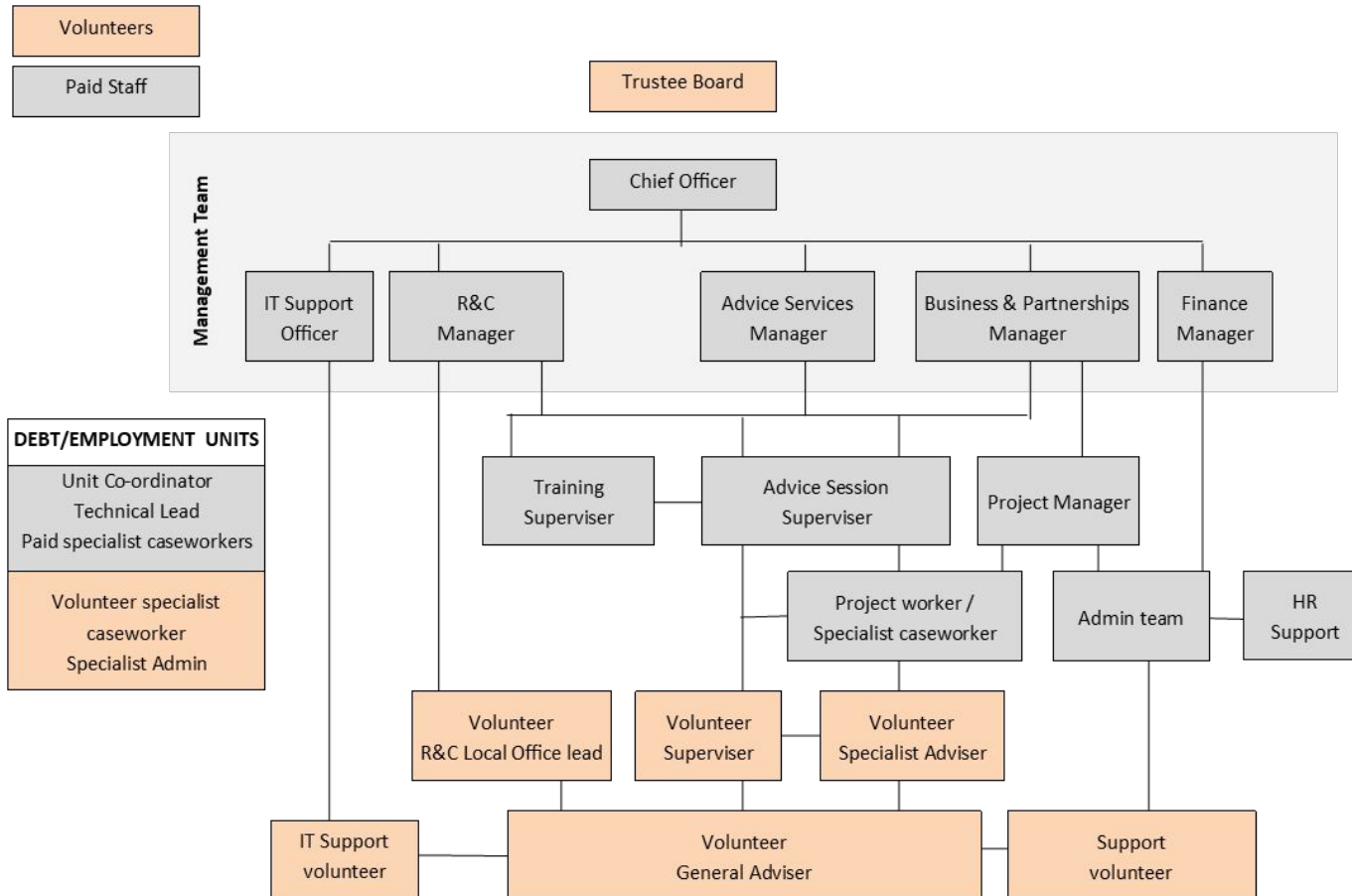


Citizens Advice in Central Dorset

Career Pathways

Volunteer or Work with us





Why volunteer or work with us?

[Citizens Advice Central Dorset](#) has 4 local offices serving the Dorchester, Gillingham, Sherborne, Weymouth and Portland communities. There are several outreaches in local GP Surgeries and other community venues across the Dorset Council area. We are supported by approximately 50 staff, 150 volunteers and 15 Trustees.

We are part of the National Citizens Advice organisation but are able to operate at a local level thereby serving the specific needs of the communities we operate in. All our services are free, confidential and impartial. Our trained and friendly advisers come from the local area and so will understand the issues the local communities face and most importantly be passionate about helping others with the important issues they face. We offer advice via face to face in our offices and outreaches, by phone, email, video link or webchat.

As demand for our service increases year by year and as the 'Cost of Living' impacts on individuals and families our service is required more than ever. Working with us either voluntarily or through paid work brings meaningful rewards for you as an individual. Through a variety of work in various projects and topics means you will never get bored and learning and training is, we believe, key to developing your skills as an individual. There is a wonderful supportive team spirit amongst our colleagues and so if you are working in the office or remotely from home you will always feel connected.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Citizens Advice Central Dorset (CACD) is committed to social justice, towards making society fairer, more just and equal. The policy statement from National Citizens Advice (NCA) sets out our mission and values.

"We need to understand how issues in society impact on our clients in different ways, and we need to ensure that the diversity of needs among our clients is taken into account. Therefore, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is integral to all we do as a service, not only for our clients, but also for our staff and volunteers." Citizens Advice, Advancing EDI

Trustees, staff and volunteers work to make this principle a reality by:

- understanding and respecting differences,
- valuing people regardless of who they are or who they appear to be,
- treating each other fairly and with respect.
- being open to learning about and from those who are different or seem to be different,
- listening and respecting and making CACD welcoming to all.
- providing training, development and support.

CACD works with different 'groups' of people, formal and informal, and cross-county organisations, for example Dorset Race Equality Council, Dorset Council, Police, Health Services.

Work with us

We can offer a variety of employment opportunities, from Manager, Specialised Caseworkers, Project Coordinators to Administration roles. Most of our staff work part-time but through a combination of different roles these hours can be increased to suit you. Many of our projects are funded and so therefore will be for a fixed period of time. Depending on the success of these projects and needs these are often extended. As well as offering many company benefits, working with us at Central Dorset is rewarding in itself in the very work that you do. You are supported by your team and given every opportunity to learn and train and develop yourself. You don't always need to have Citizens Advice experience and some roles don't require this and depending on the applicant training can be provided.

Many of our staff have come into paid work having been volunteering with us. Our jobs are advertised on our website and through local and national outlets.

Example of Paid Roles:

Specialist Caseworker

An experienced adviser specialising in their area of expertise and dealing with more complex advice cases
Salary - £24,000 to £27,000 (FTE)

Advice Session Supervisor

Responsible for day to day supervision of the volunteer advisers both in the office and remotely
Salary - £24,000 to £27,000 (FTE)

Project Manager / Unit Coordinator

Responsible for day to day management of projects or units such as employment or debt
Salary - £20,000 to £25,000 (FTE)

Advice Service Manager

Responsible for managing the advice service of the local office, volunteers and staff.
Salary - £27,000 to £33,000 (FTE)

Business & Partnerships Manager

Responsible for strategy, governance, partnerships and specific projects and works with the Trustees
Salary - £25,000 to £30,000 (FTE)

Operational Support / Admin

Assisting with the overall logistics of keeping the offices going such as Finance, HR, administration and IT
Salary - £18,500 to £25,000

Career progression in CACD

We are proud to be a proactive organisation which enables our staff and volunteers to progress further in their careers, if they wish to do so.

We help this process by:

- Annual appraisals which include personal development and aspiration
- Providing a way to 'fast-track' through the advice training
- Providing mentoring support
- Enabling staff and volunteers to experience working in different offices, or to shadow staff in specific roles
- Enabling advisers to specialise in specific subject areas (as part of Employment/Debt Unit)
- Succession planning



How our staff progress

Diana's story:

Diana was keen to return to paid work after a career break when her children were small. She had qualified as a solicitor but didn't feel confident in returning to that role after a long break so a friend suggested she volunteer at Citizens Advice (CA). She qualified as a volunteer Generalist Adviser with South Somerset Citizens Advice in 2000 and realised she really enjoyed working with CA. Opportunities for paid work soon came up and she worked on a variety of different projects including being a caseworker at GP Surgeries, an Outreach worker visiting clients at home and a Tribunal caseworker. This suited her very well as the work was part time so it fitted in with family commitments. She was able to increase her hours as more opportunities arose and she ended up working as a full time Advice Session Supervisor. 11 years ago she applied for the job of Advice Services Manager and Training Supervisor for the Sherborne office and then 4 years ago, changed role again to her current one of Advice Services Manager of the Dorchester and Sherborne offices.

Diana says: 'Writing this has made me reflect on the last 22 years and how pleased I am that I decided to volunteer with Citizens Advice all those years ago'.

Clare's story:

Due to redundancy from a role in finance Clare joined us in December 2019 as the Dorset Macmillan Citizens Advice Service Coordinator. Aside from being passionate about helping people with cancer what appealed about the job was the time flexibility it gave around working as a single parent. After three months in the role the pandemic hit and the Macmillan service moved to working from home. This worked so well, that the team now combine their roles with both being in the office and working from home. In February 2021 Clare took on a further role working from home to assist the Debt team with the preparatory work required before the full appointment with an adviser along with various other administration tasks. Clare has been able to come into the office (during school hours) one day a week as well as undertaking tasks from home. In March 2022 Clare decided to begin the Adviser training offered by Citizens Advice on a voluntary basis.

Clare says: 'It has been an enjoyable change of career, my colleagues have been very welcoming and have supported me into the new roles which have led me to wanting to further myself and commit to the free adviser training that is available. The flexibility of working hours and locations has been paramount to me being able to do this'

How our staff progress

Sian's story:

Siân joined us in July 2019 as a Law Student Volunteer for a 40 Week placement, as part of her undergraduate degree. By December, after being fast tracked on the Adviser Training course she had qualified as a Generalist Advisor with National Citizens Advice. In February 2020, she took a paid role as a Project Evaluation Officer for the Access to Justice Project and the follow-on Legal Support for Litigants Project. In November of that year, Siân also took on the Single Point of Contact Project lead role and by April 2021 had also been appointed an Advice Session Supervisor for the Weymouth and Dorchester offices. In June 2021, Siân completed her undergraduate degree and started a new role as Service Manager for the Weymouth and Portland Office, making her a key part of the Management Team.

Siân says: 'I have had a massive amount of training offered to me during my journey and I have been well supported by colleagues during transitions into each role. I am very passionate about the work I do and I have loved working for CACD. The leadership team has been supportive in the face of the pandemic and adversities, particularly around wellbeing and family life, allowing me to have a good work/life balance'

Naomi's story:

Having completed a law conversion course in the summer of 2020, Naomi applied to volunteer for Citizens Advice Central Dorset in March 2021. By May 2021, she was offered the opportunity to train as a Advice Session Supervisor (ASS), working across Dorchester and Weymouth. While training as an ASS, she also continued volunteer training, completing this in June 2021. In August, the previous Rough Sleepers Caseworker had left to pursue other career opportunities and Naomi was asked whether she would be interested in taking the role on - it was felt this would be a better fit for her based on her previous experience in the humanitarian sector, and she began work in this position in September of last year.

Naomi says 'I feel that CA genuinely wants what is best for all involved and tries to make space for everyone to use their skills and experience for the betterment of the service'

Benefits of working for Central Dorset



- Competitive Salary
- 5 weeks paid holiday plus Bank Holidays (pro rata) plus additional leave for long service
- Continuing learning and career development opportunities
- Pension Scheme with 5% Employer Contribution
- Flexible, family friendly employer with scope for home working and flexible hours
- Working for a frontline charity supporting the local community
- Smartphone and Laptop available with some roles

Volunteer with us

Our dedicated volunteer workforce is a diverse team from all sorts of backgrounds and professions. There are a range of roles to suit everyone, with flexibility on hours and a wide variety of locations in the Dorset Council area to volunteer from so there is sure to be a location to suit you. We offer advice over the telephone, face to face, by videolink, or by email, most work in an office or outreach but some are happier working from home. All we ask is that you are a good listener, enjoy meeting the public and have some IT skills. Nearly all our volunteers that join us, train to become a qualified adviser, learning different aspects about Benefits, Housing, Employment and Debt. In the first year of advising it is not uncommon to touch the lives of over 170 individual clients, basically with more volunteers we can help more people.

Example of Volunteer Roles:

Volunteer Adviser

Train to complete the Generalist Advisers Certificate with National Citizens Advice. Training takes place over several months and covers all topics. You will be supported by your training supervisor and training is often delivered in small friendly groups

Volunteer Specialist Adviser

Specialising in a particular subject area. You can benefit from additional training from outside agencies to enhance your learning & interest such as training from Shelter a specialist in Housing, or maybe you could work alongside our Specialist Caseworkers.

Volunteer Supervisor

Having completed your training as a Generalist Adviser, you could complete the Advice Session Supervisor training to allow you to take sessions on an ad-hoc basis. You would learn Management skills and look after Face to Face, phone, email and Adviceline.

Volunteer IT Support

If you have experience in an IT field, your skills would be valuable in supporting our IT team leader. Maybe you are handy with websites or computer hardware items. Do you relish an IT problem and want to learn more about IT?

Volunteer Research & Campaigns (R&C)

Research & Campaigns is an integral part of Citizens Advice. We collate information about certain struggles our clients are facing and campaign to change systems and barriers often getting our local MP and communities involved.

Administration Support volunteer

Do you like an office environment, answering the phone, dealing with post, filing and other administration duties? We need help with keeping our information, posters and leaflets up to date. Checking local information is kept up to date for our clients and advisers.

Adviser Training Programme

When you join us you will have the option of training with us and completing the National Citizens Advice Generalist Adviser Certificate.

This is an in-depth training programme, fully supported by our own Training Supervisor. You will receive all the training materials and tools to enable you to become a fully qualified adviser, advising clients in Benefits, Housing, Employment, Debt and Consumer issues. Training is usually delivered in small groups or one to one, face to face or online. There are training modules that will need to be completed outside of the groups and in your own time, so some self-motivation to study and learn is required. You will also be able to gain practical experience in the office and work alongside experienced advisers putting some of your training into practice and shadowing when seeing clients.

Our advice comes in different forms and you shall learn how to advise clients by email, over the phone through the local 'Adviceline' advice system or face to face through office appointments. You are always fully supported by the Advice Session Supervisor.

Training requires skills using a computer, email and website. It takes place over a period of 6 – 12 months and requires up to 18 months of service before you become a fully qualified adviser (unless being fast tracked)



Adviser Training – what to expect?

Stage 1 Introduction to CA (1 – 3 weeks)	Stage 2 Learning & Training (4 – 8 weeks)	Stage 3 Solo Practice (15 – 52 Weeks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome to Citizens Advice• Meeting members of your group / local office• Aims and Principles• The Advice Model / Adviceline• Case Recording• Research and Campaigns• Using the public site and Advisernet• Casebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benefits• Universal Credit• Debt• Employment• Housing and Homelessness• Discrimination• Family & Personal• Disability Benefits – Forms / Reviews and Appeals• Benefits Calculator• Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advising clients on a solo basis• Working on Adviceline• Continued Training and Learning on Skillbook (Citizens Advice Learning Platform) <p>Case records are completed for every client, checked daily and feedback is given.</p>

Practical Experience - Stages 1 - 3 Throughout your training you will gain valuable experience working in the office, dealing with clients. You may be on reception greeting clients and answering phone calls or emailing clients with basic requests.

FAST TRACKING (ADVISER TRAINING) - For some paid roles, people will be able to fast track through the Adviser Training Programme. For this people need to be well organised and self motivated, confident about working through the online self - study modules and able to assimilate a lot of information quickly.

Training sessions usually take place once a week for approximately 3 to 4 hours per week.

You will be expected to do some 'homework' and you will be expected to attend the office to volunteer at least for 4 hours as well as doing your training sessions. This means that you should be able to give 1 ½ days per week to being an adviser.

Once in solo practice and the training sessions have ended you are expected to be able to contribute 1 day a week to your role and keep up to date with your learning.



How our Volunteers progress:

Tom's story:

Tom joined us in February 2022 as a trainee volunteer shortly after finishing his M.Sc. in politics, economics, and philosophy. In May, after being fast tracked on the Adviser Training course, he took a paid role as a Refugee Resettlement Caseworker.

Tom says: 'Citizens Advice is at the heart of many communities in this country and is very much on the frontline of many of the main struggles facing the British public today. From helping with debt to supporting clients with rising energy costs, the services provided by Citizens Advice are an essential part of society. I've learnt a great deal in my short time with the organisation both through my training and my experiences with clients. My training was specifically tailored to me, and I was able to "fast track" a number of sections in order to speed up my entry into paid work. Currently I am supporting refugee families to adapt to the peculiarities of British bureaucracy, challenging state and private institutions on their behalf, and helping them to make their way in their new home. My job is extremely rewarding as the impact of the work is clear and immediate'

Jan's story:

With retirement from her main occupation approaching, Jan began on reception 'watching in awe' the way that the Supervisors dealt with the demands of clients and supported the advisers to help each client resolve their problem. It was a great way to learn! With more time available Jan completed the Adviser training and then the real learning began as she saw clients on her own although always fully supported by the Supervisor and some times the Case workers.

Jan says: During the years I have moved from a volunteer to a paid worker, from Adviceline and working in the office to being (not all at the same time!) an Income Maximisation Adviser, helping clients apply for Universal Credit in the library and on the Help to Claim phonenumber, advising on the Winter Warmth scheme, and - most recently - working as a member of the Debt Support Team. The roles are varied and challenging and there is always something new to keep the brain cells working and every client presents differently bringing their own rewards.

Visit our website for more information

www.centraldorsetca.org.uk

For Job Opportunities visit

www.centraldorsetca.org.uk/work-with-us

For Volunteering Opportunities, email your interest to

Opportunities@centralca.org.uk