

More about volunteering with East Hampshire Citizens Advice

East Hampshire Citizens Advice operates from offices in Petersfield, Bordon and Alton; we have an outreach in Liphook, and a home visiting service for welfare rights. When a client first makes contact with us either by phone, email, web-chat or by dropping in, we assess their needs and work out the best way to help them. This job is done by a Gateway Assessor. All our new volunteer advisers start off as Gateway Assessors, and then, after a period of time, complete the training to become a full Generalist Adviser. For those who want to, there are other possibilities for development, such as specialist adviser (for example in debt work, or employment advice), and campaigning work.

In order to work as a Gateway Assessor/Adviser you will need to have good communication skills, be patient, determined and thorough. You will need to write letters, and use our computer based information system to research areas of law on behalf of clients. You will also need to write records of all client interviews using our computerised records system. Although we give full training on the computer systems, you will need to have good basic computer skills. But don't be put off – we will give you all the training and support you need.

The Gateway Assessor training programme covers all the things you need to become a fully competent Gateway Assessor, and consists of two phases. The first phase lasts about a month, during which we need a commitment from you of two days per week (one in the “classroom” and one learning on the job in the bureau) usually from about 9.30 – 4.00 each day. The second phase lasts another month (although this can vary) during which time you will be working in the bureau, seeing clients and developing competence, but no longer attending classroom days. After the end of this training you will be considered competent and will be a valued member of our team.

During the second phase of your training and once you are qualified, we require that you would volunteer for at least one day per week, although if you can offer more time we would be most grateful. Throughout your training, and beyond you would never be expected to work without support, so we always ensure that there is someone to ask. That's why we always have a friendly supervisor in the office to help everyone in the team. We offer 6 weeks holiday each year, although we also offer a “swap” system should you need to swap one of your rota days with another colleague. We will pay all necessary travel expenses for training, and mileage up to 20 miles round trip for attendance at the bureau. As we said, the work is voluntary (there is no pay and no contract of employment, but we do supply plenty of tea and biscuits!). However, it is not “optional” – we need to rely on our volunteers to work their rota days to ensure that we are always available when our clients need us.