

1. Time Commitment

Trainees

What we ask of you – Four full days observation prior to the selection interview with the CEO. Following selection you will be trained in a small group on a mutually agreed day. The training, which takes place at Bower Terrace and Maidstone Gateway and may involve going on outreach visits, will last about 8 months. There are 2 obligatory external courses run by Citizens Advice, often held in London.

What you should expect of us A fully supported, structured, self-learning programme.

Advisers

What we ask of you Advisers will be expected to work for at least one mutually agreed regular day a week, alternating between Bower Terrace and Maidstone Gateway. You are expected to arrive at least half an hour before the start of each session and may have to complete your work after the session closes to clients. The working day would include advising, writing up case records and some reading to keep up to date.

What you should expect of us – Flexibility about when you work within the constraints of drawing up the rota. Consideration will be given to advisers with care responsibilities or other family commitments. Parents with school going children can attend for two half days to enable them to be with their children for the start and end of school.

2. Absences/Holidays

What we ask of you – Advisers are requested to give the Bureau as much notice as possible in advance of holidays so that cover can be arranged. If an emergency arises it is requested that Advisers phone in as soon as they are able to do so.

What you should expect of us – We will accommodate all Advisers holiday arrangements.

3. Expenses

What we ask of you – Advisers are requested to try and use the most economical form of transport where possible. Take your costs and sign the daily expense sheet for travel to the Bureau

What you should expect of us – We pay your travel costs out of petty cash at the rate of 40p per mile for car travel, or bus, or train fares up to a maximum of £10. When on an approved external training course actual travel costs or 40p per mile car travel costs will be paid. The bureau has a free car park. All expenses over £10 are paid by cheque. If a train ticket for an external training course needs to be purchased and the Adviser needs prepayment please advise the Advice Manager or Chief Executive.

4. Confidentiality

What we ask of you – All discussions and contact with clients are strictly confidential and no information about the client or their enquiry, including their visit should be passed to anyone without their written permission. Please consult the Chief Executive or Advice Manager if you consider there is a case for breach of confidentiality.

What you should expect of us – In cases where you feel that there is an issue about breach of confidentiality you are not expected to make a decision on your own and will receive guidance and support from a member of the management team.

5. Equal Opportunities

What we ask of you – As an Adviser you are expected not to discriminate against clients and colleagues on grounds of race, sex, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or disability or any other reason. Remarks and comments about clients or colleagues that may be considered offensive are not permitted.

What you should expect of us – You should feel that you are being treated by colleagues and the Bureau in a fair and supportive manner. We will treat seriously any complaints you may have about discrimination.

6. Support & Supervision

What we ask of you – During the course of an interview you *must* always consult with your Advice Session Supervisor about the client's problem(s) and the advice to be given.

What you should expect of us – The Bureau will always seek to have an Advice Session Supervisor present to support all Advisers during the time the bureau is open for advice to its clients. Advisers should feel able to ask for help without censure at all times.

7. Ex-Offenders

What we ask of you – We expect you to fully disclose to the Bureau details of any criminal records that you might have. This disclosure will not necessarily preclude you from being a volunteer.

What you should expect of us – Complete confidentiality and fair treatment. The Bureau has an ex-offenders policy which will be strictly adhered to. Where necessary, CRB checks will be carried out to safeguard all vulnerable clients and children.

8. Problems

What we ask of you – We ask you to help the Bureau to maintain a working environment where people feel able to express their views and where problems are openly discussed. All workers, paid and voluntary, should feel able to put forward suggestions for improving the Bureau. Suggestions can be raised with the CEO, the Management Team or at staff meetings. Where the CEO feels that clients of the Bureau may be at risk by your behaviour or performance, he will discuss this with you.

What you should expect of us – Most problems are resolved through continuous assessment and day to day supervision. If you feel aggrieved by a colleague's behaviour or by something happening at the Bureau, you should tell the CEO, a member of the Management Team or one of the volunteer representatives on the Trustee Board. There is an established grievance procedure which must be strictly followed.

9. Assessment

What we ask of you – In order to ensure that a high quality of advice is maintained, the Bureau operates a scheme of continuous assessment of all volunteers. Part of this process is your assessing your own strengths and weaknesses for an annual review. The process is completed through regular feedback on your work by the Bureau Supervisors. You are expected to engage actively with the feedback process.

What you should expect of us – The feedback process and assessment scheme will be objective and may be able to identify training and other needs which the Bureau will endeavour to meet through one-to-one and training sessions

10. Training

What we ask of you – You must accept the need for on-going training in order to maintain and improve the quality of your work and to fulfil this, you are encouraged to attend 6 training sessions per year some of which may be outside the Bureau.

What you should expect of us – Newly qualified advisers will be supported by a mentor. Training opportunities at different levels are made available to all volunteers both at the Bureau and at other locations. After one-to-one discussions at appraisals, casework meetings and feedback processes, specific training courses will be made available as required/ identified. There may also be training sessions at Staff meetings

11. Staff Meetings

What we ask of you – Advisers are expected to attend a minimum of 6 staff meetings each calendar year. Attendance at Staff meetings will enable Bureau staff to share experiences, keep in touch with one another and to participate in the development and policies of the Bureau.

What you should expect of us – All volunteers should feel free to raise issues of concern at staff meetings. Substantial issues of concern raised at these meetings will be addressed and dealt with outside the staff meetings and the findings brought back and reported at the next staff meeting. The Bureau Trustee Board has 2 volunteer representatives elected by the staff at the staff meeting preceding the AGM.

12. Health & Safety

What we ask of you – All volunteers must observe the Organisation's Health & Safety rules and policies. Staff must read and sign the H&S documents on an annual basis. Please inform the CEO or Advice Manager about any unsafe practices you have observed or any accidents that have occurred.

What you should expect of us – The Organisation aims to provide all staff a safe working environment and to treat all issues of Health & Safety seriously and to take appropriate action as soon as possible. There is an Accident Book in the Supervisor's office at Bower Terrace. Safety at Maidstone Gateway is the responsibility of Maidstone Borough council.

13. Mistakes and Financial Liability

What we ask of you – If as an interviewer you realise that you have made a mistake, it is essential that the Supervisor or a member of paid staff is immediately informed. You will be expected to provide a detailed written account of the situation so that appropriate action can be taken by senior staff.

What you should expect of us – The Bureau assumes full liability for any action taken against the Organisation. There is a personal liability and indemnity policy in place. If mistakes are made by any advisers/volunteer, they will not be individually liable for any action the client may take.

14. Leaving the Service of the Bureau

What we ask of you – We request all our volunteers to give the Bureau as much notice as possible so that the rota can be re-arranged. In the event of volunteers leaving the service exit interviews are conducted to establish their reasons for leaving. Should you be leaving because of feeling dissatisfied in any way, we request you to discuss this with the Chief Executive before you leave.

What you should expect of us – The Bureau is able to provide all leavers with a reference indicating the skills and knowledge acquired as well as qualities observed.