

(1) Provide Advice

The Citizens Advice Service is independent and provides free, confidential and impartial advice to everybody regardless of race, sex, disability, sexuality or nationality. It is the largest advice-giving network in the UK, with over 3,000 outlets and 22,000 volunteers. We help people deal with 6.6 million problems every year, by face-to-face interview, by phone and email, at outreach sessions in places like GP surgeries and courts – even in people's homes.

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.

We act as a one-stop-shop for clients. 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 & benefits, but we will help people who come to us with any enquiry including consumer rights and legal matters..

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 make a real difference to people in your community

(2) Campaign for changes in policies and services

Citizens Advice make a confidential 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 help prevent similar problems happening to others.

National campaigning

We use evidence collected from client interviews 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 as well as businesses. We aim to stop problems at their source, using the direct experience of the communities that we serve.

Each branch sends information about the problems brought to them (but not about their clients) to the national Citizens Advice organisation. Evidence is collated to help research and campaign officers identify national trends. The CAB 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, branches may act individually or join forces with others, 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 CAB Service is respected for its impartiality and independent analysis, and is listened to at all levels of government. Councillors, MPs, and Ministers all consult the CAB 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

Payday loans

Bailiffs

Legal aid reform

You can help us make life better for everyone

More about Citizens Advice Maidstone

Locations	2 Bower Terrace, Tonbridge Road Maidstone, ME16 8RY Maidstone Borough Council Gateway King Street, Maidstone, ME15 6JQ
Wheelchair Access	2 Bower Terrace – on notice MBC Gateway – fully accessible
Opening Hours	2 Bower Terrace – Mon to Fri 10am – 4pm MBC Gateway – Mon to Fri 9.30am – 4pm
Advice Services	Generalist Advice – drop in service Money Advice – by appointment Housing Advice – by appointment Benefits Advice – by appointment Employment Advice – by appointment Family Law – by appointment Legal Advice – Weds afternoon by appointment Accountant – Thurs afternoon monthly by appointment Home Visits – by appointment Outreach Service – venues around the Borough Actions against the Police – by appointment
Annual number of Clients seen	7,248 (2014/15)
Annual number of Enquiries	40,051 (2014/15) figures)
Annual client contacts	26,698
Main Enquiry areas	Debt, Benefits, Housing, Employment Consumer, Relationships, Legal
Volunteer Advisers	43
Volunteer Gateway assessors	5
Trainees	17
Admin Volunteers	14
Paid Staff	8 Full Time & 24 Part Time
Area Served	Maidstone Borough & surrounding areas
Population	155,200
Ethnic Minority Groups	Several including Asian and Eastern European

What should I do next?

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

If you want to join us, please

- ◆ apply using the interactive form on our website
- ◆ call us 01622 750770

We will be happy to answer any questions and arrange for you to visit us for an initial discussion, and to tell you more about volunteering opportunities available here. The roles available vary from time to time. We are always looking for volunteers, and hopefully can find a role that both meets our needs and fits in with your interests and the times you are available.

After your initial discussion we will email or write to your referees and ask for their reference enclosing a job description and a person specification. Once we have obtained suitable references, we will invite you to spend four days observing our work. During these four days you will observe face to face interviews, you will listen to telephone advice conversations, spend some time learning what is expected from you as a prospective volunteer and get to know more about our organisation.

After your observations are completed we will invite you for an interview with our Chief Executive which will give you both the opportunity to decide whether the role you've chosen is right for you. Following a successful interview you will be requested to contact our Advice Manager to arrange for suitable days for you to start your training process. Before the start of your training you will receive a full induction.

The Citizens Advice service 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 maintaining a working environment that will enable disabled people to gain the appropriate skills and become valued volunteers within the service.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Maidstone CAB, and for taking the time to read this information. We look forward to welcoming you to the CAB Service.