

Citizens Advice Aims and Principles

Aims

We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.

We aim to

- provide the advice people need for the problems they face
- improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

Our service is based on four principles:

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 anything on a client tells us – or even the fact they have visited, without 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 people who turn to us for help each year.

Our service has been strongly committed to justice, fairness and equality since its foundation in 1939.

"Be prepared to put some effort in - there's no point in being a trustee if you don't - but it doesn't necessarily mean huge amounts of time. You'll get the rewards in terms of satisfaction - seeing the organisation succeed in helping a great many people to overcome serious problems."

Neil, local Citizens Advice Trustee and Treasurer

The role of trustees

Our trustees are volunteers who use their skills, knowledge and experience to help guide and govern the organisation. They work with the Chief Executive and other staff to shape strategy and give direction.

This includes making sure that we are:

- Doing what we are set-up to do, such as offering high quality advice services to the local community.
- Complying with the law, including upkeep of premises, insurance, recruitment and equipment.
- Securing money to meet current and new demands, and that all funds are used responsibly.
- Recognised and valued by local organisations, funders and people, who are aware of the vital service we provide.

Trustees attend regular meetings and sometimes get involved in additional governance projects, such as supporting fundraising, developing strategy or overseeing HR procedures. Within our board, some trustees have a specific role, such as being the Chair, Treasurer or Secretary. These positions have defined responsibilities, such as chairing and facilitating meetings (Chair), overseeing the budget (Treasurer) and taking and circulating minutes (Secretary).

“I take huge pride in being a member of the Trustee Board. I believe that I bring my legal skills and experience to add to the other skills of the Board members and that together we have guided and continue to guide, and support our staff and volunteers in the excellent work that they do. To see the charity flourish and grow and know that you have helped in some small way is very rewarding.”

Helen, local Citizens Advice Trustee

What will you do?

Complete an introduction for your role

Maintain an awareness of how we are operating

Read papers for board meetings and attend 4 meetings per year

Work on specific projects with other trustees or staff to further the strategic objectives of Citizens Advice Ashfield

Take an active discussion during board meetings and work with other trustees to:

- set policy and strategy direction, set targets and evaluate our performance
- monitor the financial position ensuring we operate within our means and objectives, ensuring that these are clear
- ensure that all our finances and supporting financial control systems are in order including that full financial records are kept for all transactions, that money is only spent for the purpose given, and that proper financial controls are in place to safeguard the organisation's resources
- monitor our financial position ensuring that we operate within our means and objectives, ensuring that there are clear lines of accountability for day to day financial management
- seek the views of all sections of the community and monitor how well we meet the needs of the local community
- ensure that our service plans for the recruitment and turnover of staff and volunteers
- review our work and how effectively we operate including action for improvement

What do you need to have?

You don't need specific qualifications or skills but you'll need to:

- understand and accept the responsibilities and liabilities as trustees
- be non-judgmental and respect views, values and cultures that are different to your own
- have good listening, verbal and written communication skills
- be able to exercise good independent judgment
- have good numeracy skills to understand accounts with the support of the treasurer

"Don't worry too much about being expert in what Citizens Advice does. There are plenty of opportunities to learn. What you really need to bring is a willingness to listen, weigh up options and be part of the decision making process."

Sarah, local Citizens Advice Chair of Trustees

What's in it for you?

- make a positive impact for people in your local area by ensuring the local Citizens Advice is sustainable and meeting the needs of the community
- meet people and build relationships with trustees, staff and other volunteers
- build on your governance, leadership and strategy skills
- increase your employability

And we'll reimburse expenses too.

"The Citizens Advice service challenges the social issues I feel passionate about. As a trustee I can help redress the imbalance of injustice."

Azad, local Citizens Advice Trustee

How do I become a trustee?

We are delighted that you are interested in becoming a trustee. If you would like to know more or apply, please email recruitment@ashfieldca.org.uk

We will send you a link to our online application form for you to complete. Once we have received this, the Chief Executive will contact you to arrange a convenient time for you to come and see us.

You will be invited to observe our next board meeting and once we have received your signed confidentiality form, you will be sent a board pack and will be able to participate fully in the meeting.

Following the meeting, trustees will make their decision and we will inform you if your application to join the Trustee Board has been recommended for acceptance.