

Housing / Debt Caseworker

Job pack

Thanks for your interest in working at Citizens Advice South Warwickshire. This job pack should give you everything you need to know to apply for this role and what it means to work at Citizens Advice.

In this pack you'll find:

- Our values
- 3 things you should know about us
- Overview of Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice South Warwickshire
- The role profile and person specification
- Terms and conditions
- What we give our staff

Want to chat about this role?

If you want to chat about the role further, you can contact Sunita Nega by emailing sunita.nega@casouthwarwickshire.org.uk

Our values

We're inventive. We're not afraid of trying new things and learn by getting things wrong. We question every idea to make it better and we change when things aren't working.

We're generous. We work together, sharing knowledge and experience to solve problems. We tell it like it is and respect everyone.

We're responsible. We do what we say we'll do and keep our promises. We remember that we work for a charity and use our resources effectively.

3 things you should know about us

1. We're local and we're national. We have 6 national offices and offer direct support to people in around 300 independent local Citizens Advice services across England and Wales.

2. We're here for everyone. Our advice helps people solve problems and our advocacy helps fix problems in society. Whatever the problem, we won't turn people away.

3. We're listened to - and we make a difference. Our trusted brand and the quality of our research mean we make a real impact on behalf of the people who rely on us.

How Citizens Advice South Warwickshire works

Our people

Citizens Advice South Warwickshire has a Trustee Board of twelve people who are all volunteers. Our Trustees bring a wide range of professional skills and knowledge and insight of the district to the planning of the service. The Trustees, in conjunction with the CEO, are ultimately responsible for setting the strategy and budget for the service. Day to day running and further development of the organisation is the responsibility of the CEO who, alongside a senior management team, oversees the delivery of our services.

CASW has 29 paid staff members (approx 20 FTE) and is proud to have in excess of 120 volunteers working in various roles. These roles include reception and administration, generalist advice, supervisors, money advice, research and campaigns work, grant finder, financial capability, money mentors, IT support and more. These volunteer roles have expanded in recent years and the service is actively developing volunteers to support its offer.

CASW operates from two main locations, in [Leamington Spa](#) and [Stratford-upon-Avon](#) town centres. In order to reach people who find travelling around our large urban and rural catchment area difficult, we have outreach offices in [11 locations around the district](#). We also deliver advice and information by telephone from the Stratford-upon-Avon office, and a home visiting service for those who would otherwise find access difficult.

Our clients

On many indices of deprivation South Warwickshire can be defined as a low need / high income area. This masks significant pockets of deprivation, rural challenges of isolation, access to services and work, significant fuel poverty and affordability, especially in relation to housing.

The difference we make

We make an amazing difference to the lives of the people of South Warwickshire. What we do is often life-changing and sometimes life-saving. In 2019-20 we delivered our advice and advocacy to over 6,200 people and advised on over 32,000 issues.

Factors impacting on people's lives include welfare benefit changes, debt, housing repossessions and local issues such as transport and the high cost of housing in our area. We work with local authorities, third sector partners, housing providers and many other agencies to mitigate the effects of sickness, bereavement, unemployment, disability, relationship breakdown and many other issues people face.

Benefits and debt are the two highest demand advice areas for our service followed by housing and employment. There has been a sharp increase in the number of people seeking help following a decision to decline or not renew disability and incapacity benefits. We are finding that this is a particular issue faced by those with mental health issues.

Over the last 5 years we have seen a marked increase in the prevalence of priority debts such as Council Tax and rent arrears and after seeing a significant reduction of unsecured credit over this period we are now once more witnessing growth in the numbers of people seeking advice with these debts.

As discussed above, housing and threatened homelessness is also a significant and growing problem. In 2019 - 20 we advised over 300 families facing repossession action.

Our funding and projects

We have a wide range of funding sources. This includes income from Warwickshire County Council, Warwick and Stratford District Councils and a number of town and parish councils. This income is awarded via direct grants and through commissioned contracts.

We have also been very successful at drawing down further income from grant and project funding bodies including: the Big Lottery Fund, Henry Smith Trust, Oken Trust, Orbit Housing, Money Advice Service and many more. This income is approximately three times the funding from local authorities.

Our partnerships

We held an exceptionally successful multi-agency event in November 2017. The event looked at how to better support our communities in partnership with funders and other partners. The success of this event helped to position our service at the centre of all of those working to achieve positive, long-term outcomes for the people of South Warwickshire.

Our local research and campaigns

The stories our clients tell us provide us with a unique insight into the problems faced by people living in South Warwickshire. We are able to spot developing trends and this helps us to create campaigns and speak up for our clients to those in decision-making roles. By raising issues nationally we can create a public debate, change things for the better and help many more people than those that contact us.

We are currently working locally on issues around access to public transport in rural areas; the reasons why people use food banks; the impact recent welfare benefit changes have had on income and access to disability benefits. More information about Citizens Advice national campaigns can be found on the national website. www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

Our R&C team are also working with clients on the co-design of our service delivery. This has helped us to understand and remove potential barriers to our service in relation to access.

Our website

- Please visit our website for further information about our service.
www.casouthwarwickshire.org.uk.

Overview of Citizens Advice

The Citizens Advice service is made up of Citizens Advice - the national charity - and a network of around 300 local Citizens Advice members.

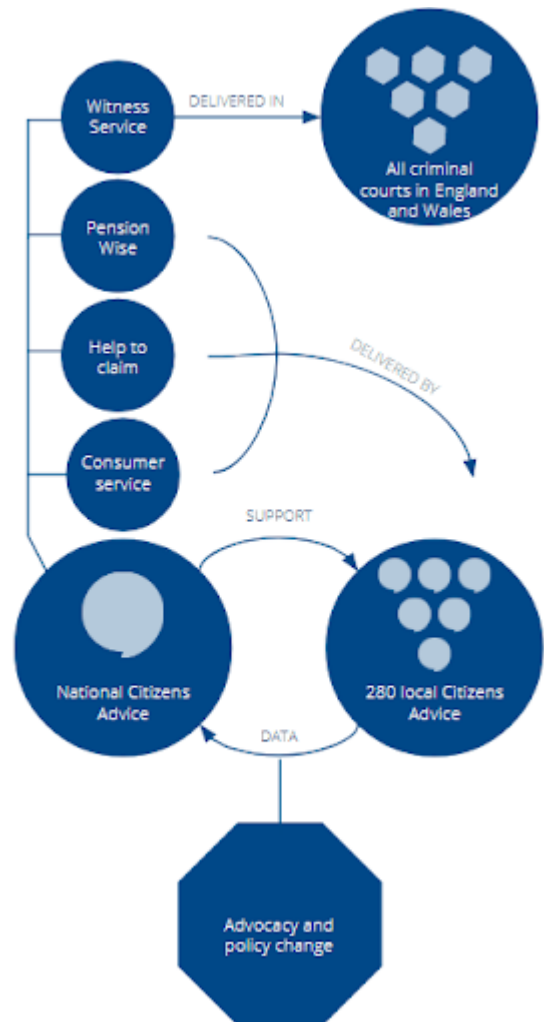
This role sits our network of independent charities, delivering services from

- over 600 local Citizens Advice outlets
- over 1,800 community centres, GPs' surgeries and prisons

They do this with:

- 6,500 local staff
- over 23,000 trained volunteers

Our reach means 99% of people in England and Wales can access a local Citizens Advice within a 30 minute drive of where they live.





The role

Post: Housing Caseworker

Salary: £23,269 - £25,295 dependent on experience (FTE 37 hours)

Hours: 30 hours per week

Responsible to: Partnerships & Inclusion Manager

Location: South Warwickshire (Stratford/Warwick office)

Duration: 12 months (possibility of extension)

Role Purpose

CASW is looking to recruit a housing caseworker to cover the Warwick district area of south Warwickshire and work in conjunction with our Stratford District housing caseworker. The aim of the role is to prevent clients from facing homelessness and evictions, by providing advocacy, advice and support to clients within Warwick District.

The caseworker will provide money advice and representation at court for clients at risk of repossession in order to prevent homelessness. Supporting clients to reduce the risk of falling into rent arrears by helping them to resolve their debt issues, doing income maximisation through benefit claims, applying for hardship grants and educating on financial capability, referring more complex debt cases onto specialist debt caseworkers.



Role profile

Casework

1. Provide casework covering money advice and representation at court for clients at risk of repossession.
2. Act for the client where necessary by calculating, negotiating, drafting or writing letters and telephoning.
3. Negotiate with third parties as appropriate.

4. Ensure income maximisation through the take up of appropriate welfare benefits.
5. Prepare and present cases to the appropriate courts.
6. Assist clients with other related problems where they are an integral part of their case and refer to other advisers or specialist agencies as appropriate.
7. Make home/outreach visits as necessary.
8. Provide advice, assistance and training to other staff and volunteers across the range of housing issues.
9. Ensure that all casework conforms to CA quality of advice and Advice Quality Mark standards at the appropriate level.
10. Maintain case records for the purpose of continuity of casework, information retrieval, statistical monitoring and report preparation.
11. Ensure that all work conforms to the bureau's systems and procedures.

Professional development

- Keep up to date with legislation, case law, policies and procedures relating to housing and undertake appropriate training.
- Read relevant publications.
- Attend relevant internal and external meetings as agreed with the line manager.
- Prepare for and attend supervision sessions/team meetings/management team meetings as appropriate.
- Assist with Service initiatives for the improvement of services.

Administration

- Review and make recommendations for improvements to our services.
- Use IT for statistical recording, record keeping and document production.
- Keep up to date with policies and procedures and undertake appropriate training.
- Attend internal and external meetings as agreed with the manager.
- Maintain close liaison with relevant external agencies.
- Maintain a library of reference material and case law.

Public relations

- Liaise with statutory and non-statutory organisations and represent the Service on outside bodies as appropriate.

Other duties and responsibilities

- Carry out any other tasks that may be within the scope of the post to ensure the effective delivery and development of the service.
- Demonstrate commitment to the values of the CA service.
- Abide by health and safety guidelines and share responsibility for your own safety and that of colleagues.



Person specification

1. Understanding of and commitment to the aims and principles of the Citizens Advice service, and equality & diversity.
2. Knowledge and experience of housing and money advice work.
3. Effective oral communication skills with particular emphasis on negotiating and representing.
4. Effective writing skills with particular emphasis on negotiating, representing and preparing reviews, reports and correspondence.
5. Ordered approach to casework and an ability and willingness to follow and develop agreed procedures.
6. Understand the issues involved in interviewing clients.
7. Numerate to the level required in the tasks.
8. Ability to prioritise own work, meet deadlines and manage caseload.
9. Ability to use IT in the provision of advice and the preparation of reports and submissions.
10. Ability to give and receive feedback objectively and sensitively and a willingness to challenge constructively.
11. Ability and willingness to work as part of a team.
12. Ability to monitor and maintain own standards.

13. Demonstrate understanding of social trends and their implications for clients and service provision.

Desirable:

14. Citizens Advice Certificate in Generalist Advice

15. Knowledge of the local area and local bodies and organisations

16. Is a Certified Member of the Institute of Money Advisers (MIMA Cert)

17. Holds DRO Intermediary status

Notes on Special Conditions of Service

1. Valid and up to date driving licence and business insurance together with access to a car is essential as regular driving is necessary to carry out this role. Expenses will be paid in accordance to CASW's policies.
2. Enhanced DBS required
3. The post holders will be required to work across designated areas of Stratford District and or Warwick District.
4. Some occasional evening and weekend work will be required together with a flexible approach where necessary.

The closing date for applications

Monday 24th May 2021 9am.

Interviews will be held via video conference w/c: Monday 31st May 2021

We look forward to receiving your application form.

Terms and conditions

- If inexperienced at Citizens Advice we provide the essential citizens advice adviser training.
- There is a 6 months probation period for the role
- We work on a 37 hour working week, if you're part time then your holiday, sick pay and bank holiday days will be pro rata

What we give our staff

- Holiday: 5 weeks holiday with 8 days bank holiday (pro rata if part time) With a mandatory time off between christmas and new year.
- Sick pay: 1 week full pay and 1 week half pay when starting, increasing to 1 month full pay and 1 month half pay after two years of service.
- Mileage (if you do home visits or outreach) and expenses reimbursed in accordance to our expenses policy
- IT equipment for your role provided
- Further training and CPD
- "People's Pension" Pension scheme
- Maternity / Paternity / Shared parenting pay