

Volunteer stories



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citizens
advice
bureau

What were your motivations and reasons to volunteer at the bureau?

I started volunteering at Argyll and Bute CAB 14 years ago. I was about to retire from a busy role co-ordinating social care provision for a third sector organisation and realized that I needed to find something to make use of the additional free time I would have. I saw an article about volunteering at the CAB in the local paper and decided to apply. As it happened, I retired from work one day and started my training at CAB the next! I enjoyed the training which was in part self-directed learning at home, along with group sessions. I find what I do as a Generalist Adviser challenging as we can be asked anything; even after all this time I still come across queries that I have not encountered before. However, we do the research using the resources we are provided with which means that I am learning all the time and that is a good thing.

What does your volunteer role involve?

I contact clients back after they have made initial contact with the CAB to request advice and, if clients have asked for a face-to-face appointment, I also go into the office to see them. I'm experienced at providing advice using the CAB processes and resources and there is always some one there to support the advisers as well as specialist staff on hand to refer clients to or get help from.

What is the 'stand out' part of your role(s)? In other words, what are the most important, rewarding, or enjoyable part of your volunteering?

It's the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped someone. Of course, you can't always do that, but I know that even when we must tell clients what they did not want to here, they appreciate that we took the time to listen and that we give them impartial, clear information.

I feel proud of the quality of the service we offer. Apart from the excellent resources that we have access to as advisers and the support from staff at the bureau, there is a robust checking process in place. The bureau checks my advice records and then a national team of auditors check the work of the bureau case checkers. Knowing that this is in place means I am part of something bigger, it validates what I do. It's also reassuring to know that if I or my colleagues are going wrong at any point, checkers will let us know what it is that we need to change.





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What are the benefits of volunteering at your bureau?

It keeps my mind active. Sometimes it's a challenge; as I said, you can't always help as sometimes the rules or the system are just not in the client's favour but, regardless I do get a sense of satisfaction from my volunteering.

What skills or knowledge have you gained through volunteering at the bureau?

I have knowledge about subjects I would not have come across without my volunteering – the benefits system, debt advice, immigration issues for example. Then, when I started to work remotely, I began to use Zoom and Teams which I had no previous experience of.

What difference do you feel your role/contribution brings to your bureau and community?

Without volunteers, the bureau could not help the number of clients that it does. Our community really appreciates having our CAB available and visible locally. They know we are a resource for them to use and in that sense, we are accessible to them.

