

# Volunteer stories



Louise,  
Volunteer for 4 months, Help  
to Claim Adviser 7 months  
and now Regional Coordinator  
– HTC Project  
West LothianCAB

citizens  
advice  
bureau

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

For me I chose to volunteer as I was at a point that I was looking for a new career path. I knew I wanted to go into the charitable sector because I have a passion for helping others. For me I wanted to be supporting my local community with real life issues and support clients look for positive solutions for their issues and bring forward positive change for that person. I have accessed Citizens Advice in my past and gained support and found the service to be of great value. Therefore, I knew this sector was the right direction for me. I am motivated by the value received when you know you have supported clients and see a positive outcome. As well as this, the CAB encourages employment opportunities and supports all volunteers and staff to reach their full potential.

## **What does your volunteer role involve?**

Giving a sense of hope and reassurance to the local community. Letting people know that times may be hard or difficult at the moment but coming forward and asking for help can make things seem that little more manageable. It also allows you to be educated within local community issues and educates you on the real-life issues that people are facing on a daily basis.

## **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?**

Seeing a client leave the bureau with a sense of relief that they have been helped and best supported with their issue. Also, being thanked for the service we provide. Many clients advise that they find CAB a life saver and without the service would not know where to turn. Feeling thanked for providing a positive path for clients to work towards. Although it is important to note not all issues nor client requests require an outcome, some clients need to be actively listened to and heard and guided with a sense of direction in order to know they are not alone.





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**What are the benefits of volunteering at your bureau?**

Supporting our clients. Sitting with a client in person and working through a plan of action in steps that are right for the client based on their issue.

The knowledge and experience gained and learned in relation to real life issues. Especially challenging issues of a more complex nature and how to access support and guidance in order to provide support to the client and try make the situation more manageable.

Training and development: Full training is given and there is continuous refresher training if you feel you need it. You are never alone and support is always available if needed.

Opportunity of employment: Through volunteering your time there is always opportunity throughout CAB to apply for vacancies that become available. Employment opportunities are welcome for all and by volunteering and gaining experience on different subject areas, this allows an insight into a full range of projects running throughout bureau, that may be of interest for a potential job opportunity.

**What challenges have you overcome as part of your volunteer journey?**

On first starting in my role my confidence was low. As well as the worry of not knowing what to say to a client or if I could not answer their question or enquiry in the way they wanted. Although throughout my time at CAB I have gained more confidence within ongoing real-life issues. I have enhanced my knowledge on subject areas I found more complex through completing additional training in order to gain a better understanding and best support clients.

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

I have gained knowledge on the current issues faced throughout the local community, such as an increase in food poverty. I have a better understanding into how our service can support the clients and those who are most vulnerable access services that they may face barriers with.

I have enhanced my people skills and ability to build up relationships with clients and existing clients. As well as building trusting relationships with the clients so that they feel comfortable accessing our service.





Knowing you are making a difference in a person's life, even if that difference is sitting down with a client and listening to them.



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

Overall, I feel my own lived experience makes a big difference within my role within the bureau. Through my own lived experience of social issues. I am able to have a better understanding into the issues arising throughout the community and through my training I am able to support clients in the best manner.

**Please tell us anything else which you feel is an important part of your volunteer story.**

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