

Chance to help people tackle stressful issues

Citizens Advice was founded on September 4, 1939; the day after the Second World War broke out, and 80 years later they are still helping people with complicated and stressful problems.

At times, the world around us can seem increasingly fragmented and people can become more isolated from their communities. Their aim is to give people the knowledge and the confidence they need to find their way forward – whoever they are, and whatever their problem.

They provide free and, confidential advice to help people overcome problems with debt, benefits, housing, employment, relationships and much more. They also work to address the underlying causes of these problems.

The 670 volunteers supporting Citizens Advice in Oxfordshire contribute over 2,650 hours each week and last year helped 20,000 people with 65,500 problems. In order to maintain that level of support, they need to recruit about 50 volunteers each year.

VOLUNTARY VOICE

I enjoy volunteering here because it's about helping with people who are dealing with real issues such as housing, rent, utilities and relationship problems

The general public can help them achieve their goals by becoming a volunteer adviser, IT specialist, administrator, receptionist, campaigner or fundraiser. They can encourage people to look at their website and contact them before problems become too difficult to resolve.

As a charity, donations help them to maintain this valuable service at a time when funding local government funding is declining.

They are looking for volunteers from all backgrounds and of all ages across Oxfordshire. Volunteers need to have a desire to help, an ability to engage with people who may be distressed, participate in

Their volunteers give and gain a great deal. Volunteers love the fact they are helping their community and meet so many different people. It also gives them experience in the charity sector, a sense of purpose and some volunteers go on to secure paid roles having received extensive training and support. For example, advisers spend up to nine

months in initial training (once a week) and then up to a further nine months (if they wish) to enable them to deal with more complex cases. Volunteers are asked to contribute four-10 hours per week.

They will find the work challenging but satisfying – and they will help people resolve their problems or at least make progress in over three quarters of cases. Many volunteers stay for five, 10 and even 20 years. Citizens Advice volunteer's expertise and commitment define the culture of their charity.

Bushra Begum, one of the youngest volunteers at 23 said: "I enjoy volunteering here because it's about helping people who are dealing with real issues such as housing, rent, utilities and relationship problems."

If you're interested in finding out more about volunteering with Citizens Advice in Oxfordshire contact your local office or visit their page on oxonvolunteers.org. Additional information can also be found on their website www.caox.org.uk