



SOUTHWARK CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAUX SERVICE

Information about volunteering as a Trustee Board Member

This pack contains information about:

- The Southwark Citizens Advice Bureaux Service
- The Citizens Advice Service
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Becoming a Trustee Board Member
- What Citizens Advice Bureaux do

*Community
Legal Service*



Southwark Citizens Advice Bureaux Service
Charity registration no: 1070263

Company limited by guarantee registered number 3507093 England
Registered office: 8 Market Place, Southwark Park Road, SE16 3UQ
www.southwarkcabservice.org.uk



Information about the Southwark Citizens Advice Bureaux Service

Southwark Citizens Advice Bureaux Service is an independent registered charity and member of Citizens Advice. We help people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing information and advice, and by influencing policymakers.

Our bureaux in Peckham and Bermondsey provide free, confidential and impartial advice across all subjects. People visit the bureaux for information and advice during drop-in sessions and at other times by arranging appointments. We also have a telephone advice service and answer enquiries by letter and email.

In addition Southwark CABx also has a number of specialist and project advice services:

- we have a contract with the Legal Services Commission to provide specialist advice in welfare benefits and debt.
- we have a dedicated money adviser through the Capitalise Debt Partnership
- the Southwark Council Leaseholders Advice Project provides advice to council leaseholders on leasehold matters
- we provide advice services in hospitals in South East London to people who are affected by cancer. These services are in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and Dimbleby Cancer Care.
- we have an immigration and asylum advice project funded by Trust for London

We are also the lead agency in the Southwark Legal Advice Network. This project has the overall aim to improve access to quality assured advice services in Southwark for people in greatest need and brings together a partnership of 9 Southwark based advice providers from the voluntary and commercial sectors to further develop methods of integrated working.

The Southwark CABx Service handled over 23,000 enquiries last year. We also undertake social policy work and produce evidence on issues raised by client problems. This evidence is used to inform relevant authorities and organisations with the aim of solving problems at source.

The Southwark CABx Service team consists of 24 paid staff and a growing number of volunteers, who undertake advice, social policy, administration and reception work. The Service has a central management team reporting to the Borough Director who has overall responsibility for the Service. The Service is governed by a Trustee Board made up of volunteers with a range of experience and skills to lead and support the Service.

The Southwark CABx Service complies with the Citizens Advice membership scheme and quality standards, and has achieved the Community Legal Service Quality Mark. We have also achieved the London Volunteer Management Charter quality mark for good practice in our work with volunteers.

The borough of Southwark is an area of great cultural and ethnic diversity. Our clients represent the whole range of Southwark's population. Typically for an inner

city area, there are high levels of poverty, unemployment and poor housing. Many clients are refugees or asylum seekers and many clients do not have English as their first language. Many clients have disabilities or problems with long-term illness.

The Citizens Advice Service

The Citizens Advice Service helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free information and advice, and by influencing policy makers

The Citizens Advice Service provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. It values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination.

The Service aims:

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

Introduction to Southwark CABx Service Equality and Diversity Policy

Southwark CABx Service is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive culture for:

- all those who need our services
- our volunteers
- our staff and
- other stakeholders.

We recognise the positive value of diversity, promoting equality and fairness, and challenging discrimination.

We welcome our legal duties not to discriminate as a service provider and an employer. We aim to go beyond the narrow scope of legislative compliance and follow best practice, making equality, fairness and diversity a fundamental part of all our activities.

We recognise people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions, and we wish to encourage and harness these differences to make our services more relevant and approachable.

Southwark CABx Service will not discriminate or tolerate discriminatory behaviour on the grounds of race, colour, sex, gender identity (transgender), disability, nationality, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief, marital / partnership or family status, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation, age, social class, educational background, employment status, working pattern, trade union membership or any other irrelevant factor.

Becoming a Trustee Board Member



The Trustee Board

All Citizen Advice Bureaux are independent charities, governed by their own board of trustees, who are ultimately responsible for the quality and range of the service. Day to day control is delegated to the chief executive, but trustees

- Set the overall direction and support the development of the Service
- Ensure the Service meet the needs of the local community and Citizens Advice membership standards
- Employ paid staff and control bureaux finances
- Earn and retain the respect of important and influential people and organisations in the community, including funding bodies
- Ensure the Service complies with relevant laws.

CAB trustee boards need people from all sections of the community with a wide range of different skills, experience and perspectives. A full induction into the trustee board's role and responsibilities is provided.

In order to carry out the function of a governing body, the members of the Trustee Board between them must be able to:

- Understand what the Service aims to do and why
- Give the Service stability and plan for the future
- Earn and retain the respect of important and influential people and organisations with whom the Service has to deal, especially funding bodies
- Exercise responsible control over the finances of the Service
- Oversee equal opportunities implementation
- Offer enough time, knowledge, skills and other qualities to carry out the work of the Board

The Southwark CABx Trustee Board meets quarterly. Board meetings are usually held in the evenings starting at 6.30 pm. In addition, the Trustee Board has ad hoc working groups. Trustee Board members participate in the work of the Service, for example by being on a working group, sitting on recruitment panels, attending staff meetings and planning days, and representing the Service at local and national events.

Southwark CABx Service Trustees must live or work in the London Borough of Southwark or in the surrounding area.

Trustee Board Member - Role Description

Purpose of role: To maintain and develop the CAB Service in order to meet the needs of the local community

Responsible to: The Charity Commission, funders, donors, and the local community.

Main Duties:

- Setting the strategy and policies of the Service, and ensuring Service participation in Citizens Advice policy making through the democratic process
- Ensuring that the Service meets Citizens Advice standards and that the needs of the local community are being adequately met
- Monitoring the financial position of the Service and ensuring that it operates within its means
- Supporting the development of the Service through participation in agreed projects
- Actively seeking to further the strategic objectives of the Service
- Understanding all necessary employment functions relating to staff members and ensuring that Service training and development policy is adequate to meet the needs of staff

Personal Qualities & Experience

- Willingness to gain knowledge of local needs and resources
- Commitment to the aims, principles and policies of the CAB Service, including those relating to equality and diversity, independence and social policy
- Willingness and ability to act in the best interests of the Service
- Ability to understand their responsibilities as trustees and employers
- Willingness to participate in the national democratic process
- Numeracy to the extent required to understand CAB accounts with the support of a treasurer
- Willingness and ability to learn, and to develop and examine their own attitudes
- Commitment and availability to attend Trustee Board meetings
- Effective communication skills
- Experience and skills in business management, finance and human resources would be particularly useful.

What do Citizens Advice Bureaux do ?



Give advice

The CAB Service is independent and provides free, confidential and impartial advice to everybody regardless of race, sex, disability, sexuality or nationality. It is the largest advice-giving network in the UK, with over 2,000 outlets and 22,000 volunteers. We help people deal with nearly six million problems every year, in bureaux, by phone and email, at outreach sessions in places like GP surgeries and courts – even in people’s homes.

Our clients and volunteers come from all walks of life. We are committed to providing an independent advice service, and volunteering opportunities, for the whole community.

Bureaux act as a one-stop shop for clients. Advisers provide up to date advice and information using our unique electronic information system, link clients up with other services and agencies, help write letters and complete forms, negotiate with creditors, make phone calls on clients’ behalf and represent them at tribunals.

The problems we are most often asked about concern employment, debt, housing or benefits, but we will help people who come to us with any enquiry including consumer rights, legal matters and immigration.

Advisers don’t tell clients what to do, but explain their options and the possible outcomes of different courses of action. Clients are encouraged to make their own decisions and act on their own behalf. We enable clients to manage their own problems by focussing on their needs as individuals.

The CAB Service is based on four principles. It is:

- 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 on anything a client tells us – or even the fact they’ve visited us – without their 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 millions of people who turn to us for help each year.

What do Citizens Advice Bureaux do ?



Campaign for changes in policies and services

Citizens Advice Bureaux make a record of every enquiry brought to them. This adds up to a huge wealth of information about the problems people experience. We work proactively to prevent similar problems happening to others.

National campaigning

We use this evidence to highlight the effects that policies have on real people in the real world, and to suggest where improvements can be made to the policies and services of national and local government and businesses. We aim to stop problems at their source, using the direct experience of the communities that CABx serve.

Each bureau sends information about the problems brought to them (but not about their clients) to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. Evidence is collated to help social policy officers identify national trends. The CAB can then present evidence to policy makers by writing reports and submissions and participating in consultations to improve policies.

Local/regional campaigning

With local or regional issues, bureaux may act individually or join forces with other CABx and outside agencies, using their client evidence to lobby MPs, Assembly Members (AMs), councillors, local authorities and others, as well as presenting their findings to the media.

Turning evidence into action

The CAB Service is respected for its impartiality and independent analysis, and is listened to at all levels of government, Councillors, MPs, AMs and Ministers all consult the CAB Service on a wide range of issues. This enables us to effectively campaign for social justice and get laws and policies changed for the better.

We have recently campaigned on issues as diverse as :

- Maternity and parental rights
- Support for asylum seekers
- Disability discrimination
- Charges for health care
- School uniform costs
- Improving financial literacy