



# Housing Specialist

## Job pack

Thanks for your interest in working at Citizens Advice East Herts. 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 mission, vision and values
- 3 things you should know about Citizens Advice
- Overview of Citizens Advice East Herts
- The role profile and personal specification
- Terms and conditions

### **Want to chat about this role?**

If you want to chat about the role further, you can contact Karen Hoy, Head of Advice, by emailing [hoyk@citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk](mailto:hoyk@citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk) or calling 01920 459946

# ● Our mission, vision and values

Our **mission** is to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives.

Our **vision** is that everyone is able to access free advice to find a way forward.

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 Citizens Advice

**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.

## **Overview of Citizens Advice East Herts**

Citizens Advice East Herts provide free, confidential and impartial advice on any subject. We are an independent, local charity and a member of the Citizens Advice network. Last year we helped over 6,500 people in East Herts. Post Covid, demand for our service has increased considerably.

Our general service operates Monday to Thursday and is currently being delivered remotely via phone, email, webchat and video (pre Covid we worked from 2 main advice centres and 3 outreach locations). Face to face appointments are arranged where needed. Our service is delivered by local volunteers, supported by paid supervisors. We provide on-going casework where required.

***“They were amazing when our life fell apart. Without them I don't think I would be here”***

Client

Our volunteer model means our services are locally delivered by and for members of the community, directly at the point of need.

***“For me, working as an adviser at East Herts Citizens Advice ticks all the boxes. I get to be part of a team and learn new skills in a professional and supportive environment. Clients present with a very varied range of enquires and it is very satisfying to be part of an organisation that makes a real difference to people's lives”***

Volunteer

Whilst people seek help with many problems, the most common are benefits and tax credits, money advice, housing, employment and relationship problems. Our holistic service will explore other issues in addition to the presenting problem.

The clients we help include those most in need - our clients are most likely to earn significantly less than the average East Herts resident, less likely to be in

employment, more likely to be disabled or have a long-term health problem, and less likely to own their own home. Over a quarter of our clients who live in East Herts come from the 5 most deprived East Herts wards.

We are fortunate that East Herts is a largely affluent district but this can mask pockets of deprivation. There are many households experiencing multiple indices of deprivation living in close proximity to more affluent households. Life expectancy in more deprived areas is significantly lower than more prosperous neighbourhoods.

***“It’s often harder to be poor in the midst of affluence than it is to be poor in stereotypical ‘poor’ areas. Services, funding, staffing, grants etc all gravitate to the poorer areas, even within the County, and so those who are in poverty in ‘richer’ areas are left even more isolated and excluded.”***

Hertfordshire Matters

We work locally in East Herts but also across Hertfordshire through our Citizens Advice Hertfordshire consortium. It is through this partnership that we provide countywide services.

Some problems are too difficult to be solved through advice alone. Our evidence shows there are systemic barriers which stop people’s problems being resolved. Our work helps to remove these barriers by improving policy and practice. This can bring change not only for our clients but also for people who may never come to us for help. Our research and campaigns work provides evidence so that we can better target our support and our resources.

We have around 74 volunteers and 17 (mainly part time) paid members of staff supported by an active board of 9 trustees. We have developed very good relationships with local stakeholders including our primary funder East Herts Council.

***“Their level of expertise and local knowledge of East Herts and its communities are second to none.”***

Partner Organisation

# Who we are and how we help 2019-20



				
<b>75 volunteers</b> giving 21,000+ hr pa	<b>5 locations</b>	Advice <b>face-to-face</b> and <b>by phone</b>	Advice by <b>email</b>	Advice by <b>webchat</b>

*Everyone should be able to access free advice to find a way forward*

				
Our clients are <b>5 x more likely to live on a low income</b> than UK average	<b>Our advice improves finances</b> – income gain & money advice reduction	36% of our clients are <b>disabled or have a long term health condition</b>	<b>Our advice improves health</b> – relieving stress & the knock on effects	<b>We empower,</b> provide education and skills & campaign on key issues

## Our impact

				<b>£8.3 million in financial outcomes</b>
<b>6,509</b> clients helped	<b>14,325</b> issues dealt with	<b>3 in 4</b> clients said our advice improved their lives	<b>9,470</b> activities	For <b>every £1</b> invested we generate <b>£22.95</b> in value

## The Future

				
We want to recruit <b>more advisers and specialists</b>	We want to <b>extend</b> our <b>opening hours</b>	We want to <b>meet more people at their point of need</b>	We want to <b>change perceptions</b> – we're here for <u>everyone</u>	We want to <b>reach more people</b>



## The role

**Salary:** Grade 15 £24,167 – Grade 20 £26,617 FTE depending on experience. Including London Weighting

**Location:** Home based and working in community locations in East Herts when required

**Hours:** 15 hours per week

**Contract:** Initially 1-year fixed term

**Application deadline:** Thursday 6 May 12pm

**Virtual Interviews:** Week commencing 17 May 2021

Citizens Advice East Herts are looking for an experienced Housing Specialist to join our friendly team to deliver housing advice and advocacy services to East Herts clients via telephone, digital and face to face channels and to provide technical housing support to our team of volunteer advisers.

An important aspect of this role is to build on our existing good relationships with other voluntary agencies and the Local Authority, fostering good working relationships for the benefit of our clients.

The successful applicant will have recent experience of giving generalist advice, including benefits advice to clients and will have ideally achieved Adviser Certification This role will also carry a specialist advice caseload supporting clients on a range of housing issues in order to prevent and alleviate homelessness and address housing problems.

You will need to be highly motivated and proficient in the use of IT and have excellent communication skills. *This is an ideal opportunity for someone who has fundamental knowledge and experience of housing law, giving advice, and is looking for the opportunity to further develop their skills, as specialist housing training can be provided for the right candidate.*

Working closely with the Head of Advice, supervisor team and Money Advice team you will assist in providing and developing an impartial high-quality Housing Advice & Advocacy service to private and social housing tenants.

To apply please submit a CV and covering letter to [hr@citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk](mailto:hr@citizensadviceeastherts.org.uk) outlining your suitability for the role by 6 May 2021 12pm. Virtual interviews are scheduled to take place week commencing 17 May.

# Role profile

## **Casework**

- Provide casework covering the full range of housing issues. Prepare and present cases to the appropriate statutory bodies, tribunals and courts as appropriate and negotiate with third parties as appropriate, for example:
  - Homelessness applications and appeals
  - Challenging other decisions e.g. LA points allocation, tenancy demotion
  - Advising clients facing eviction by; challenging validity of S21 or S8 notices, challenging retaliatory or other illegal evictions, liaising with social housing and private landlords and their agents to prevent evictions, assisting clients with completion of court forms to challenge, suspend or dismiss proceedings court forms
  - Disrepair issues
  - Complaints to Housing Providers through to Housing/Local Government Ombudsman services
- Refer or signpost clients to other advisers or specialist agencies as appropriate.
- Maintain case records for the purposes of continuity of casework, information retrieval, statistical monitoring and report preparation.
- Ensure that all casework conforms to the organisations Office Manual and the Advice Quality and Citizens Advice Quality of Advice standards.

## **Research & Campaigns**

- Assist with research and campaigns work by identifying and providing information about clients' circumstances via Evidence Forms.
- Provide statistical information on the number of clients and nature of cases and provide regular reports to management.

## **Professional Development**

- Keep up to date with Housing legislation, case law, policies and procedures and undertaking appropriate training.
- Attend relevant internal and external meetings as agreed with the line manager.
- Prepare to attend supervision session and team meetings as appropriate.

## **Administration**

- Use IT for statistical recording, record keeping and document production.
- Attend internal and external meetings as agreed with your line manager.

- Maintain a library of reference material and case law.
- Liaise with statutory and non-statutory and present the service on outside bodies as appropriate.
- Undertake Independent File Reviews and support Peer Reviews to maintain quality standards.



## Person specification

- Experience of building good relationships with community partners fostering good working relationships for the benefit of our clients.
- Significant recent experience in giving generalist & housing advice, providing technical support to promote team working
- Effective communication skills (oral & writing) with particular emphasis on negotiating, representing and preparing reviews, court submissions & correspondence.
- Fully understand the issues involved in interviewing clients and demonstrate an understanding of social trends and their implications for clients and the service.
- Have an ordered approach to casework and an ability and willingness to follow and develop agreed procedures. Utilising IT in the provision of advice and the preparation of reports and submissions.
- Understanding of and commitment to the aims and principles of the organisations service and its equality and diversity policies.
- Hold - or be prepared to work towards - a qualification in Housing advice

In accordance with Citizens Advice national policy we may ask the successful candidate to be screened by the DBS.



# Terms and Conditions

This role is home based and working across community locations in East Herts when required (subject to Covid restrictions). Reasonable expenses will be reimbursed for costs incurred. All reasonable car parking expenses are reimbursed.

This is a fixed term position of 1 year. There is a probationary period of 6 months.

The annual leave year runs from 1 April to 31 March and full-time employees are entitled to 5.6 weeks paid annual leave plus statutory holidays. Part time employees receive a pro rate annual leave entitlement.

There is an auto enrolment pension scheme with an employer contribution of 3% and an employee contribution of 5%.