

## **WELFARE BENEFITS VOLUNTEER**

### **VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION**

#### **WHY WE NEED YOU**

During the coronavirus pandemic the need for welfare benefits advice has increased at the same time as capacity in the advice sector (which has often been focussed on face to face advice) has diminished.

Brixton Advice Centre has already been successfully running an online legal advice clinic staffed by volunteer solicitors and barristers in areas of law including family, employment, housing, and civil litigation.

This new service combines online, face-to-face, and telephone advice services in a way that allows volunteers to both get a handle on the basics of benefits advice whilst also developing detailed legal knowledge in key areas of welfare benefits law.

This is an opportunity to deliver a much needed service to residents of Lambeth and to shape that service as it develops in the years to come.

#### **ACTIVITIES YOU WILL BE INVOLVED IN**

Full training will be given for this role which will involve one or both of the the following:

##### **Dealing with initial enquiries:**

- Gathering initial information from online enquiries
- Researching the client's issue
- Identifying further relevant questions and gathering information from the client by phone
- Identifying non-benefits issues and signposting to other services
- Booking appointments and associated admin

##### **Disability and sickness benefit form filling:**

- Gathering detailed information about a client's health condition(s)
- Developing a thorough understanding of the regulations and case law that sit behind these health assessments
- Completing the forms and advising clients on their entitlement



## **WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR**

- Research skills
- Ability to process large amounts of written information
- Ability to identify key facts and apply your research to those facts
- Attention to detail
- Ability to establish a rapport with a diverse range of people
- Good organisational skills
- A willingness to experiment with different approaches to advice
- Strong IT skills
- High levels of literacy and numeracy

## **HOW MUCH TIME YOU SHOULD OFFER**

To get the most of this opportunity you will need to be available for at least one full day (or two half days) a week for at least six months. It is unlikely that shorter placements will be appropriate given that this is a new service and it is expected there will be a great deal of subject matter learning and experimentation with different processes involved. It may be that shorter placements or those with elements of home working will become available in the future as the service develops.

## **WHO YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH**

Initially, you will be working in a small team under the supervision of the Volunteer Coordinator, who will guide your learning and take responsibility for the accuracy of your advice. Over time you will also work with the Welfare Benefits Specialist and other members of the team.

## **WHAT TRAINING IS PROVIDED**

No prior experience of welfare benefits advice is needed. You will receive an initial induction into the organisation and there will be formal training in how the benefits system works. In depth training will be given in respect of the disability and sickness benefits these opportunities will focus on. Further learning will take place in the role as you encounter different types of cases and explore various advice strategies. You will be fully supported in all cases.