

## **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 has diminished. We also recognise that good quality volunteering opportunities are increasingly difficult to find.

Against that background, we've designed this service to maximise both the opportunities for you to develop your skills and experience, and to get the best outcomes for our clients.

The project focuses on the health assessments for the disability benefit Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

The decision making in relation to those assessments is notoriously poor; claimants are often vulnerable; criteria are complex; and the need for advice is difficult to overstate.

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 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 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

We take a very detailed legalistic approach to this work, much more so than most other advice organisations.

You will be using the regulations and case law to help clients get the PIP awards they are entitled to the first-time round, but you will also be working in such a way as to give your clients the best chances of success if they need to appeal. In those cases, there may also be opportunities to develop written and oral advocacy skills through mandatory reconsiderations and appeals to the First-tier Tribunal.

## **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
- Appreciation of the importance of confidentiality
- Sufficient self-awareness to recognise your own biases and prejudices
- Strong IT skills
- High levels of literacy and numeracy

## **AMOUNT OF TIME YOU SHOULD EXPECT TO SPEND VOLUNTEERING**

To get the most of this opportunity we would expect you 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 there is a great deal of subject matter learning involved.

You will need to be able to attend our offices in-person at: 167 Railton Road London SE24 0LU.

## **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 our welfare benefits specialist caseworkers 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 followed by a formal training programme.

Our welfare benefits volunteers receive broad-based training providing an overview of the welfare system so they can effectively triage welfare benefits cases as they come into the service.

They also receive in-depth training covering the legal tests for the main disability benefit Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

The training includes weekly group training sessions over the first 10-12 weeks, observation of more experienced volunteers, and some independent study.

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.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Applications should be made through the Brixton Advice Centre website:  
<https://brixtonadvice.org.uk/volunteering/>

You'll also find role descriptions and information about forthcoming recruitment cycles on the that page.

## **SELECTION AND AVAILABILITY OF PLACES**

The selection process includes an application form, written exercise, and interview.

We regret that we cannot offer volunteering opportunities to everyone. We base our selection decisions firstly on the extent to which you meet the criteria outlined above. In the event that we have more suitable applicants than opportunities priority will be given to those who live, work, or study in the London Borough of Lambeth.

## **RIGHT TO WORK IN THE UK**

There are no right to work checks for this volunteering opportunity. However, **you should satisfy yourself** that your immigration status allows you to volunteer.

In general, you will be allowed to volunteer if you have one (or more) of the following:

- British or Irish nationality
- EU/EEA nationality and Settled Status
- EU/EEA nationality and Pre-settled Status
- Refugee status or humanitarian protection  
(including those awaiting the outcome of an application or appeal)
- Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)
- A visa status that allows volunteering

You may be in breach of their immigration conditions if you volunteer without one of these statuses. We recommend you seek immigration advice if you are **at all** unsure.