

Volunteering for the Child Law Advice Service Colchester

Application pack

For more information email us at CLAS@coramclc.org.uk.

Introduction

Coram Children's Legal Centre (CCLC) is a national charity committed to promoting children's rights in the UK and worldwide. CCLC provides legal information and advice to children, young people, their families and carers.

The Child Law Advice Service has operated a telephone helpline offering legal advice to parents, carers and young people for **over 10 years**. The **Child Law Advice Service** was launched on the 1st April 2015 as a digital first service with an intensive legal advice line available for clarifying questions: www.childlawadvice.org.uk.

We provide free legal resources with advice and information on all aspects family, child and education law affecting children and families.

We also operate a limited intensive support telephone line for complex matters and clarifying questions and we have recently launched an email advice service.

In January 2017 we launched a new website called LawStuff www.lawstuff.org.uk. This website is aimed solely at young people for them to find out their legal rights and information on a variety of topics from education to police and the law as well as children services and online safety. Young people are able to contact us via a contact form to seek clarification on points as well.

It is hoped that LawStuff will increase young people's knowledge surrounding their rights and that they will be able to have somewhere to contact for free legal information and advice.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering for **The Child Law Advice Service**. You will find information about CCLC, voluntary placements and how to apply in this application pack.

"I spoke with a gentleman [adviser] in respect of ongoing issues I am having with contact with my child and application for a Child Arrangements Order. I wanted to say a huge thank you in respect to the advice provided as well as the manner with which [the adviser] dealt with my case."

Caller to the Child Law Advice Service

"I want to say a big thank you to all the staff here, I would not have known what to do without having you at the end of the phone. You are a great and invaluable service and I am very grateful for your help."

Caller to the Child Law Advice Service

If I could give a higher score I would! The advisor gave me everything I needed to take the case forward. I wish I had found you guys sooner!

Caller to the Child Law Advice Service

"I called today for some advice. I spoke to a lovely lady. I have been calling around all different numbers to get the information I needed but [the adviser] was the only person who could help me, she listened to my very long story and gave me the most helpful advice and I am grateful to have spoken to her. Thank you."

Caller to the Child Law Advice Service

About our work

In today's financial climate and following cuts to legal aid, services such as the Child Law Advice Service are crucial to ensure that those most vulnerable in our society continue to receive access to justice. With no access to government funding for legal aid, nor the disposable income to afford legal representation, without us, our clients would not be able to fight for their rights and those of their children.

In 2018-19 **we helped over 2,447,000 parents, carers, children and young people** with issues relating to family, child and education law.

We provided advice via our telephone line and email advice service to over **17,000** parents, carers, children and young people and there were over **2,430,000** downloads of an individual information page on our website.

The Child Law Advice Service carries out research to influence policy developments in areas of education, child and family law as part of our work with Coram Children's Legal Centre. For more information please visit: <https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/promoting-childrens-rights/policy/>

Top five matters in Family and Child law:	Top five matters in Education law:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact, i.e. access to children• Residence, i.e. who the children live with• The court process• The law on smacking children• Parental Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secondary school Exclusions• Attendance and Absence• School Admissions• Special Educational Needs• Bullying

Results from a 2018 survey:

100% of callers surveyed felt better prepared having sought advice from the Child Law Advice Service

93% of people contacting the Child Law Advice Service were **VERY SATISFIED** with the advice they received

100% of people were **SATISFIED** or **VERY SATISFIED**

94% of service users found the navigation of our website either **GOOD** or **VERY GOOD**

100% of our service users would recommend the Child Law Advice Service website to a friend experiencing a similar issue

100% of our callers would recommend us to a friend experiencing a similar issue

Why Volunteer with us?

- Become a part of the UK's first children's charity
- Help to protect and promote children's rights
- Learn skills relevant to working on a helpline
- Interact with new people in a friendly, motivated environment
- Gain work-based training and experience in the legal field
- Help support vulnerable children and families in need of advice and guidance
- Obtain academic credit for your placement with us through your University
- Gain a reference for future employers
- Update information pages on our website and take a role in producing new information pages

Previous volunteers say:

"I found volunteering for CLAS was an invaluable experience. I volunteered with CLAS whilst completing my law degree and found it complemented my studies. The placement enabled me to develop my knowledge in family law and learn about education law which is not a course covered by most universities. Volunteering gave me the opportunity to develop my communication and research skills which are essential for a career in law. The placement was rewarding as I was able to help people to tackle their legal problems. It is vital to obtain as much experience as possible as this will put you in a good position for a future in law."

"Volunteering at CLAS for a few months before attaining a permanent position in the organisation proved to be an invaluable experience in my legal career. One of the unique aspects about CLAS is the exposure to direct client contact very early on working with a range of people who call into the service. Consequently my interviewing and advising skills have improved significantly which forms an integral skill for a legal professional."

An advisor has said of the volunteer project:

"The CLAS volunteer project has been very popular. We have taken on law students as well as legal professionals returning to work or seeking a career change. Volunteers are fully trained in child, family and education law and supported by a team of trained professionals. Our volunteers develop key communication skills, drafting skills and legal research skills and are given a lot of responsibility. They are not simply making the tea!"

F.A.Q's

Here are some FAQs on our volunteering opportunities:

What sort of things can I get involved in?	You can volunteer as a legal adviser, advising callers on education, family and child law. Assisting on this advice line provides a lifeline to clients who without our assistance would not be able to access justice.
Do I need a legal background?	You must have studied or be studying for a law degree or equivalent qualification in order to volunteer as a legal adviser. You also must have studied or be studying family, child or education law.
How much time do I need to give?	We ask that each volunteer gives us at least 1 day a week for a minimum of 3 months.
Do I need to come to the office?	Volunteer legal advisers are based in the Colchester CCLC office for support and supervision reasons. You will need to ensure you can get to and from the office. The CCLC office is based near the centre of Colchester town and has good access to bus and train services. There are also nearby car parks for those who do drive.
Will I be paid?	Unfortunately, we do not pay a wage but we can cover travel expenses to and from the office up to the value of £10 per day (upon submission of valid receipts).
Will I receive training?	The supervisor will offer full training and guidance in the relevant law and provide regular reviews of your progress. You will work with a member of the team who can help train and provide support.
Can I do a placement through my University?	We have had LLB students from Essex University who can gain academic credit for their placement. We would suggest contacting your university to discuss this requirement.

Please note we can only offer volunteer opportunities for the Child Law Advice Service. If you are interested in any other department within Coram Children's Legal Centre, please email info@coramclc.org.uk and state the department you are interested in volunteering with.

Selection process

Our selection process

We are committed to providing the best possible selection process which includes working to remove barriers to Equal Opportunities at each stage of the process.

We use a standard and fair system to assess suitability to any role at CCLC.

We will:

- Be polite and try to give you as much information that we can regarding your application and answer any relevant questions.
- Treat your personal information confidentially and only share it with those involved in the selection process.
- We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments to the selection process to enable applicants to participate equally.
- Advise you as soon as possible whether your application has been successful or not.
- Aim to arrange a mutually convenient time for a face to face discussion following a successful application.
- Need to obtain 2 references before we are able to offer a placement as a volunteer. We will not contact your referees unless you give your permission to do so.

You will be asked to complete an equal opportunities form when you apply. This is for monitoring purposes only and will be kept confidential. You will also be required to complete a DBS disclosure before beginning your volunteer placement with CCLC.

Application

Making an application for a voluntary placement

To apply;

- Complete the application form at the end of this guide and return it to us by email to CLAS@coramclc.org.uk. Please note we cannot accept CVs or applications in any format other than that provided.
- Please ensure that your application demonstrates that you have the skills to meet the requirements set out in the volunteer role description (found at the end of this guide) and please read the instructions carefully.
- We will contact you as soon as possible to discuss your application and let you know whether we will be calling you for an informal discussion.

If you have questions regarding the application process or anything you have read in this guide, please contact us at CLAS@coramclc.org.uk.

Volunteer Legal Adviser Role Description

Role Title:	Volunteer Legal Adviser
Service:	Coram Children's Legal Centre
Project:	Child Law Advice Service (CLAS)
Reporting to:	Lead Advisers/CLAS Manager
Hours	Requested 1 full day per week

Following successful completion of CLAS's Volunteer Training Programme; the purpose of this role is to support parents, carers and young people who are experiencing difficulties accessing legal advice and representation in the areas of Family, Child and Education law. You will join a team of experienced legal advisors responsible for providing legal advice via our telephone helpline.

Main tasks:

Telephone Advice

- Providing legal advice on family, child and education law to our service users;
- Carry out legal research to ensure accuracy of advice given and/ or liaise with our in-house solicitors on more complex issues;
- Accurately record full details of all telephone callers and other contacts and further action recommended, according to Coram Children's Legal Centre procedures;
- Liaise with the Safeguarding Officer on all concerns regarding child protection;
- Signpost users to our legal practice and external organisations when appropriate;
- With training, ensure that own knowledge and expertise are as up to date as possible in the relevant fields of law.

Other

- Maintain the standard of professional service in line with Coram Children's Legal Centre's Standards and Procedures documents;
- Comply with other relevant policies and procedures, i.e. Coram Children's Legal Centre's Health & Safety policy and confidentiality agreement;
- To arrive on time to commence work at the start of the shift and give suitable notice of any shifts you cannot work.
- Form effective working relationships with all staff members, volunteers and outside organisations.