**Volunteering for the**

**Child Law Advice Service**

**Colchester**

**Application pack**

**For more information email us at** [**CLAS@coramclc.org.uk**](mailto:CLAS@coramclc.org.uk)**.**

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| **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.

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| 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](http://www.childlawadvice.org.uk). An option to get legal advice via email was also added in December 2017.  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.  In January 2017 we launched a new website called LawStuff [www.lawstuff.org.uk](http://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.  LawStuff also houses two previous publications namely At the Police Station and At What Age Can I? Both these publications were hugely popular and are now accessible online.  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**. In this leaflet,  you will find information about the CCLC, our voluntary placements and how to apply.  **“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** |

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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | |  | |  | |  |  | |   **"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**  **“I think your service is absolutely amazing. I do not know what we would have done without you guys. I stumbled across you on the internet and I am so pleased I did. We would not have got as far as we have if it wasn’t for all of the help provided. Your service is the voice of logic and reason in a terrible time.”**  **- Caller to the Child Law Advice Service** | | |
| **About our work** |

In 2016-17 **we helped nearly 706,000 parents, carers and young people** with issues relating to family, child and education law. This was through either digital downloads or through our legal advice service.

**Nearly 14,000 parents, carers, children and young people** contacted us to seek advice from one of our legally trained advisors on family and child law, and **nearly 3,500 contacted us about education law issues.**

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| **Child and family law, top five matters:** | **Education law, top five matters:** |
| Contact – access to children  Residence – who children live with  Court Process (during)  Specific Issue Orders  Parental Responsibility | Secondary school Exclusions Attendance and Absence  School Admissions  Special Educational Needs  Bullying |

**97%** of users surveyed were **VERY SATISFIED** with the service received from Child Law Advice

**99%** of users surveyed were either **SATISFIED or VERY SATISFIED** with the service received from Child Law Advice

**99%** of users surveyed would **recommend** Child Law Advice

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.

**Our Advisors say:**

**“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!”**

**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.”**

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| **Why Volunteer with us?** |

**Help to protect and promote children’s rights in England**

**Be a part of the UK’s first children’s charity**

**Learn skills specific to working on a helpline**

**Gain work-based training and experience in the legal field**

**Meet new people in a friendly environment**

**Gain a reference for future employers**

**Get academic credit for your placement with us through University**

**Help support vulnerable children and families in need of advice and guidance**

**Improve career prospects: many of our volunteers have later been employed by the Child Law Advice Service**

**Learn a niche area of law not taught at traditional universities**

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| **F.A.Q’s** |

Here are some FAQs on our volunteering opportunities:

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| **What sort of things can I get involved in?** | You can volunteer as a legal helpline assistant, 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 helpline assistant. 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 helpline assistants 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 get any 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 also take on volunteers from the University of Law studying their LLB, GDL and LPC. |

**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**](mailto:info@coramclc.org.uk) **and state the department you are interested in volunteering with.**

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| **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.

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| **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](mailto: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**](mailto:CLAS@coramclc.org.uk)**.**

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| **Volunteer Helpline Legal Assistant Role Description** |

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| **Role Title:** | Helpline Legal Assistant |
| **Service:** | Coram Children’s Legal Centre |
| **Project:** | Child Law Advice Service (CLAS) |
| **Reporting to:** | Team Leader |
| **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.

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| **Application Form** |

Please complete the following application (in black ink or type) and return to:

**Child Law Advice Service**

**Coram Children’s Legal Centre**

**Riverside Office Centre, Century House North,**

**North Station Road,**

**Colchester, Essex, CO1 1RE**

[**CLAS@coramclc.org.uk**](mailto:CLAS@coramclc.org.uk)

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| Role Applied for | Volunteer Legal Advisor |
| Surname |  |
| First Name(s) |  |
| Title (Mr, Mrs, Miss etc.) |  |
| Home Address |  |
| Post code |  |
| Contact Telephone Number |  |
| Mobile Number (if different from above) |  |
| Contact Email Address |  |
|  | |
| National Insurance Number |  |
| Are you eligible to work in the UK?  (please tick appropriate box) | Yes No |
|  | |
| **Qualifications:**  **Please list any relevant qualifications for this role (most recent first)**  **You can continue on a separate sheet where necessary** | |
| Qualification: |  |
| Institution: |  |
| Date Achieved: |  |
| Grade Awarded: |  |
| Have you or are you studying Family/Child or Education Law (please specify) |  |
|  | |
| Qualification: |  |
| Institution: |  |
| Date Achieved: |  |
| Grade Awarded: |  |
| Relevant module: (if any), e.g. Family Law Elective |  |
|  | |
| Qualification: |  |
| Institution: |  |
| Date Achieved: |  |
| Grade Awarded: |  |
| Relevant module: (if any), e.g. Family Law Elective |  |
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| **Experience:**  **Please list any employment, work experience or voluntary experience you have that is relevant for this role (most recent first)**  **You can continue on a separate sheet where necessary** | |
| Name of employer: |  |
| Dates of employment: |  |
| Your role: |  |
| Brief description of duties: |  |
|  | |
| Name of employer: |  |
| Dates of employment: |  |
| Your role: |  |
| Brief description of duties |  |
|  | |
| Name of employer: |  |
| Dates of employment: |  |
| Your role: |  |
| Brief description of duties: |  |
|  | |
| **Please use this space to comment on any other skills or information you feel would be relevant for this role:** | |
|  | |
| **In 300 words or less, please tell us why you applying for this role:** | |
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| **Please tell us if you have any preferred days or time commitments that may impact upon your volunteering (Please note we request 1 day per week, please contact us if you would like more information):**  **Please let us know if you have any preference of day you would like to volunteer (We are open Monday to Friday 8am-6pm)** | |
|  | |
| **Reference 1** | **Reference 2** |
| Name: | Name: |
| Position: | Position: |
| Organisation: | Organisation: |
| How long have you been known to this referee? (Month/Year) | How long have you been known to this referee?  (Month/Year) |
| Address: | Address: |
| Postcode: | Postcode: |
| Contact Telephone: | Contact Telephone: |
| Contact Email: | Contact Email: |
| May we contact before interview?  Yes No | May we contact before interview?  Yes No |

Declaration:

I declare that all information provided on this application is true and correct. I understand that any falsification of information will result in the application being withdrawn from the selection process.

The information that you provide on this form and that obtained from relevant sources will be used in the administration of your placement. The personal information that you give us will be used in a confidential manner to help us monitor the selection process.

We may also use the information if there is a complaint or legal challenge relevant to this selection process. We may check the information collected with third parties or with other information held by us. We may also pass information to third parties to prevent or detect crime, to protect public funds or in any other way permitted by law.

By signing this application form you declare to understand that the information provided will be retained in a secure and confidential manner and agree to the processing of sensitive personal data (as detailed above) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

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| Signature: | Date: |

**Disclosure of Criminal Convictions**

The position for which you are applying is covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 and 1986. This means that you are required by law to disclose **all** spent and unspent criminal convictions.

As a registered body of DBS, Coram adheres to the DBS Code of Practice. Please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service> for further information and guidance. All offers of employment are subject to receipt of a satisfactory DBS disclosure however this sheet will be detached before your application is considered and the Human Resources department will maintain the information confidentially.

**Where no convictions have been recorded against you, please write NONE across the boxes**

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| **Offence** | **Date of Conviction** | **Sentence** |
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If you are convicted later during the application process, you must inform the Human Resources Department of the details.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the information that I have entered is factually correct and I understand that any false information may result in my application being removed from the selection process.

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| Date: | Name: | Signature |

**Failure to complete this declaration will result in your application being withdrawn.**