

# 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).

# 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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). We provide advice via email, webchat and telephone.

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 an email advice service.

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.

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.

**"Thank you so much for your reply and the information. While this may be a standard information pack you have no idea how important that information is to me. It's hard for many people now and for you to give me the guidance I need brought me very close to tears. Again thank you so much"**

**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**

**I am so grateful for your help, advice assistance in this matter. And, so quickly too! Your response is greatly appreciated and so clear and understanding. Your information is so comprehensive and is full of useful links. I now have a way forward and can start taking real steps for some sort of closure to this situation.**

**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 2023-24, **we helped over 15,000 parents, carers, children and young people** with issues relating to family, child and education law.

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/>

## 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
- Learn advising and customer service skills
- Put your legal knowledge into practice
- 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 am a final year LLB Law student from the University of Essex. I have volunteered at the Child Law Advice Service two days per week for four months now, and have thoroughly enjoyed my experience so far. I decided to apply for a volunteer role at CLAS as I have a keen interest in family law and hope to practice it after graduating. After securing my placement at CLAS, I decided to enrol on the placement module at university so I could gain academic credit for my volunteering. CLAS knew of the module having had students from the module previously, so they were aware of the process and the forms that needed signing. The training was comprehensive and well structured, and I felt comfortable when it was time to begin advising on the telephone. Once my hours for the placement were completed, I decided I wanted to continue volunteering at CLAS in order to continue expanding my family law knowledge and gain more experience before graduating and getting a job. My time so far at CLAS has been so valuable, everyone is so knowledgeable and friendly and I have learned so much in the short time I have been here. I would recommend volunteering at CLAS to anyone with an interest in family law."

"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.”

“My placement at the Child Law Advice allowed me to understand the reality of applying the law I learnt during my degree to real cases. It taught me the value in giving people accurate, professional and reliable legal advice to help them navigate themselves throughout the family legal system in the UK. Most importantly, it honed my skills of legal intellect and etiquette, developing my abilities as a legal advocate into ones that can visibly make a difference and help people who truly need it.”

**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:

<b>What sort of things can I get involved in?</b>	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.
<b>Can I work remotely</b>	Unfortunately, we cannot offer a remote volunteering role. We require all our volunteers to attend our Colchester office once a week.
<b>Do I need a legal background?</b>	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.
<b>How much time do I need to give?</b>	We ask that each volunteer gives us at least 1 day a week for a minimum of 3 months.
<b>Do I need to come to the office?</b>	Volunteer legal advisers are <b>based in the Colchester CCLC office</b> 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.
<b>Will I be paid?</b>	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).
<b>Will I receive training?</b>	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.
<b>Can I do a placement through my University?</b>	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](mailto: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](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).**

## Volunteer Helpline Legal Assistant Role Description

<b>Role Title:</b>	Helpline Legal Assistant
<b>Service:</b>	Coram Children's Legal Centre
<b>Project:</b>	Child Law Advice Service (CLAS)
<b>Reporting to:</b>	Lead Advisers
<b>Hours</b>	120 hour placement completed over a three month period <b>OR</b> a one year placement with a minimum of three days a week for 30 weeks

Coram Children's Legal Centre, part of the Coram group of charities, is dedicated to promoting the rights and welfare of children and young people through legal advice, information and practice. Staffed by lawyers and professionals with experience in child law, the Centre provides free legal information, advice and representation to children, young people, their families, carers and professionals, as well as international consultancy on child law and children's rights.

Coram Children's Legal Centre has been operating as a specialist children's legal service from its bases in Colchester and London for thirty years and became part of the Coram group in 2011.

The Child Law Advice Service is a digital first, Family Support Service, funded by The Department for Education. The service aims to provide legal information and advice to parents, carers and young people each year. This is provided via a range of mediums including free downloadable resources on our website, and one to one legal advice with a legally trained specialist via the telephone.

### Purpose of the role:

Your primary role will be to advise 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 low cost telephone helpline and email advice service.

You will be deployed as a Legal Advisor answering the calls that come through the telephone system and email system. You will be provide legal advice to callers to the service, and signpost to the website if this is necessary.

## Main duties & Responsibilities

### 1. Telephone & Email Advice

- Providing legal advice on family, child and education law to our service users ensuring calls & emails are signposted in line with our Digital First Approach;
- Conduct 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 and other contacts and further action recommended, according to Coram Children's Legal Centre procedures;
- Liaise with solicitors and caseworkers to ensure that those enquirers who are entitled to legal advice and assistance receive the adequate provision;
- Liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Officer on all concerns regarding child protection; and,
- Ensure that own knowledge and expertise are up to date as in the relevant fields of law.

### 2. Other

- Comply with other relevant policies and procedures, i.e. Coram Children's Legal Centre's Confidentiality policy;
- Although the core duties of the post are set out within the job description, a flexible approach to work is essential. You may be required to adapt the above duties to take account of changes to working practices (e.g. introduction of new technology or new ways of working).
- To treat everyone with respect, dignity and fairness and to acknowledge and celebrate diversity.
- To maintain an awareness of your own and others' health and safety and comply with Coram Group Health and Safety policy and procedures.
- To maintain confidentiality of information; it will be necessary to comply with all requirements related to the Data Protection Act/ General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

# Application Form

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

**Child Law Advice Service  
Coram Children's Legal Centre  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Annex Wellington House,  
90-92 Butt Road,  
Colchester,  
Essex, CO3 3DA**

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

Can you commit to attending our offices one day per week in Colchester? We are unable to offer remote placements. (please tick)	YES	NO
Role Applied for	Volunteer Legal Adviser	
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)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<p><b>Qualifications:</b></p> <p><b>Please list any relevant qualifications for this role (most recent first)</b></p> <p><b>You can continue on a separate sheet where necessary</b></p>	
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	
<p><b>Experience:</b></p> <p><b>Please list any employment, work experience or voluntary experience you have that is relevant for this role (most recent first)</b></p> <p><b>You can continue on a separate sheet where necessary</b></p>	
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:	
<b>Please use this space to comment on any other skills or information you feel would be relevant for this role:</b>	

**In 300 words or less, please tell us why you applying for this role:**

**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):**

<b>Reference 1</b>	<b>Reference 2</b>
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?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	May we contact before interview?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 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.

Signature:	Date:
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## **Criminal Records Declaration Form**

All applicants must complete this form in full and return it with their application form. Please refer to the guidance notes on pages 17, 18 and 19 before completing the following sections.

<b>Full Name (Block Capitals):</b>	
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<b>Post applied for:</b>	
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**Please answer the following questions:**

**1. Have you ever been convicted by the courts or cautioned, reprimanded or given a final warning by the police? Please give details of offences, penalties and dates in the table below.\*** (Note that the post you have applied for is exempted under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions Order) 1974, which means that all convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings on your criminal record need to be disclosed.

Please ✓ as appropriate:    Yes  (Please provide details)        No  (Proceed to Q2)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Details</b>

\*If any circumstances change which would affect your response to this question, you must inform the Human Resources department of the details without unnecessary delay.

**2. Have you ever been disqualified from work with children or vulnerable adults or subject to any other sanctions imposed by a regulatory body?**

Please ✓ as appropriate: Yes  (Please provide details) No  (Proceed to Q3)

Date	Details

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

I confirm that the information I have given on this form is correct and complete and I understand that any false information could result in my application being rejected or, if appointed, in my dismissal from employment. I understand that any offer of employment made to me will be subject to a further check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (previously Criminal Records Bureau) and I hereby give my consent for Coram to carry out the relevant DBS status checks in line with the DBS Code of Practice.

I declare that I am not currently on the DBS Barred List and that I will notify the Human Resources department immediately if I do become barred in future.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## Guidance Notes for Applicants

- **Statement of commitment to safeguarding children and young people**

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

- **Why we need you to declare your criminal convictions and other related information**

The post you are applying for is exempt from the provision of Section 4(2) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Orders 1975 and 2001 and therefore all convictions, cautions and bind-overs, including those regarded as 'spent', must be declared.

We therefore ask you to complete the Criminal Records Declaration Form as fully as possible and return it with your application form. The only people who will see the information will be those directly involved in the recruitment process. All information will be handled in accordance with our Criminal Records Code of Practice. At interview, or in a separate discussion, we will ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place about any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position.

If you are successful at interview, we will require you to obtain an Enhanced Certificate of Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us. This will depend on the nature of the post you have applied for and the relevance and circumstances of your offences, as set out in our Criminal Records Code of Practice. We also comply with the Disclosure & Barring Service's Code of Practice, which is available on their website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice>.

We ensure that anyone making appointment decisions has the necessary information and support to assess the relevance and circumstances of any offences.

- **What will happen at the interview stage?**

If you are invited for interview, we shall assess issues relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people including:

- your motivation to work with children and young people;
- your ability to form and maintain appropriate relationships and personal boundaries with children and young people;

- your emotional resilience in working with challenging behaviours; and
- your attitude to the use of authority and maintaining discipline.

We will also ask you to confirm that you have correctly completed the Criminal Records Declaration Form and discuss with you any information that you have declared.

- **What will happen if you are offered the post?**

If you are offered the post, we will ask for evidence of your identity, your right to work in the UK and your qualifications. We will ask you to complete an application form to obtain a certificate of enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or, if you are subscribed to the DBS Update Service, we will check your certificate online.

We will also check:

- whether you are barred from working with children in a regulated activity by the Independent Safeguarding Authority. It is a criminal offence for someone who appears on the Children's Barred List to engage, or seek or offer to engage, in the regulated activity from which they are barred;
- your professional registration, if relevant; and
- that you are medically fit to undertake the role.

We will also take up detailed references from your current and previous employers. If you have worked with children, on either a paid or voluntary basis, your current or previous employer will be asked about disciplinary offences relating to children, including any in which the penalty is time expired. We will also ask if you have been the subject of any child protection allegations or concerns and if so, the outcome of any investigation and how the matter was resolved.

- **False Information**

Please note that providing false information could result in your application being rejected or your dismissal from employment if you are appointed. The matter may also be referred to the police if we consider that you may have committed a criminal offence.

- **Retention of Information**

The information that you provide in this declaration form will be processed in accordance with the *Data Protection Act 1998*. It will only be used for the purpose of determining your application for this position. The declaration will be kept for no longer than necessary and then destroyed

following receipt of a DBS Disclosure and a recruitment decision being made. This is generally after a period of up to six months, to allow for the consideration and resolution of any disputes or complaints.

## DBS Check Agreement

All applicants must sign this agreement and return it with their application form.

The DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check is a criminal record check that Coram undertakes as part of our safer recruitment and undertaking a DBS check is an essential part of our safer recruitment checks.

The DBS Code of Practice sets out Coram's specific obligations in respect of making these checks and can either be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-code-of-practice>.

The DBS Privacy Policy explains how they will use your personal data, outlines your rights under the GDPR and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consent-privacy-policy>.

Applicants undertaking DBS checks with Coram will need to inform us when the completed check is received as **copies of the outcome of the check are only sent to applicants. We will need to see the original and obtain a copy for our files.** We will not be able to take your application further without this.

**When your DBS check is returned to you please contact us to arrange a time for us to view the original.**

Please sign below to confirm that you agree to show Coram your DBS check and take a copy for our records.

### Privacy Policy - Standard/Enhanced checks declaration

I have read the standard/enhanced check [privacy policy](#) for applicants and I understand how DBS will process my personal data and the options available to me for submitting an application.

**Name of Applicant:** .....

**Signature:** .....