

Chief Operating Officer

Job pack

Thanks for your interest in working at Citizens Advice South West Surrey. This job pack should give you everything you need to know to apply for this role and what it means to work at Citizens Advice.

In this pack you'll find:

- Our values
- 3 things you should know about us
- Overview of Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice South West Surrey
- The role profile and personal specification
- What we give our staff

Want to chat about this role?

If you want to chat about the role further, you can contact
Linda.Philippson@casws.org.uk

Our values

We're inventive. We're not afraid of trying new things and learn by getting things wrong. We question every idea to make it better and we change when things aren't working.

We're generous. We work together, sharing knowledge and experience to solve problems. We tell it like it is and respect everyone.

We're responsible. We do what we say we'll do and keep our promises. We remember that we work for a charity and use our resources effectively.

3 things you should know about us

1. We're local and we're national. We have 6 local offices and offer national support to people in around 236 independent local Citizens Advice services across England and Wales.

2. We're here for everyone. Our advice helps people solve problems and our advocacy helps fix problems in society. Whatever the problem, we won't turn people away.

3. We're listened to - and we make a difference. Our trusted brand and the quality of our research mean we make a real impact on behalf of the people who rely on us.

Citizens Advice South West Surrey

Citizens Advice South West Surrey covers the areas of Waverley and Guildford Boroughs. Both borough areas are often considered to be affluent with high levels of employment and rates of home ownership. However, there are significant pockets of deprivation. We're an independent local charity and limited company supporting some of the most vulnerable in our community.

We have 6 offices, in Ash, Cranleigh, Farnham, Godalming, Guildford and Haslemere, as well as delivering services at outreach in communities. We provide free, confidential, impartial and independent information, advice, casework and support for the benefit of the local community, as well as using our unique evidence based approach to exercise a responsible influence on policy and practice to address the underlying cause of problems for our clients.

Governed by a board of 9 trustees, we have a highly skilled workforce to support the organisation. This includes 29 staff and 94 volunteers.

We provide a generalist advice service through which the public can access advice from Monday to Friday through email, in person and over the telephone. Our core funding is primarily provided by Guildford Borough Council, Waverley Borough Councils and the Town and Parish Councils across Waverley, with additional support from donations. However, we also receive specific ringfenced project funding for our generalist service which allows us to have specialists such as debt and energy advisers, as well as additional outreach in key communities.

In addition to our generalist advice service, we run targeted services for specific groups of people.

- **Our Cancer service** is funded by Macmillan and the Fountain Centre. We provide welfare benefit advice to people who are affected by cancer and is a largely telephone-based service. We also have an outreach service funded by and operating from the Fountain Centre for those being treated at Royal Surrey Hospital.
- **Our Mental Health service** provides a casework service (predominantly welfare benefits, debt and housing) to people with mental health issues. The service is currently available for people under secondary mental health care and is funded by the Surrey and Sussex Integrated Care Board.

- Our Homelessness Prevention service, provides debt, benefits and housing advice and casework for those who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness. This is currently restricted to those in the Guildford area and funded by Guildford Borough Council, and a restricted donation.
- To help improve access to our service, we also work with and partner with other local support providers. A key part of this work includes our Advice First Aid programme where we train people in community organisations on providing supported information and provide a fast-tracked referral system so that those they are supporting don't need to repeat their story.

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Overview of Citizens Advice

The Citizens Advice service is made up of Citizens Advice - the national charity - and a network of around 236 local Citizens Advice members.

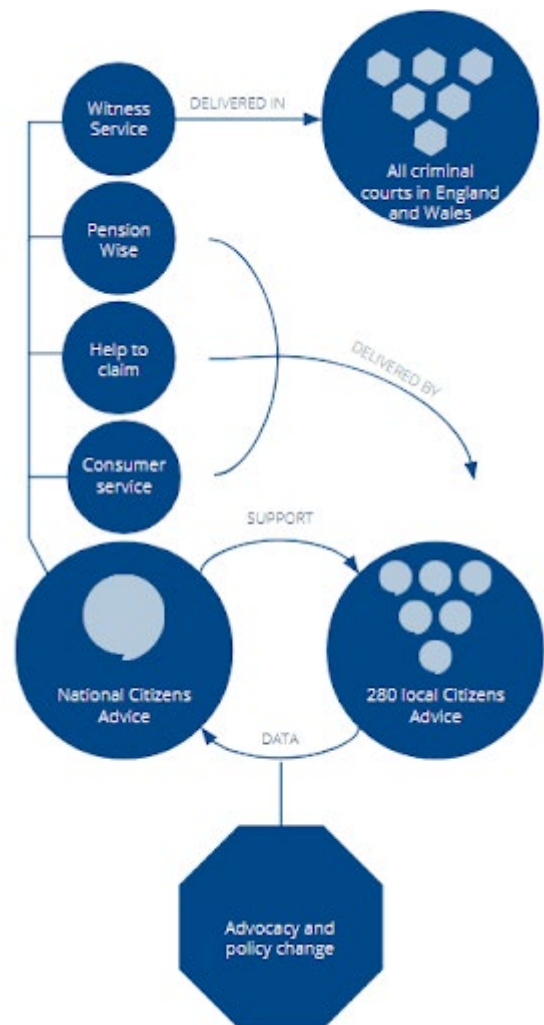
This role sits within our network of independent charities, delivering services from

- over 600 local Citizens Advice outlets
- over 1,800 community centres, GPs' surgeries and prisons

They do this with:

- 10,000 staff
- 19,500 trained volunteers

Our reach means 99% of people in England and Wales can access a local Citizens Advice within a 30 minute drive of where they live.





The role

37 hours a week

£50,000 FTE

Permanent

Help us build an advice service ready for the future.

We're looking for an experienced and people-focused **Chief Operating Officer** to help lead Citizens Advice South West Surrey through its next stage of development.

As our second-in-command, you'll work closely with our Chief Officer, Trustees and leadership team. You'll lead our day-to-day operations, oversee service delivery, people, transformation and corporate services, and help turn our strategy into practical results.

It's an important time to join us. Demand for advice is increasing, resources are under pressure and the world around us is changing quickly. We're looking for someone who can help us adapt while keeping people, quality and our purpose at the heart of what we do.

You'll be an experienced senior leader who can bring people with you, lead change, make sound decisions and build strong relationships. You'll be collaborative, approachable and committed to creating an inclusive organisation where staff and volunteers can do their best work.

You don't need to have worked for Citizens Advice before. Experience of transformation or working in the charity, public, advice, health, housing or community sectors would be welcome, but isn't essential.

Location: CASWS offices and service locations, with some remote working by agreement.

Closing date: Midnight Friday 11 September 2026

Find out more and apply: <https://casws.org.uk/job-vacancy-hopp/>

If you care about people, enjoy making organisations work better and want your leadership to make a difference in your community, we'd like to hear from you.

Citizens Advice South West Surrey welcomes applications from people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. We're committed to equity, diversity and inclusion in how we work and how we recruit.



Role profile

Role	Chief Operating Officer	
Reporting to	Chief Officer	
Salary / Grade	£50,000 FTE	
Hours	37 hours per week	
Location	CASWS offices and service locations, with some remote working by agreement	Level of travel: High
Role purpose	As the organisation's second-in-command, the COO will lead a team of staff and volunteers, ensuring they have the support, training and working environment essential to delivering an excellent advice service to our clients. They will deputise for the Chief Officer in their absence and support integration with the evolving regional organization.	

Key Responsibilities

Operations, performance and service excellence

- Lead organisation wide service delivery, ensuring quality, consistency and compliance with Citizens Advice, funder and regulatory requirements.
- Oversee KPIs, quality assurance, safeguarding, complaints, research and campaigns, and corrective action.
- Use evidence and insight to improve services, resilience and business continuity.

Strategic leadership and executive management

- Work with the Chief Officer and Trustee Board to deliver on agreed strategy, business plans and organisational priorities.
- Provide clear advice, analysis and performance reporting to Trustees and senior leaders.
- Deputise for the Chief Officer, align resources to priorities and build leadership capability.

Change, transformation and programme delivery

- Lead organisational and digital transformation, introducing effective operating models, systems and processes.
- Establish proportionate programme governance, manage change risks and track benefits.
- Embed innovation, continuous improvement and strong change leadership across management teams.

People, culture and leadership

- Deliver people and culture strategies that support an inclusive, values led and high performing organisation.
- Oversee workforce and succession planning, leadership development, performance, engagement and wellbeing.

- Champion Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and ensure staff and volunteers feel valued and supported through listening and communicating.

Corporate services, governance and infrastructure

- Help to provide executive oversight of HR, IT, facilities, health and safety, and contribute to information governance and wider business support.
- Ensure legal and regulatory compliance, effective risk management, current policies and action on audit recommendations.
- Ensure premises, technology and infrastructure enable effective service delivery.

Financial and external responsibilities

- Contribute to budgets and financial planning, monitor operational resources and identify efficiencies.
- Support funding applications, business cases and sustainable service development.
- Represent CASWS externally and maintain relevant professional knowledge.



Person specification

Essential criteria

- **An experienced people manager with good listening and communication skills and the ability to empathise across a diverse workforce.**
- **Substantial senior operational, programme, transformation, service delivery or organisational leadership experience, including executive-level responsibility.**
- **Proven ability to translate strategy into measurable delivery and to support boards, trustees or governance bodies.**
- Significant experience leading complex change, transformation and digital or systems improvement.
- Strong track record of improving performance, efficiency, service quality or organisational culture.
- Experience leading complex services and multidisciplinary teams, with effective performance, quality, risk and compliance frameworks.
- Experience managing budgets, resources and competing priorities.
- Strong people leadership, including developing managers, high-performing teams, workforce plans and organisational culture.
- Excellent analytical, decision-making, communication, influencing and stakeholder-management skills.
- A collaborative, resilient and adaptable leadership style, with commitment to inclusion, innovation and continuous learning.
- Degree-level qualification or equivalent professional experience.

Desirable Criteria

- Recognised programme, project, Agile or change-management qualification, or equivalent practical experience.
- Experience leading digital transformation.
- Experience in the charity, public, advice, health, housing or community sector, including volunteer-led organisations.
- Understanding of Citizens Advice, social welfare law or related client-facing services.
- Relevant postgraduate management or leadership qualification.

Organisational Expectations

- Uphold Citizens Advice principles: confidential, free, impartial and independent.
- Embed Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in everyday leadership and decision-making.
- Ensure legal, regulatory and governance requirements are met.
- Use and champion relevant digital systems, reporting tools and technology.
- Understand local and national Citizens Advice services and how operations support delivery.
- Build a safe, inclusive and accountable culture based on collaboration and integrity.
- Pursue professional development and promote organisational learning.



What we give our staff

Financial Benefits

Pay

See Job Description / role profile.

Our pay policy includes progression as people train and develop experience, as well as an annual review which considers cost of living rises. Each salary grade has three bands and we will offer the starting salary (band 1) to anyone without prior experience of the role. Once training is complete and you have achieved competency in the role, you will move to the mid-point salary (band 2).

We also benchmark our salaries against market trends to make sure your pay is in line with the wider market.

Pension

Citizens Advice South West Surrey will provide an employee pension scheme with employer contributions of 5% of the applicable earnings amount into this scheme.

Perks and Savings

Through our partnership with TELUSHealth (formerly LifeWorks), we are able to support our colleague's financial wellbeing with savings on everyday purchases and important life events, such as getting married, buying a home or car, family outings and holidays.

Free on-site tea, coffee and milk

Providing a good working environment for colleagues is important to us which is why we offer staff on-site access to free hot beverages in all our offices.

Sickness payments

When you're ill we offer enhanced sick pay of:

- up to 2 weeks during your probation period,
- 1 month's full pay and 2 months' half pay after this and up to 2 years,
- 2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay, after 2 years of service.

Expenses

CASWS will cover subsistence and travelling expenses reasonably and properly incurred in the course of your employment and with prior approval in line with an updated expenses policy. This will cover business travel only and not regular commuting costs.

Work-life balance

Working hours

See Job Description / role profile. Full-time paid colleagues are contracted to work 37 hours per week. Those working over 6 hours must take an unpaid half hour break.

We are open to discussion about flexible working, which may include arrangements such as part-time working, fixed (non-standard) working hours, working from home and job sharing.

Annual Leave

Colleagues are given 26 days annual leave, plus bank holidays, pro rata per year from 1 January to 31 December. Two days of long service leave are also awarded, with one additional day after completion of 4 years' service, and a further day after completion of 6 years' service.

We close on all public holidays and, at the discretion of CASWS, for up to 5 days during the Christmas period. You are required to take such days as part of your paid leave entitlement if that is a day on which you would otherwise be working. We also recognise that sometimes additional leave is needed for circumstances beyond someone's control like a bereavement and offer additional discretionary special or compassionate leave.

Maternity, adoption and shared parental leave

We offer maternity, adoption and shared parental leave schemes in line with statutory entitlements.

Flexible working

We understand that staff who balance their work and home responsibilities effectively are more engaged and productive. We are committed to providing a successful Work-Life Balance approach, which balances the needs of the service

with individual wellbeing. Examples of flexible working arrangements might include:

- Working part-time or job sharing
- Changing your hours of work
- Working from home for part or all of the time

Location

See Job Description / role profile.

All employees will have agreed location(s) which are determined by the requirements of the role. Most roles will have a reasonable expectation to work across locations in our area, dependent on the need of the role.

Employment Status

Permanent. (In some circumstances we will offer fixed term roles where the role is for genuine fixed-term transformation or cover).

Health and wellbeing

Employee assistance programme (EAP)

Our employee assistance programme, provided through our partnership with TELUSHealth (formerly Lifeworks) gives everyone working at the organisation immediate access to professional and completely confidential counselling and advisory services.

The service also provides:

- A free 24 hour, 365 days a year confidential helpline of which the issues do not need to be work-related
- Advice on a wide range of issues - legal, consumer, family, financial, medical, work, stress
- Free counselling - via telephone or face-to-face
- Free advice and counselling (not face-to-face) for staff family members residing at the same address
- Serious illness and accident cover support
- Staff management - support to managers from counsellors, HR specialists, or OH psychologists
- The EAP has a website with supporting materials and an app is also available

Most of the services can also be used by members of your family normally resident with you, including children living away from home at college or university.

TELUS Health - All colleagues have access to our TELUS Health platform which contains a range of courses and tools to help you navigate life changes and issues. Togetherall - All colleagues have access to Togetherall which is an online mental health and wellbeing service that offers anonymous, confidential peer support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Occupational Health (OH) service

The OH service used by CASWS is aimed at supporting all paid colleagues in the workplace, including advising on return to work after long term absence or advising on workplace adjustments as appropriate.

Free eye tests

You're entitled to a free full eye test, every year in some cases and we'll provide a voucher for this. If you need special corrective glasses and lenses for regular use of computers, we'll cover the cost of these or a contribution to them if you want to upgrade them.

Learning, development and growth opportunities

Our people are at the heart of our service and we recognise that as individuals grow, learn and develop - so too does our organisation.

Regular training

We have a co-ordinated training plan. This means we will provide training for you in your role and support you in taking forward opportunities for your development.

Regular 1-2-1 support sessions with your manager

We think it is important that you get regular time with your line manager which is why all colleagues have regular support sessions with their line manager to discuss performance, personal development and organisational development opportunities.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

At Citizens Advice South West Surrey, we recognise the positive value of diversity, promoting equity and celebrating inclusion. We welcome and encourage job applications from people of all backgrounds.

Our aim is that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society. Everyone should feel respected and valued and able to achieve their full potential. You can read more about our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion [here](#).

Network groups

You can join one of our nationwide staff equity groups that include:

-  Race, ethnicity and cultural heritage group
-  Disability group
-  LGBTQ+ group
-  Trans and Non binary group

These provide peer support, influence in the organisation and run various events throughout the year.

Dignity at work

Citizens Advice South West Surrey is committed to providing a culture in which all staff value each other and can work together to their full potential in an inclusive environment free from harassment, bullying and other unacceptable forms of behaviour. Unacceptable behaviour in the workplace will be actively dealt with, all complaints will be taken seriously, confidentiality will be respected and victimisation of those that raise complaints will not be tolerated.

We have clear fundamentals and values which we developed with our staff, volunteers and trustees. These are at the heart of our work and include our purpose, how we deliver this, who we support, our identity and how we show this. This includes core values and behaviours we expect all our people to demonstrate – collaborative, inclusive, supportive and with integrity.

All our employees are expected to have read and understood our Dignity at Work Policy and to ensure they behave in accordance with its principles. All staff are responsible for helping to create and maintain a positive and inclusive working environment free from bullying and harassment. All managers have a particular responsibility for ensuring a supportive and inclusive working environment in which dignity at work is actively promoted.

Political Impartiality

An important part of the principle of impartiality is that Citizens Advice staff are seen to be upholding the principle of party-political impartiality. To avoid misunderstanding or conflicts of interest, guidelines have been established on staff taking part in party political activities. If you currently hold or are intending to stand

for local or national political office, then we will expect you to tell us about this if shortlisted for interview.

Disclosure and barring service checks (DBS)

Some positions may require people undergo a DBS check. We follow [national Citizens Advice policy on this](#), to ensure all sensitive information is handled appropriately.