

Dear Volunteer Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in volunteering for the Disability Law Service (DLS).

Please find the following enclosed with this letter:-

- Application Form
- Information on what will be involved
- DLS Guide for Volunteers
- DLS Annual report.

Please read through this information. If you then decide you are still interested in volunteering for DLS, please complete the application form and return it to me with a copy of your CV if you have one. (If you have already sent in an application form, there is no need to do it again).

We provide training before and while you are carrying out your volunteering work. Details of the next training day will be sent after your application has been received and once the dates have been confirmed.

Please note that we will be taking up references before you attend the training day.

Once again, thank you for your interest in volunteering for DLS and I look forward to receiving your application soon.

Yours faithfully,

Poppy Hasted
Legal Advice Co-ordinator
Email: poppy@dls.org.uk

What's Involved in Volunteering for Disability Law Service?

We ask volunteers to attend a training session of approximately one half-day which will introduce the work of Disability Law Service, explain the role of volunteers, discuss issues of disability awareness, equal opportunities, and other important issues related to working with disabled people in an advice work setting. We will also explain our volunteer policies on health and safety, and DLS computer and information systems.

If, after this introductory session, you feel that you would definitely like to volunteer for us, we will give you practical training on using the computers and switchboard, and the work of the Advice Service, including answering calls, assessing legal problems and making appointments with our legal advisers, making referrals and signposting to other organisations. We will also tell you about our postal systems, about our leaflets and factsheets, how to log enquiries and other administrative systems.

Once you are confident you will be able to undertake a number of administrative and telephone duties for Disability Law Service as a valued volunteer, with the support and guidance of the staff team.

Answering calls on the Advice Service is a vital part of what we do at DLS, and helping us with this will give you experience in listening to the problems that people present, and assessing which area of law will be relevant in each case.

The Advice Service forms the most important part of the advice service DLS offers. The Advice Service provides immediate access by telephone or textphone, letter or email for disabled people requiring legal advice in a number of specialist areas.

The Advice Service is a unique service because it:

- is available on a UK wide basis
- provides the caller with direct access to a solicitor or specialist adviser
- gives advice to other organisations working with disabled people
- is supported by factsheet and referral services

There may be opportunities to get involved in some of the events we take part in, both at DLS and externally.

If you already have some experience in any of the areas of law we deal with, or working in an advice setting, you might be able to get involved in other activities such as assisting the legal team.

Disability Law Service

offering free, confidential
legal advice and representation
to disabled people.

GUIDE FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering at DLS

The Disability Law Service was founded by volunteers in 1975, and we have worked with volunteers ever since. Volunteers are considered to be a very valuable resource at DLS. We hope that those volunteering with DLS will feel valued for the contribution they make and enjoy their time with us.

Volunteers are very much part of the DLS team. While here you may have the opportunity to join in events, meetings and attend training. We value your views and encourage your feedback on what we do and how we do it.

Here are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions volunteers ask us:

How will I know what to do?

Before you start volunteering at DLS you will have a full induction morning, and training sessions with members of staff. This will cover most of what you need to know to effectively carry out your volunteer role at DLS.

Does DLS have any guidance on the way it provides its service that I should follow?

DLS has a number of policies and procedures that you will learn about. These give guidance on how it delivers its service, and other important issues. You will be told about these and given copies when you join. Some of these relate directly to our service, such as the Complaints Procedure for Service Users, and our policy on service user confidentiality. On some issues we have specific guidance for volunteers, on such issues as Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, and using IT at DLS.

How long do I have to stay at DLS and how regularly do I have to attend?

We hope that our relationship with you will be a long and happy one. There is no obligation on you as a volunteer to stay for a particular length of time or attend at certain times or on set days. However, in order for us to plan our work better we request that you agree to stay with us for a minimum of 4 months, and pledge 3 hours of your time per week. We are aware that this is sometimes not possible, so we like you to give us as much notice as possible if you are not able to come in.

What will happen if I am asked to do something I don't have the knowledge or skills to do?

We aim to provide you with all the support you need to carry out your role effectively. We do not expect you to undertake any task you are not able to do without giving you the training and support you need. Members of staff at DLS are on hand to provide guidance and advice on a day-to-day basis, and you will be told whom you can speak to you if you have any questions or problems.

Who will I report to?

Poppy Hasted, our Legal Advice Co-ordinator or Christine Goodall, our National Development Office, are responsible for volunteers at DLS. In addition you will be introduced to other members of staff whom you may be working with on a day-to-day basis.

What if there are any problems?

We recognise that problems arise in all organisations from time to time. If you have a problem, speak to Poppy or Christine as soon as possible. Hopefully the problem will be resolved quickly.

What happens when I want to leave?

All good things come to an end! When you decide it is time for you to move on and end your volunteer relationship with DLS we hope you will come and discuss this with us as soon as possible.

Will DLS act as a referee?

Because a substantial number of our volunteers are students, we are often asked if we will act as a referee when they are applying for another volunteer position, or a job. In certain circumstances we are happy to do this. We can't provide a useful reference if you have only volunteered for us once or twice or intermittently for a short period. This is because we need to have experience of how you work with us, so we need to get to know you regularly over a period of time. For this reason we suggest you do not use us as a referee until you have been volunteering regularly (once a week) for at least 3 or 4 months.

Do you pay expenses?

We refund volunteers for actual 'out of pocket' public transport travel costs incurred travelling to and from DLS on the days on which they volunteer. In the case of weekly and monthly travel cards we will only reimburse where the volunteer has actually incurred an 'out of pocket' expense by travelling to DLS, e.g. by having to purchase an extension to their card.

We will also reimburse volunteers who come in for a full day, up to a maximum of £4.50 for their lunch.

You must provide receipts or tickets for all expenses as we are unable to reimburse you without a receipt. You will be told how to claim at your induction meeting.

We do not reimburse volunteers for attending our training and induction day.

DISABILITY LAW SERVICE

39–45 Cavell Street
London, E1 2BP

Tel: 020 7791 9800
Minicom: 020 7791 9801
Fax: 020 7791 9802
Email: advice@dls.org.uk

DISABILITY LAW SERVICE APPLICATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

PERSONAL INFORMATION

First Name: Last Name:

Street Address

County Postcode:

Home Telephone: Mobile:

Email:

EDUCATION

University/ College:

Degree/Course:

Year of Study:

Other Qualifications:

SKILLS

Please list all legal, office and computer skills

LANGUAGES

Please list languages in which you are fluent.

AREAS OF LEGAL INTEREST

Please list any areas of law that you are particularly interested in.

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AVAILABILITY

Please place a tick next to the days and times you are available to volunteer.

Monday (10am – 1pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuesday (10am – 1pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday (10am – 1pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thursday (10am – 1pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friday (10am – 1pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Monday (2pm – 5pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuesday (2pm – 5pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday (2pm – 5pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thursday (2pm – 5pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friday (2pm – 5pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate how many sessions you are willing to do per week:

DISABILITY AWARENESS

Please list any experience you have of working with disabled people and the reason/s you are volunteering at DLS.

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Where did you hear about volunteering for DLS? _____

REFEREES:

Please give the details of two (2) people that can act as your referees. One of these people should be your law tutor (or similar) and the other person should be someone who is not a close friend or family member who can act as a character witness. Please ensure that you tell these people that you have given them as referees.

	Referee I
Last Name:	
First Name:	
Relationship to You:	
Telephone:	
Email:	
Street Address:	
County:	
Post Code:	

Referee II

DECLARATION

I DECLARE that to the best of my knowledge and belief the information given in this application, including any attachments is true and correct. I consent to the Disability Law Service taking steps to verify any information. I understand that any false information given will lead to my volunteer placement being terminated.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

Completed applications should be marked "Private and Confidential" and return to:

**The Legal Access Co-ordinator
Disability Law Service
39-45 Cavell St
London E1 2BP**