

**CITIZENS INFORMATION SERVICE**

**Advocacy Support Worker**

**Full-Time, Permanent Position**

Applicant Information Pack

**May, 2024**

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## **Citizens Information Service - Service Offer**

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Citizens Information Services (CISs) provide free, impartial and confidential information, advice and advocacy services to the public. Each Citizens Information Service covers a geographical area within their region, facilitating both rural and urban areas, delivering a service through a network of Citizen Information Centres (CICs).

### **Information and Advice**

Our Information Officers assist people with queries in relation to a broad spectrum of public and social services, including social welfare entitlements, income tax calculations, housing supports and access to health services. Our staff receive regular training and social policy updates to ensure that the information and advice that we provide is up-to-date and relevant for CIS service-users.

### **Social Policy**

Our staff also engage in social policy reporting, highlighting issues that affect CIS clients in accessing public services, which in turn feeds into the work of the Citizens Information Board in the development of policy papers and recommendations to government. Through this process, CIS Information Officers capture social policy issues in real-time, facilitating the development of responsive and evidence-based policy reporting.

### **Advocacy**

When required, Information Officers provide further support through our advocacy service which operates across a wide range of areas, including social welfare, employment, housing, consumer issues, health, and immigration. CIS provide an advocacy service up to and including the Social Welfare Appeals Office, Workplace Relations Commission, Labour Court and the Residential Tenancies Board. All Information Officers are supported by a regional Advocacy Support Worker who provides expert advice, coaching and mentoring in this key aspect of our work.

CIS Advocacy has developed very significantly over recent years, with more CIS staff becoming experienced in complex representative advocacy. The range and level of advocacy support provided by CISs has continued to develop and expand year on year, with significant outcomes (monetary and otherwise) achieved for people around the country every day.

Further information on CIS Advocacy is available in the CIS 2018 Advocacy Annual Report at the following link:

[http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/downloads/advocacy/CIS\\_Advocacy\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2018.pdf](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/downloads/advocacy/CIS_Advocacy_Annual_Report_2018.pdf) -

### **Applicants**

If you are interested in working in a dynamic, information and advocacy service environment, developing representative advocacy casework, and supporting a team of Information Providers to deliver these services to the general public, we welcome your application for the permanent position of Advocacy Support Worker with our service.

## Citizens Information Services – Locations

**Citizens Information Services (CISs)** are supported and funded by the Citizens Information Board to provide free, impartial and confidential information, advice and advocacy services to the public. Each Citizens Information Regional Company covers a geographical region, facilitating both rural and urban areas, delivering a service through a network of Citizen Information Centres.

The 8 regional CIS companies cover the following areas: North Dublin, Dublin South, North Connacht & Ulster, North Leinster, North Munster, South Connacht, South Leinster and South Munster, as illustrated in the map below. Each CIS Region is subdivided into a number of CIS Service Areas, which in turn each contain a number of Citizens Information Centres.



An ASW will be based in a fixed location but provide services across the full area of a regional company, therefore access to a car is a requirement.

## **Advocacy Support Worker – Job Description**

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**Report to:** Regional Manager – North Connacht and Ulster Citizens Information Service

**Employer:** North Connacht and Ulster Citizens Information Service Company

### **Purpose of the job:**

- To support the provision of advocacy in the Citizens Information Services within a region as directed by the Regional Manager of the Citizens Information Service and in line with the Citizens Information Board requirements for the provision of Citizens Information services in adherence to standardised policies, practice and quality standards
- To enhance the capacity of the Citizens Information Services to deliver mainstream advocacy as part of an integrated information, advice and advocacy service to the general public and particularly to people with disabilities
- To support CIS collaboration with the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities and to ensure seamless access for people with disabilities to CISs and to and from the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities

### **Service Delivery**

- Assist Development Managers to enable services prepare and manage advocacy cases to ensure a consistent level of service across the region
- Mentor and transfer knowledge to develop the capacity of CIS personnel to provide an advocacy service through support of self-advocacy and provision of representative advocacy to meet individual customer needs and particularly those of people with disabilities
- Support CIS personnel both remotely and on site through a programme designed to provide intensive support to a number of CISs for a defined period while being available for back-up advice to the other services where necessary
- Coach and mentor CIS personnel in the processes and skills of advocacy case work, i.e. interview skills, case recording, negotiation, representation, preparation for third party hearings/appeals, communication and presentation skills
- Contribute to the identification of training needs, contribute to the development of resource materials and deliver training as required
- Implement and support the use of best practice policies and procedures in CISs, including Electronic Case Management and Record Keeping Systems

- Encourage and support CIS personnel in the use of Infonet as a resource underpinning quality standards in advocacy practice
- Develop the expertise of CIS personnel to identify and report on social policy issues as part of the case management process
- Support the streamlining of work practice and referral mechanisms between the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities and CISs and other relevant agencies, e.g. MABS

## **Planning & Evaluation**

- Develop an annual Work Plan to support the implementation and enhancement of advocacy practice, in line with the CISs individual work plans and in collaboration with the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities Team.
- Undertake a review of the annual Work Plan and provide a report to the Board of employing CIS.
- Collaborate, as required, with other ASWs nationally and with the Citizens Information Board to ensure a consistent approach to the provision of support and capacity building and to the review and evaluation of the service provided
- Monitor the progression of CISs to the delivery of advocacy
- Support CISs in implementing advocacy Customer Feedback processes
- Keep up to date with advocacy related developments at a national level.

## **Organisational**

- Adhere to budgetary requirements, as directed by employing Citizens Information Service
- Undertake appropriate training as required
- Representation at conferences/events as directed by the Regional Manager
- Participate and work within a Performance Management Development System (PMDS) process with the employing Citizens Information Service
- Undertake such duties and additional responsibilities as may be assigned from time to time as directed by the Regional Manager and in line with the Work Plan

## **Advocacy Support Worker – Person Specifications**

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### **Essential Educational and Experience Requirements**

- Educated to graduate level in one or more of the following areas: Social Sciences, Humanities, Law, Training and Development.

**or**

- Equivalent training and experience may be considered in lieu of a formal qualification.

### **Desirable Educational and Experience Requirements**

- Post-graduate legal qualification and/or experience.
- Three years professional experience in representative advocacy/ supporting individual self-advocacy.

### **Essential characteristics**

- Motivated to ensure people are supported to achieve their rights and entitlements.
- Committed to capacity building and the principles of advocacy.
- Flexibility of approach.

## Advocacy Support Worker – Required Competencies

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Competency	Definition
<b>Representative Advocacy</b>	<p>Researching and reviewing information from a variety of sources including legislation, departmental sources and case law.</p> <p>Representing, negotiating and communicating (verbally and in writing) on a client’s behalf through formal processes such as the Social Welfare Appeals Office, the Workplace Relations Commission and the Residential Tenancies Board.</p> <p>Understanding the principles and practice of independent advocacy.</p>
<b>Expert Knowledge</b>	<p>Comprehensive knowledge of the systems and processes involved in accessing public, housing, health and social welfare services.</p> <p>Comprehensive knowledge of the legislation, policy and procedures of Social Welfare Appeals Office, Workplace Relations Commission and the Residential Tenancies Board.</p>
<b>Coaching and Mentoring</b>	<p>Transfers skills and knowledge in a clear and structured manner, being flexible in approach and adaptive to the needs of staff based on individual levels of experience and competency.</p> <p>Engages in reflective practice facilitating team members to learn from their casework and deepen their competence and capability.</p> <p>Shows a balance of empathy and insight in feedback and framing development. Provides both positive and constructive feedback, which focuses on supporting and developing team members to meet client needs.</p>
<b>Analysis, Evaluation and Judgement</b>	<p>Analyses information and situations accurately, evaluates comprehensively and comes to well-balanced judgements</p> <p>Draws on a broad range of sources including experience, legislation and case law to inform decisions on advocacy case strategies.</p> <p>Constructs an evidential and persuasive case.</p> <p>Identifies innovative solutions to complex problems.</p>



**Advocacy Support Worker – Required Competencies (cont.)**

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Competency	Definition
<b>Communication</b>	<p>Communicates clearly, concisely and confidently both verbally and in writing.</p> <p>Comfortable communicating across a range of forms including one-on-one, preparing and delivering group training, representing clients at quasi-judicial hearings and drafting papers on complex issues.</p> <p>Negotiates complex and contentious issues in a structured, persuasive and respectful manner.</p>
<b>Management and Delivery of Results</b>	<p>Takes responsibility and is accountable for the delivery of agreed objectives.</p> <p>Successfully manages a range of different projects and work activities at the same time.</p> <p>Structures and organises work effectively.</p> <p>Is logical and pragmatic in approach, delivering the best possible results with the resources available.</p>
<b>Team Work</b>	<p>Develops rapport well and builds relationships characterised by respect, empowerment and ongoing learning. Addresses conflict in an incisive and constructive manner.</p> <p>Makes a significant contribution to the success of the team in relation to both performance and process.</p> <p>Maintains composure and positive behaviours when working under pressure. Is sensitive and supportive in assisting Information Officers under pressure.</p>

## **Advocacy Support Worker – Terms and Conditions**

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This is a permanent, full-time position, subject to satisfactory completion of a six-month probationary period. The period of probation may be extended at the discretion of the Development Manager/Regional Manager. The successful candidate will be available to work 35 hours per week, (Monday to Friday). There may be a requirement to work evenings from time-to-time.

The Advocacy Support Worker will be required to travel throughout the region, therefore access to the use of a car is an essential requirement for the post. A travel and subsistence expenses policy applies.

Scale range of €42,658; €44,078; €45,496, €46,915, €48,334 (max),  
€49,975 (LSI1), €51,616 (LSI2)

**Incremental Credit:** It is expected, that all new entrants to North Connacht and Ulster Citizens Information Service will be appointed at point one of the salary scale. However, North Connacht and Ulster Citizens Information Service operates an incremental credit process for appointments higher than point one. This process is applicable to new entrants into North Connacht and Ulster Citizens Information Service. Incremental credit criteria, based on the competencies for the role, are assessed against employment history as laid out in the application form only. A request for incremental credit from a successful candidate must be made within the first 3 months of employment. The decision on whether or not to award an incremental credit is a decision made by the Board and is subject to the availability of funding.

**Pension:** A company pension scheme is in place, and membership is obligatory upon commencement. Employee contribution; 5% of salary, Employer contribution; 7% of salary. Please note the Citizens Information Service has established a normal retirement age in line with the state pension age (currently 66).

**Annual Leave:** Calculated on a pro rata basis for part year service as follows:

- 23 days
- 24 days (upon completion of 2 years' service)
- 25 days (upon completion of 5 years' service)

Full terms and conditions are contained in a Staff Handbook, which is issued with and forms part of the Employee Contract at CIS.

## Advocacy Support Worker – How to Apply

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- A relevant application form can be accessed from the vacancy section of [www.citizensinformationboard.ie](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie)
- Applicants must possess all required competencies for the role and will be shortlisted solely on the basis of information provided in their completed application form.
- Curriculum Vitae (CVs), late, incomplete or hand-written applications will not be considered.
- Please contact [sharon.dillon@citinfo.ie](mailto:sharon.dillon@citinfo.ie) if you have any special requirements in relation to completing the application form.
- **Closing date: 4:30pm on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024**
- **Please email application form to: [sharon.dillon@citinfo.ie](mailto:sharon.dillon@citinfo.ie)**
- **If you require any reasonable accommodation to your application due to your circumstances (e.g. disability), please contact the above email address and we will try and facilitate you where reasonably practicable.**
- A panel of qualified candidates may be formed from which temporary/permanent, part/full-time Advocacy Support Worker posts which arise in a specified period up to a maximum of 12 months will be filled, should vacancies arise in this period. Posts will be located in the CIS region applied for.]
- For information on how your personal data will be used as part of this process please refer to our Data Protection Notice for Job Applicants, available at the following link: [http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/en/data\\_protection/cis.html](http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/en/data_protection/cis.html)

*Citizens Information Services are equal opportunities employers*