

Welfare Rights Adviser

Welfare rights advisers give clients advice and guidance on welfare benefits and their rights. These include benefits such as income support, housing benefit and tax credits.

The Work

You could be:

- giving advice to a client, in a confidential interview
- helping clients to fill in forms to apply for benefits
- writing letters for clients, or helping them to write letters, for example to appeal against decisions on benefits
- representing clients at benefit appeals
- keeping confidential records of clients and their needs
- giving talks to groups, to encourage people to apply for benefits to which they are entitled
- visiting clients at home, if they are unable to travel to the office
- writing up reports
- keeping up to date with benefit laws and policy.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

The salary for welfare rights officers and money advisers is around £20,000 to £22,000 a year. Experienced advisers may earn around £23,000 to £30,000 a year or more.

Conditions

- You would normally work in an office, but you may do home visits.
- You usually work regular hours, Monday to Friday, but you may have to go to meetings in the evenings or at weekends.
- Some organisations now offer a telephone advice service outside normal working office hours.

Getting In

- You do not always need formal qualifications but some entrants have a degree, qualifications in social work (see [Social Worker](#)) or qualifications obtained through Citizens Advice.
- Relevant experience may be more important than qualifications. You may need to do at least a year of voluntary work before getting a paid job.
- Some entrants move into welfare rights after working in social work or community work, perhaps with a

local tenants' group or with unemployed people.

- A driving licence is useful and may be essential for some jobs.
- You will require a satisfactory PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) check to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact Disclosure Scotland for details.

You may find work with a local authority department such as social work, a housing association, an unemployment or anti-poverty unit or a voluntary body. Vacancies are usually advertised in the press and in jobcentres.

What Does It Take

You should be:

- a good listener, helpful, with a pleasant manner
- able to relate to a wide range of people
- sensitive to clients' problems
- patient, when dealing with clients who may be upset
- confident, especially when representing clients at appeal hearings
- able to explain complex benefits rules clearly and simply to clients.

You should have:

- respect for confidentiality
- the ability to manage your own caseload
- some ability in maths
- good IT skills, especially knowledge of Microsoft Word and Excel.

Training

- Training is on the job.
- You will need to take short courses throughout your working life, to keep up to date with changes in the benefit system.
- The Child Poverty Action Group runs a range of courses in Glasgow. These include a 5-day introduction to welfare rights and a number of one-day courses on specific benefits. They also offer training in negotiating skills and representing at appeal tribunals.

Getting On

- With experience and further skills, you may be able to become a manager for a welfare rights advice centre, or for a more general advice centre.
- You may move into training welfare rights advisers.
- If you work for a local authority department, you may move to work in a related post in the same or another department.

Contacts

AdviceUK

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COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

Tel: 0131 474 9200

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Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.