

Employment advice

A steady job is often a precious possession. For many, the world of work is changing, leading to increased job insecurity and underemployment, with an increase in casual work, agency work and zero hours contracts.¹

Where work isn't safe and secure, it can affect someone's ability to get on with their job, leading to a lack of productivity at work and potentially time off due to work-related stress.²

Issues that are mismanaged can lead to a deterioration of the employer-employee relationship, potentially forcing someone to leave or lose their job. Loss of or reduction in work - for whatever reason - can have a devastating impact on someone's security of housing, ability to afford to live and support their families.

Local Citizens Advice in 2015/16:



208,000
clients



377,000
employment
problems

In work rights: checking basic rights

In a changing labour market, not everyone has a contract with plainly written terms and conditions. People come to us when this is not yet a problem: they may simply want to check basic facts about what they can expect from their employer.

For instance: what are reasonable working hours, should they expect paid holiday, or what happens if they fall sick for an extended period. With the introduction of the new national living wage rate, an individual might be check if they're being paid the right amount, but not know what to do if they're being underpaid.

When checking basic rights, people can often self-help including online, but where a problem has arisen additional support is needed. For example, in 2015/16, 49,000 clients sought our help about terms and conditions of employment. We advise people on how to frame conversations with their employer, helping them assert their rights without damaging the employment relationship. This effectively stalls potential problems in the making, enabling people to get on with their jobs and their lives.



Our biggest employment advice area is pay and entitlements: **83,000 clients** sought our help about this last year



2 in every 3
clients will have their
employment problem solved

¹ Citizens Advice. (2016) *The importance of income security*.

² Centre for Mental Health. (2007) *Mental health at work: developing the business case*.

In work problems: managing disputes and grievances

We help workers to find their way through difficult employment issues. The focus is on negotiation and conflict resolution, with litigation as a last resort.

When someone comes to us about a dispute or grievance problem, we help them diagnose the issues and take appropriate action including identifying unrecognised signs of disciplinary action. The right process must be followed by an employer, and we help individuals formally and informally challenge circumstances where it has not. This provides people the opportunity to mend relations or to start looking for alternative employment, reducing the chances of unanticipated unemployment. Where a client has been dismissed, we provide guidance about their likelihood of being able to appeal or challenge this decision.

We also help when things are at breaking point: failure to make reasonable adjustments for disabled workers, unfair dismissal, bullying and harassment. We're able to give individuals an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of, and potential levels of compensation for, their claims allowing them to make an informed choice before they go to an employment tribunal, and guide them through the process if they do.

The introduction of tribunal fees means that making a claim to an employment tribunal is off limits to many people or, if they decide to do so, it's crucial that they present their claim in the best way.³ Individuals need an honest answer about the chances of legal action being successful and if they'll be paid out at the end.

³ Citizens Advice. (2016) *Fairer fees*.