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## Olivia Collin

Volunteer  
Advice Service Community Links

"I graduated from university in July this year. I knew I wanted to take the year out and do some form of volunteering as a way of giving back and to gain some legal and advocacy experience, as I hope to one day become a barrister. I was scrolling through my University Careers Service website when I came across the advert for the placement in the Advice Team at Community Links. Months of slight anxiety about what my year would hold was erased, and I became fascinated by all the wonderful, and extremely diverse, projects Community Links is involved with. I knew it was exactly the kind of place I wanted to work. I applied that same day, had my interview a week later and accepted the offer on the day. I did not apply anywhere else and I have not looked back.

It's safe to say that if you work at Community Links you are thrown in at the deep end. On my first day I assisted the Advice team with the form filling session, on day 3 I was at an appeal and by the end of my first month I had already ticked off my main aim of representing a client before a HMCTS Tribunal.

I have had so many great experiences working at Community Links; it is an electric and dynamic place where you see change happen for people. I have learned how to listen to someone who is stressed and panicked and help them identify the problems that we can support with. I didn't know I could help people so much and it feels really good. The high point was being given a bottle of wine when I won a case for a client!

I am applying for scholarships to study at law school and competition for pupillage is fierce, but my experience at Community Links has given me the skills and human focus that I think will help me stand out. I empathise so much with people's situation sometimes it is hard not to feel overwhelmed, but I've had really nurturing support from my manager, John. Community Links is an asset to the community, and I feel proud to work here as a volunteer."