

The ACSO secondment programme

The Association of Consumer Support Organisations ([ACSO](#)) offers 3- to 6-month secondment opportunities for trainees from member organisations, with longer programmes available if appropriate. Their purpose is to provide trainees with the opportunity to broaden their skills, develop links with senior industry stakeholders and personnel, and obtain a unique and valuable overview of the broader civil justice sector. Secondees may join ACSO on a full-time or part-time basis.

The programme enables secondees to:

- engage with relevant politicians, the media, policymakers, regulators, other ACSO members and industry figures;
- learn how to develop and manage senior external stakeholders;
- gain experience of project management, the timely delivery of tangible outputs, good governance and effective organisation of meetings;
- build a greater understanding of the trends and factors which are shaping the legal and financial services sectors by undertaking research on issues relevant to ACSO campaigns and the wider industry; and
- develop research and written communication skills by:
 - helping to draft responses to relevant consultations; and
 - distilling and summarising complex topics into easy-to-understand formats for a variety of audiences.

ACSO's approach to the programme is to involve secondees in all its activities, thereby providing each individual with the opportunity to learn as much as possible during their placement. For this reason, secondees are able to join meetings between ACSO and industry stakeholders (including policymakers and regulators), take an active role in all ACSO working groups, join monthly board meetings, Strategy Committee meetings and weekly executive calls, as well as gain access to ACSO resources.

Owing to the high level of involvement in ACSO's work, confidentiality is vital. Contractual protections are in place in the form of a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). The agreement imposes obligations on the secondee to maintain the confidentiality of any sensitive information and/or documents disclosed during the secondment programme.

Before the formal start of the secondment, an introductory meeting will be arranged between the secondee, ACSO personnel and the seconding organisation. Background on ACSO will be provided, alongside an overview of the secondment programme. Objectives for the secondee will be agreed with the seconding organisation before the commencement of the programme.

Each secondee may be asked to construct a research report on a key trend or topic within the sector; the continuation or furthering of this report can form one of the secondee's main workstreams. Reports will require qualitative and quantitative research, will make clear observations on the future of the market alongside recommendations on how to navigate any potential challenges. Any final report will benefit ACSO and its members, including the

seconding organisation, by providing an increased understanding of the subject matter and will be used for a wide range of public relations and stakeholder engagement opportunities.

In addition to any research report, the secondee will be accountable for projects and tasks allocated to them to support ACSO's core working groups. Wherever possible, ACSO will align the work of the secondee to areas of direct interest to the seconding organisation.

From the start of the secondment, regular meetings will be held between ACSO, the secondee and the seconding organisation, in addition to a meeting between ACSO and the seconding organisation at the end of each month. The purpose of the former meeting is to ensure that ACSO and the seconding organisation are kept up to date on the work and activities of the secondee and enables the individual to receive regular advice and feedback. The latter meeting is to ensure both ACSO and the seconding organisation are satisfied with the format of the programme, allowing for the identification and discussion of any difficulties or obstacles experienced during the secondment and the development of the secondee.

During their time with ACSO, each secondee will continue to be paid by their employer (the seconding organisation) in the usual way, will be permitted their normal leave entitlement – to be approved by the seconding organisation - and will be expected to work the hours they are contracted to by their employer.

There exists a mutual obligation on the secondee and the seconding organisation to maintain communication throughout the period of the secondment. This includes the secondee's requirement to keep the organisation from which they are seconded informed of the work they are doing and any variation to their secondment agreement.

It is the responsibility of secondees who join ACSO on a part-time basis to manage their time in order to meet deadlines set by ACSO alongside the completion of work set by the seconding organisation. Work and meetings arranged by the seconding organisation should be prioritised by the secondee.

The secondee does not owe any duties directly to ACSO, only to the seconding organisation. However, while on secondment the secondee will work at the direction and management of ACSO's designated personnel, typically the Executive Director. It is ACSO's responsibility to supervise the secondee and to notify the seconding organisation immediately should we feel the secondee's performance is unsatisfactory. The seconding organisation retains day-to-day control of the secondee and will carry out any appraisals, disciplinary or grievance procedures.

ACSO has the ability to terminate at any time and for whatever reason a period of secondment. In these circumstances, the secondee does not have the right of appeal.

Upon completion of the secondment, ACSO will request feedback from both the secondee and the seconding organisation in order to evaluate and better understand their experiences. Such feedback will help ensure the secondment programme works to the benefit of the secondee and aids their personal and professional development as much as possible. The secondee will then return to their substantive post.

In addition, a review and evaluation of the secondment will be held between ACSO and the seconding organisation in order to ensure the programme is functioning efficiently and to the benefit of both organisations.

For further information, please contact:

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