



**Berkshire
Vision**
Supporting The
Visually Impaired



Volunteer

Supporting The Visually Impaired

Making a difference

Welcome

As a volunteer you are contributing your time, energy and enthusiasm to supporting us deliver our service to people with a visual impairment. You will be making a real difference to the lives of many individuals who live in Berkshire who may feel vulnerable and alone.

Volunteers are at the heart of our organisation. We have two types of volunteers, people who want to help us deliver our essential service and those who are keen to raise the much needed funds to support those in need.

As a volunteer you will be warmly welcomed.

Berkshire Vision

Berkshire Vision is a local registered charity with over 100 years of expertise and experience in the provision of services, advice and support to more than 2,000 people across Berkshire who are blind or partially sighted.

We aim to provide visually impaired people (VIPs) with the information and support they need to live independently and safely.

We achieve this by offering a wide range of services to VIPs and their families as well as working with health and social care professionals, local employers and community groups to improve their understanding of visual impairment and the needs of those affected by all forms of vision loss.

We also provide vital practical and emotional support to VIPs and their families, we have a children's activity club, social clubs and a full range of sporting activities for all ages.

Sight loss does more than take away a person's sight; it can take away their self-confidence and independence and leave them isolated.

The support and opportunities of companionship we offer to people of all ages is highly valued by our members. Quite often just knowing that someone will be visiting or taking them out gives a great sense of comfort.

The opportunities to get involved in a variety of sports programmes enables children, young people and adults to experience new and exciting activities giving them a great sense of accomplishment.

Volunteers are a vital part of our team.



Why Volunteer?

Volunteers are a vitally important part of the Berkshire Vision team. Volunteers are integrated into the structure of the charity and play a crucial role in ensuring that members can access opportunities and activities on offer.

Volunteers support Berkshire Vision by giving their time, energy and commitment to carry out roles which have been agreed by the volunteer coordinators within the charity. The volunteering relationship is based on trust and does not involve the obligations associated with employment. No payment, other than reimbursement of agreed expenses is made to people who volunteer their time to the charity.

This volunteer handbook is intended to outline the principles on which the relationship between volunteering and the charity is based and provides basic information about volunteering with us.

We welcome and respect the breadth of skills, experience, dedication and good will that a volunteer will bring to the team.

In most cases volunteers will be over 16 years old as there are legal requirements that need to be adhered too for children and young people. We are still keen to engage with young people and don't want to put them off but want them to be aware of the legalities.

Opportunities to volunteer are numerous and you can get involved in many different ways.



What we would like from you...

Berkshire Vision welcomes and respects the breadth of experience, skills, dedication and goodwill that volunteers contribute. What we expect from you will include:

- 🌀 An Aim for high standards of efficiency, reliability and quality of volunteering
- 🌀 Work in partnership with other volunteers and staff
- 🌀 Always consider and protect the charity's reputation
- 🌀 Contact staff if there are any issues or problems that need discussing
- 🌀 Understand the aims and goals of the charity
- 🌀 Support, respect and adhere to organisational policies
- 🌀 Act responsibly and within the law at all times
- 🌀 Have the best possible experience by getting involved...

What you can expect from us...

As a volunteer you are an important part of our team. We want you to enjoy the experience and feel rewarded for all your hard work. As part of our commitment we endeavour to:

- Offer equal opportunities to all at all times
- Match your skills and experiences with the right role wherever possible
- Celebrate success and recognise loyalty
- Provide information about the work we do with regular updates
- Ensure your health and safety when volunteering
- Ensure that you are protected through adequate insurance and risk assessments
- Offer an initial meeting to discuss suitability and aspirations
- Offer appropriate and effective training and support
- Respect all volunteers and communicate regularly
- Reimburse out of pocket expenses when agreed up front
- Encourage a positive and friendly atmosphere
- Ensure that we offer best practice volunteer management in accordance with the Institute of Fundraising

Getting Started

We want to make your volunteering experience mean as much to you as it does to us.

Berkshire Vision values the work of volunteers. These principles reflect this commitment:

- Berkshire Vision ensures that volunteers are effectively integrated into the organisation
- Berkshire Vision does not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff
- Berkshire Vision expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers
- Working with volunteers increases Berkshire Vision's contact and involvement with the local community

All prospective volunteers will be interviewed by the Volunteer Coordinator to find out what they would like to do, what skills they offer, their suitability and how best their potential might be realised within the organisation. They will then be asked to complete an application form and provide two references with the aim of establishing both suitability of character and confirmation of identity. All volunteers are also required to have an enhanced DBS check.

Please ask any questions or highlight any areas you are unsure of when you have your interview. We want you to be part of our team for some time and recommend a settling in period of 3 months so that we can both be sure that it's best for all of us.



Training

Volunteers will receive a Berkshire Vision induction pack, which will include, but is not limited to: the Berkshire Vision Volunteer Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Data Protection Policy, Lone Working Policy, Confidentiality Policy and Specific Task Description and Berkshire Vision's Aims and Objectives.

The Whistleblowing Policy is available on request from the Chief Executive.

In addition to the induction pack, all volunteers will receive a half day training workshop at Berkshire Vision offices at Erleigh Road in Reading.

Reliability and commitment

It's important to us that we can rely on you. Please let a staff member know if you are unable to keep a pre-arranged commitment.

Support

The Volunteer Co-ordinator will contact the volunteer on an agreed regular basis for feedback, to discuss future development and air any problems.

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning the organisation. Berkshire Vision aims to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage and build on good practice.

Volunteer Expenses

All Volunteers undertaking voluntary work may have all reasonable and genuine out of pocket expenses reimbursed (e.g., lunch, and travel) upon production of a receipt. Mileage allowance can be reimbursed by the volunteer completing a Berkshire Vision expenses sheet. Please refer to the Expenses Explained sheet for further information on how to claim out of pocket expenses.

The Chief Executive has the discretion not to reimburse expenses that are considered unreasonable.

Any such reimbursement for expenses is not a consideration for services, and so does not affect benefits in any way and is not subject to income tax or national insurance.

Young Volunteers

We want people of all ages and backgrounds to volunteer. There are some rules and regulations that need to be adhered too for younger volunteers.

A young person under the age of 16 years cannot be left unattended without at least one responsible adult but preferably two. Parental consent is required for activities outside of 'normal' environments such as a school, club or group where they are in the care of responsible adults although parents should be informed of activities concerning children and young people.

Young people must not be placed in situations that offer unnecessary or undue risk.

Media Relations

Volunteers may be asked to represent the charity publicly. No comments or stories should be given directly to the media unless a draft has been prepared and approved by a staff member. Generally requests from the media should be referred to the office.

We may ask you to assist with our marketing activities by allowing us to use images of your activities and involvement with the charity.

Information, Equipment and Materials

Volunteers are entitled to all necessary information pertinent to their roles. The Volunteer Co-ordinator will ensure that the volunteer receives all relevant information, memos, materials etc. Appropriate equipment such as stationery is provided according to the needs of the voluntary role.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by Berkshire Vision's Employer's Liability insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any voluntary work on behalf of Berkshire Vision.

Berkshire Vision's Policies and Procedures

Volunteers with Berkshire Vision are expected to adhere to the Policies and Procedures of the organisation. It is the responsibility of each volunteer's co-ordinator to ensure that all policies and procedures are read and understood by the volunteers.

The following policies are particularly important for volunteers:

Health and Safety

All volunteers must comply with Berkshire Vision's Health and Safety policy, whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any voluntary work on behalf of Berkshire Vision.

Equal Opportunities

Berkshire Vision is committed to the governing principles of Equal Opportunities. In this respect it operates an Equal Opportunities Policy for both paid staff and all volunteers.

Data Protection

Berkshire Vision is committed to the principles of Data Protection and operates a policy for the protection of personal data.

Procedures for Problems or Complaints

If a volunteer is not happy with any aspect of their involvement with Berkshire Vision, they should first discuss the matter with the Volunteer Co-ordinator, who will in all cases try to resolve the matter in the most appropriate manner. It may be necessary to tackle a grievance in a more formal way in which case the Volunteers' Grievance procedure will be used.

All volunteers are expected to adhere to the policies and uphold the aims of Berkshire Vision and as its representatives behave in an appropriate manner. If a volunteer behaves, or is suspected to have behaved in a manner likely to cause offence or bring Berkshire Vision into disrepute, the volunteer's co-ordinator will discuss the matter with the volunteer and the Volunteer's Disciplinary Procedure may be implemented. The Chief Executive has the authority to prevent any individual from volunteering with Berkshire Vision although any such decision will be made on objective criteria and within the principles and practices of Berkshire Vision Equal Opportunities Policy.

Berkshire Vision aims to provide a volunteering environment that is enjoyable and rewarding. It welcomes feedback from volunteers on the quality of the volunteering experience it offers.

How much you mean to us...

We value and appreciate all the time, enthusiasm, commitment and skills you bring to help us support Berkshire Vision.

We want to keep you informed and we'll keep you up to date with news and events through regular communications and newsletters. Please visit our website www.berkshirevision.org.uk to keep up with developments as they happen.

We aim to monitor and review our volunteering policies from time to time and welcome constructive comments and support offering improvements to our service.

Thank you



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