



## Volunteer Befriender role description

*A Christian response to the emotional and spiritual needs of people losing their sight*

### Role context

Each day 100 people are told they are losing their sight across the UK. Few receive any support - such as information, resources or friendship during this difficult time.

The role of Volunteer Befriender is central to this scheme, being alongside individuals as they journey through the life-changing impact of sight loss.

**Role:** *Journeying With* - Volunteer Befriender

**Reports to:** *Journeying With* - Volunteer Co-ordinator

**In co-operation with:** Representatives of the church/group of churches running the local *Journeying With* scheme

### Main purpose

To befriend, with emotional, spiritual and practical help, people who are losing their sight and journey with them as they come to terms with this loss. Help clients to access other services available to them, to gain independence, be able to talk about matters of faith, and to feel more confident in facing the future.

### Support and training provided

Training will be provided through your local *Journeying With* scheme in conjunction with Torch Trust. A handbook will be provided which should give a good basis for your role, and hopefully answer any questions you may have. Ongoing support will be provided by the Volunteer Co-ordinator who will liaise with you about matching you up with clients and will provide support for you and the other volunteers within the local scheme.

## **Main duties and responsibilities**

- Offer regular (usually weekly) befriending support for a period of roughly six months on a one to one basis to people losing their sight
- Listen to the concerns and issues of the person experiencing loss of sight
- Enable clients to regain confidence through encouragement and support, and prayer if requested
- Link clients with any other services and support which may continue to benefit them once the befriending period comes to an end
- Meet at least once every six weeks with the Volunteer Co-ordinator either individually or with other befrienders as appropriate
- Complete the initial training session and annual refresher day. There may be additional training opportunities from time to time
- Notify the Volunteer Co-ordinator immediately of any concerns/safeguarding issues arising from contact with your client

## **Desirable skills, experience and attributes**

- A good listener and able to empathise
- Able to relate to the issues faced by individuals with sight loss
- Non-judgmental; treats people with respect
- Able to respond to invitations to pray with the client if requested
- Interested in supporting people in the community
- Good sense of humour
- Honest and trustworthy

## **Specific Requirements**

*Journeying With* is a Christian befriending scheme. The role of volunteer befriender will involve being able to pray with and offer Christian support to clients if requested. It is therefore a requirement that a volunteer befriender has an active Christian faith, involvement in the local church and accepts the Torch Basis of Faith.

## **Expected hours of volunteering**

We anticipate that this role will require a commitment of 4 hours a week.

## What a Volunteer Befriender does

- A volunteer befriender provides emotional and practical support: acting as a friend would act. A volunteer befriender is not replacing the role of any professional, but could signpost the client towards professional services such as counselling if required.
- A volunteer befriender helps the client come to terms with their sight loss, supporting them to make their own choices. A volunteer must never try to take control of the client's life - the autonomy of the client should always be respected.
- We envisage each befriending relationship lasting roughly six months. The relationship should not create a situation where the client becomes dependent on the volunteer; the aim of *Journeying With* is to help the client regain confidence and independence.
- We recognise that volunteers and clients may wish to keep in touch with each other once the befriending period ends, as this is a sign of a friendship which has been formed, but this continuing contact would not be part of the *Journeying With* scheme.
- Volunteers are Christians but should not view this as an opportunity to recruit for church membership or to preach, although we encourage volunteers to offer prayer and to respond to opportunities to share their faith if the client asks: "...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...." (1 Peter 3:15)

## Criminal Records Check

Because this role may involve working with vulnerable adults, an Enhanced DBS [or Access Northern Ireland] check will be required. This will usually be done through the church leading the local *Journeying With* scheme.

## Further Information

If you would like to find out more about the possibility of being a volunteer befriender, or if you have any questions at all, please do contact your local *Journeying With* scheme if you have the contact details, otherwise contact:

## Torch Trust

Tel: 01858 438260 or Email: [info@torchtrust.org](mailto:info@torchtrust.org)

The role of volunteer befriender is central to this work, and a practical opportunity for putting your faith into action. We would encourage you to take the opportunity to find out more about this and to pray about whether this may be something God is leading you towards.