

BucksVision Volunteering Policy

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1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles of volunteering, establish minimum standards for recruitment and support, and define the mutual expectations between BucksVision and its volunteers.

BucksVision works with blind and partially sighted people to support them through the trauma of sight loss and help them maintain independent lives. This policy applies to **all volunteers, volunteer managers, and staff** regardless of role, location, or length of service.

2. Legal Status of Volunteers

Volunteers are individuals who freely give their time and skills to help BucksVision achieve its strategy. They are not employees or workers under UK employment law. To preserve this status and avoid creating an unintended contract of employment:

- Volunteers are not paid a wage or salary; only reasonable out-of-pocket expenses are reimbursed.
- There is no legal obligation for BucksVision to provide opportunities or for volunteers to accept them.
- Role descriptions are framed as mutual expectations, not contractual obligations.

3. Our Volunteering Commitment

Our Volunteering Commitment outlines what you can expect from us while on your volunteer journey; and what we expect from anyone who volunteers for BucksVision.

A copy of the commitment is included in our ***Volunteer Welcome Pack*** and is available on request.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Volunteers	Follow this policy, the Code of Conduct and role guidance; raise concerns promptly; keep training up to date.
Volunteer Manager	Induct, train, support and supervise volunteers; manage concerns fairly; maintain accurate records.
Senior management / trustees	Ensure adequate resources, insurance and policy review; approve this policy and any significant changes.

5. Recruitment and Selection

Advertising roles

Volunteer roles are advertised with a short role description covering purpose, tasks, time commitment, location and any role-specific requirements (e.g. age limits, DBS checks).

Roles are advertised on our website and external platforms. Volunteers can apply via the online application linked to the advert. Where necessary, Volunteers can apply for a role via calling the main office number on **01296 487 556**.

Equity, Equality and Inclusion

We welcome volunteers from all backgrounds and will not discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation).

Reasonable adjustments will be made to enable disabled volunteers to take part.

Minimum age

Volunteers must normally be aged 18 or over, except for organised group or school volunteering with appropriate parental consent and supervision arrangements. Specific roles may set a higher minimum age where this is justified (e.g. roles involving vulnerable groups).

Checks

Some roles involving regulated activity with vulnerable adults require an enhanced DBS check before the volunteer starts, in line with our **Safeguarding Adults Policy**. References may be requested for roles involving higher levels of trust or risk.

6. Welcome and Induction

Induction to BucksVision

Once you've been successfully recruited to a volunteering role, we'll invite you to a volunteer induction session.

During this induction you'll learn about sight loss and how to sighted guide; our policies and procedures; the practical parts of your role such as what you'll be doing, where and when as well; and who your main contacts will be.

Mandatory training

We want to make sure that you're prepared for your role and have a good understanding of important policies and procedures. All volunteers must

complete mandatory training at induction and refresher training every two years. These currently cover safeguarding, data protection, health and safety, and diversity and inclusion. This training will help you to carry out your role with confidence.

We recognise that you are sharing your time and skills with BucksVision, therefore we are committed to making this training easy to access and available in a variety of methods and formats so that is an accessible and inclusive experience. You'll receive the mandatory training as part of your induction and then we will be in touch to arrange refresher training.

Your volunteer manager will support you along the way with completing the mandatory training.

Skills development

We want you to feel confident and well informed in your role. We offer some additional development opportunities and are looking to expand this offer over time.

We have training that can be delivered by your volunteer manager and even online learning. Some of the modules include customer service, First Aid, dementia awareness, eye health and sighted guiding.

Your volunteer manager can let you know more about what's available.

7. Expenses

We don't want you to be out of pocket when you support us. Your time is all that we ask for. We encourage you to claim your volunteering expenses. BucksVision reimburses reasonable, pre-agreed expenses against receipts, including:

- **Travel:** Standard class public transport or mileage (currently **55p/mile** for car journeys).
- **Submission:** Claims must be approved by the volunteer manager and should typically be submitted within **30 days**.

Expense claims should be submitted within 30 days using the *Volunteer Expenses Form*. All expenses must be approved by your volunteer manager who will arrange payment.

Payments beyond reimbursement of actual costs (e.g. flat-rate 'thank you' payments) are to be avoided, as these can affect a volunteer's legal status, benefits entitlement or tax position.

You can find out more about what you can claim for and how to make a claim in our ***Volunteer Expenses Guidance*** policy.

8. Keeping in touch and connected

You should have regular communication with your volunteer manager. This will include providing updates from BucksVision, sharing information relevant to your role and opportunities to review the volunteering relationship.

Volunteer News

All volunteers will receive the regular volunteer news update, which is available in several formats (email, braille, audio, and large print). This includes volunteering stories, information relevant to your volunteering role and key updates from BucksVision.

Support Available

Your volunteer manager will be your main point of contact and support throughout your volunteering relationship with BucksVision. Your volunteer manager will support from the point of recruitment and will provide you with an induction, ongoing support and development as required in your role.

Feedback on Experience

Your volunteering experience matters to us. We conduct regular volunteering surveys to understand and improve your volunteering experience.

We will develop opportunities for you to feedback and be more involved in shaping the volunteering experience at BucksVision. We will include volunteers in focus groups or project groups as they come up.

9. Keeping Volunteers Safe

BucksVision carries out risk assessments for volunteering activities and provides any necessary protective equipment, briefing or supervision.

Volunteers are covered by BucksVision's public liability accident insurance while carrying out agreed volunteering activities; volunteers should not undertake tasks outside their agreed role without authorisation.

Volunteer Drivers **must inform their insurance company** that they are undertaking volunteer driving, as this activity will be covered **under their own car insurance**.

All accidents or "near-misses" must be reported to Head Office immediately and logged in line with our ***Health and Safety Policy***.

Volunteers are encouraged to raise any wellbeing concerns as soon as possible, whether that is about volunteers, members, or someone else involved in delivering our services.

10. Code of Conduct

Volunteers must adhere to BV's Professional **Code of Behaviour** and **Safeguarding Adults Policy**.

Confidentiality: Volunteers must maintain strict confidentiality regarding service users and internal information.

Gifts and Money: Volunteers should **not accept personal gifts or money** from members. If a role requires handling money (e.g., trip payments), strict record-keeping and receipts are mandatory.

11. Data Protection

Personal data is managed according to Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, **UK GDPR** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**. Data is kept securely, used only for volunteering purposes, and retained only as long as necessary.

12. Problem Solving

Issues are typically resolved through informal discussion with your volunteer manager. If unresolved, a **formal process** may be followed to agree on next steps, such as extra support or a role change. This is a supportive process rather than a disciplinary one.

See BucksVision's ***Problem Solving for Volunteers*** policy for further details.

Right to raise concerns: volunteers may also raise concerns about their own treatment, role or the organisation at any stage, including via contacting the Volunteer Manager, Operations Manager or Chief Executive.

In cases of serious misconduct, safeguarding concerns or risk of harm, Bucks Vision may suspend or end a volunteering arrangement immediately while the matter is investigated.

13. Ending the Arrangement

As a volunteer, you can stop volunteering with BucksVision at any time. We'd be grateful if you can give as much notice as possible. If you are unable to continue volunteering with us, please let us know through your volunteer manager.

On occasions, we may need to end your volunteer involvement. If this is the case, we will treat you fairly, and with dignity and respect and where appropriate will find you an alternative role. Rarely, we may need to end a volunteering role if there has been a complaint, concern or serious breach of our policies or procedures. If this is the case we will follow our ***Problem Solving Procedure for Volunteers***.

We welcome feedback on all volunteering experiences and we will send you an exit questionnaire so that we can find out if there are any changes we could make or to hear about what worked well during your time with us. If you do not wish to complete an exit questionnaire, please let your volunteer manager know.

14. Recognition

We recognise the value volunteers bring through, for example, regular thanks, volunteer appreciation events, references on request, and opportunities for development or progression into other roles. Recognition is not provided as payment or reward for work and does not affect volunteers' legal status.

15. Review

This policy is reviewed every **two years** (next review: January 2027) or following significant organizational or legislative changes.

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	1/7/26	Milena Dixon-Rajkoviches	New policy created from existing policies

Volunteer Experience Flow Chart

1. Registration of Interest

Potential volunteers register their interest. The Volunteering team responds within two working days.



2. Information & Informal Chat

Applicants receive a *Volunteer Welcome Pack* and role descriptions in their preferred format. An informal chat is arranged to discuss next steps.



3. Formal Application

The applicant completes a *Volunteer Application Form*.



4. Vetting and Selection

BucksVision obtains references. An Enhanced DBS check is required for roles involving regulated activity with vulnerable adults.



5. Induction Training

Successful applicants attend an induction session covering sight loss awareness, sighted guiding, and essential policies and procedures.



6. Mandatory Training

Volunteers complete *Safeguarding, Data Protection, Health and Safety, Diversity and Inclusion*, and role-specific training before unsupervised work.



7. Active Volunteering and Support

Volunteers begin their roles with Volunteer Manager support, regular communication, expense reimbursement, and access to further support



8. Ongoing Maintenance

Mandatory training is refreshed every two years. Volunteers stay connected through regular updates and check-ins.



9. Farewell and Feedback

When a volunteer stops, they give as much notice as possible and are offered an exit questionnaire to gather feedback and identify improvements.