



Blatchington Court Trust

Volunteer Handbook 2021

Contents



We value our volunteers and want everyone to enjoy being part of Blatchington Court Trust. By donating your time, skills and experience you are making our services possible and enabling us to extend our support. We want to do all we can to help you understand what our volunteers will expect from this role, we hope this handbook will give you some useful information about volunteering with us. Please do get in touch if you have any further questions or suggestions.

Thank you for all your support

Welcome	.....	P1
Why we are here	.....	P2
What we do	.....	P3
Our Values	.....	P4
Our History	.....	P5
Your Volunteering	.....	P6
Supervision and Support	.....	P7
Volunteer Roles	.....	P8

Why we are here

BCT provide a range of services to young people registered blind/vision impaired and their families. We pride ourselves on delivering professional services such as Advocacy and Counselling, as well as hosting events and socials that have a laid back, informal family feel.

We have found only one other charity that develop similar services to us and have a similar feel, making us a very unique charity. We are unique because we walk through life with our clients, many of us have known them since birth and we see them grow.

Many clients refer to us as their 'BCT Family' because we all know each other so well and are there for each other. We invite all clients, workers and volunteers to share this and be a part of this wonderful charity. Various clients claim they do not know what they would have done without our support, and that is exactly why we are here.



A Few facts:

In the UK there are almost 2 million people living with sight loss. Of these, around 360,000 are registered as blind or partially sighted.

- Nearly half of blind and partially sighted people of working age said they had been treated unfairly by others in the last 12 months due to their sight loss.
- Only 17 per cent of people experiencing sight loss are offered emotional support in response to their deteriorating vision.
- 39 per cent of blind and partially sighted people of working age say they have some or great difficulty in making ends meet.

What we do

BCT is a support network for clients and their parents, we are here to listen, to give expert information and provide services to help them manage at home, at work, at school or wherever they are. Through volunteers like you we will be able to maximise our support and most importantly let the clients and their families have fun, in a safe space that caters to their needs. Whatever you give to BCT, whether it's time, skills, expertise or the benefit of your experience we are grateful.

Blatchington Court Trust (BCT), established in 1995, is an independent, impartial, financially secure charity working to promote and support the needs of blind and partially sighted people under the age of 30 who live in Sussex. Our services include educational support where we work with clients to remove barriers to learning at school/college, employment support, provision of assistive technology for home use, counselling and life coaching services, leisure development and outreach development services. Currently, we have around 600 clients, eleven of us working in the BCT office, a board of trustees and around fifteen active Blatchington Friends.



Our values

We put our clients first

Our clients and their families are at the centre of everything we do

○ **We listen, learn and share**

Listening, informing and sign posting, sharing with each other what we've learnt.

○ **We value each other**

We value and respect the different ways people see the world.

○ **Accessible to all**

Inclusive of everyone, admiring diversity

○ **We grow together**

We are collaborative in our approach to the work we do.

○ **We take pride**

We take pride in what we do, and the people we work with.

Our History

Blatchington Court School was the first school for blind boys in the UK opening around 140 years ago. In 1978, the Warnock report was published, this was a government initiative to integrate many special needs children in to mainstream education. Consequently, in 1985, Blatchington Court School was closed and the land sold. The money from the sale was invested and the income from these investments was used to set up and fund Blatchington Court Trust through annual dividends.



Since then, we have Blatchington Court Trust a registered charity working to support young individuals who are blind/vision impaired all across Sussex. The Trust has been around for decades now; it initially provided free advocacy support to help support the educational needs of children. As time has progressed, more services have been introduced and we now have an array of fantastic resources. We offer free counselling to clients, advocacy, events, IT support, accessible device training, benefit application support, grants, a befriending service, over-18 socials on Friday nights as well as a range of events that include trips out, crafts, sports and we host an annual BBQ at Hove Cricket Ground which everyone looks forward to.

We now want to introduce a volunteer service, which we hope flourishes and enriches the lives of our clients



Your Volunteering

What you can expect from us:

- We will pay for your enhanced DBS check if you ever work 1:1 with a client
- We will pay for your safeguarding training if you ever work 1:1 with a client
- An induction about the role of volunteering, as well as training in how to be a sighted guide
- A named supervisor will always be on hand to support you and monitor
- We can provide a reference to employers for the volunteering work you do
- Volunteers are front line for the charity so we respect your voice and will listen to any ideas you have about improving our services
- Your communication and people skills will improve
- We will cover reasonable out of pocket expenses: Travel and tickets to the events we attend
- We will have adequate insurance to cover you while undertaking voluntary activities
- We will follow the procedures, policies and standards of the organisation in relation to volunteers
- We will resolve any concerns promptly and fairly
- We create an enjoyable and friendly atmosphere

What we expect from you:

- You will undertake all of your training
- You will be active in replying to emails and engaging with Blatchington Court Trust
- You will read and abide to our various policies such as the volunteering policy, health & safety as well as our social media policy
- You will respect the confidentiality of Blatchington Court Trust and our clients
- You will interact with clients and families in a professional and friendly manor, representing the Trusts name in good light
- You will raise any topics you feel are important to discuss at team meetings
- To be active in learning about visual impairment and how this affects the lives of our clients
- To give Blatchington Court Trust more than 48 hours notice if you cannot attend an event or activity so that we have time to find a replacement



Supervision and Support

This volunteering service is brand new to us as a charity, we have got to a point where we could really do with some people assisting us.



How we will support you:

We want you to feel happy and prepared in your volunteering role. This handbook offers a warm welcome to our new volunteering team, an induction to the organisation and answers many general volunteering questions. Some roles may require a more specific induction and this will be offered. Your training will vary depending on your role. Ongoing training will be offered as appropriate to your role and your needs. Further training and guidance are also available should you feel unsure of what is required or how to fulfil your potential within a role.

Providing support and supervision to our volunteers is very important to us. We want you to feel comfortable and confident in your role. You will have a named supervisor for ongoing support during your time with us. Your supervisor will be approachable and available if you have any needs, concerns, questions or ideas. This support can be offered in person, on the phone or online, depending on the nature of your role. There will be opportunities for catch-ups with your supervisor and to review your volunteering and to update you on what's happening at BCT. We will also be staying in touch with regular emails and e-newsletters and a WhatsApp group chat.

Volunteer Roles

BCT delivers a range of services therefore there are various volunteer roles you can choose from. You can choose a number of roles or just one that you think you will enjoy. Here is a breakdown of the support we need:

Allotment Volunteers

We have an allotment in Hove that we run events at. Each week we attend to this allotment and welcome people to assist in the maintenance and tasks at the allotment.

Events Volunteers

Every month we run a few events that either take place at the trust or we go on a trip. The events at the trust or at the allotment are often art & craft based.

The places we visit range between theme parks, the theatre, water sports centre, trampoline park, paintballing, activity days, tours around attractions and many more. We also host residentials, where we go further afield and stay for a certain period of time. We would like our volunteer team to work with us and attend these events as sighted guides for any clients who need guiding. We will pay all of the entry fees and supplement a meal if we are all eating out.

Service Provider Volunteers

The trust like to engage with the community and we welcome anyone who can teach a skill to run a workshop for us or offer their services. We have had yoga instructors, fitness instructors running a boot camp, self-defence lessons, drama workshops and welcome anyone to get in touch to deliver something to our clients. We also welcome people with skills to volunteer, for example we have a nail technician who does nail art at some of our events.

Keep fit Volunteers

Many of our clients who are blind/vision impaired often find it hard to go out and exercise as they need a guide to do this. We would love to offer to train our volunteers in how to be a sighted guide, sighted guide runner or even ride a tandem bike with any of our clients who feel they would benefit from this.



Mini-bus Drivers

We work in partner with the charity Sight Support Worthing, SSW has kindly let us borrow their mini-van for any events we may need to transport clients to. SSW can provide training on driving the van and we can provide insurance.

Over 18 Social Volunteers

On the last Friday of every month from 5pm till 9pm we host our over 18's social event. This event normally takes place here at the trust. We would love some volunteers to assist us in making drinks and preparing some oven food, as well as socialising with our clients and chatting to those who are finding it more difficult than others to engage. We normally run a quiz, watch an audio described film or have a silent disco! Some over-18 social's we head out and do an activity such as bowling and a meal, therefore we are looking for volunteers to be sighted guides for some of our clients.

Online Content

We would really love to be able to post more on our social media as well as post some interesting articles, videos or podcasts on our website. If you feel like you could contribute and have some amazing content, we would love to share it. We are also looking for anyone who would like to be a photographer for some of our events.



Thank you for taking the time to read our volunteer handbook. We hope you like the idea of joining our team. The next step from here would be to click on the link on our website to apply to be a volunteer!