

# Blatchington Court Trust Volunteer Policy

## 1. Purpose

Blatchington Court Trust (BCT) recognises volunteers as essential partners in delivering high-quality support to young people who are blind and vision impaired and their families throughout Sussex.

This policy sets out how the Trust recruits, supports, manages and values volunteers, and clarifies the mutual expectations between volunteers and the organisation.

Volunteering with BCT is not intended to create an employment relationship. Volunteers are not employees and do not receive payment for their time.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers engaged with BCT, whether assisting at events, supporting activities, contributing to outreach and content, acting as sighted guides, or undertaking other agreed roles.

## 3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

BCT is committed to equal opportunities. Volunteering roles are open to anyone aged 18 or above (or as defined by specific roles) regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or any other protected characteristic.

BCT will make reasonable adjustments to ensure volunteering is accessible to those who wish to contribute to the work of the Trust.

## 4. Recruitment and Selection

Volunteers are recruited based on suitability for defined roles and the needs of BCT.

All applicants will receive clear written and verbal information about the role, responsibilities, time commitments, and any required training.

Relevant checks (e.g. enhanced DBS checks where required) will be completed at BCT's expense.

Personal data collected during recruitment will be managed in line with BCT's Data Protection and Privacy policies.

## 5. Role Descriptions

Each volunteer role will be supported by a written role description outlining:

- Key responsibilities
- Required skills or experience
- Training provided
- Expected time commitment
- Reporting relationships

Volunteers will agree to these expectations prior to starting their role.

## 6. Support, Supervision and Training

Each volunteer will be assigned a named supervisor for ongoing support, feedback and guidance.

Volunteers will receive induction training, including orientation to the Trust's purpose, values, and relevant policies and procedures.

Role-specific training (for example, sighted guide techniques or safeguarding procedures) will be provided where needed.

Opportunities for further learning relevant to volunteering roles may be offered where appropriate.

## 7. Volunteer Rights

Volunteers can expect:

- Clear information about their role and the support available
- A safe working environment and appropriate training
- Recognition and respect for their contribution
- Reimbursement of agreed reasonable out-of-pocket expenses in line with this policy
- To be treated fairly and for their feedback to be listened to
- To raise concerns without fear of negative consequences

## 8. Volunteer Responsibilities

Volunteers are expected to:

- Understand and fulfil the agreed role and responsibilities
- Respect the dignity, privacy and rights of clients, staff and other volunteers
- Comply with BCT policies, including safeguarding, health and safety, confidentiality, equality and social media standards

- Attend required training and induction
- Communicate proactively with supervisors, including providing more than 48 hours' notice where possible if unable to attend an agreed activity
- Represent the Trust professionally in all activities and interactions

## 9. Professional Boundaries and Conduct

Many volunteers work alongside vulnerable young people and families. Clear boundaries protect both volunteers and the Trust.

Volunteers must:

- Maintain appropriate professional behaviour and language at all times
- Avoid sharing personal contact details with clients unless explicitly agreed as part of their role
- Not initiate or accept personal social media contact with clients
- Use personal devices appropriately and not record, photograph or share information about clients without prior consent and authorisation
- Refer any concerns, disclosures or complex issues to a member of staff rather than attempting to manage them independently

Volunteers should seek guidance from their supervisor if they are unsure about appropriate boundaries in any situation.

## 10. Health and Safety

BCT is committed to providing a safe environment for volunteers, clients and staff.

Volunteers are expected to:

- Follow all relevant health and safety guidance
- Participate in risk assessments where appropriate
- Report accidents, incidents or near misses promptly to their supervisor
- Use equipment safely and only as instructed
- Follow lone working procedures where relevant to their role

BCT will ensure that appropriate risk assessments are completed for activities and events.

## 11. Safeguarding

All volunteers must adhere to BCT's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of blind and vision impaired young people, families and other participants.

Roles involving direct contact with clients will require appropriate safeguarding training and enhanced DBS checks.

Any safeguarding concern must be reported immediately to the designated safeguarding lead.

## 12. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Volunteers may have access to sensitive personal or organisational information. This must be treated as confidential and not shared outside the scope of the role.

Volunteer data will be stored securely and processed in accordance with UK GDPR and BCT's Data Protection Policy.

Where volunteers appear in photographs, videos or promotional material, consent will be sought and recorded in line with BCT procedures.

## 13. Insurance and Liability

Volunteers are covered by BCT's public liability and employer's liability insurance while carrying out agreed volunteering activities on behalf of the Trust.

Use of personal vehicles must be agreed in advance. Volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their vehicle insurance covers the agreed use. BCT will clarify arrangements in writing where driving forms part of a role.

Volunteers are not covered for activities undertaken outside the scope of their agreed role.

## 14. Expenses

BCT will reimburse reasonable, pre-agreed out-of-pocket expenses incurred as part of volunteering. This may include:

- Travel to and from approved activities
- Reasonable meal and refreshment costs incurred during full-day or extended volunteering activities, where food is not otherwise provided
- Other role-related costs authorised in advance

Claims must be submitted using the agreed process, with receipts where required, within a reasonable timeframe (normally within one month of the expense being incurred).

## 15. Raising Concerns or Problems

BCT encourages open communication.

Volunteers who:

- Have concerns about their role
- Feel unhappy about how they are being treated
- Wish to raise an issue informally or formally

should first speak with their named supervisor. If the issue cannot be resolved informally, volunteers may escalate concerns to a senior member of staff or trustee.

Concerns will be handled fairly, promptly and confidentially where possible.

## 16. Ending a Volunteering Arrangement

Volunteers may choose to step back from their role at any time. Where possible, reasonable notice is appreciated to ensure continuity of activities.

BCT may end a volunteering arrangement where:

- The role is no longer required
- Policies or expectations have been breached
- The placement is no longer suitable

Any decision to end a placement will be handled sensitively and, where appropriate, discussed in advance.

## 17. Review of Policy

This Volunteer Policy will be reviewed at least every two years or when significant organisational changes occur to ensure it remains relevant and effective.