

VOLUNTEERING POLICY



Provides a service for blind and partially sighted people to take a full and fulfilling role in society and to support them in achieving the outcomes they aspire to

Beechwood House
69 – 71 Old Perth Road
Inverness
IV2 3JH
01463 233663
www.sightaction.org.uk

Approved November 2013
Reviewed November 2016
To be reviewed November 2019

Introduction

A volunteer is someone who freely commits their time and energy for the benefit of others, through personal choice and without expectation of financial reward, except for the payment of actual out-of-pocket expenses. Voluntary work can help people gain new skills, meet new people and enjoy themselves

Sight Action offers a range of services to blind and visually impaired people as early as possible in their deterioration of good vision.

The aim to keep individuals as safe and as independent as they would wish to be through the introduction of individually tailored training programmes ensuring they are fully integrated into society.

Sight Action's Children and Families service offers:

- information and support to parents
- introduction of development work with babies and young children
- programmes in mobility and independence skills including socializing skills
- lending Toy Library for families, nurseries and pre-school playgroups and visual awareness training for the staff involved.

For blind and visually impaired adults, Sight Action offers:

- assessment of need, counselling and emotional support
- comprehensive range of information
- rehabilitation service provides appropriate low vision aids and training in their use
- programmes of independence training in mobility, daily living, communication and personal skills, leisure activities and opportunities to limit isolation through social interaction
- support to families and carers
- a Resource Centre displaying a wide range of specialised aids and equipment available for hands-on experience
- Access to other technology
- Talking Book Service. A catalogue of general literature and a developing catalogue of Scottish literature and children's literature.

Approved November 2013

Reviewed November 2016

To be reviewed November 2019

Sight Action's services are enhanced by the active involvement of volunteers. Volunteering is an activity that involves 'spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, individuals or groups other than, or in addition to family and friends'.

Volunteers make a vital contribution to **Sight Action** in their support of service users and staff and their involvement in all appropriate programmes and activities is encouraged. Volunteers complement and add value to the organisation but do not replace the work of paid staff.

Recruitment of volunteers & Sight Action's Equal Opportunities Policy

- Volunteering opportunities will be promoted in accordance with our written method for recruiting volunteers, specifying the task to be undertaken and drawing attention to the benefits and experience to be gained from volunteering.
- Volunteers will be required to complete a volunteer application/ registration form
- Written task descriptions will specify time commitment, duties, and the skills necessary to undertake them.
- Placements will match the volunteer's skills, talents and interests.
- References will be requested for volunteers.
- Potential volunteers will be contacted as quickly as possible regarding their offers of help.
- We will regularly review the way in which potential volunteers can make contact with Sight Action.
- Once placed, volunteers will be expected to comply with existing policies and procedures.

Sight Action's Statement on Diversity

Sight Action is firmly committed to diversity in all areas of its work. We believe that there is much to learn and profit from diverse cultures and perspectives and that diversity will make the organisation more effective in meeting the needs of all stakeholders. **Sight Action** is committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which

Approved November 2013

Reviewed November 2016

To be reviewed November 2019

differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute.

Supervision and support of volunteers

Sight Action will invest personnel and financial resources for the management of volunteers.

- Where appropriate, an induction period and a review session for volunteers to assess the progress of their placements and to resolve problems, at any stage, will be provided.
- Funding for the payment of volunteers' expenses will be provided and clear information given to volunteers regarding expenses and how to make a claim for them.
- Volunteers will be given information on other legislation or policies which may affect them: e.g. Health & Safety and Equal Opportunities. In these respects volunteers will be treated in the same way as paid staff for liability purposes.
- All volunteers will be offered appropriate access to support and supervision on a regular basis with a named support worker and will be informed who to contact in an emergency.
- Volunteers will be offered access to training to enable them to develop their capabilities and personal confidence appropriate to the organization and their needs.
- Volunteers will be encouraged to support each other.
- Volunteers will be made aware of Sight Action's complaints, grievances and disciplinary procedures
- The Volunteer Co-ordinator is responsible, in the first instance, for dealing with complaints about a volunteer's conduct in accordance with the general procedures of Sight Action.

Expenses

Sight Action believes that expenses are important to volunteers and will strive to ensure volunteers are not out of pocket. All volunteers are encouraged to claim their expenses on a regular basis. Receipts need to be attached to volunteers' expenses form

Approved November 2013

Reviewed November 2016

To be reviewed November 2019

However, volunteers may not wish to claim their expenses preferring to donate the money to **Sight Action**, which needs to be recognized by the organisation. Volunteers wishing to do this can contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator to complete a donation form which will be recorded and acknowledged by the finance department.

Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers

In engaging volunteers, **Sight Action** recognizes the rights of volunteers to:

- know what is expected of them, be given clear information and induction
- have clearly specified lines of support and supervision
- be shown appreciation
- have safe working conditions
- be insured
- know what their rights and responsibilities are if something goes wrong
- be paid expenses
- be trained and receive ongoing opportunities for learning and development
- be free from discrimination
- experience personal development through their participation as volunteers
- ask for a reference
- be consulted on decisions that will affect what they do
- withdraw from voluntary work

Sight Action expects that volunteers will:

- carry out their tasks in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of **Sight Action**
- work within agreed guidelines and remits
- be reliable
- respect confidentiality
- attend training and support sessions where agreed

Approved November 2013

Reviewed November 2016

To be reviewed November 2019

Volunteers' relationships with paid staff

Volunteers and staff are considered to be partners in implementing the mission and programmes of **Sight Action**, each having an equal but complementary role to play. In operating this relationship, each partner understands and respects the needs and abilities of the other. In order for this to happen **Sight Action** will:

- ensure that paid staff at all levels are clear about the role of volunteers.
- ensure that good working relationships are fostered between paid staff and volunteers.
- the roles of volunteers and paid staff will be complementary and mutually supportive
- appropriate training, support and resources will be provided for all those who work alongside volunteers and for those who have a managerial role in relation to volunteers
- during the induction programme volunteers will be provided with information about the organisation itself and the roles undertaken by paid staff
- volunteers will not be recruited to undertake the work of, nor used to displace paid staff from their position