



Herts Vision Loss

Herts Vision Loss Volunteering Policy

Introduction:

Our Volunteering Policy aims to reflect the high esteem in which Herts Vision Loss holds its Volunteers. Volunteers bring the valuable asset of their personal experiences to the Charity. They promote the cause and often challenge opinions and perspectives whilst demonstrating commitment to the Charity's mission "Supporting People who have a Visual Impairment".

This policy sets out the broad principles for volunteering with Herts Vision Loss. It is relevant to everyone concerned with the recruitment, support, development and co-ordination of Volunteers as well as Volunteers themselves across the whole Charity.

The Charity recognises that the whole volunteering experience has to be mutually beneficial and aims to provide an environment that is inclusive, stimulating, friendly and supportive.

About Herts Vision Loss:

The Charity was founded in 1915 and has spent in excess of 100 years supporting people in Hertfordshire who have a sight loss. The Charity provides a number of services to over 4,000 clients. It does this with a small team of eight paid staff, but more crucially with the support of around 140 committed Volunteers.

Our commitment to volunteering:

The Charity is fundamentally committed to its Volunteers and recognises that its services could not be provided without them.

The Charity is focussed on the Volunteer development to the benefit of both the individual and the organisation.

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Volunteers are represented throughout the organisation up to and including Board Level.

Volunteers are Herts Vision Loss's lifeblood and ambassadors. The Charity recognises that the activities of its Volunteers are a positive force in raising its profile and support in the community.

Role of the Volunteer:

The Charity offers a broad range of volunteering opportunities in delivering its services:

Home Visiting / Befriending:

Volunteers visit people throughout Hertfordshire who have a visual impairment. This role is varied and can involve supporting people a few hours per week helping with practical tasks and offering companionship. HVL operates a Deafblind Visiting/ Befriending scheme where Volunteers visit people with a dual sensory impairment.

Low Vision Equipment Outreach:

Volunteers help to demonstrate Low Vision Equipment and aids that support people to maintain their independence. Volunteering usually involves 3-4 hours per month demonstrating equipment along side paid staff at Low Vision Exhibitions, Sight Information Points, Social Groups/ Clubs, Day Centres and Residential Homes.

Hospital Eye Clinics:

Volunteers are based in hospital Eye Clinics operating as part of the hospital team talking to patients, giving information and support or sometimes just a smile and a bit of reassurance. Volunteers usually give two hours a week or on alternative weeks.

Other volunteering opportunities:

These include fundraising – helping with charity collections and fundraising events. Also Office volunteers helping with general tasks, administration and sending out the HVL newsletter. Hours are variable.

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Recruitment:

The Charity's volunteering opportunities are advertised through a diverse range of avenues. HVL encourages involvement from all sections of the community and will not discriminate against any volunteers in the selection procedure, in accordance with its equal opportunities policy.

Young Volunteers can bring fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to the Charity whilst gaining valuable skills and experience. Young Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age, this rises to 18 years of age when volunteering for the Hospital Eye Clinics and Low Vision Equipment Outreach Service. All volunteering opportunities involving young persons are appropriately assessed for risk in advance. All young Volunteers who have not reached the age of 18 will be protected in accordance with Health & Safety (Young Persons) Regulations 1997.

All prospective Volunteers have to provide two relevant and fully checkable references (excluding relations) attesting to their character and suitability for the position. Enhanced level Disclosure and Barring Service checks are also undertaken. No new Volunteer will be allowed to work directly with our potentially vulnerable client group without satisfying these qualifying checks.

DBS Disclosure:

The Charity will not proceed with a Volunteer's application if the following is highlighted on their Disclosure form: History of any form of abuse or attempted abuse of a Vulnerable Adult or Child, any serious financial fraud or irregularities, any history of violent behaviour, history of significant or habitual theft.

Other minor or spent convictions will be considered depending on relevance and risk in relation to the Volunteering position.

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Induction and Training:

All new Volunteers will complete an induction programme with the Charity which HVL will endeavour to arrange at convenient times.

Induction includes:

- Sight Awareness training session
- Familiarisation session with Herts Vision Loss and the particular services they are volunteering under.
- A one to one session with their specific Volunteer Co-ordinator.
- Guidance on Health and Safety including Lone Working.
- Guidance on Insurance cover given by the Charity.
- Deaf/blind Awareness training session (compulsory for Volunteers operating under the Deaf/blind befriender scheme).
- Any other relevant training felt appropriate to enhance the skills of the individual Volunteer.
- Where a Volunteer is based with us on a day to day basis, he/she will be expected to be involved and included in general staff activities, such as staff meetings and to have general access to the office.
- Such Volunteers will also be entitled, subject to availability, to undertake training courses free of charge in a calendar year.

Herts Vision Loss Responsibilities:

- To match the needs of the Charity with the skills, knowledge, experience and motivation of the Volunteer.
- To recognise that successful Volunteer involvement incorporates the individual's motivations and aspirations and that the relationship is mutually beneficial.
- To ensure paid staff are trained to work with Volunteers.
- To ensure Volunteers receive appropriate training and support to help them be effective in their roles.
- To give Volunteers recognition for their successes, loyalty and dedication.

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- To respect Volunteers, listen and learn from what they have to say, consistently encouraging two-way communication.
- To provide information on relevant changes in policies and procedures as appropriate.
- To encourage and create a friendly and supportive atmosphere – aiming to make volunteering fun.
- To make sufficient plan in the Charity's budgets to recruit, retain and support Volunteers adequately including providing adequate insurance cover for their volunteering role.
- To try to resolve fairly any complaints or grievances.
- To ensure all Volunteers have a designated member of paid staff to guide and support them.
- To ensure the health, safety and welfare of all Herts Vision Loss Volunteers whilst undertaking their volunteering activities.
(see Insurance)
- To ensure that Volunteers have appropriate travelling expenses paid whilst carrying out their volunteering role.

The Charity's expectations of Volunteers:

- To maintain and uphold the reputation of the Charity.
- To co-operate with paid members of staff and to take on board their guidance in order to achieve the aims of the Charity.

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- To be consistent and reliable in their volunteering contribution to the Charity.
- To encourage two-way communication with other volunteers and paid staff, fostering a pleasant and friendly atmosphere.
- To support and adhere to the Charity's equal opportunities policy.
- To be aware that the ultimate responsibility for the affairs of the Charity rest with the Charity's Board of Non-Executive Directors.
- To work within the law – for instance, restrictions relating to collections of donations. Volunteers should seek advice from their designated HVL staff member or the Chief Executive Officer.
- To respect the need for confidentiality in all areas of volunteering activities.
- To take reasonable care of their own health and safety whilst volunteering and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.
- The role and placement of the Volunteer may be terminated by the Trustees, Directors or Management Committee and one week's notice, or immediately, where behaviour equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred. In all cases the Volunteer will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken.

Expenses:

Expenses incurred by Volunteers carrying out their specific roles will be reimbursed by the Charity. Travel expenses incurred in connection with their volunteering role should be claimed by completing a Volunteer Expenses Form, which should be passed to their individual Volunteer Co-ordinator for authorisation.

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They will be reimbursed for authorised and reasonable travel costs and other personal expenses, e.g. travel costs to and from their particular volunteering role – a journey to the client they visit or an Hospital eye clinic or travel to an HVL training course.

Covering the costs of extra journeys arranged with a client e.g. a trip to the coast would have to be agreed between the Volunteer and the client and can not be covered by the Charity.

Further guidance will be given on expenses as part of the Volunteer Induction and expenses forms will be provided in the Volunteer pack.

Any specific queries on expenses should be raised with their Volunteer Co-ordinator or the Chief Executive Officer.

Gifts & Hospitality:

Given the fact that your role is carried out voluntarily you may from time to time be offered gifts or hospitality by the client you are supporting. This may include money which unless is for an agreed expense like petrol for a day trip cannot be accepted.

The following applies:

- Volunteers must not accept a personal gift comprising of money or any other gift of a significant monetary value
- Only gifts of minor monetary value may be accepted (e.g. diaries, calendars, chocolates, a bottle of wine etc).

If you are offered money or a gift of significant value by a client then please politely refuse this offer. Of course these situations can be difficult and the client could be offended. In these circumstances please contact your Volunteer Co-ordinator or the Chief Executive Officer and they will help to resolve the situation. **(Please read full Policy on Gifts & Hospitality for more detailed guidance)**

Supervision and Support:

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Volunteers will have their own Volunteer Co-ordinator for supervision and support purposes. This Volunteer Co-ordinator will be a paid member of HVL staff. Their specific Co-ordinator will depend on the area of service they undertake their volunteering in. Where a Volunteer undertakes more than one volunteering role e.g. Home Visiting and Equipment Outreach, then HVL will decide who their main Co-ordinator will be.

Their Volunteer Co-ordinator will be the main contact for all their support issues while volunteering with HVL. The Co-ordinator will also inform the

Volunteer in relation to all aspects of their volunteering role. If the Volunteer has any questions, difficulties or issues in respect of their role then they should contact their Co-ordinator in the first instance.

If they are unable to contact their Co-ordinator then they should contact the HVL main office or the Chief Executive Officer.

Volunteers to be made aware of external training opportunities which may be open to them. Information received by HVL which may be of interest to volunteers, will also be made available to them too.

Grievance and Complaints:

HVL take all grievances and complaints seriously and will make every effort to investigate and settle these amicably.

In the case of a Grievance the Volunteer should contact their Volunteer Co-ordinator in the first instance. If the grievance involves the Co-ordinator then the Volunteer should contact the Chief Executive Officer. The HVL Grievance procedure as set out in its HR manual will be followed. (A copy of this procedure is available on request)

In the case of a Complaint the Volunteer again should contact their Volunteer Co-ordinator in the first instance, unless the complaint involves the Co-ordinator in which case the Chief Executive Officer should be contacted. The HVL Complaints procedure will be followed which is set

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out in the HVL Complaints Policy. (A copy of this Policy is available on request).

Health & Safety:

The Charity is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for Volunteering at its premises and while in the community. HVL will endeavour to give appropriate instruction, training and supervision in order to safeguard the welfare of Volunteers.

Health & Safety will be covered as part of a Volunteer’s induction. Specifically safe working practices will be discussed including the subject of lone working, which some Volunteering roles require.

All Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner and not to act in a way that may put themselves or others at risk of injury.

Written information and guidance will be provided as part of the Volunteer Induction Pack.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity:

HVL operates an Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy for all Volunteers, Paid Staff and Clients. HVL is committed to diversity in all areas of its work and believes that it can learn from diverse cultures and perspectives. A full copy of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy will be provided in the Volunteer Induction Pack.

Confidentiality:

Volunteers as part of their volunteering role will on occasion have knowledge of client’s personal circumstances and some of this information may be of a sensitive nature.

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Volunteers must ensure that this information remains confidential and within the confines of the volunteering role. However if a Volunteer has serious concerns about a client's welfare then they are duty bound to break this confidence and inform their Volunteer Co-ordinator or the Chief Executive Officer and where appropriate the statutory agencies.

HVL has a Confidentiality Policy and this will be covered as part of a Volunteers induction process.

Insurance:

The scope of the Charity's insurance in relation to Volunteers is wide and risk is regularly monitored.

Volunteers are covered while carrying out their duties by the following insurance areas:

- Personal Accident Insurance
- Public Liability Insurance
- General Liability Insurance

Volunteers can view the policy document for the above insurance areas on request.

Using their own vehicle:

HVL does not provide Motor Insurance for Volunteers using their own vehicle as part of their volunteering role. If they do intend to use their own vehicle while supporting a client, then it is recommended that they inform their Motor Insurance company of this intended use. Charitable work is normally classed as social domestic pleasure use and not business use, but Volunteers may wish to check with their insurer.

Review of Policy:

The Volunteering Policy will be reviewed at set intervals or as appropriate in response to changes in legislation or specific volunteering issues. HVL

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welcomes any Volunteers comments or suggestions in respect of this
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