



Volunteer Strategy

2020–2023





What is volunteering?

We define volunteering as an unpaid activity where someone freely gives their time to help other individuals or groups, who they are not related to. This can include a formal activity or informal social and community participation within a voluntary organisation like BID Services. Volunteering can have significant benefits for all those individuals involved.

Introduction

BID Services is a charity. We work in partnership with children, young people, adults and their families and carers. We support people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, visually impaired, have a dual sensory loss or other disability.

The charity has been around since 1872, we were founded as the Birmingham Mission for the Deaf and over 100 years later volunteers are still at the heart of the organisation.

Our mission is that ***“we’re here to make a positive difference to the people we support by offering a range of innovative services that empower people to control their own lives”*** and our organisational values of innovative, professional, quality and caring underpin our approach and are key in the way we deliver our services.

The services we provide are geographically spread nationally and include social work, information and guidance, employment, wellbeing, rehabilitation training and support, enablement and support, residential care, adaptive technology and technical equipment services, BSL interpreting and communication support, and deaf awareness / British Sign Language training.

At BID Services we recognise that volunteering is a two-way street, it enables volunteers to connect to their community and make it a better place by achieving goals and making a positive difference. Volunteers also benefit by

meeting new people, making new friends and joining in with fun activities. Volunteers can gain valuable new skills and experience which all contribute to improved wellbeing.

Many of our funded contracts incorporate a requirement to recruit and engage with volunteers to provide additional resources and support to add further value to the services that we provide. Clearly, BID Services would not be able to do the work that we do, and we would not be the organisation that we are today without the hard work, dedication and commitment from our amazing volunteers.

BID’s wider organisational strategy has key priorities ***“to develop and embed a new volunteer strategy across BID”*** and ***“to be an exceptional place to work and volunteer.”***

This volunteer strategy sets out the steps we will take to be able to achieve this to improve and further develop volunteering within the organisation and ensure that it is embedded deeply into the heart of everything we do.

Our volunteer strategy sets out a clear plan to make volunteering a top priority, we want to make sure our volunteers have a great experience and that they feel welcomed, supported and valued.

This volunteer strategy sets out our objectives and commitments to our volunteers over the next three years.

Everyone has the right to volunteer!

Where we are now

We already have on board a diverse group of volunteers. Our volunteers come from all walks of life, some have a sensory impairment themselves and/or other disabilities, others have friends or family members with a sensory disability, or some simply wish to develop their skills whilst making a difference to other people.

Volunteers carry out a wide range of roles for example we have volunteers who help with administrative tasks and provide support to groups, clubs and hearing aid clinics. We have a team of volunteer befrienders who engage with people to alleviate isolation and loneliness. In fact during the Coronavirus pandemic volunteers have been able to utilise technology to keep in touch and provide vital support to service users which has been key to their wellbeing in these times.

“
I enjoy being a volunteer for BID and making a difference to those with sight loss.
”

We have commenced our journey to review current practices by undertaking surveys with our volunteers, managers and project workers to gather feedback. It is fantastic that our recent volunteer survey confirmed that the majority of our volunteers received regular support and guidance and 100% felt supported.

“
I feel part of a team and valued.
”

When it came to communication some volunteers felt they were kept updated but 28% felt they were not and that there was room for improvement.

We already have established HR policies and procedures in place for the recruitment, induction, training and supervision of volunteers, and an established volunteer handbook and volunteer problem solving policy. However our findings from the survey evidenced that the recruitment

process was lengthy with unnecessary form filling and managers thought that it should be an easier process with more of the induction localised.

“
Far too much paperwork it seemed more like applying for an MD post!
”

Managers were of the view that supervision should be much less formal and for example only 45% thought it was appropriate for volunteers to follow the formal supervision policy highlighting that our practices needed to be revisited.

57% of volunteers thought that the handbook was good and 81% of Managers thought it was good but there was recommendations for it to be less formal and more interesting to volunteers.

Furthermore these surveys have shown that 64% of volunteers confirmed they felt valued alerting us that there was definite room for improvement, and although some Managers were very good in exercising a range of recognition initiatives, there was scope for further improvement to ensure that 100% of our volunteers feel recognised and valued.

We are committed to addressing these gaps and making further improvements and to enable us to do this a strategic decision was undertaken in late 2020 to make an investment from reserves to employ a dedicated full time Volunteer Coordinator. The introduction of this job role is an exciting new venture, bringing in an additional resource to assist in delivering our volunteer strategy.

“
There should be a volunteer coordinator.
”

If we are to continue to succeed we must continue to engage and invest in our committed volunteers and continue to attract new volunteers in order to grow and develop our volunteer services and further enhance our organisation. We need ongoing support from volunteers more than ever and equally we must also support those people who volunteer for us.



Our vision for volunteering

- BID is seen as an exceptional place to volunteer.
- Our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do and a vital part of our service delivery.
- Our volunteers feel valued, supported and connected.



Our plans and priorities

We have listened to the views of stakeholders to develop our plans and priorities around volunteering and our plans focus on three key areas:



Streamlining recruitment and induction to bring new volunteers on-board faster.

Reviewing policies and adapting practices for a better fit to volunteering.



Engaging more widely with volunteers and ensuring they feel recognised and valued.



Streamlining recruitment and induction to bring new volunteers on-board faster

Until recently the recruitment of volunteers was undertaken by an already stretched HR Team which presented some challenges but our newly appointed Volunteer Coordinator brings in an additional resource to focus on the recruitment and induction of volunteers.

The volunteer survey indicated that the recruitment process was lengthy and resulted in the loss of new volunteers, it needed to be easier and quicker.

"the process is lengthy and bureaucratic."

"unnecessary form filling."

We recognise too, that it is important that the diversity within our volunteer services reflects the diversity in society.

A volunteering service that embraces equality, diversity and inclusion will be more effective and relevant to a wider range of service users as volunteers will be able to understand and respond to the needs of the local community.

The Volunteer Coordinator will work geographically across the organisation and link with national Project Managers, they will review the whole on-boarding experience and work hard to make it a better experience for everyone involved.

We will

- Focus on improving our website volunteer page, separating content from paid employment opportunities so it is geared more to volunteering; incorporating clips to make it more visual to publicise our exciting opportunities.
- Review the application form to make it less lengthy and make the interview process more informal and friendly.
- Streamline recruitment and induction paperwork to make it more apt to volunteers, making it more digitalised and accessible.
- Ensure the diversity representation of our volunteers reflects the diversity of our service users and take action to address under-represented areas.

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Reviewing policies and adapting practices for a better fit to volunteering

There are already HR policies and procedures in place and the volunteer survey discovered that 87% of Managers thought that the current volunteer handbook was good but only 57% of volunteers were in agreement. Clearly there was room to make some improvement and adapt these to make them more relevant to volunteers.

Having the right policies, procedures and systems in place for volunteers will enable us to maintain professionalism and consistency and be more efficient and effective. For example, we know that the health and safety of volunteers is really important and having concise guidance on safety makes it easier for Project Managers to manage risk and for volunteers to feel safe when volunteering.

Our aim will be to have succinct volunteer policies to enable Project Managers to communicate clear guidance and for volunteers to understand expectations and

be clear about their role and boundaries. This will allow us to grow volunteering on a stable footing and encourage it to flourish.

"If this was moved into a digitalised system, it would make it easier for BID to update it and to save on printing costs – plus volunteers would always have the most up to date and accurate information to hand at a push of a button."

Volunteer and service user data is currently stored within a number of databases and spreadsheets, being able to pull data together into one database would allow us to process data more efficiently and improve systems for everyone involved.

By making these changes we know we will be able to demonstrate that we are delivering a credible volunteer service, our aim will be to acquire a recognised volunteer accreditation to celebrate the achievements that we have made.

We will

- Review and revise policies, procedures and systems for volunteers, amalgamating information into one new volunteer policy and handbook.
- Introduce a purpose built volunteer database that pulls all data together enabling Project Managers and volunteers to access relevant data.
- Achieve a recognised volunteer accreditation.



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Engaging more widely with volunteers and ensuring they feel recognised and valued

We want all our volunteers to have an enjoyable and meaningful experience with us from the moment they first engage with us until the time they decide to move on.

When we asked our volunteers about training, 100% confirmed they had received training and 85% were satisfied with the training they had received, these outcomes are fantastic and our aim is to build further on these successes.

We know that providing training opportunities to volunteers is another way of thanking and rewarding them for their contribution.

"My training was excellent."

Our volunteer survey showed that 64% of volunteers feel valued which demonstrated that there is still more we can do to offer a consistently great experience across all volunteer roles.

All Project Managers were exercising reward initiatives but these varied from service to service.

We will address these inconsistencies, further enhancing the volunteer experience to ensure our volunteers remain valued and connected to the organisation, and for BID Services to continue to be an exceptional place to volunteer.

We will

- Invite volunteers to join Workplace so they feel more involved and part of the organisation.
- Ensure volunteers have the opportunity to access a variety of training opportunities to enhance their volunteering experience.
- Ensure catch-up sessions acknowledge volunteer achievements, embedding recognition into regular practices.
- Promote "Volunteers Week" and identify other ways to recognise and value volunteers.





This document explains what we are already doing and what additional initiatives we plan to undertake to broaden and develop our volunteer service in accordance with our mission and values.

We know that we could not do this without the incredible support and commitment from our volunteers and with this strategy in place we know we can make the greatest difference to our service users and volunteers.

An important component of the volunteer strategy will be measuring the impact of the volunteer service, keeping abreast of best practice and sharing case studies to document and celebrate our achievements.

Our aim is for long-term improvement brought about by a continual process of review through consultation and feedback.



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