



Support for people facing life-threatening illness

Information pack for potential volunteers



Our Mission Statement

The Brigitte Trust offers a free service of emotional support and practical help to people who have a life-threatening illness and who wish to stay in their own homes for as long as it is practical and desirable.

We believe that the experience of death is the most profound of all human experiences that everyone has the right to die with dignity and that dying, in spite of pain, anguish and loss can also contain moments of incomparable humanity and depth.

Volunteers who work for the Brigitte Trust enter the home of the client with respect and openness to: the nature of the illness, the timescale, their culture and traditions and the needs of their family and friends. Every Client is different, every encounter important, every experience of meeting has the potential for healing, comfort and love. Those who are privileged to be with someone in the last stages of their lives know that they may be asked to enable that person to go beyond the surface of things to the heart and depth of life.

We undertake to work with Clients in as professional and ethical a way as possible and to ensure the highest standards of practice and care.



An Introduction

The circumstances around the death of a loved one can affect the memories of those who live on. Home is often the preferred place of death for the majority of Clients and their family and carers. There is great relief in being cared for in familiar surroundings with family and friends nearby. Sometimes, however, that family care may not exist, or the carers themselves may need relief.

This is where a Brigitte Trust Volunteer can play an essential role in helping to meet the needs of Clients and their Carers, staying alongside when death may be imminent. That help can take a variety of forms for example:

- Being there to listen is often what is needed most
- Providing transport to a hospital appointment or other trips
- Sitting quietly with a Client
- Providing respite for family carers

This can make a huge difference, as users of our service have testified:

“It was a great worry to leave my wife, but I felt so secure leaving her with the volunteer”

“I couldn’t have got through my problems without the support of the Brigitte Trust. My volunteer encouraged me afterwards and opened up a new life for me”

“She lights up my life”

It can also be a valuable part of volunteers’ lives.

It may not be easy for someone to acknowledge the progress of their illness or to accept outside help. Sensitivity is required so that people can preserve their independence and dignity as far as possible whilst the volunteer is still meeting their individual needs

Aims of the Organisation

The Brigitte Trust is an independent charity helping people with a life-threatening illness – and their carers – cope better with life at home for as long as it is possible and desirable. The Trust office is based in Dorking and offers its services throughout Surrey. The catchment area is subdivided so Volunteers work within their local area as much as possible.

Volunteer Recruitment

New Volunteers are always welcomed. We do advise however that if you have experienced a loss or serious illness yourself, that you wait for a period of up to two years before you embark on the training course. If you have a four hours each week you could give to this rewarding work.

You must have a current driving licence and access to a car. We will provide you with ongoing training, supervision and an organisation based on friendship and mutual support. Our volunteers value the warm and caring atmosphere within the Trust, the enjoyment of sharing experiences and the personal growth that occurs during training. There is a rich reward of supporting a family at such a personal and intimate time. The Trust operates a policy of strict confidentiality.

Acceptance for Volunteering will be through individual interviews, the Induction Training Course, references and DBS checks. During the training participants will be expected to demonstrate openness, compassion, reliability, trustworthiness, recognition of any major losses of their own, commitment to learning, availability of time, means of transport, good health and absence of a criminal record. As Volunteers work with vulnerable adults and children, police checks will be made via the Disclosure and Barring Service. The training itself aims to develop a Volunteer's skills in listening and to foster self-awareness. The Volunteer becomes more sensitive to the varying emotional needs of the Client and their Carers during the stress and anxiety of a life threatening illness.

The initial assessment of the client and matching of Client/Volunteer is undertaken by a Service Co-ordinator (SCO). SCO's are key members of the organisation who promote the service, receive referrals in their geographical area, monitor progress and collate records of volunteer visits. Volunteers are able to discuss with the SCO what they feel able to undertake and whether they can meet the needs of a particular family

situation. Volunteers are expected to remain available for the Trust for at least two years from their date of joining.

Volunteer Support after Induction Training

Ongoing support and training is provided for all Volunteers in the following ways:

- Regular telephone support with the Service Co-ordinator
- Support Groups once a month – mandatory
- Ongoing training sessions during the year plus ad hoc day workshops - mandatory

The above takes up approximately 5 hours per month. The timetable for Supervision groups is set at the beginning of each calendar year and volunteers are given a choice of day or evening times.

Training Schedule

Our training schedule consists of a 9 x 2.5hrs sessions plus a full weekend.

It is hoped this will make the course more accessible for volunteers. We ask prospective volunteers to make a commitment to attend all training sessions. Contact the Trust for details of the next training programme.



Safeguards and Procedures

In order to ensure that we provide a quality service, we have put into place the following safeguards and procedures:

- All potential Volunteers are asked to complete an application form, which includes the names of two referees.
- All potential Volunteers are interviewed before training to assess their suitability
- The training is designed to prepare the Volunteer for the Volunteer role and includes work on what a Volunteer is and is not, clarifying boundaries, and completing a 'commitment' which includes our volunteer rules and guidelines.
- During the training, the Brigitte Trust staff gets to know each individual well, which not only helps to match users with the most suitable volunteer, but also brings to light those who might not be suitable for such work.
- References and DBS Forms are called up before the Volunteer starts work with clients
- The first year for each volunteer is a probationary year
- Ongoing supervision and support is provided through monthly group meetings, Volunteer's Service Co-ordinator and an annual review. Regular training workshops are offered to meet identified training needs resulting from these.
- Referred potential clients are visited by the Service Co-ordinator to discuss their needs and have the role of the Volunteer clarified.
- Feedback from clients, referrers and Volunteers is used to monitor and improve the quality of our service.
- Networking with other service providers and links with organisations in the community is also used to help improve the quality of our service.



The Recruitment Procedure

On receiving an enquiry from a potential Volunteer, a “Volunteer Information Pack” is sent.



Volunteers are asked to complete an application form and volunteer agreement



Attend a taster session and interview



Two references obtained



A course outline is sent to all participants before the training, and they are asked to confirm that they will be attending



Attendance at all sessions is compulsory. Volunteers are DBS checked.



In addition to compulsory monthly supervision, Volunteers are expected to attend on-going evening/daytime training Workshops



Volunteers are asked to commit to at least two years volunteering after completion of training and to adhere to the handbook of Good Practice and Brigitte Trust policies.



Volunteers are offered an Annual Review Interview after successful completion of the 1st probationary year.



Confidentiality Policy

We place great importance on ensuring that any personal information given to the Brigitte Trust is treated as confidential.

Confidentiality is basically a contract to hold information that is shared within mutually agreed and understood boundaries. All information that someone shares about himself or herself should be regarded as the 'personal property' of that person. This means that information given and received by us is 'on loan' and should remain under the control of the person sharing it.

Personal information is only divulged within the Trust to those who need to know certain facts in order to provide a service. This includes the supervision and support of Volunteers. We obtain user consent before any information about him or her is disclosed outside the Organisation. Unless we feel that someone, especially a child is at risk of serious harm.

In practical terms this means:

- Explaining our confidentiality policy to referred potential service users during the initial visit and leaving an information booklet for future reference.
- Volunteer and client discussing and agreeing their boundaries, including the need for relevant information to be disclosed within The Trust for support and supervision purposes and by asking permission to quote them in publicity materials and also checking if an initial or first name can be used for this purpose.
- All Staff, Trainers and Volunteers respecting the confidentiality of information about each other as well as clients of the service by never discussing such information in a public place, and by ensuring that any written personal information is stored securely.
- General information gathered for planning and monitoring services is anonymous i.e. first name only, first initial only or neither.



Equal Opportunities Policy

The Brigitte Trust is an equal opportunities Organisation

It is our policy that we welcome applications from potential service users and Volunteers and staff from all sections of the community, irrespective of race, colour, age, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or marital status.

All staff, volunteers and service users are expected to share this commitment to equality of access.



“ ... I have nothing but praise for your organisation – simply having a couple of hours a week away from caring was such a relief. It was also good for my late husband to have someone other than me to talk with...”

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