

BEACON McKenzie Friends

#### Volunteer Role Description

BEACON is a small charity based in Bradford which supports people seeking asylum. The McKenzie Friends project is one of the three projects run by BEACON. The people we support have usually received a refusal on their asylum claim – they may be awaiting an appeal hearing or have exhausted their appeal rights and need support to find a way forward to re-enter the asylum system. Our team of committed volunteers accompany unrepresented asylum seekers to appeal hearings and offer support to access legal advice and representation for those looking to submit fresh asylum claims.

**Volunteer duties**

* Assist people seeking asylum to understand the asylum process
* Gather information from people seeking asylum to establish a narrative and timeline of events
* Read and explain letters and documents
* Offer support to access legal advice and representation, liaising with legal professionals as appropriate
* Carry out research and evidence gathering to help people with their asylum case
* Maintain appropriate records in line with GDPR requirements
* Maintain regular contact with allocated service users, particularly those who are vulnerable
* Attend and contribute to monthly volunteer meetings
* Attend ongoing volunteer training sessions
* Liaise with, signpost and refer on to other agencies to ensure other needs are met
* Attend court hearings with clients when possible (can be at short notice)
* Manage expectations of service users at all times

## Skills and experience required

* An interest in refugees and people who seek sanctuary, human rights, and legal justice
* Ability to work independently, in a pair and as part of a small team of volunteers
* Ability to use initiative and adopt a pro-active approach
* Ability to accept guidance and supervision
* Good research skills
* Good listening skills
* Ability to empathise and manage expectations
* Resilience and persistence, when faced with challenging situations
* Ability to understand and communicate complex information to people who may have very limited English language skills (using interpreters when needed)
* Ability to communicate with a wide range of people, including legal professionals
* Basic IT skills or ability and willingness to learn (Microsoft Office including OneDrive, email, internet)
* Good written communication skills
* Flexibility to meet regularly with clients and other volunteers, usually during office hours in Bradford, and to attend daytime court hearings at Phoenix House tribunal centre when possible
* Availability to attend monthly volunteer meetings
* Understanding and commitment to equality and diversity, confidentiality and data protection
* Ability to provide two recent referees
* Ability to commit to a minimum of 6 months of volunteering
* Basic awareness of the asylum process (desirable, although full training will be given)
* Ability to speak another language (desirable but not essential)

**All volunteers must be aware of the importance of maintaining boundaries and sign a volunteer agreement to commit to working within BEACON’s policies and procedures**

**How do I become a McKenzie Friend?**

The first step is to complete a volunteer application form. You will then be invited to an interview, and following this, we will take up references for successful candidates. Once these are received, you will be invited to a training session. On completion of the training, you will attend a monthly volunteer meeting to meet the other volunteers. New referrals will be allocated to volunteers who work in pairs with clients. You will be paired with a more experienced volunteer for a period of shadowing.

If you have any queries, questions or concerns about the role, please contact the McKenzie Friends Coordinator on 07531 576330 or at mckenziefriends@beaconbradford.org.