

BEACON McKenzie Friends

#### Volunteer Role Description

BEACON is a small charity based in Bradford which supports asylum seekers. The McKenzie Friends project is one of the projects run by BEACON. A team of committed volunteers work with unrepresented asylum seekers to support them to access legal representation and to accompany asylum seekers to court hearings when possible.

**Volunteer duties**

* Assist asylum seekers in understanding the asylum process
* Gather information from asylum seekers to establish narrative and timeline of events
* Read and explain letters and documents
* Offer support to access legal advice and representation
* Research and share information that may help clients with their asylum case
* Liaise with, signpost and refer clients to other agencies
* Attend and contribute to monthly meetings
* Maintain appropriate records in line with GDPR requirements
* Maintain regular contact with clients, particularly those who are vulnerable
* Attend ongoing volunteer training sessions
* Attend court hearings with clients when possible (often at short notice)
* Manage client expectations at all times

## Skills and experience required

* Ability to work independently and as a team
* Good research skills
* Good listening skills
* Ability to empathise and manage expectations
* Ability to understand and to communicate complex information to people with very limited English language skills
* Confident IT skills (Word, 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 in Thornbury when possible
* Availability to attend volunteer meetings on the third Friday of each month
* 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 system (desirable, although full training will be given)
* Ability to speak another language (desirable)

**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**

**Why be a McKenzie Friend?**

This is a rewarding opportunity to improve the life chances of some of our community’s most vulnerable people and is an interesting and fulfilling role. Through the skills and commitment of our volunteers, we can support asylum seekers to access justice, whenever possible. As a McKenzie Friend volunteer, you will be part of a dynamic and creative team of volunteers. You will receive support from both the Coordinator and peer support from other volunteers.

**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 the next 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.