



## **Befriending Coordinator**

Relieving social isolation for people living with a visual impairment

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the Befriending Coordinator post. We recognise that a job description cannot give you all of the information you may wish to know and so this document aims to give you some background information about Sight Support Derbyshire and about the Befriending Project.

### **About Sight Support Derbyshire (SSD)**

Sight Support Derbyshire is the only Derbyshire based, sight loss charity, providing a range of services to visually impaired people. As well as our own services, we provide services on contract to Derbyshire Integrated Care Board, and to the County Council. Our skilled and experienced staff and volunteers pride themselves on the high quality services that we have provided for over 110 years throughout Derbyshire. Over this time, we have learned a lot about the needs of people living with sight loss and how services help in reducing isolation and promoting independence.

SSD is a Registered Charity and we rely on fundraising for over half of our total income. We have a small but dedicated fundraising team who work with individuals as well as local and national groups to raise our money.

We are a team of twenty-one staff working from our main office in Derby, our sub-office in Chesterfield and we have staff based in the two main hospitals in Derby and Chesterfield. The majority of our staff had not worked with people with sight loss before starting work with us, they learned from training and from doing the work. The most important skill to bring to our direct services is to be outgoing and good with people – we can teach you the more technical knowledge that you'll need to know.

### **About our Befriending Service**

Sight Support Derbyshire has run a successful befriending project before, but due to lack of funding, it ended nine years ago. However, the negative impact of loneliness on people's health and wellbeing has been more widely recognised, particularly after the pandemic, and in 2023 we secured funding to set up our new service.

For many people, sight loss is not easy to come to terms with and can lead to a variety of challenging problems. It can lead to reduced confidence, an adverse effect on the person's health, and a decline in general wellbeing. Sight loss is linked to

reduced wellbeing and involvement in society. Almost half of visually impaired people feel moderately/completely cut off from people and things around them (RNIB research). Over a third of visually impaired older people have depression (research UK Vision Strategy). With the number of people being registered as blind or partially sighted in Derby and Derbyshire growing, we know there is work to do.

The aim of the Befriending Project is to increase people's confidence and reduce their isolation by linking them with a volunteer befriender. The volunteer will meet with the person on a regular basis and offer them friendship and support. They may help them to read letters, write shopping lists, or just have a cup of tea and a chat. Sometimes they may accompany the visually impaired person to go out. Every befriending partnership is unique!

The service works with people from around the county, but our focus areas are on key conurbations of Derby and Chesterfield. The project is monitored and evaluated to assess the impact and benefits of the service intervention in order to help with future funding.

As a relatively new project quite a lot of work has already been done, and we have a growing number of befriending matches in place. Feedback has been really positive and both service users and volunteers are reaping the benefits.

*"I never would have thought that visiting Stan would be so rewarding. We have a laugh and when we're together time just flies! I've learned about how his sight loss affects him and have been able to help him with checking his post."*

Val, Befriending Volunteer

*"When Val visits it's just lovely. She's so cheery and it makes my day. We always find plenty to talk about."*

Stan, Service User

(Our current funding runs through to April 2026, but subject to further funding we would extend the contract and look to make it permanent.)

### **What next?**

If you're still reading, and are still interested, then have a look at the full job description and person specification and then complete the application form and get it back to us by the closing date. We would love to hear from you.

If you have any questions that you need answering before you apply, feel free to drop us a line:

[Heather.davidson@sightsupportderbyshire.org.uk](mailto:Heather.davidson@sightsupportderbyshire.org.uk)

Or telephone Rachel Graham on 01332 292262

Kind regards

Sight Support Derbyshire