

Guide/Communicator Service

Guidelines for Guide/Communicators

Guide/Communicators, by adopting the following simple guidelines, can play their part in ensuring deafblind people; those who purchase the service and the public view the service as professional and positive one.

Establishing good habits

It is important to establish good habits from the first assignment:

1. Be on time and expect the deafblind person to be ready when you arrive. Guide/communicators should contact the office as soon as possible if they are going to be late for an assignment.
2. Guide/communicators should discuss the deafblind person's priorities for an assignment and make a realistic assessment of what can be achieved in the allotted time. Guide/communicators should contact the office if a major change of plan is contemplated.
3. It is important that the deafblind person does not think of the guide/communicator as a **personal 'friend'** but as a **friendly person** who provides a professional guide/communicator service. It is advisable that guide/communicators should always present themselves as a guide/communicator, taking the time to explain the role to families and friends.
4. Whilst working for Deafblind Scotland, volunteering as a Guide/communicator is only permitted in exceptional circumstances and where a Guide/communicator wishes to volunteer their time. In all cases, volunteering must be agreed upon and logged with the Service Manager.
5. Guide/communicators should not give/receive gifts to/from individual deafblind people. Guide/communicator should not borrow/lend money or items from/to the service user. Guide/communicators should also not buy anything on behalf of the service user.
6. It is important that the deafblind person does not become dependent on individual guide/communicators. All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure this does not happen and indications of dependency should be reported to the service manager.
7. Physical contact between guide/communicators and service-users should be kept to an absolute minimum and whenever used be appropriate i.e. hugging a service user is not appropriate.
8. Guide/communicators should not sell to or buy from deafblind service-users or indeed enter into any kind of financial or in-kind benefit arrangement with service-users.
9. Guide/communicators must always use appropriate language when working with deafblind people. Guide/communicators should refrain from using offensive language.

Relationships

1. If a guide/communicator has any personal relationships with deafblind people or their friends and families this must be disclosed to the Service Manager or the Head of Operations as a conflict of interest may otherwise occur.
2. If a guide/communicator has any relationships with any other guides involved in the service whether it is a blood relationship or a friendship this should be declared at the earliest opportunity, as a conflict of interest may otherwise occur.

Security

To ensure the safety and security of service users and guide/communicators the following must be adhered to at all times:

1. The office must be informed of and maintain a record of all contact between guide/communicators and service users. All time spent with service users must be documented in the weekly written report. If an assignment ends earlier than planned, whether due to the service user allowing the guide to leave early or for any other reason, the office must be notified so this can be recorded. Depending on the amount of unused time, guide/communicators may be required to undertake other duties as necessary.
2. All contact with service users must be agreed by the office. This includes, for example, collecting personal items left in the service user's house and returning items left by the deafblind person. Guide/communicators should not make personal arrangements with service users to act as guides, even on a provisional basis.
3. All service requests must go through the office.
4. Deafblind people should not be given guide/communicator's home or mobile telephone numbers, or their addresses.
5. Staff managing out of hours will have access to a list of service user's contact details for use when on call.

Failure to access a deafblind person's house

In the event of being unable to gain access to a service user's house, guide/communicators should:

1. Contact the office immediately; the office will then normally advise the guide/communicator to return after 20 minutes. If there is still no access the guide/communicator should re-contact the office who will check if a contact number is available for family or social work.
2. Normal procedure will be that guide/communicators should not leave the address until:
 - 2.1 Access is gained
 - 2.2 Reason for non-access is ascertained.

3. Contact with the office should be maintained until a satisfactory conclusion has been reached.
4. If there is no cause for concern as the cause can be ascertained then a note should be left to say Deafblind Scotland has called.

Record Keeping & Reporting

1. Availability must be given to the Service Co-ordinator. This will be requested in four week blocks three weeks ahead of scheduling.
2. The Service Co-ordinator will send out rotas four weeks in advance and will follow up with weekly updates. Guide/communicators should raise any concerns with assignments immediately by contacting the Co-ordinator.
3. Expenses and reports must be completed and returned by the Tuesday of the following week.
4. Where a service user does not have a communication book, a written weekly report containing a brief summary of each assignment undertaken the previous week should be submitted by the following Tuesday.
5. Expenses and reports should be submitted weekly to:
servicesinvoice@dbscotland.org.uk
6. Any issues/concerns/complaints should be reported to the Service Manager and/or Head of Operations. It is the responsibility of all guide communicators to report concerns or issues regarding safety, well-being, incidents accidents etc. Email:operations@dbscotland.org.uk and servicemanager@dbscotland.org.uk
7. A whistleblowing policy is in operation which means guide/communicators can report directly to Chief Executive or member of the senior management team if necessary.
8. Deafblind Scotland is striving to become as paperless as possible and prefers to communicate by email however alternative arrangements can be made in exceptional circumstances.
9. Guide/communicators should arrange to meet with their allocated supervisor quarterly to discuss progress, concerns and future plans. Supervision meetings will be by mutual arrangement.

Out of Office Hours

Experienced members of staff will provide out of hours support and can be contacted on 07715 421 388. Any concerns, difficulties and emergencies should be reported immediately. This number should not be used for routine rota queries.

Flexibility

Guide/communicators will be required to undertake weekend work on a rota basis and also to agree to be on standby for emergencies at weekends. This will be arranged on a mutually agreeable basis.