

# BlindAid



**Trustee**  
Candidate Pack

**March 2021**



## Welcome message

Dear Applicant,

Thank you very much for your interest in BlindAid.

BlindAid has over 187 years of experience of delivering emotional and practical support to people with a visual impairment living in the 12 inner London Boroughs and the City of London.

Our enthusiastic team is dedicated to serving both our aims and values as we offer our services for our beneficiaries. BlindAid beneficiaries are primarily a hidden community of people; resident in the 12 inner London Boroughs. The majority of our BlindAid community are likely to be 50+, isolated and very much in need of the warm and welcoming support and social connections we offer. We provide a unique, vital service that is not replicated by statutory services or other charities.

Our employed Sight Support Workers are specially trained and work alongside our beneficiaries offering consistent friendly company and conversation as well practical support and links to other useful organisations. We also have 250+ valuable volunteers who support our core services with additional assistance with social activities. We aim to improve quality of life and to promote the best achievable level of independence for all. Beneficiaries with more complex circumstances may not be able to fully regain independent living; in which case we may be alongside them for life.

All our services are provided free of charge for our service users.

Our core service is our Community Sight Support Service; normally visiting beneficiaries in their homes, but converted to a telephone support service during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also provide Community Projects, based in three locations across London: now currently online. We operate Peer to Peer Telephone Services, providing peer led support. In addition, we are supported by Clothworkers Foundation with funding for a grant for grants programme that allows us to offer aids and equipment that support independent living for people in need and where these are not available via statutory services.

We provide services and support in the following inner London Boroughs: Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Islington, the City, Kensington and Chelsea, Lewisham, Lambeth, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster.

We are seeking to appoint a new trustee who is inspired by our cause and will enjoy working collegially with our board of trustees and our experienced CEO to lead our organisation forward at an exciting time in the charity's development.

We are seeking an active ambassador for BlindAid with sound fundraising knowledge and the enthusiasm to support our passion, aims and objectives wholeheartedly.

We very much hope you are interested in joining us and look forward to hearing from you.

***Vice Chair of Trustees, BlindAid***

# History of BlindAid

BlindAid has a long and distinguished history and has earned an excellent reputation amongst both our beneficiaries and the professional organisations we work alongside.

The charity was established in 1834 and has been delivering support services for over 187 years and we have naturally evolved and developed during this period. BlindAid is the oldest specialist sight loss charity in London and has supported Londoners through some of the capital's most challenging and historic times.

Initially called the Indigent Blind Visiting Society, the charity was founded in 1834 by Lord Shaftesbury and Thomas Rhodes Armitage. Armitage was famous for introducing Braille into England and for also being one of the founders of RNIB).



In June 2011 we refreshed our brand and changed our name from the Metropolitan Society for the Blind to BlindAid.

Since then, we have consistently built upon on our strong foundations and rich heritage to develop and enjoy the excellent reputation that we hold today.

## What BlindAid does today

BlindAid is both a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

Our team are wholly invested in continuing to develop and improve our charity into the future. The quality of our service portfolio is developed by us listening to and collaborating with our beneficiaries.

We aim to ensure that no visually impaired Londoner is left living in isolation. Each year our objective is to raise the essential funding needed to increase the number of people we can support and help.

During 2020 and the COVID-19 global pandemic our BlindAid team has been working from home and we made over 36,000 direct contacts with our beneficiaries, which is a record for our charity.

# Key Activities

## **Community Sight Support Service**

BlindAid has an exceptional team of friendly, understanding Sight Support Workers who make regular visits to our 1,200 beneficiaries to provide emotional support and practical help where possible.

We visit people in their own homes, in sheltered accommodation or residential homes.

We employ our team of Sight Support Workers and invest in them with the provision of vocational training four times each year, to ensure our skills are up to date. Our team have all been carefully selected and hold current DBS (Disclosure and Barring Security Certifications).

Our team engage in regular supervision meetings with their Service Manager to ensure quality standards and the consistency of our service offering.

## **Community Projects:**

We have offered three Community Projects over the past seven years, based at accessible locations within our area of operation. In 2020 these centres were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have converted our popular classes which are now available online every week, together with our social groups.

## **Grants:**

BlindAid operate a grant for grants programme funded by the Clothworkers Foundation. BlindAid may make grants available to help blind and partially-sighted people maintain independence and reduce isolation (subject to criteria and typically up to £400).

## **Share London:**

Share London is a volunteer-based service; funded by Big Lottery Reaching Communities and designed to connect volunteers that would like to share the opportunities and events that are happening in our vibrant city with local, visually impaired people who would otherwise not be able to get out and experience them. We currently have over 250 Share London volunteers, and this service has been running virtually and by telephone during Covid-19 from March 2020.

## **Peer to Peer Telephone Support:**

We have an ever-growing team of volunteers with lived experience of being blind or visually impaired who have both time and experience to other Londoners either newly diagnosed or who are feeling the challenges that living with sight loss can present. Our volunteers can log on securely via our internet-based portal to call the people their choose to support without disclosing telephone numbers to each other, and BlindAid pays the cost of the calls, so volunteering with us is both safe and easy.

# Structure and Governance

The Board currently comprises seven Trustees, with a broad range of skills and experience, a few whom have joined in recent years. Headed by the Chief Executive; BlindAid has 20 employees. A few key roles are office based; and our 14 Sight Support Workers, are mobile remote workers.

## **Chief Executive Officer**

### **Sue O'Hara**

Sue worked in the commercial management sector for many years, predominantly in global corporate relocation. Additional experience includes advertising and public affairs, as well as working as a voluntary bereavement counsellor.

### **Katherine Cox (Vice Chair)**

Katherine Cox is Head of Global Financial Client Groups for Schroders Investment Management. Katherine graduated from the University of Manchester (UMIST) and has held roles in Business Development, Product Management Katherine was appointed to the Board of the Charity in July 2013 and became Vice-Chair in November 2018.

### **Angie Pankhania (Hon Treasurer)**

Angie Pankhania trained and qualified as a Chartered Certified Accountant in 1991 with the National Audit Office (NAO). She worked for NAO for over 20 years as external auditor for Central Government Departments, NGOs, Commonwealth organisations and United Nations Development Programme as well as value for money reports. After leaving the NAO in 2007 she has worked mainly in the charity sector, initially as external auditor before joining DeafPLUS, a small-medium size national charity in April 2009 as their Head of Finance. More recently she has also started working for Latin American Women's Aid, a small London based charity, on a consultancy basis. Angie joined the Board of BlindAid as Honorary Treasurer in July 2013.

### **Kassim Gaffar**

Kassim completed an Msc in IT systems from London School of Economics and subsequently qualified as a chartered accountant with Deloitte in London. He has worked in the financial services sector since 1997, having held several roles in the corporate and investment banking arm of HSBC. He is currently Director of Techrun Technologies Ltd, a company that providing IT services to non-profit and social sector enterprises. He is Honorary Treasurer of the Prisoners Advice Service, a charity that supports for prisoners. He also mentors several start-up businesses. Kassim was appointed to the Board of the Charity in November 2013.

## **Structure and Governance Cont:**

### **Fran Hibbert**

Fran Hibbert was the Chief Officer of Merton Vision for 13 years; retiring in 2016. During her tenure she increased services for people with a visual impairment, strengthened the charity and relationships with social services, councillors, MP's and other organisations. She was successful with applications for funding with national funders. Fran feels strongly that Local societies are unique in what they offer individuals with a visual impairment. The value of local support and peer support is often crucial to those newly diagnosed with enduring sight loss. Fran has a Post grad certificate from the Institute of Chartered Secretaries/Administrators; in Charity management and has served as a trustee on local and national sight loss charities. Fran was appointed to the Board of the Charity in July 2013.

### **Tim Barnard**

A Cambridge graduate, Tim Barnard retired from full-time work as a solicitor with a large international law firm based in the City of London in 2013. His specialism in practice was real estate he advised a wide range of individual and corporate clients including charities on many aspects of real estate transactions. Tim was ordained a non-stipendiary Church of England curate in 2013 to serve in Amersham in Buckinghamshire and was appointed to the Board of the Charity in 2013.

### **Katherine (Katia) Ramo**

Katherine is a Qualified Corporate and Commercial Solicitor in England and Wales at the global law firm CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP, London Office. She is active in all diversity related issues in the City of London. She is a PhD Candidate at the Centre for Energy, Petroleum, Mineral Law, and Policy (CEPMLP), University of Dundee in Scotland. She holds a BSC, MPA, LLB, LLM with Merit in Comparative and International Dispute Resolution from Queen Mary University of London. Before then, she had an extensive career in international development working with governments and international aid organisations globally. Katherine has a passion for serving, assisting, and advocating on disability issues, especially having become disabled herself few years ago. She was a service user of BlindAid for several years. She is the founder and chair of CMS ENABLE Disability Network. Katherine was appointed to the Board of the Charity in 2014.

### **Aneta Saunders**

Aneta is currently a Director of Income Generation at the Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice, responsible for the voluntary and trading income. Previously Director of Community & Engagement at Barts Charity, she brings a broad experience in fundraising, engagement, and marketing & communications within healthcare charities. Aneta was appointed to the Board of the Charity in 2019

# Financial Information

In 2020 BlindAid had an annual income of c£580,000, and the charity currently has total funds of c£2.8m.

In 2019 and again in 2020 we were awarded substantial grants by the Big Lottery Fund; during 2020 we raised £240K via in-house fundraising, this was attained mainly in grants applications to trusts and grant making organisations. We also receive income from the charity's investment portfolio and by legacy and donation. We have no local authority contracts.

In 2018 BlindAid commenced a strategic fundraising campaign for the first time. In past years, the trustee's financial strategy has been to invest surplus reserves in the expansion of charitable activities for Londoners with visual impairment. As a result, BlindAid has budgeted annual deficits each year.

We have been successful in spending down some of the charity's reserves for the benefit of our service users, and now in view of the financial circumstances brought about by COVID-19, BlindAid has brought forward a planned strategy that supports a key intent to be diligent in minimising its deficit budgets and maximising fundraising income specifically to cover the costs of its vital core services.

Our annual report and accounts are available at both:

Companies House – Registered No: 00986407

Charity Commission – Charity No: 262119



# Trustee Role

We are at an exciting time in the charity's development and we are seeking a new trustee to join our Board of Directors. The successful candidate will be invited to join our board meeting in May 2021 as an observer. With a formal appointment taking place at our board meeting in July, the position would be for an initial three-year term.

## Future Plans

Over the past few years, the charity has purposefully initiated a number of positive changes, developing and expanding its services as noted above. In addition, operational improvements achieved include updating the terms for its staff, documenting formal policies, outsourcing the accounting function, introducing technology to manage and report upon activities, and modernising the charity's governing documents. We also completed a total refurbishment of the charity's head office in 2017.

We expect there to be continuing changes in the next few years:

- Further expansion of the charity's services
- Establishing a fund-raising capability
- Exploring partnerships with other charities
- Developing a volunteer workforce

## Key Responsibilities of a trustee

- Work with fellow trustees to shape, drive and monitor BlindAid's strategy
- Prepare for and participate fully in board meetings (4 per year)
- Act responsibly in decision making and leadership of the organisation
- Ensure the proper management and administration of the charity
- Use any specific skills, knowledge or experience you have to help the board of trustees reach quick and sound decisions focusing on key issues, providing advice and guidance in subjects which the trustee has particular expertise
- Be an ambassador for BlindAid externally and when attending events
- Participate in sub-committees (where appointed)
- Manage risks with a considered, proportionate and balanced approach
- Support BlindAid's fund raising efforts

## Key Qualities of a Trustee

### Essential

- Understanding of responsibilities and duties of trusteeship
- Empathy with BlindAid's mission
- Willingness to commit time to carry out responsibilities
- Prior experience of committee/trustee work
- Leadership and interpersonal skills (including tact and diplomacy)
- Aspiration to foster and join a collaborative team environment

### **Desirable Attributes:**

- Lived experience of visual impairment or experience of visual impairment.
- Wider involvement with voluntary sector
- Ability to help charity's fundraising efforts
- Familiarity with financial management

### **Trustees have a number of statutory duties, which are:**

- To ensure that BlindAid complies with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
- To ensure the organisation pursues its objects as defined in its governing document
- To ensure the organisation uses its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects for the benefit of the public
- To contribute actively to the board of trustees' role in giving firm strategic direction to the organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals and setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets
- To safeguard the good name and values of BlindAid
- To ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation including having appropriate policies and procedures in place
- To ensure the financial stability of the organisation
- To protect and manage the assets of the charity and to ensure the proper investment of the charity's funds

### **Time Commitment**

Around 8 hours per month, including preparing for meetings, attending meetings and events, and undertaking any training activities. Meetings will take place at a time to be agreed by the Board of Trustees. The duration of time you will serve on the Committee will be an initial period of 3 years.

### **Expenses**

The role is voluntary, but expenses will be paid, for example cost of travel to meetings.

### **Application process, contact & enquiries**

- *Application is invited by CV and cover letter to [enquiries@blindaid.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@blindaid.org.uk) and must be received no later than **31 March 2021***
- You may have an informal conversation prior to interview with the Chief Executive.
- A representative group of Trustees will interview short-listed candidates via Zoom on a mutually agreeable date and time.
- The Trustees expect to invite the candidate to attend their meeting to be held on in May 2021 as an observer and to appoint the successful candidate at the next meeting of the board thereafter.

**BlindAid** – Lantern House, 102 Bermondsey Street, London, SE1 3UB  
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