



What is Directions Plus?

- Directions Plus is a voluntary organisation formed in July 1993 to meet the information needs of children and adults with disabilities, older people and carers.

Who Funds It?

- Main funders include Cambridgeshire Social Services and Cambridgeshire City Council.

Who Controls It?

- A Management Committee consisting mainly of disabled people and carers. In April 2002 Directions Plus became a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Who Works For It?

- There are full-time and part-time paid members of staff. However, a great deal of the work is undertaken by volunteers who are a vital part of the team.

How Do People Contact Us?

- By telephone, in writing, fax, e-mail or by appointment at locations in Cambridge City and outlying areas. We also run three sessions in the Advice Centre at Addenbrooke's Hospital.

What Do People Ask Us?

There are a wide range of issues which people contact us about and these include equipment and adaptations for daily living, transport, housing, benefits, holidays and local support groups. Where we are not able to help directly, we try to put people in touch with someone who can. We aim to base our work on the personal experience of disabled people and carers.

Directions Plus: Volunteer Person Specification:

The following are essential requirements:

- Respecting users' confidentiality (to comply with the Data Protection Act)
- Completely trustworthy

Some of the following qualities would be useful:

- Experience of disability either as a disabled person or a carer
- Understanding the importance of information in people's lives
- Accepting supervision
- Working within guidelines and procedures laid down by the Service and within the Constitution
- Willingness to undergo induction and training
- Willingness to attend meetings of volunteers and other events
- Willingness to work co-operatively as a member of a team.

Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

Directions Plus, like most voluntary organisations, places a high value on its volunteers and seeks to support and develop them and ensure that they find working with us a satisfying experience. As with paid staff, we accord volunteers rights and duties. There is a grievance procedure, through which a volunteer may address a problem in the organisation which is troubling them, and a disciplinary procedure is in place for volunteers who have deliberately stepped outside the established guidelines, principles and constitution of Directions Plus.

Recruitment Process

- Prospective volunteers are asked to pay an informal visit (by appointment) to the office at Cowley Road to see for themselves what we do. If they are still interested in volunteering they are asked to fill in an application form, provide the names of two referees and then attend for a short interview.
- Directions Plus does not guarantee to place everybody who enquires about volunteering: we may at different times be seeking people with particular skills or there may not be available vacancies.
- We don't expect everybody to want to do, or be good at, all the tasks in the list in the volunteer job description. But we do need a balanced team, for example some people who are good at answering the telephone and looking up information, and some people who can help maintain a computer database.

Confidentiality

- All volunteers are expected to understand and respect the importance of confidentiality while working at Directions Plus. All people who use our service must be confident that their details or problems are not going to be discussed without their consent.

Access

- Our office is based near the Science Park in Cambridge. It is fully accessible, including a toilet accessible to wheelchair users, though it is located on the first floor with access via a lift.
- Whenever possible, appropriate equipment will be provided.

Travel Expenses

- We offer payment for travel by public transport or car to the office or other locations where you will be working for Directions Plus. For disabled people who are unable to use public transport, we will pay taxi fares within Cambridge City.

Training

- Each volunteer takes part in training before they start answering enquiries from the public. A commitment of around three - six hours per week is necessary to gain knowledge of information sources, and to keep up-to-date with changes.
- Each new volunteer who wishes to advise people will need to attend training sessions on key areas and follow this up with reading and work within the office. There is ongoing training to inform all staff about changes to services or legislation. Training sessions are fixed during school term time.
- On-going training and support are provided within the office; people are encouraged to develop new skills and build confidence.

Meetings and Representation

- Bi-monthly meetings are held to offer an opportunity for volunteers to raise any issues of concern. These meetings are often used for informal training; usually we welcome a guest speaker from another service. The volunteers have two representatives on the Directions Plus Management Committee.

Refreshments

- We will ensure that there are plenty of hot and cold drinks, biscuits etc. to keep you going during the times you are working for us. Volunteers who work through a whole day (though this is exceptional), are provided with lunch.

Social Events

- Social events are normally organised, to give an opportunity for volunteers to meet together.

Directions Plus: a Brief Description for Prospective Volunteers

What Other Work Is There?

- There is a constant task of gathering, collating, and updating of information to be carried out. We have information in a manual filing system and on a computer database. This area of work requires a well-organised approach to ensure that it is completed correctly. Increasingly, our information is being computerised.

Publicity

- A major task is that of getting the service known and finding networks through which we can pass on information. Volunteers who are involved in support or action groups can often assist us by being a link person who passes on information to their group and brings back feedback and comments.
- At local events we like to have an information stall to meet more members of the public and let them know about our work. Some of these take place at weekends.

Listed below are some of the tasks we would like you to do:

- Answer enquiries from the public in person, by post, telephone and e mail
- Help maintain our manual information system by classifying and filing documents
- Help maintain computer databases
- Help research and write information materials
- Make tea and wash up!
- Distribute information and publicise the service
- Staff information stalls at local events
- Undertake routine tasks such as photocopying, message taking, envelope stuffing, shredding etc.
- Word processing
- Maintain notice boards, leaflet displays and stores
- Chair or take minutes at volunteers meetings
- Suggest speakers for volunteers meetings
- Scan newspapers and periodicals for disability related information
- Help run the Annual General Meeting and other meetings
- Take part in training outside groups
- Contribute to the annual report
- Attend training sessions
- Attend volunteers meetings and contribute to the development of the service by discussion.
- Any other relevant tasks that need doing when you are in the office

Directions Plus

Volunteer Application Form

Name

Address

Telephone number

E mail address

When would you be able to work?

Morning

Afternoon

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Referees

Please give the names of two referees who we may approach

Name

Name

Address

Address

Telephone

Telephone