



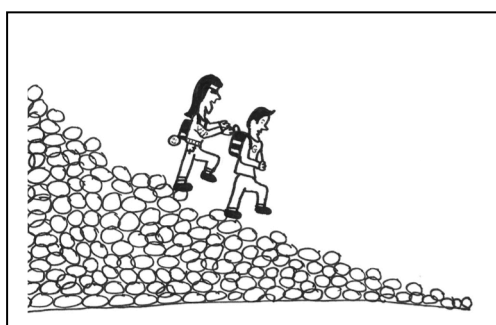
Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group

Guidance for New Guides

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This document is intended to assist those joining us for the first time as guides and should be read in conjunction with our Group leaflets, Sighted Guide booklet and one of our newsletters. This is a 'getting started' document and we recommend that our guides attend one of our Visual Impairment Awareness courses at a later date.

1. Visually impaired (VI) members can be identified by their yellow name badges and green smiley reflector discs. Guides have white badges and orange discs. When a member does not have this identification, just ask whether they are a guide or a VI member.
2. It is important that guides ask the VI member if they need assistance and when they need it. Every person is different, has a different eye condition and has different needs. Some may need full time guiding. Some may just need assistance when: the terrain is rough, muddy or icy; coming downhill; in bright sunlight or dim light conditions. Some may only need help when crossing a road. Guides should also be aware that some VI members may be reluctant to admit the extent of their limitations in an attempt to be independent, when in fact they need to be guided.



3. Always introduce yourself by name. Never assume that the VI member will recognise your voice.

4. When wondering how to guide, ask whether the VI member needs to have contact, i.e., holding your arm above the elbow or touching your shoulder. Ask which side of you they prefer to walk on or tell

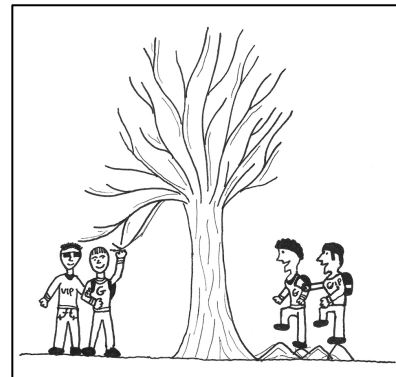
them if you have a preferred side.

5. Ask the VI member whether they have any vision or are totally blind. If they have some vision, ask them to describe what they can see so that you are aware of their limitations. Remember that changes to the weather or light conditions could limit their vision further.

6. If possible, try to guide a VI member who is approximately the same height and weight as you.

7. The VI member may appreciate you describing the scenery as you walk along but for others this may not be meaningful. Just ask them what they prefer. Do not try to avoid words like “see” and “look” as there are no reasonable substitutes.

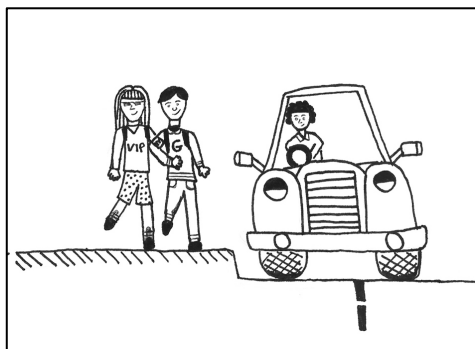
8. Describe upcoming changes in ground levels, width of pathways, and the presence of overhanging bushes or low branches etc. Do not feel the need to describe every obstacle, especially when covering very rocky or uneven terrain or when walking downhill. This is a time when the VI member will need to concentrate most. Just say what the surface is underfoot and ask the VI member to pick up their feet. Except in cases of danger, do not grab a VI member.



9. It is very important that guides change over at every break so that both they and the VI members have an opportunity to get to know someone else. If there are more guides than VI members this change enables you to have a rest from guiding and a chance to observe the Group. However, after a break, please ensure that the person you have been guiding is passed to another guide so no one is left without a guide.

10. At all times please be aware of potentially dangerous situations, especially at the bus station, during lunch stops and when visiting shops, pubs, or toilets.

11. Never leave a VI member standing alone in mid space. Always give them a point of contact, e.g., wall, seat, or tree. In addition, do not forget to tell them when you are leaving.



12. When approaching stiles or stepping stones in streams, give a clear description of what the VI member has to negotiate. One guide should go ahead of the VI member to assist them from the front and one guide should assist from behind.

13. Guiding does not come naturally and there may be times when you omit to mention a hazard or the VI member stumbles. Do not lose confidence or give up. Experience will give you

the skills needed. Just come and try. We have a wonderful time and we hope you will too!

14. When you are on our mailing list, you are a full Group member and therefore covered by our Public Liability insurance. Also, you are entitled to recover your transportation costs if you wish.

We hope that this document answers some of your queries but do not hesitate to contact us if you want to know more.

Chairman: Christine Hewitt. **01142366685** or **hewitt.c4@sky.com**

SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS We gratefully receive support from the following organisations:

SHEFFIELD ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE BLIND - who provide us with facilities for meeting and sending out information to members.

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL - The Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Service. Who organise training for guides, and refer and provide information to registered VIPs.

THE RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION - who provide leaders and guides for our walks. Each VIP will have at least one guide.