

Volunteer role description

Who we are

The New Bridge Foundation is a charity which was founded in 1956 with the intention of using volunteers to support people in prison to resettle back into the community after release, by prominent prison reformer Lord Longford. Over the years we have run a variety of additional projects to support people to this end, including Through The Gate programmes and family support programmes. However our core offering since our inception has been a befriending service delivered by volunteers, which we continue to run today. For over 65 years, our volunteers have offered a bridge to the outside world to people serving prison sentences across England and Wales by offering non-judgemental social contact to some of the most isolated and vulnerable in our society.

We are proud to have Michael Spurr, CB (former CEO, HMPPS) as our President, and Professor David Wilson (criminologist, author and former prison governor) and Jonathan Aitken as our Vice Presidents, as well as a royal patron in HRH Princess Alexandra.

Our vision: Every person in prison feels a meaningful connection to the outside world.

Our mission: We match people in prisons with trained volunteers who offer long-term support through a combination of correspondence and visits. This provides people in prison with a bridge to the outside world, along with an increased sense of value and potential for their future.

Our values:

- **Non-judgemental:** we believe every person has value
- **Inclusive:** we accept applications from any person in prison, and any volunteer who shares our values
- **Independent:** we are wholly separate from and not influenced by the criminal justice system
- **Prisoner-led:** our volunteers shape their support, correspondence and visits around the needs of the person they support
- **Constant:** we provide a reliable connection between those inside and outside prison

Volunteer befriender role

We are looking for compassionate, empathetic and committed people to join our volunteering community, supporting isolated people in prison by providing a social connection and a bridge to the outside world.

Our volunteers are matched with a person in prison who they write to once a fortnight. The person in prison sends their replies to our office where we redirect them out to the volunteer. After they have been writing for around 6 months, the volunteer begins to visit the person in prison, up to 4 times per year. We reimburse all expenses related to letters and visits.

Every volunteer is part of a Volunteer Support Group, which is Chaired by an experienced volunteer. Each group meets once per month for around an hour, and every group member attends to discuss their correspondence and visits and have the opportunity to raise any concerns about the relationship or the prisoner's welfare in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. Support groups are spread across the country, and volunteers can choose to join one locally that meets in person, or one that meets via zoom with volunteers from across the country.

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Volunteer responsibilities

All volunteers must:

- Be committed to writing to and/or visiting people in prison on a consistent basis.
- Act as a positive role model to people in prison by demonstrating responsible behaviours, such as reliability, respect, honesty and encouragement.
- Respect the privacy and comfort level of people in prison, allowing them to develop the supportive relationship at their own pace.
- Be clear in all communication with people in prison, particularly around their role, boundaries and confidentiality.
- Regularly attend Support Group meetings and submit Expenses Forms.
- Promptly report any issues of concern to their Support Group/New Bridge.
- Comply with the 'Volunteer Policies & Procedures' and the rules and regulations of any establishment they may visit in their capacity as a New Bridge volunteer.
- Act in a professional and responsible manner, which enhances the reputation of New Bridge.
- In the event of closure of contact, be sensitive to people in prisons' needs and concerns and work with New Bridge to facilitate a positive end to the relationship.
- Notify New Bridge of any contact detail changes or any matters that may impact upon their ability to perform the volunteering role.

Personal attributes

Volunteers should:

- Have the ability to relate to people in prison and to separate the individual from their behaviour.
- Be adaptable to change and able to work as a team member of New Bridge.
- Demonstrate emotional intelligence.
- Meet New Bridge's minimum age requirement of 18 years.

Time commitment

Every fortnight: send a letter to the person in prison that you support.

Every month: attend an hour's meeting with volunteer support group; submit form detailing expenses incurred and letters sent/visits made.

Benefits of volunteering with New Bridge

Our volunteers tell us that they enjoy:

- Being able to make a tangible difference to isolated people in prison
- Being part of a community of like-minded volunteers
- Peer support from Volunteer Support Group meetings
- The flexibility of being able to fit volunteering around their work/studies/life
- The huge impact they can have with a relatively small time commitment
- Attending our annual Volunteer Conference to learn more about prisons and the criminal justice system from a variety of speakers

Recruitment process

After completing an online application form

(<https://www.newbridgefoundation.org.uk/Pages/Category/apply-now>) prospective volunteers will be invited for an interview over Zoom, after which they will attend a training session (either online via Zoom or in person at our London office, according to their preference and availability).