

Sands

Application Information

Befriender Programme Lead (Maternity Cover)

May 2026

About Sands

Sands exists to save babies' lives and ensure that anyone affected by pregnancy loss or baby death receives the support and care they need.

We provide bereavement support services both nationally through our Freephone helpline, online community and resources, as well as locally through a network of around 100 regional support groups based across the UK and run by trained befrienders.

Working in partnership with professionals, trusts and health boards, we offer a range of training programmes and bereavement care resources to ensure that every bereaved parent and family receives the best possible care wherever they are in the UK.

Additionally, we promote improvements in practice and support research to better understand the causes of deaths and save babies' lives.

Sands raises awareness of baby loss and works with government, key influencers and other stakeholders to make reducing the number of babies dying a priority nationally and locally.

Over the past 46 years, Sands has grown into a national charity with a powerful vision shared by dedicated volunteers, fundraisers, members, donors, healthcare professionals, partners, staff and bereaved parents and families.

Sands has grown its income by 40% since 2012 and, as part of our strategic plan, is focusing on how we can make the biggest difference to the lives of bereaved families and save babies' lives. To find out more, visit www.sands.org.uk

Our vision at Sands is for a world where fewer babies die and anyone affected by the death of a baby receives the best care and support for as long as they need, wherever they live in the UK.

Join us and help create a world where fewer babies die.

Sands Staff Benefits

Annual Leave

Staff receive 28 days annual leave per annum pro rata, plus bank holidays. Staff will be required to take 3 days annual leave during the period between Christmas & New Year.

Employee Assistance Services

As part of its commitment to employee wellbeing, Sands offers all Staff access to the Bupa employee Assistance service which offers free and confidential counselling and wellbeing support. Support is available on a range of issues including legal, financial, emotional, health, and work-related concerns.

Sand Cycle to Work Scheme

Sands has teamed up with Cycle Solutions to provide a Cycle to Work Scheme, which you can join to make considerable savings on the cost of a new bike and equipment.

Sands Pension Scheme

Subject to eligibility, you will be automatically enrolled into the Aviva Personal Pension scheme as soon as your employment commences. You can decide whether to remain in the scheme and/or make additional voluntary contributions if you wish.

Life Insurance

All Staff are covered by a Life Insurance Policy which pays 3 x annual salary to nominated beneficiaries. Staff also have access to Canada Life's WeCare wellbeing platform including 24/7 online GP, mental health counselling and financial and legal support. Additionally Staff have access to Bereavement Counselling and a Probate Helpline.

Flexible Working

All Staff can apply for flexible working with effect from their first date of employment.

Maternity Pay

Staff on maternity leave are paid their full salary for the first 26 weeks of their period of leave.

Leave for the Death of a Baby or Pregnancy Loss

Any member of Staff affected by the death of baby or pregnancy loss will be granted leave paid at their normal salary, regardless of the type of loss.

Sands is a vibrant, growing charity!

With a clear strategy, Sands is repositioning as a learning, developing organisation which aims to achieve excellence through people and offers a collegiate, collaborative working environment - making it an especially exciting time to join the charity.

Sands is an inclusive and diversity-friendly employer. We are committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity and working inclusively. We welcome and encourage applications from people of all backgrounds and do not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, colour, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age or any other category protected by law.

To apply:

Please submit your CV, together with a supporting statement that demonstrates how you meet the criteria in the person specification to recruitment@sands.org.uk.

CVs and supporting statements should be sent as attachments to an email in either Word or PDF format. The title of the attachments should be your first name, surname and either CV or supporting statement e.g. "NAME.. CV"

Please also complete the Diversity and Equality Monitoring Form and send this with your application.

Closing date for applications: 17th May 2026 23:59pm

Interviews From: Monday 8th - Thursday 11th June 2026

As we have limited staff resources we are unable to provide candidates with feedback about their applications. **Interviews will be held online**

Job Description

Job Title:	Befriender Programme Lead - Maternity Cover
Responsible to:	This role is matrix managed by the Head of Bereavement Support Services and the Head of Community and Volunteering
Location:	Home-based, with some requirement to travel around the UK
Contract:	Maternity cover - September 2026 to August/September 2027
Hours:	Full Time - 35 Hours per week
Salary:	£40,000 per annum plus £312 Home Worker Allowance per annum

Main Purpose of Job

Volunteer and community involvement is a core part of what we do here at Sands. From Sands United Teams, Support Groups, knitters, Parent Speakers and event volunteer, volunteers are at the heart of Sands delivering peer support, and building a local community for bereaved parents.

Sands Groups are volunteer led, and community driven.

Sands has a vision to grow community-based peer support, community activity and volunteer involvement across the organisation. This requires an investment in enabling, innovation in peer support and volunteer involvement and partnership working. At the heart of this is our Befrienders.

Befrienders are in every Group across the UK and enable online support groups too.

This post is all about developing, delivering and managing our fantastic volunteer befriender programme across Sands. Ensuring that Sands befrienders are enabled to provide warm, supportive, evidence-based and values-driven peer support to bereaved families across the UK.

This maternity cover post will have two key focus areas

- Maintaining key components of the befriender programme, including regular communications and meeting with Befrienders, driving recruitment opportunities, supporting innovation in Befriending and troubleshooting in partnership with volunteers.
- Deliver a fixed timeline project focused on developing the Befriender programme.

Responsibilities

Best practice in peer support and befriender programmes

- Manage the direction and growth of the Befriender programme
- Work with the Development Leads and Community Development Officers to create plans for regions to support existing Befrienders and grow the peer support offer across the UK
- To engage, inspire and support existing Sands befrienders, providing a positive volunteer experience from recruitment to saying goodbye

- Be the point of contact for Befriender safeguarding issues. Be proactive in addressing and be an escalation point for challenges, risks and safeguarding issues.
- Practice and support excellent standards in all aspects of inclusion and diversity, particularly in reaching marginalised groups in recruitment and enabling volunteers to provide inclusive support spaces.
- Lead on development of processes, guidance and resources, ensuring good governance and risk management of the Befriender Programme
- Work with the Volunteering Coordinator to ensure delivery of key processes, process development and improvement to enhance the volunteer experience.
- To identify learning and development opportunities for befrienders and create a culture of continued learning for all Befrienders

Develop and innovate

- Be an opportunity spotter, picking up innovation opportunities to grow and develop the Befriender programme, alongside relevant Sands' staff teams.
- Manage short- and long-term projects and where appropriate join cross organisational working groups to represent the Community and Volunteering Team. Including projects that may have budgets.
- Advocate the voices and needs of Befrienders, bringing in knowledge and feedback to enable good decision making and volunteer participation in new ways of working
- Through supporting approaches to recruitment and partnerships, ensure that individuals with a wide range of bereavement experiences are at the heart of Sands' volunteering
- Build a data driven understanding of gaps in service and representation, and make promotion and recruitment decisions to support growth for under-represented towns/regions/groups
- Support continuous improvement and accurate delivery of processes in the welcome journey for new befrienders, including in recruitment, on-boarding and off-boarding processes in partnership with the Volunteer Coordinator
- Use the CRM to record accurate information and help make data informed decisions

Internal and external partnerships

- Work with the Bereavement Support Services Team (BSS) to ensure collaboration across the Befriender programme and national BSS support groups and ensure the Befriender programme continues to be rooted in trauma-informed practice.
- Work with the Training Team to ensure that training and learning experiences for Befrienders are up to date, relevant and accessible.
- Work with the Philanthropy and Partnerships team and the Head of Community and Volunteering to maximise compelling cases for support, storytelling and funding opportunities at a national and local level.
- Work with the Engagement Team to ensure Sands befriending is represented in an engaging and positive way across Sands social media and the media

This job description is not contractual and is liable to change over time

What we're looking for:

Beliefs and behaviours:

- Equality and inclusion are an essential part of community engagement
- Understand the significant potential that volunteers have in the delivery of peer to peer support and in enabling organisations to achieve their goals
- Proactive and solution driven in approach to individual and team activities
- You'll understand the potential of community building amongst the baby loss bereavement community, the importance of peer support, enabling and empowering
- Professional and impartial, with an ability to manage challenging conversations with clarity and empathy
- Empathy with Sands cause, aims and values, with strong personal boundaries
- Sensitive and emotionally intelligent when it comes to understanding experiences of bereavement and what that means when working with volunteers who have experience of bereavement
- A commitment to safe peer support practice and safeguarding

Experience:

- Experience in volunteer involvement good practice, volunteer management and relationship building
- Experience of peer support services and best practice in volunteer led programmes
- Experience of leading and influencing colleagues at all levels.
- Experience of managing projects, budgets and geographically dispersed teams
- Experience of building, organising and leading community level sports
- Experience of working with marginalised communities and creating safe spaces for all people
- Have a sound understanding of the barriers to accessing bereavement support, participating in community, and volunteering
- Experience of developing and delivering events in partnership with volunteers, fundraising teams or those in a community
- Experience of using document management systems, CRMs, and accurate record keeping
- You'll have experience of recognising opportunities and using your initiative to take these opportunities forwards to fruition, seeking support, guidance as required
- Experience of teamwork with a remote team and working collaboratively with teams across an organisation

Core skills:

- Top tier communication skills suitable for a range of different audiences and environments, including professional networks, influencing and difficult conversations
- The ability to communicate and act proactively, make decisions and know when to seek input from others
- Ability to cope with demanding situations and work to tight deadlines
- Understand nuanced high-level conversations and how to apply that at an operational level
- Active listening skills and ability to empathise with people's needs at the same time as building consensus
- Strong personal organisational skills, the ability to manage and maintain key documentation and reports
- Highly skilled in project management and influencing others
- Familiarity with Microsoft Office 365
- Use of CRM's and understanding of good process development

Person Specification

Skills and Experience		
Importance	Criteria	Assessment
Essential	Passionate and knowledgeable about volunteering within the charity sector, up to date with relevant volunteering research and able to communicate findings	Application, interview
Essential	Experience of using communication strategies and online platforms to engage and enthuse large numbers of geographically dispersed volunteers	Application, interview
Essential	Ability to support volunteers closely connected with the cause they are supporting, empathising with them, and understanding their motivations	Application and interview
Essential	Experience of building programmes or projects around the principles of equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion; ability to ensure befriending is represented across all areas, including type of bereavement, younger parents, parents from higher risk groups	Application, interview
Essential	Experience in establishing and maintaining productive relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders working in a collaborative and inclusive way	Application, interview
Essential	Ability to create open, professional and boundaried relationships so that befrienders feel able to manage their volunteering commitments effectively	Application, interview
Essential	Excellent verbal and written communication skills and experience of drafting well-written guidance, reports, documents, and resources	Application, interview,

Essential	Experience of using a range of IT packages, including Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, Zoom, etc. to develop and maintain effective administration systems.	Application, interview,
Essential	Commitment to work flexibly and travel across the UK to engage with potential stakeholders as required	Application, interview
Desirable	Experience of using CRM/database programmes to produce reports	Application, interview
Desirable	Demonstrable commitment to Sands' aims, and knowledge of the issues relating to baby loss	Application, interview
Desirable	Knowledge and experience of befriending as a volunteer or in a work setting	Application, interview

Core Competencies		
Importance	Criteria	Assessment
Essential	Understanding of personal resilience and professional boundaries in the workplace	Application, interview
Essential	Excellent time management skills, and an ability to proactively manage and prioritise a varied workload	Application, interview, timed task
Essential	Excellent planning and organisational skills, with considerable attention to detail	Application, interview, timed task
Essential	Collaborative and a team player with a positive, warm style, who can support and motivate people to engage with projects with positive outcomes	Application, interview
Essential	A proactive approach to solving problems and challenges	Application, interview
Essential	At least two years have elapsed since your own bereavement, if applicable	Application, interview
Essential	Enthusiasm for continued learning and a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances	Application, interview
Essential	Understanding of confidentiality and data protection regulations	Application, interview