**Tandem Trekkers Sighted Guide Awareness for Pilots and Volunteers**

When volunteering with Tandem Trekkers, you will regularly be meeting with and assisting individuals that are blind or visually impaired (VI). One of the skills that can be useful during volunteering with us is sighted guiding, a method of assisting VI individuals with getting around safely. Below is a brief introduction to sighted guiding that will help you understand the key concepts.

**Sighted Guiding**

When guiding a VI person, please keep the below steps in mind to help you assist them in navigating their surroundings effectively and safely.

1. Before any guiding, it is important to check whether the individual requires any assistance in the first place, as opposed to assuming that they do. This is because visual impairments affect people in a wide variety of ways, and factors in the environment, such as the sun being low in the sky or the area being dark or busy, can influence whether someone requires assistance.
2. Should an individual wish to be guided, ask the individual if they have a preference as to which arm they would like to be guided with. For guiding, stand slightly ahead and to the side of the person you are guiding, ensuring they can see or hear you clearly. Maintain a relaxed position and avoid sudden movements. From here, offer your arm to the person, who will hold onto your arm just above the elbow.
3. As you walk, provide verbal cues and descriptions of the area and surroundings, including obstacles, steps, or changes in terrain. Use clear and concise language to avoid any confusion.
4. When guiding, try to pre-empt any obstacles ahead of time and communicate them to the guidee with phrases such as ‘Left turn coming up.’ Or ‘Door ahead on the right.’ Try to provide specific information when needed such as ‘two flights of stairs going downwards coming up.’ ‘First step coming up’ ‘Last step coming up.’ Potential obstacles to be aware of may include curbs, uneven surfaces or low hanging branches.
5. Finally, try to remain patient throughout the process, and be aware that different individuals will have different levels of guiding needs, walking speeds, and scenarios where they may need guiding more or less. If you are unsure, you can always ask the individual what they need assistance, and if so, what assistance they would like.

**Guiding While Walking with a Tandem Bike**

During rides, there are often situations, such as busy road crossings or narrow gates, where it will be necessary to walk with the tandem bike rather than riding it. While walking with a bike and a VI individual, stand between your saddle and handlebars as if you were walking with the bike on your own. Your (VI) stoker will stand next to their saddle and hold onto the bike, using this as the ‘guiding arm.’ Make sure that both you and your guidee are on the same side of the bike, as this makes this process easier, and continue to provide as much description as possible for obstacles. Please also ensure that the stoker is stood far enough away from the pedals of the bike to avoid being hit by them as they rotate when the bike moves forward.

Thank you for volunteering with Tandem Trekkers, and please do ask if you have any questions!