

Sunshine Coach Programme

Variety, the Children's Charity

Registered Charity Number 209259 (England & Wales)

SC038505 (Scotland)

Application Guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions

July 2026

Please read these guidelines and FAQs before completing your application form.

Your application

- Variety's Sunshine Coach Programme exists to enable schools and non-profit organisations catering for disabled and/or disadvantaged children to obtain a Sunshine Coach.
- A Sunshine Coach is used to take children out on educational and cultural trips, recreational activities, and vocational experiences to compliment and continue their education and/or provide social enrichment. It provides access to opportunities and experiences that would otherwise be unavailable, or inaccessible, to them. The vehicle should be used 4 to 5 times a week, 39 weeks a year.
- The coach should only be used by the applicant organisation and never carry passengers for hire or reward.
- The applicant is expected to contribute financially towards the Sunshine Coach. Currently, the applicant pays roughly 1/3 of the total cost of the vehicle, with Variety, the Children's Charity securing a donor (or donors) to fund the remaining 2/3.
- The applying organisation must provide qualified drivers with appropriate licenses, secure garage or parking permits, and ensure that the coach is serviced, maintained and securely stored. This must be in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. The applicant organisation must also ensure that the coach is comprehensively insured, taxed, and has annual MOT inspections.
- If your application is successful, you will be asked to participate in our impact monitoring process. This will involve both a brief telephone interview approximately three months after your equipment is delivered, and a short survey ten months after your equipment is delivered. Your feedback is vital in helping us evaluate the impact of our work and demonstrate the ongoing needs of disabled and disadvantaged children across the UK. This, in turn, enables Variety to raise further funds and support more children in need.
- When the coach is no longer road-safe and at the end of its usable life, we ask that you inform the Programmes team, who will help arrange disposal for you.

To be able to process your application as efficiently as possible, please ensure you answer all questions on the application form **in detail**.

Corporate funding

- Once the funds for the coach have been secured, the donor(s) providing the funds will expect to receive recognition in the form of their logo or name being displayed on the vehicle. This will be handled by Variety before you the delivery of your coach. Please note that any supporter who assists applicants to raise funds for their contribution will not be entitled to have their name or logo displayed on the vehicle.
- The coach recipient must ensure that the original artwork is not defaced or changed in any way, and will make sure to replace the graphics following any body work repairs. In occasional circumstances, additional logos can be added to the coach – please enquire with the Programmes team for more information.

Frequently asked questions

1. Who can apply?

We consider applications from schools and non-profit organisations (including hospices, charities, youth clubs, alternative provisions) who exist to support the educational and recreational outcomes of disabled and/or disadvantaged children, up to age 19, across the UK.

2. How do I apply for a Sunshine Coach?

Please visit our website [Sunshine Coaches - Variety, the Children's Charity](https://www.variety.org.uk/sunshine-coaches) where you can find the digital application form, and some more information about the Sunshine Coach Programme.

You and Variety will receive email confirmation once your application has been submitted.

3. What is the deadline to submit my application?

There is no deadline; we welcome applications submitted at any time of the year.

4. What happens after I submit my application?

Once your application has been received, it will move through the following steps:

a) Casework

Your application will first undergo Casework.

b) Assessment

Your application will then be assessed by our network of external assessors.

c) Decision

The assessment report will be sent to the decision-making panel.

d) Notification

You will then be notified if your application is approved, or rejected, with guidance.

e) Sourcing funding

Variety then look for a donor to match-fund your application.

There is detailed information about the whole process, from application to post-award, available on our website here *[include link to infographic]*.

5. When will we hear if our application is successful?

You will be notified via email as to the outcome of your application as soon as it has passed through the decision making part of the process. We endeavour to let you know within two weeks of your assessment being completed.

Please note - it may take us up to 6 months to carry out the casework on your application due to the volume of submissions received.

6. What are the timescales for securing funding and obtaining a coach?

Variety's fundraising team are hard at work securing as much donorship as possible, all year round, for all of our programmes. It can take us 9 -12 months+ to secure a donor for your coach, so please be aware this is often not an immediate process. This timescale is subject to change and it can be faster or slower.

7. Are there any other financial considerations (other than our contribution) for a Sunshine Coach, and if we have the funds available, will we receive a donor faster?

If your organisation is not VAT exempt (meaning you either pay VAT or can pay and claim VAT back), you will be asked to fund the VAT of the vehicle. Variety's donor(s) and your contribution only cover the base cost of the vehicle.

Depending on coach type selected, VAT ranges from an additional £10,000.00 - £13,000.00. More information about VAT is available on the application form, and in the payment FAQ.

While having your funds readily available is fantastic and helps us significantly with the paperwork, it does not mean you will necessarily be allocated a donor sooner.

8. Can we hire a Sunshine Coach?

No, Variety does not have Sunshine Coaches that can be lent or hired, and external organisations cannot lend or hire a Sunshine Coach from one of our beneficiaries. They are only for use by the organisation who initially applied for them.

We understand that academy trusts have different schools at different sites. This is appropriate usage of the coach so long as it had been previously stipulated in the application.

9. What happens when our coach is no longer usable?

Please get in touch with the Programmes team who will explain the next steps.

10. If rejected, can we re-apply?

Yes. If your application has been rejected with guidance, please ensure that you make the necessary changes before re-submitting your application. Alternatively, should the reasons that your application was rejected no longer apply, you are also welcome to re-submit.

11. If we see a Sunshine Coach involved in an incident on the road, how can we report it?

If you see an accident, incident or troubling behaviour concerning a Sunshine Coach, please immediately report it to the Programmes Team by calling 027 4288100 or 0207 4288133 or emailing coaches@variety.org.uk.

For us to identify the owner of the vehicle, please be sure to include **the registration number of the vehicle** and, if possible, **the name of the organisation, which will be on the rear and front doors**. Please note, Variety holds no ownership of the coaches, and so any incident or troubling behaviour that you may see or experience is the responsibility of the coach's owner to rectify. Variety will follow up with the owner of the coach and investigate the matter independently.

12. If we decline a media release request (the use of photos, quotes or text for publicity), will this affect the outcome of my application?

Not at all. Declining media request consents doesn't change the outcome of your application, but we would appreciate your feedback when a member of staff contacts you for your input.