

Family Friends volunteer's role description.

Introduction.

To help give children the best possible start in life, Family Friends supports parents as they grow in confidence, strengthen their relationship with their children and widen their links with the local community. Family Friends offers support, friendship and practical help to parents with young children in the local community.

The work of the volunteer requires a high level of commitment and reliability and will be supported by the Family Friends Co-ordinator.

The Family Friends Approach

Family Friends volunteers are expected to work towards the increased confidence and independence of the family by:

- offering support, friendship and practical help
- visiting the families in their own homes, where the dignity and identity of each individual can be respected and protected
- reassuring families that difficulties in bringing up children are not unusual
- emphasising the positive aspects of family life
- developing a relationship with the family in which time can be shared and an understanding developed
- encouraging parents' strengths and emotional well-being for the ultimate benefit of their own children
- encouraging families to widen their network of relationships and to use effectively the support and services available in the community

Support for Volunteers

The Family Friends Coordinator, who is in turn responsible to the trustees, supports volunteers in their work with families offering regular supervision and training for the role.

Commitment required

- initial course of preparation - all volunteers need to be prepared to offer their support to families. The initial course of preparation normally lasts 40 hours over a number of weeks
- time with families each week - to meet the needs of families and ensure the best support we ask volunteers to offer to spend time with at least one family per week, ideally for three hours or more depending on the needs of the family.
- willingness to accept regular support and supervision in respect of their voluntary activity
- we recognise that volunteers may stop volunteering at any time but we would expect and hope they would be able to offer their time to Family Friends for two years or more.

Expectations of Volunteers

Following attendance at a course of preparation and with the support of their Coordinator volunteers are expected to:

- be familiar with and committed to the Family Friends ethos as specified in the scheme's governing documents, *Standards and Methods of Practice*, the *Family Friends Agreement* and the *use of the Family Friends Policy and Practice Guide*
- understand and implement Family Friends policies on:
 - confidentiality
 - equal opportunities
 - looking after children in the absence of their parents
 - child protection
 - health & safety
 - personal safety.
- be introduced to and support a family or families by home-visiting regularly (usually at least once per week) for as long as is necessary or until the volunteer is no longer able to offer support
- share information with the Coordinator and contact the Coordinator immediately if there is concern about the physical or emotional well-being of any member of the family
- take part in reviews with the family and Coordinator as requested
- keep records of visits to families as requested by the Coordinator
- attend support, supervision and training sessions as arranged by the scheme
- submit travel and telephone expenses on a regular basis, which will be paid at the agreed rate by the trustees
- inform their insurance company that the car is being used for voluntary work with Family Friends for which expenses are paid.

This exciting and rewarding voluntary activity requires energy, commitment, reliability, creativity and a sense of humour. All volunteers can expect the support of the Coordinator, other volunteers and the trustees, and, through the Coordinator, other professionals involved with the family. The Management Committee includes two representative volunteers. There are also opportunities for self development within the role and social contact with others in Family Friends.