



Volunteer Information Pack





Family Friends in Windsor and Maidenhead
@ The Lawns Nursery School
Imperial Road Windsor Berkshire SL4 3RU

Telephone: 0300 800 1005 Text: 07860 021 720

Dear Prospective Volunteer,

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Family Friends.

We believe volunteers are very exceptional individuals; the most precious gift any of us can give another is our time and this is at the heart of what our organisation is all about.

By volunteering with Family Friends you are giving your time freely for the benefit of families living in your local community. The time and commitment given by each volunteer has helped to build and sustain a strong, well respected local resource which reaches out to many vulnerable families and makes a significant difference to their lives.

Our process to becoming a volunteer is thorough to ensure that we continue to provide the best service possible. We look forward to exploring this opportunity with you.

Welcome and many thanks

Shahida

Shahida Omarshah

Volunteer Co-ordinator

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Who are we?

Family Friends was established in 1995 and supports over 300 families a year in the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead via our volunteer service, family support workers and community workers.

Family Friends is a caring and listening local organisation with dedicated and skilled staff and volunteers. We support families and children, who are facing difficulties, to work through challenges, develop resilience and realise their potential.

We do this by providing a free and confidential short term service through practical and emotional support to families with children aged 0-13 years living in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Our Ethos:

- Welcoming/Friendly
- Inclusive
- Dedicated
- Safe
- Empowering
- Timely
- Solution focussed
- Respectful and professional

Our Delivery:

We aim to offer a minimum of two hours support per week to a family who are experiencing short-term difficulties by providing them with a volunteer who can offer them emotional and/or practical support.

Volunteers are matched with a family to offer practical and emotional support to work through difficulties and to support the families to improve circumstances. Volunteers visit families in their homes. The nature of the support can be varied and will include some of the following:

- Practical help with the children – playing with them, taking them out with or without the parents/ carers (with the parent's consent), helping at meal times etc.
- Practical help for the parents – this could include helping to apply for benefits, form filling, helping to motivate parents, looking after the children to give parents respite.
- Emotional support – spending time with the family, befriending them, listening.
- Enabling people to access more specialist support such as counselling.
- Supporting people to meet others locally through joining groups or making friends.
- Encouraging families to spend time together and help parents enjoy spending time with their children.

The Process to Becoming a Family Friends Volunteer

In 6 easy steps!

- 1** Application Form The application form is a chance for you to tell us about yourself, what interests you in volunteering and the skills that you have.
- 2** Informal Interview The Volunteer Co-Ordinator will contact you to arrange to meet you. The interview will be relaxed and we encourage you to ask any questions that you have.
- 3** References We will take up the two references you have named on your application form.
- 4** Induction You will be invited to attend induction training (usually 9am to 4.30pm or over 2 half days). This covers all the practical information and skills that you need to help you feel prepared for starting to support a family as well as safeguarding training. You will also get to meet other new volunteers.
- 5** Disclosure & Barring System When we have received two satisfactory references we will complete a Disclosure & Barring System check (DBS) with you. It is standard that everyone who works or volunteers with children or families is required to have a DBS check. This confirms that you do not have any criminal convictions that would prevent you from being able to work with children or vulnerable adults.
- 6** Completing the process Once this process has been completed satisfactorily then we will write to you to offer a voluntary role with us and look forward to beginning working with you!

What if I don't have any relevant experience?

Please don't worry if you feel that you lack experience or training with children and families, as long as you have the qualities that we look for we can support with training and experience.

Family Friends Volunteers Charter

When you volunteer with Family Friends it is our aim that:

- 1) You are able to make a positive difference to the lives of families.
- 2) Your gift of time, skills and experience will be used well – *we won't waste your time; we will value what you bring.*
- 3) Your volunteering will be appreciated and recognised – *without volunteers we couldn't operate.*
- 4) You will be provided with all the information and guidance required for you to carry out your volunteering - *we'll give you all the resources, training, information and support you'll need.*
- 5) You will be encouraged to develop in your volunteering role – *we'll help you to use your volunteering experience to try something new with us.*
- 6) You can expect **Family Friends** to seek your views on its work and on your volunteering – *we want to hear from you so that you can help to shape the future with us.*
- 7) While you are volunteering with **Family Friends**, you will be covered by our public liability insurance policy – *as long as you are working within our guidelines.*
- 8) You are eligible to claim mileage expenses of 35p per mile for journeys within RBWM.
- 9) You can expect **Family Friends** to help you to resolve any difficulties you may have with **Family Friends** or with your volunteering – *if we've upset you, or if your volunteering is causing you problems, we would like to talk it through with you.*
- 10) You are free to stop volunteering at any time however, if it is possible for you to give us one month's notice it would be very helpful – *we would love you to continue with us, but if you feel the time has come to stop we will understand and thank you for what you have given us.*

In order to meet these aims:

- 1) **Family Friends** will ensure that all our team are trained in how to work effectively with volunteers – *we want all of our people to work happily together.*
- 2) **Family Friends** will provide a range of training programmes for volunteers – *we are keen to help all of our volunteers to keep up-to-date.*
- 3) **Family Friends** expects everyone to carry out their volunteering in a way that honours the regulations we are bound by – *we want to protect you, ourselves, and the families from any legal issues.*
- 4) There may be a time when we have to part company – *if this is the only solution, it will be done caringly and in a spirit of grace.*
- 5) We need to make certain checks, to protect the children and young people we support – *references from responsible people who know you, and a police (DBS) check will need to take place.*
- 6) We will need to keep a record of your details on file so that we can keep in touch with you and know about your volunteering with us – *We comply with the General Data Protection Regulations and will keep your details securely.*

Time Commitment

A volunteer typically visits for no more than 2 hours per week for an initial 6-8 sessions. After this, the support is reviewed and either extended or completed.

At times we are asked to support families in more flexible ways such as more regular visits over a shorter time period. We agree this with the family and the volunteer on an individual basis. Although we appreciate having volunteers who can be flexible in this way we know that it is not possible for everyone.

It is at the volunteer's discretion whether or not they support a family when invited to. The volunteer should decide whether or not the role, location, timing etc is suitable for them at that point.

Training and Development

Volunteers need to:

- Attend essential training sessions including first aid and safeguarding.
- Attend other training sessions as and when available including the training provided by Family Friends.
- Have a commitment to learning and self-development.
- Be willing to talk with the Volunteer Co-ordinator on a regular basis to reflect on families supported and discuss development, issues arising, training and feedback.

Commitment to Safeguarding Children

All volunteers:

- Support families in an open, honest way that is open to scrutiny and feedback
- Are alert and aware of child protection issues.
- Raise any concerns with the Volunteer Co-ordinator when they arise.
- Are subject to reference and disclosure and barring checks.

Commitment to Family Friends

Volunteers are expected:

- To be reliable, punctual and committed to completing the sessions of support.
- To keep the Volunteer Co-ordinator informed about progress, any breaks in support and/or any issues throughout period of support especially in relation to safeguarding.
- To work within Family Friends policies, guidelines and boundaries.

To agree to working within the standards and ethos of Family Friends:

- to respect the rights of individuals
- to work within the confidentiality guidelines
- to support people in a way that is non-judgemental and non-discriminatory
- gifts of under £10 are acceptable, but gifts in excess of this should be declined. If a family gives you a personal gift, please let the Volunteer Co-ordinator know.
- to avoid entering into a personal relationship with any client e.g. maintaining contact with the family after the support has ended or to give out personal phone numbers.

Equal Opportunities Statement

Family Friends is committed to offering equal opportunities to all team/volunteers and who work/support the work and who access Family Friends. We acknowledge our responsibility to act in ways that avoid and eliminate unfair and unethical practices.

All members of Family Friends will play their part in ensuring that we act in ways which:

- 1 respect and respond to different traditions of culture, religion and faith;
- 2 recognise the impact of gender, age and sexuality on lifestyles;
- 3 seek to understand and attempt to redress the disadvantages arising from race, poverty and class;
- 4 refrain from stigmatising people by reason of disability or illness;
- 5 actively work towards eliminating unfair advantage or discrimination in all aspects of our work.

Family Friends will not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic language or behaviour from anyone participating.

This will involve an ongoing reflection on our work and regular discussions about how we are implementing our policies.

All team members and volunteers are required to adhere to this policy.