

East Cumbria Family Support Association

Volunteer policy

Ethos

Everyone has the right to volunteer and volunteering is, in itself, a legitimate activity. It is not a substitute for paid work, but it is just as important.

The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidance to staff and volunteers. It is not a contractual agreement, and will be reviewed on a regular basis at the discretion of the management committee.

East Cumbria Family Support Association (ECFSA) provides support for families on a group and individual basis. The individual support is usually provided in the families own home, and is given mainly through volunteers. The Association recognises the special relationship this can offer to families. The volunteer's role together with that of paid staff is at the core of the Association's mission, and our policy aims to reflect that.

Recruitment

We aim to follow accepted good practice with regard to equal opportunities and diversity, and seek to recruit volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and life experiences, reflecting the local community, as the families we support have a variety of needs.

At the first point of contact with a prospective volunteer an initial visit will be arranged at the volunteer's place of residency, in order to give them information on volunteering with ECFSA and to assess their suitability.

Prospective volunteers are required to complete a registration form which gives their permission for ECFSA to contact 2 suitable referees and undertake an enhanced DBS disclosure, which is repeated every 3 years. Referees must not be related to the applicant and should be from a relevant source e.g. Work with children.

Volunteers are asked to disclose previous convictions (including spent convictions), cautions and warnings or pending proceedings as voluntary work with ECFSA is considered to not be covered by The Rehabilitation of Offender's act 1974 but is in accordance with Home Office Circular (86) 44.

A positive DBS Disclosure must be considered by the Trustees and will be taken seriously, but need not debar the applicant.

Members of families who have received our support are welcome to apply to be volunteers at least one year after the support from us comes to an end.

Volunteers are asked to give a commitment of at least one year's volunteering.

If a person is deemed to be unsuitable to be a volunteer they will be informed as soon as possible, with the reasons given and the details of how to appeal.

Volunteers need to be capable of task assigned to them. We expect volunteers to keep us informed of any changes to their physical/mental health which may impact on their volunteering.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Confidentiality is central to the work of ECFSA. Volunteers are expected to maintain the confidentiality of all information to which they are exposed during the course of their volunteering and after it has ceased. Any failure to maintain confidentiality during the course of their work will be brought to the attention of the Trustees. Volunteers will be required to sign a Confidentiality Policy at their initial training session.

Any respite support that is provided within the volunteer's own home must first be discussed with the appropriate member of staff. Volunteers are not allowed, or covered by the Association's insurance, to look after children overnight in their own home.

Volunteers must seek the advice of staff or management before taking any action outside the role assigned to them, which might serve to commit ECFSA, or compromise the integrity of the Association. Examples of this would be liaising with the media, lobbying or raising finance.

ECFSA employs trained staff to attend any family or interagency meetings and it is not part of the volunteer's role to attend.

Volunteer records are open to inspection by the volunteer concerned and are kept in individual files and in locked cabinets. Records are kept for 2 years after the volunteer's last involvement with the Association. If a volunteer wishes to return to the Association, a new DBS check will be required, and they may be required to refresh their training.

Training and support

Volunteers are required to attend an initial 2-3 hour training session (Level 1) and complete the LSCB e-learning safeguarding session, which equips them to begin visiting a family. On completion a discussion will take place with the Family Support Coordinator to see whether they wish to proceed as a volunteer. We encourage volunteers to then attend a Level 2 programme which runs for six sessions and enables them to support a family with a more complex need. The course takes a more detailed look at topics such as being a volunteer, confidentiality, making relationships, being safe and being healthy, relationships with families and play, safeguarding children in need of protection, domestic abuse awareness and also includes an accredited First Aid session.

Established volunteers will have the opportunity to take part in any of the training sessions to refresh their knowledge.

An induction will be provided for all newly trained volunteers before they are matched with a family. When a volunteer is matched with a family, a Family Support Plan is completed to record the focus of the support. After each support visit, volunteers are required to email a completed Family Contact Form to the Family Support Coordinator within 5 days. Volunteers are then required to delete this information, but are welcome to view copies in the office at any time.

Volunteers are given ongoing support and training and encouraged to attend group support meetings and additional training opportunities.

Individual support is tailored to each individual volunteer's needs and a Family Support Coordinator is available for face to face and telephone support as required. Volunteers will have access to a member of staff at all times through the "yellow card" which contains staff contact details.

Volunteers will be issued with a signed ID card which they should carry with them when volunteering.

East Cumbria Family Support will review the volunteer's work with a family on a regular basis, and assess the need to continue providing support.

It is ECFSA's policy to communicate with the family and referrer when support comes to an end. Support can be resumed if necessary.

Expenses

It is the policy of ECFSA to reimburse expenses for travel and phone calls incurred during volunteering. Any other expenses reimbursed will be at the discretion of the Association. Expenses should be claimed on a monthly basis.

Volunteers will be required to complete a Driving Policy at their induction. Volunteers must seek permission from their own insurance company to use their vehicle for voluntary work, confirming necessary insurance cover. A standard letter is available for use if required.

Ceasing Volunteering

On ceasing their involvement in Family Support with the Association, volunteers are asked to return their ID card and yellow cards to their Family Support Coordinator and destroy any contact details for the families they have supported, unless they have agreed to keep in contact as a friend.

Volunteers are asked to complete a final evaluation of their volunteering experience.

The Association's policies are reviewed regularly by the Trustees and are available for volunteers to view within office hours or on our website.