



Volunteer Information Pack

What our volunteers do:

- Meet up for a few hours most weekends with the child they support over a period of two years (and many of our friendships continue beyond this point)
- Pick the child up and drop them off
- Plan outings and activities with the child they support
- Have regular telephone supervisions with a caseworker to keep in touch and discuss progress

Basic requirements for volunteering with us:

- You need to be in a settled period of your life
- You must be 21 or over
- You should live in or around London, to make travelling once a week a realistic commitment
- We ask that our volunteers do not have caring responsibilities for a child under 14
- You must be able to make time most weekends to take a child out

If you are not at the right time of your life to volunteer now, there are lots of other ways to get involved, from telling other people at your work about us, running to raise money, or following us on [twitter](#) and [facebook](#). Why not sign up for our monthly newsletter so that we can send you the latest updates? Just go to <http://www.friendshipworks.org.uk/get-news-and-updates/> to register.

Skills and personal attributes we are looking for:

Empathy: Our volunteers can put themselves in the child's world and understand their needs.

Self-awareness: Our volunteers understand their own emotions and those of the child they support. They are aware of the impact of their behaviour on others.

Management of own and other's emotions: Our volunteers are able to express their emotions in a way which is appropriate and help a child to do the same.

Emotional maturity: Our volunteers are good at building relationships with the children they support and their parents. They are non-judgemental and take responsibility. They set clear boundaries and are always safe.

Commitment: Our volunteers understand that they are making a promise to be there for a child over two years, and will see it through.

Reliability and consistency: Our volunteers are dependable and trustworthy.

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Resilience: Our volunteers persevere and know they can't solve every problem. They are patient and tolerant.

Energy and enthusiasm: Our volunteers are fun and actively enjoy mentoring a child. They are upbeat and make things interesting.

Warmth: Our volunteers are approachable and kind.

Good communications: Our volunteers are open and friendly. They listen and allow children to open up. They deal well with their caseworker and the child's parents.

Working well with others: Our volunteers are good at keeping in touch with their caseworker, and seek advice and support if needed.

Imaginative planning: Our volunteers plan carefully and have good organisational skills. They are interested in finding new things to do.

Expectation management: Our volunteers have realistic expectations about mentoring and what it can achieve. They know it can be slow-going sometimes, and recognise small changes just as much as big ones. They know that the objective isn't to help a child to achieve better grades, but to build confidence, self-belief and a sense of trust in the world around them.

Understanding and experience of children: Our volunteers don't always have direct experience of children, but they all like children, know where they are coming from, and want to have the opportunity to build up this experience.

A step-by-step guide to the application process:

1. Fill out the online form and send it to us
2. We review your application
3. You'll come for a 2 hour interview with our caseworkers
4. You will attend a weekend training course with other trainee volunteers to learn more about mentoring
5. You provide 3 references for us to follow up, and we carry out an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check
6. Once these have been approved, we'll do a home visit which is the final stage of assessment
7. Once you have been accepted, we will look at matching you up with a child.

Common questions and answers:

Why do I have to be over 21 to volunteer?

In our experience, people under 21 still have too much change happening in their life to be able to make the necessary long-term commitment to mentor a young child who needs that stability.

Why can't I volunteer if I have a child under 14?

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The service we provide relies on its one-to-one nature to be successful in supporting vulnerable children. Therefore as a mentor you would not be able to bring your own children with you on outings. As an organisation we believe that the quality and amount of time parents spend with their children is incredibly important, and we know that they will rightly be your priority.

It is also important for our children to feel that they have their mentor's undivided attention, and their support to develop and grow. Even if your children are not present, it can be hard for the child you would be supporting to build confidence and feel like a priority if they know that they are sharing you with someone else, particularly a child of a similar age.

Why have I not been invited to interview?

As a small charity it is not possible for us to interview everyone who applies to us. Because of this we have developed a short listing system to invite those applicants to interview who we think might be the best fit for us.

Do volunteers have to pay for activities and outings?

Friendship Works reimburses the cost of weekly activities up to a maximum of £15 per week.

Can I go on holiday or away for a weekend?

Yes. We know that in two years there will be times when you want to go on holiday or away for a weekend. Just let us know your plans in plenty of time, so we can make arrangements.

How long does it take to become a volunteer?

It depends. On average we would advise people to expect a three month process, as it takes a little while to go through interview and training, and then some time for the Enhanced CRB to be carried out. But it can then take a little longer to find the right match for you and the children we support.

Do I have to have a lot of experience with children?

Not necessarily. We are looking for qualities that would make you a good friend. Warmth, patience, empathy, consistency and commitment are the most important of these.

Does it have to be every week?

One of the most important things we do is provide regular, consistent and reliable support for children, so it's important that you meet regularly. However, this could be three out of four weekends.

Can I see a child during the week instead of at a weekend?

We ask that volunteers can make time most weekends to meet with the child they support. In some rare cases it may be better for the child to occasionally meet during the week, but most of the time outings happen at the weekend. We offer volunteers the option to meet three out of four weekends, as we do understand that people have commitments to family and friends.

Can I volunteer for less than two years?

We ask that our volunteers commit to a minimum of two years. Evidence shows that mentoring is only really effective when it is long-term. Otherwise you will not have the chance to make a lasting difference. It takes a while to form a strong friendship as the foundation on which to build other more long-lasting changes in a child's life. Many of our volunteers say it is in the second year and beyond that they start to see the real changes happen.

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Can I bring other people on a visit or introduce the child to people I know?

You shouldn't take anyone else on a visit, as the purpose of the friendship is to provide one-to-one support for children. As safety is a key concern for us, children should not be introduced to people who have not been assessed by Friendship Works.

What if I can't make it for an outing?

If you're ill or something comes up, we understand that happens from time to time. Just let the family and us know in plenty of time and we can sort everything out.

Do volunteers have much to do with the family?

Volunteers will see the parents and it's important that the parent knows that they are trustworthy and will look after their child. But volunteers are just there to support their child, not the parents too. If children have brothers and sisters who also need support, they can be referred to Friendship Works for their own mentor.

What if the child doesn't like me?

This is a common worry. Most of our children are very keen to have a volunteer to go out with. They may be reserved at first, however, or it may take them a while to trust you if they have been let down before.

Can the child visit my home?

This is something we will only consider after you have been matched with the child for over 6 months, and there must be a good reason, such as doing cookery together. We will visit your home to make sure it is safe and to meet anyone else who lives there. We would have to carry out Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks on the other occupants.

Can I volunteer if I have physical or mental health problems?

We ask that our volunteers have a reasonable standard of physical and mental health to be able to provide the best all-round support for the child they are matched with. If you have a health problem which significantly affects your ability to carry out day to day activity, we cannot accept your application. For similar safety purposes, we don't accept applications from anyone who has experienced a severe psychiatric episode requiring hospital treatment within the last three years, or people who have experienced extreme emotional distress (such as the death of a partner) from which they are still recovering.

What if I don't live in London?

We can only accept applications from people living in and around London. Although volunteers are keen to make the effort, the travelling time often makes a weekend commitment for two years very difficult.

Can I volunteer if I have a criminal record?

Having a criminal record would not necessarily mean you couldn't volunteer with us. It would depend on the nature of the offence, how long ago it happened, and whether it was an isolated incident. We would normally expect a minimum of 3 years to have elapsed and would be most concerned about sexual or violent offences. Due to the nature of this role we would not consider anyone with a history of offences against children. You should note that an Enhanced CRB check shows all convictions and cautions.



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Ready to apply?

If you meet the criteria and you are ready to apply to be a volunteer, go to www.friendshipworks.org.uk/apply

If you would like to sign up for our monthly newsletter with ideas for how to get involved and take part, go to <http://www.friendshipworks.org.uk/get-news-and-updates/> to register your details with us.