

Good Practice Guides: Developing Further

No 18 – Childcare for Volunteers

Key Points

This guide explores the difficult situation facing Volunteer Involving Organisations who are considering assisting their volunteers with childcare responsibilities. It explores which options there are and makes some suggestions for possible solutions. It is not about childcare legislation per se, though this is considered where applicable. The expense of childcare is a challenge for most parents, whether they are working, studying, or volunteering. Parents can get state financial help with childcare if they are working or studying. They cannot get help with childcare if they are unemployed, or to enable them to volunteer. This means that for parents wishing to volunteer, they must rely on the goodwill of friends and family, pay for childcare or ask for assistance from the agency they volunteer with.

Options

The options for voluntary organisations wishing to assist volunteers by giving access to childcare are:

1. In-house provision e.g. in your own, existing crèche, setting up your own facilities, volunteer job/childcare schemes, contracted places with childcare agencies or volunteers take their children to work with them
2. Paying Expenses - you pay / contribute toward the cost of the volunteers' childcare.

Challenges

Unless you are a childcare provider already and have your own crèche, the options for in-house provision are fraught with difficulties.

Organisations providing childcare on their premises need to be registered under The Children Act 1989. Registration means that the facilities offered should meet certain criteria. Staff and volunteers in contact with children will be subject to checks, and the premises made safe for children. Activities need to be planned to help them enjoy learning and playing.



Volunteer Involving organisations may be able to contract with crèche/nursery services for childcare places but the organisation can't guarantee the places and there is no choice for the parent about where their children are looked after.

Some volunteers ask if they can take their children with them, either into the place of work or if they work for a visiting service, to the home of the client. Though in certain circumstances this might be appropriate, volunteer organisers need to be aware that the child will not usually be covered by the organisation's insurance. Also children can be distracting for the volunteer and other workers.

Paying Expenses

Childcare costs are expensive at around £177 per week (figures from Daycare Trust). This sounds impossible for voluntary organisations, but looks more plausible if you bear in mind that the average voluntary commitment is about 4 hours a week. The benefit of paying expenses though, is that the parent gets to choose how they provide childcare: it gives them the flexibility and control that they need.

VCE's own policy as an example

We believe that volunteering should be accessible to all, including those with child or dependent care responsibilities. Our own policy is that where VCE volunteers are required to make provision for dependants care, to enable their volunteering, then VCE pays expenses on production of a receipt from the care provider up to a maximum of £7.00 per hour. The care provider does not need to be a registered care provider and can be for example a trusted friend or neighbour. They must however be over the age of 16, not resident in the dependant's home or be a parent, step parent or guardian of the dependent. |

More help?

If you would like more help or advice in relation to this factsheet please contact the Volunteer Centre Edinburgh on 0131 225 0630 or email: admin@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk

Or you can drop in and see us:

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