



family lives

Volunteer information pack

Forward from Jeremy Todd

Volunteering is at the heart of the work that Family Lives delivers. As an organization we have a proud history spanning over three decades in which volunteering has spearheaded our organisational response to family need.

Family Lives seeks to provide the same levels of support to its volunteer workforce as paid staff and does not make any distinction between a staff member who offers time freely as a volunteer or through a paid wage, as all Family Lives staff are trained to the same programmes.

The volunteer information that you are about to read describes the work done by current volunteers and covers some of the values and vision that we have for ensuring effective, respectful and impactful volunteering throughout the organisation.

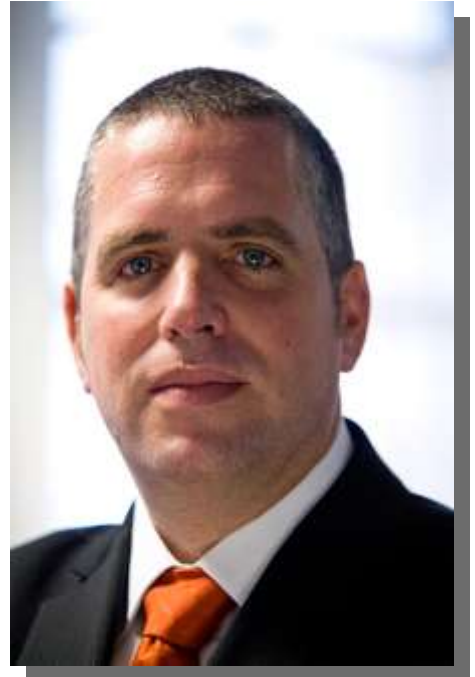
We recognise that volunteers can play an active part in all aspects of our organisation. This is demonstrated by the Chief Executive being managed by a volunteer body in the board of trustees.

I would personally like to thank each and every one of you who goes on to volunteer for Family Lives as, without your gift of time and commitment to learning and delivery, we would not be able to provide the range of support to families across the country. I am very proud of the work that we undertake within Family Lives as it is driven by a very practical example of vision, passion and selflessness within our volunteer body.

With thanks and best wishes

Jeremy Todd

Chief Executive, Family Lives



Thank you for taking the time to consider joining us as a volunteer. This pack should give you all the information you need to decide if Family Lives is right for you and how you can best use your skills and experience to support families.

Location of Family Lives Offices

Family Lives currently has eight offices which have volunteer opportunities. With all current volunteer posts, you will need to be within traveling distance to an office or a project site to attend training courses, supervision and staff support. Regions covered by our work are:

- London (Old Street)
- London and South East (Hatfield, Croydon, Ealing, Milton Keynes and Barnet)
- Essex (Hadleigh)
- Gloucestershire (Stroud, Gloucester City, Forest of Dean)
- Nottinghamshire (Mansfield, Nottingham City, Leicester support)
- Hampshire (Southampton)
- Tyne and Wear (Newcastle)



If you are not in one of those areas but are interested in supporting Family Lives or hearing about other organisations who offer similar opportunities, please contact recruitment@familylives.org.uk for more information, or see <http://familylives.org.uk/volunteer-one-million-families>

About Family Lives

“Our experience enables us to help families with any problem or challenge that they face. Our trained family support workers, both paid and volunteer, offer all family members free immediate and on-going help on the phone, online or in local communities.

Family Lives recognises and values the commitment, energy and passion of our volunteers.

We will endeavour to meet the needs of volunteers and celebrate and promote volunteering both within our organisation and within family support services as a whole.”

- Family Lives Volunteer Policy Statement of Intent

We believe that happy children come from happy families and currently support families to improve the outcomes for over 1 million children each year.

Family Lives is a charity that has over three decades of experience in helping parents deal with the changes that are a constant part of family life. We know that many people play active roles in the raising of children within any family, from Dads, Grandparents, stepparents and non-resident parents.

Our role is to support everyone to achieve the best relationship possible with the children that they care about.



We recognise that the best way to support families is to provide FREE professional, non-judgmental support and advice in a way that all members of the family can access. We therefore provide a helpline, a really useful website, message boards, email service, live chat and parenting/relationship support groups – the great news is that all of the services are free.

People contact us about all aspects of family life that include all stages of a child's development, issues with schools and parenting/relationship support.



We also respond when life becomes complicated and provide support around family breakdown, aggression in the home, bullying at school, teenage risky behaviour and mental health concerns of both parents and children.

We recognise that life is often complicated and the experience of over 700,000 families, who contact us each year, is that it is good to talk and seek a solution through engaging with our staff and volunteers who are experienced at listening.

They can help find the solutions to the concerns that people have and recommend further support within our own wider services and/or in relationship to our many partner organisations.

What volunteering can achieve

"I ring Family Lives often to offload and you're amazing!" – user of Helpline

Our helpline receives over 3000 calls every month.

Without our dedicated call taker volunteers we would not be able to run the service at this level and meet the needs of families and parents.

We help people tackle real day to day issues including child behaviour, mental health, conflicts in families, bullying and isolation. By speaking to our volunteers, people feel empowered to take action and make positive improvements in their lives. Sometimes, just talking can help people to find conclusions and move to a more positive place to make decisions.



"I feel so much clearer in my mind and will go off and think about what we can do, thank you."–user of helpline

Some of the outcomes from that volunteer-led projects include getting a child back to school, improving family relationships, helping a parent communicate better with their child's school and encouraging a family to work together to solve their problems.

Volunteering for Family Lives really can make a huge difference to those struggling with life's ups and downs.

Volunteer Roles and Locations

Not all of these roles will be available at all offices or at all times. Please see <http://familylives.org.uk/content/volunteer-family-lives> for our current opportunities. You can also find out more about each role by reading the full role descriptions.

➤ **Family Support Volunteer (Helpline)- Hatfield, Hadleigh and Newcastle**

This role provides an empathic, caring and informed response to callers to the helpline.

Our free confidential helpline provides confidential support, guidance and information about any family issue.

This is a diverse and challenging role – no two calls are the same and you have to be ready to deal with whatever issues are happening at the other end of the line. However, you receive full support from a staff supervisor and all our volunteers find the work rewarding, inspiring and fulfilling.



➤ **Family Support Volunteer (Live Chat)- Hatfield, Hadleigh and Newcastle**

We have a flexible team providing an empathic, caring and informed response to people who contact us via our Live Chat Service. Live Chat is an instant messaging service that allows parents to have a live conversation online with one of our trained volunteers, who provide support on a broad range of parenting issues.

This role is for anyone who is IT literate and enjoys communicating with and supporting people online.



➤ **Befriending and Family Support- Ealing, Croydon, Southampton, Nottingham City, Gloucester City, Forest of Dean, Milton Keynes**

Matched with a parent or family who need one to one support, our volunteers visit families in community settings or family homes to listen and provide support.

You will also be supporting Family Lives staff to set up parenting groups, run training courses in parenting skills and support families to support each other. A demanding but fulfilling role, befriending would suit anyone who wants help make real and lasting change in people's lives.

➤ **Family Support Mentor- Barnet, Stroud, Nottingham City, Leicester**

Similar to the befriending role, volunteers are matched with a parent or family who need one to one support. With work revolving around GP surgeries and health centres, families on this project will have been referred to us by a health professional or will be families with health issues. As they become more experienced, volunteers will also have the opportunity to support staff to run parenting groups and can choose to support other, less experienced volunteers.

➤ **Outreach**

Do you enjoy getting out into the community and meeting new people? This role includes being part of a team that goes to events, tells people about our services, gives out information at community venues such as schools and GP surgeries and generally spreads our message that seeking family support is a strength, not a weakness.

➤ **Administration**

All offices sometimes need administration support- whether it's helping to minute meetings, photocopying, filing or database work. Administration volunteers help keep the office running smoothly. If the office is well organised and supported, the organisation can focus on supporting families. This role suits people who want to start a career in office work or the charity sector or who simply want to spend some time each week working to support a friendly team.

➤ **Fundraising**

All the work that Family Lives does to support families costs money and has to be funded by the charity. We need your help to fundraise- whether that's by collecting money at local events, organising raffles or being sponsored to run a marathon. This role would suit anyone with a good imagination and a sense of creativity and fun.

➤ **Internships- all areas, particularly Central Office in London**

We offer structured unpaid internships covering a wide range of topics such as Policy and Communications, Administration, Digital Media, Fundraising and Project Work. If you are interested in these opportunities please see, <http://familylives.org.uk/careers>

➤ **Child Mentor- Stroud**

Working within a school setting, volunteers will be matched with children to meet regularly and allow children to talk about family life.



➤ **Family Media Volunteers**

By talking to the media about everyday family life, worries or dilemmas the name Family Lives really comes to life for the thousands of families who hear about us in newspapers and radio stations across the country.

If you become a family media volunteer we may ask to you:

- Speak to your local newspaper about your family situation
- Take part in television or radio interviews
- Feature on other carefully selected websites

For more information on this role, please contact simonw@familylives.org.uk

Training and Experience

"It's difficult to put into words how much volunteering and then working for Family Lives helped me – it was pivotal in getting me to where I am today, what with all the training and encouragement I received." – ex-volunteer

All our volunteers receive appropriate training ranging from a short induction to 25 hours of professional workshops.

Areas covered in our training programme include:

- ✓ The ethos and work of Family Lives
- ✓ Listening skills
- ✓ Empathy and being non-judgmental
- ✓ Equality
- ✓ Personal Safety
- ✓ Group working skills
- ✓ Communication skills
- ✓ Child protection and Risk of Harm
- ✓ Supporting families
- ✓ Home visiting
- ✓ Assessing risk
- ✓ Dealing with difficult situations
- ✓ Relationship building



All our volunteers who work with families are encouraged and supported to undertake accreditation with the Open College Network- leading to a professional qualification and certificate- all paid for by Family Lives.



As well as formal training, volunteers can benefit from:

- ✓ Increased experience in listening and supporting families
- ✓ Working as part of a passionate team
- ✓ Experience in the voluntary/ social care sector
- ✓ Increased confidence
- ✓ Increased skills and experience for future employment
- ✓ Motivation
- ✓ Sense of achievement
- ✓ New experiences
- ✓ Working with a diverse range of people
- ✓ Sense of fulfilment from helping people

Time commitment

Each role is different and we can be as flexible as possible around your other commitments.

However, for Family Support volunteers, Befrienders and Family Support Mentors we ask that you provide a minimum of four hours per week for 12 months or more.

Other roles may be a full 35 hour week or a few hours per month attending events. For each role, we also ask that you attend a minimum number of group sessions and one to one supervisions on top of any time undertaking activities.

You will also have to commit to the training that is relevant for that role.



Expenses and benefits

Volunteers bring their time, commitment and enthusiasm to Family Lives and in return we are committed to making sure that volunteers are never out of pocket.

We pay expenses against receipts for the use of public transport and 30p per mile for volunteers who use their cars.¹ Where appropriate we may also provide expenses for lunch and childcare.

For those claiming benefits, volunteering will not affect the money you get, and you can volunteer for as many hours as you like. You should, however, tell your benefits advisor that you are volunteering.

Disclosures and pre-registration checks

We work with vulnerable adults and some volunteers will come into contact with children.

Because of this we ask all volunteers to:

- Informally disclose any criminal proceedings or convictions at application stage
- Discuss these issues at interview stage if appropriate
- Undertake a Criminal Records Bureau check

However, having a conviction does not automatically prevent you from volunteering with Family Lives. We will look at each individual's circumstances and make an informed decision as to whether applicants are appropriate.

Recruitment processes

Recruitment processes differ for each role but you can expect some or all of the following steps as part of the recruitment procedure:

1. Informal information morning
2. Application Form
3. Interview
4. CRB check
5. Training
6. Probation period (up to 6 months)



¹ This may be capped per week depending on funding for various roles.

How to Apply

If you are interested in volunteering for Family Lives you need to do the following:

1) Check that the voluntary opportunity you wish to apply for is currently available by contacting your local office via <http://familylives.org.uk/get-in-touch> or checking <http://familylives.org.uk/volunteering/local-opportunities>



2) If it is available, fill in an Application Form, available at <http://familylives.org.uk/volunteering/local-opportunities> and return it to your local office. They will then get in touch with further information.

3) If it is not available, you should contact them to ask when they are next recruiting and if They can keep your details on file until then.

Thank you so much for your interest in volunteering for Family Lives. We look forward to receiving your application.

For more information, please contact recruitment@familylives.org.uk