



Volunteer Information Pack



Find out more about how you can get involved and help families in need of support

Volunteering is at the heart of the work that Family Lives delivers



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

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, from answering calls on our helpline to our board of trustees. We have always been a volunteer-led organisation and we simply couldn't do it without our 300+ volunteers, alongside our dedicated staff team. Many of our volunteers began their relationship with us as service users but have stayed to support others on their journey – a testament of the support they themselves received.

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, 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

What we do



Family Lives was formed over forty years ago by volunteers, with the aim of ensuring that all parents and families had somewhere to turn before they reached crisis point. We know that the right support at the right time makes all the difference.

We're here to support families, whatever they're going through. We believe all families should have access to active support and understanding. We do this through our national helpline, live chat, and email service and through our online advice articles and videos. And we provide a wide range of support services in areas across England, ranging from support for new mothers, befriending for vulnerable families to working with couples in conflict. Last year we supported over 2,450,000 people through our range of services.



What you can do as a volunteer



At Family Lives, volunteers are at the heart of the support we provide to vulnerable families. There are many different types of volunteering roles, from working on our national helpline, email or live chat services, to providing support to families in your local community.

Some of the areas we work include various areas across Greater London, Hertfordshire and Essex, Newcastle, and Nottingham.

We have volunteers from across the UK and you can now volunteer for some of our services from the comfort of your home, such as our helpline call takers, live chat and email support volunteers.

Our volunteers are at the very centre of the services we provide to families, both in the community and nationally. Over the last year, our volunteers donated over 27,000 hours of support to families.

Types of volunteer roles



Helpline, live chat or email service volunteer

These roles provide an empathic, caring and informed response to people who contact us through our helpline, chat or email services. We provide free confidential support, guidance and information about any family issue. This is a diverse and challenging role – no two contacts are the same and you have to be ready to deal with whatever issues are happening for the service user. However, you receive full support from a staff supervisor and all our volunteers find the work rewarding, inspiring and fulfilling.

Befriending, family support and early learning volunteer

Matched with a parent or family who need one to one support, our volunteers visit families in community settings or family homes to provide support, befriending or play ideas. You might also help to deliver online workshops, admin and social media support and groups for families. A demanding but fulfilling role, befriending would suit anyone who wants help make real and lasting change in people's lives. Some of our projects include helping families to become more active, supporting new mums, working with families in the military, or supporting families with their young child's learning and language development so they are ready for school.

To see whether there are any current volunteering opportunities please visit our website

www.familylives.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/local-opportunities/

How much time do you need?



Each role is different and we can be as flexible as possible around your other commitments. However, for Family Support volunteers and Befrienders, we usually ask that you provide a minimum of four hours per week for 12 months or more.

Other roles may be a couple days a week or a few hours per month. 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. We do ask that our volunteers commit for an agreed duration. This ensures our families who we support to have a reliable and trustworthy service.

Volunteering is good for you



Our volunteers often tell us how rewarding their time with us is. You'll be part of a compassionate community and feel a real sense of pride for what you do. You'll meet new people, gain valuable experience, and develop your skillset.

We're passionate about helping people to reach their full potential, so we'll offer you full training suitable for the role, supervision from a named member of staff, including help setting personal development goals, and opportunities to increase skills and input into practice via regular Practice Development Groups.

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

Helping people is a great feeling. But did you know that volunteering has been shown to improve the wellbeing of the volunteer too?



How we support our volunteers



We are delighted that this year we gained the Investing in Volunteers quality standard for good practice in volunteer management.



Training and support

All volunteers receive substantial training before going on to support families. This is followed up with ongoing professional development and supervision. Our helpline, chat and email volunteers undertake a 30-hour online training programme to ensure they are equipped to become skilled and effective call takers. They support families with a wide range of issues with care and respect.

Our befrienders and family support volunteers also receive appropriate training for their role. Our volunteers often benefit just as much as the people they support, going on to higher education or to find employment.

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 safeguarding
- Supporting families
- Home visiting
- Assessing risk
- Dealing with difficult situations

Volunteer 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. 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.



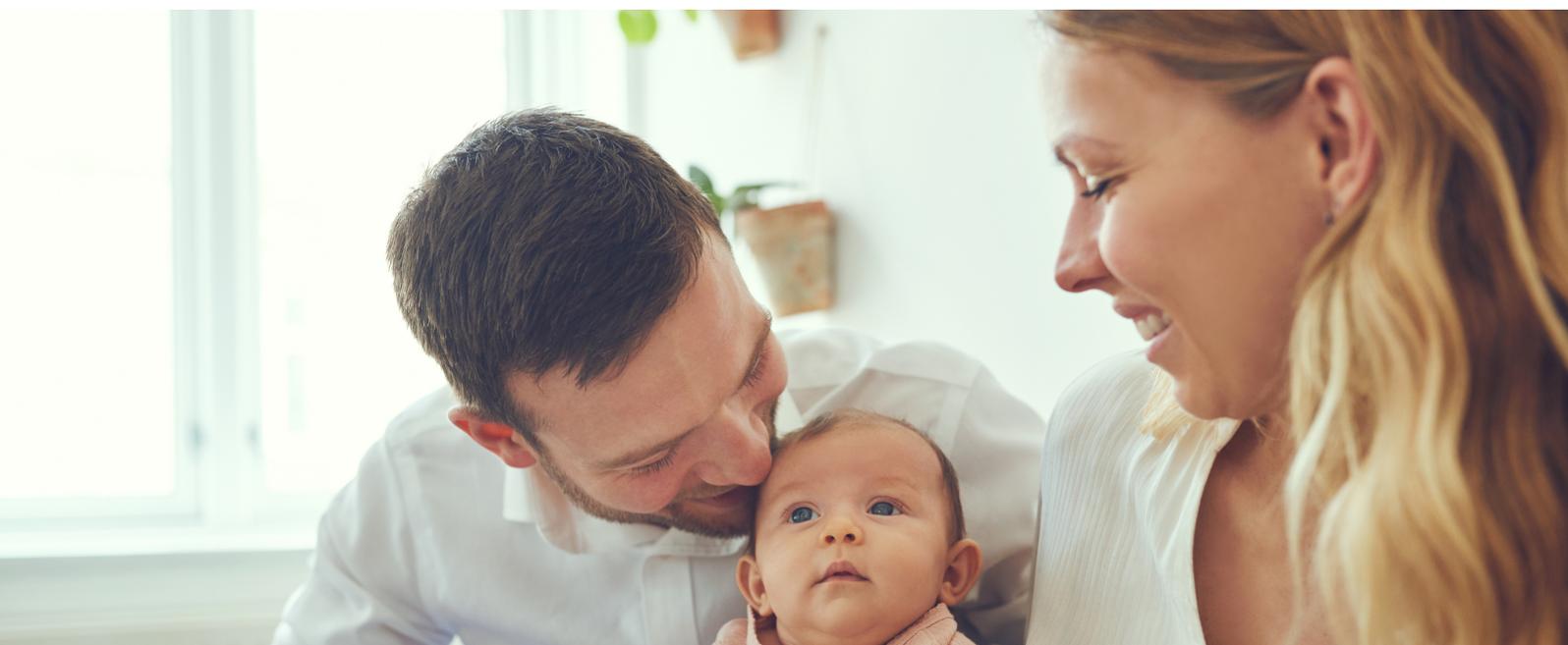
Danielle, Peer Support Volunteer – Support Service for New Parents, Barnsley

'Family Lives are a fantastic organisation to work for. Even though my role is voluntary it's given me a lot of new skills and experiences. The job role itself is very rewarding and I enjoy working with my families and my team. I have been able to obtain so many new skills since joining Family Lives such as being able to offer a listening ear, provide appropriate advice, establish professional working relationships with different people such as parent/guardians, work, colleges, mentor etc. I can accurately record and report any safeguarding concerns to the appropriate designated safeguarding lead.

Family Lives hasn't just helped me gain new skills it's also improved my old ones such as effective communication, time management, meeting deadlines and being able to adapt to new challenges. The Practice Development Groups that the organisation offers have been really informative and provided me with useful and interesting information.

This has given me the confidence to use this information to help and support families that have been or are in challenging situations such as domestic abuse, suffering with mental health, having financial difficulties, etc.

I am able to sign post families to different services and organisations with ease. My confidence has grown so much since I started with Family Lives, it has given me the opportunity to feel I am able to apply for courses and jobs that are in this area of work. Finally, I hope to use all the knowledge and skills that I have developed and gained and have a successful career working with families and become a Family Support Worker.'





Ann, Helpline Volunteer

'After I retired from London Fire Brigade a friend suggested volunteering for Family Lives. I looked into the work of the charity, I knew that working on the helpline and advising, listening and talking to people who were in difficult situations was something that I was interested in doing.

Training for the helpline role was excellent and made me realise that there was going to be more to this role than I originally envisaged. I was quite nervous when I first started taking 'live' calls, it turned out to be quite different to anything I had done before.

I was given so much support and help from supervisors and also other helpline volunteers who were originally listening in to my calls.

The first few calls that I took without being monitored were particularly nerve-racking but I tried to put into practice the training I had received. I got such a sense of achievement after dealing with those first calls, and to receive a 'thank you, you've been so helpful' was amazing! I have now been working on the helpline for over 2 years and I'm still enjoying my Tuesday afternoons.

The helpline receives such a diverse range of calls, some can be very challenging and some can be quite upsetting but I know that I can always call on my supervisors and colleagues for help and guidance.

Debriefing at the end of my shift with my supervisor and colleagues is so important, we discuss calls, talk about how we could have dealt differently with a particular call, there's never a time where I don't learn something. And we also have a chat and sometimes a bit of a giggle, so we end the shift on a light-hearted note.

I'm so lucky to work with such a great bunch of people. Volunteering for Family Lives has had a massive impact on my outlook on life and how I deal with my own personal issues and those of my friends and family. I listen more and judge less, I try to give others time to express themselves, I actually think I've become a kinder person. Having said that I know that I am nowhere near perfect so I constantly try to improve myself, both in relation to my volunteering and in my personal life.'



Next steps



Like what you've read? We hope so! Please follow the steps below to get you on your way to become a volunteer for Family Lives. Visit our website at www.familylives.org.uk to see our latest volunteering opportunities. If you find an opportunity you feel you are suited to, please follow the instructions provided in the advertisement. The office you apply to will advise you about the process.

Thank you for wanting to make a difference.

We look forward to meeting you.

www.familylives.org.uk



@familylives