



Description of the work of a Volunteer Befriender for Ups and Downs Southwest

The Ups and Downs Southwest Volunteer Befriender Project is a scheme in which volunteers offer regular support, friendship and practical help to families where there is a child with Down Syndrome. Families will access this service at times of additional need in terms of managing the complexities of a Down Syndrome diagnosis and potential impact on family life.

The work of the volunteer befriender requires a high level of commitment and reliability and will be supported by the Ups and Downs Southwest Family Support Team.

Purposes of the work:

Ups and Downs Southwest Volunteers Befrienders are expected to work towards the increased confidence and independence of the family by:

- offering support, friendship and practical help
- visiting the families in their own homes, where the dignity and identity of each individual can be respected and protected
- reassuring families that challenges in bringing up children are not unusual
- emphasising the positive aspects of family life
- developing a relationship with the family in which time can be shared and an understanding developed
- encouraging parents' strengths and emotional well-being for the ultimate benefit of their own children
- encouraging families to widen their network of relationships and to use effectively the support and services available in the community

Responsible to:

- the Ups and Downs Southwest Family Support team who are in turn responsible to the Director.

Hours of commitment:

- initial foundation course lasting approx. 25 hours over 6 weeks
- 2 – 3 hours per week visiting time according to family's needs
- regular support/supervision
- ideally a commitment of one year initially

Duties:

- to be familiar with and committed to the Ups and Downs Southwest ethos
- to understand and implement Ups and Downs Southwest policies on confidentiality, equality and diversity, safeguarding children, health and safety and data protection
- to be introduced to and support a family by visiting them at home
- to share information with your allocated family support worker and contact them immediately if there is concern about the physical or emotional well-being of any member of the family
- to take part in reviews with the family and family support worker as requested
- to keep records of visits to families as requested by the family support worker
- to attend support, supervision and training sessions
- to submit regular expense claims to be paid at the agreed rate by the board of trustees.

This is exciting and rewarding voluntary work that requires energy, commitment, reliability, creativity and a sense of humour. All volunteers can expect the support of the family support team, the Director, other volunteers and the Trustee Board. There are also opportunities for self-development and social contact with others in Ups and Downs Southwest.

Ups and Downs Southwest Volunteer Befrienders should:

- have a child who has Down Syndrome (similar conditions/experience will be considered)
- have a positive attitude to working with people of any gender, family status, sexual identity, any ethnic origin, culture or religion and all disabilities
- demonstrate a sensitive and caring attitude towards others
- have a non-judgemental attitude
- be clear about confidentiality and when a confidence remains so, but be able to decide when disclosure of a confidence is essential to the well-being of a child
- understand the importance of reliability
- have good communication skills including an ability to listen
- understand the need for support
- have a warm and open personality and a sense of humour
- have time and enthusiasm for Ups and Downs Southwest
- be able to work as a member of a team
- be prepared to keep records as requested by the service