



PARENTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER

Volunteer Information Pack

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Forward
by
Jan Fishwick,
Chief Executive



PACT has a long tradition, going back a 100 years, of benefiting from the skills and commitment of volunteers in the work we do. Indeed the whole agency was borne from the spirit of volunteerism, building on the foundations of those early charities who set out to work with vulnerable families.

I recognise how much we at PACT gain from the time, skills and talents given freely by the range of volunteers working with us today. The families we work with and the whole workforce benefit from the life experience and generosity that our volunteers bring to their work.

In return, I know from a recent survey that 100% of our volunteers enjoy their work for us, feel valued and appreciated. They feel what they are doing is important, they can see their work makes a difference to children, young people and their families. Their contact with PACT has brought them different experiences, training opportunities and new friendships to their lives. They are all keen to tell their friends about the volunteering role.

I would very much like to welcome you to PACT, thank you for your interest in working for us and hope you will find the information below useful.

With best wishes

Jan Fishwick

Introduction to
volunteering with PACT

"Volunteering is essential to creating an inclusive and mutually supportive society."

The Right Honourable Tony Blair, Prime Minister (1997-2007)

At PACT we see volunteering as individuals giving their time or money freely to help to the organisation in a variety of ways. Some volunteers act as Trustees, Adoption and Fostering Panel members, sit on our committees as advisers, act as Ambassadors who promote awareness of the agency, provide administrative input to finance or support services. Friends of PACT give regular sums of money to support our work.

The other main focus of our volunteering work takes place in or on behalf of our Children's Centres spread throughout the three countries of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The key

focus of the work is individual or group support to improve the life chances of children.

We know that the key to the volunteering relationship working out well lies in careful matching between the volunteer and the work they are asked to do. We will equip our volunteers with knowledge of what PACT does as a charity, how they will fit into the work of the charity, and the procedures that will drive their volunteering.

We recognise that volunteers need support, supervision and appreciation in their role and each person will have an identified supervisor who will fulfil this role.

We believe that volunteering:

- develops opportunities and skills for local people;
- provides resources to PACT, otherwise unavailable;
- contributes to community cohesion by bringing together people from different backgrounds;
- promotes well-being and healthy ageing;
- enables active citizenship and involvement in shaping local life;
- can improve understanding across different communities and age groups;
- Enables involvement in local life and makes a difference.

Expectations of our volunteers

Working well together requires a respectful two way relationship. We will ask you to commit to:

Turn up when you have agreed to, or if an emergency prevents this you ensure you give notice with sufficient time for alternative arrangements to be made.

Act as an ambassador for PACT, positively talking about the work of the agency with your friends and others. Any problems you are encountering should be shared with your supervisor, or the volunteer organiser.

Wear your volunteer badge at all times.

Attend training and supervision identified to meet your needs. This will help you develop your skills and provide an opportunity to discuss your role.

Adhere to PACT policies, procedures and guidance which are there to help make PACT a good service for children, their parents and carers as well as making it a safe place for both staff and volunteers.

Role of the Volunteer Organiser Our Volunteer Organiser(s) will play a crucial role in holding an overview of the service and ensure our volunteers feel appreciated for what they do.

Application and checks We will help each potential volunteer to identify which role they are interested in.

Once a role has been identified we will send you an application form, on return we will forward this to the centre where the vacant role sits. The Manager will set up an interview and if the outcome is positive we will send off for your personal references and CRB checks.

You will need to register with the Independent Safeguarding Authority – guidance will be available from the Volunteer Organiser.

It will depend on which role you are interested in as to which administrator has responsibility to process the paperwork. Volunteers in the Children Centres will be supported by central administrative support, others by administrators working with Committees or Panels. All names will be held on a central data base

CRB risk panel We are required to take action when a positive disclosure is received from the CRB, evidencing a history of offending. There are a range of offences (involving aggression, and abuse of minors) that will automatically preclude a potential volunteer as in-eligible to proceed with an application. Where other, less serious offences are involved, the volunteer organiser will complete a written report detailing the offences, whether they were disclosed on the application form, the volunteer's view of them and the assessed likelihood of repetition. We will send the report to our Risk Panel which will make a decision as to the level of risk posed and whether PACT should proceed with the application. There is no appeal to the Risk Panel decision.

Friends of PACT Friends of PACT are volunteers who support PACT's work by giving us money. Some people raise funds, others give by standing order and others leave a legacy to PACT in their Will. Some people decide to embark on a PACT challenge – trekking across the Moroccan desert or cycling the great wall of China, seeking sponsorship for the task.

Linking with a project We ask our managers to let us have details of any volunteering roles they have identified, with brief details of the hours and tasks to be undertaken. These may come in from any of our

workplaces in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire.

We understand that many volunteers like to work with others, so we often find a group of volunteers work well together in one setting, whilst in another venue there may be only one. We will hope to match the skills and availability of the volunteer up, with those identified for the task.

What type of roles might I be asked to undertake?

PACT volunteers take up a range of roles depending on their experience, skills and the vacancies that we have at any time. These roles include requests to talk to a range of groups about what the agency does. Requests come in from schools, social groups and churches and we are keen to respond positively. This contact helps maintain our image and raise people's awareness of what we do and it also brings in funds to the agency. We can provide volunteers with a framework of what to talk about and a copy of our promotional DVD to show.

We are approached to talk to school groups about aspects of our work, which fits with the school curriculum (managing relationships, domestic abuse, parenting children). Volunteers with experience of public speaking or teaching often enjoy these encounters. We will provide a framework for the session, which you may want to add to, to bring the topic alive in a personal way for you. Often people partner up for these visits, on the basis that two sets of skills are better than one!

We have volunteers who act as trustees, advisers, ambassadors and members of our Adoption and Permanence Panel.

The workers in our Children's Centres are often looking for volunteers to help them with their work. Volunteering opportunities may include help to:

- act as a meet and greet person, welcoming newcomers to the Centre
- prepare meals and snacks
- help children and their parents play together
- visit families in their own home and offer friendship, support and practical help
- set up and co-ordinate the running of a toy library
- assist in the running of a crèche.

As well as the tasks outlined above we are looking for female volunteers to offer mentoring to other women and taster sessions, such as yoga, bag making and music.

Induction, Supervision and Training

We understand how important it is when volunteers join a new organisation to understand how it works, what systems are in place and where to find out information and to ensure that policies and good practice guidance is followed.

To address this need, we have regular induction days, based at HQ in South Street Reading. These sessions run for a whole day, and provide information from a number of PACT workers. Your travel expenses will be met. The induction will describe PACT's 100 year history, what we were set up to do and how we have evolved into a creative and responsive service, with an aim to build and strengthen families. Volunteers will hear how the Oxford Diocese supports our work and that we have a clear value base called 'I shape'.

Once a volunteer starts their role they will be offered supervision. This will be provided minimally every three months and records will be kept. Some volunteers will be provided with monthly supervision which will reflect the responsibility they hold. The timescale will be determined in your induction. The purpose of supervision, sometimes called "one to one meetings" is to support the volunteer in their work and to provide an opportunity for concerns to be shared. The supervisor will want to know if there are other skills the volunteer has which might benefit PACT in some other way. The meeting also gives the supervisor an opportunity to thank the volunteer for what they are doing.

PACT provides a range of training for both employees and volunteers to meet their role in the workplace. Any training needs will be discussed and identified in supervision. Any training workshops attended will be confirmed with a certificate, which can be useful when volunteers are seeking new work opportunities.

Feedback

We pride ourselves on our 'open door' policy. This means that we welcome all kinds of feedback. We particularly want to hear what is going well for you but if you have any concerns which you cannot iron out with your supervisor you may wish to approach our volunteer's administrator in HQ.

Celebrating our volunteers

We believe that all our volunteers like to be appreciated for the work and time they give to PACT. To this end we have a number of ways in which we show our appreciation. These include a regular newsletter with chat about what's going on, and invitation to regular events.

Our volunteers told us in a recent survey that 100% of them would tell their friends about working for PACT, they enjoyed and valued the experience so much themselves.

When service users want to become volunteers

In keeping with a number of other agencies that use volunteers we will not appoint volunteers to work in a setting from which they or their family has previously received a service.

This decision is based on our experience that ex-service users can over identify with existing users and have a conflict of interest within the new role. They will need to act independently and at times sit back and reflect upon the issues raised by service users, rather than be expected to support them, as they might have done previously as a user.

We recognise that many of our service users may benefit from changing their role and becoming a volunteer as part of their journey towards independence or work.

Expenses

We do not pay our volunteers for the work they do. We do pay your travelling expenses, based on receipts and a completed claim form. You will obtain the claim form from your supervisor. We positively encourage you to make these claims as we are then able fully to cost our services. Volunteers are not PACT employees.

We do not pay for child care expenses.

Volunteering does not affect your benefits at all, although if you are unsure please contact your Benefits Adviser.

Exit Meeting

When you decide to stop volunteering with us, we will offer you an exit meeting. It is helpful for us to learn from outgoing volunteers how they have found their experience of volunteering for us. There may be things we can learn, we realise we don't always get it right, and positively welcome constructive comments.

**Maintaining contact with volunteers/
Carbon footprint**

We have a commitment to reducing the carbon footprint of the agency. To this end we prefer to keep in contact with our volunteers by email.
