

OEAP EG: Volunteer Helper Role

These will normally be parents, governors, members of PTAs and possibly nominated young people who are not accountable as employees.

A volunteer leader cannot be the designated Visit Leader because they are not legally contracted or commissioned.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places overall responsibility for health and safety with the employer. While Volunteers are not employees, they must work to the requirements of the employer within the establishment where they volunteer their services.

Employers have legal duties to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all employees and Volunteers.

As a Volunteer Helper you should:

- Be suitably competent and knowledgeable about establishment and employer policies/procedures - insofar as they affect the responsibilities you have been assigned;
- Make sure you understand the role, responsibilities and limitations that you have been assigned and how these integrate with other staff;
- Be prepared to contribute to the evaluation of all aspects of the visit, both during and after the event;
- Ensure that you have been briefed on:
 1. the young people making up the group, including age, health characteristics, capabilities, special educational needs, behaviour and any other information that seems relevant in the context of the planned activities.
 2. the nature and location of the activity.
- The overarching duty of care remains with the accompanying Visit Leader and Assistant Leaders, even when partial responsibility is shared with a provider. Should the provider run the activity in a way that causes concern, a Volunteer helper should make every effort to report this to the accompanying Visit Leader/Assistant Leaders as soon as possible.
- Ensure that you have a proper understanding of how the Volunteer Helper role interfaces with that of the Visit Leader and the Assistant Leaders.
- If you are a parent of a young person taking part in the visit, you must be aware of the potential for your parental instincts to compromise the Visit Leader's plans for group management, particularly if there is a serious incident - where you may be distracted by the needs of your own son or daughter, rather than looking to the needs of the whole group. This means that in most situations, unless it is an agreed part of the plan, situations where you are assigned a leadership role that gives you direct responsibility for your own child should be avoided.