

Helpful tips when working with Volunteers in parenting groups /workshops

Consideration in the pre-planning

Only those trained in FLASH can deliver the group. It is always with 2 trained FLASH professionals and then a volunteer may also attend.

If using volunteers to check with own service manager on the services written guidelines and if there is a contract that the volunteer should adhere to and sign. The guidelines should cover such aspects as confidentiality, roles, responsibilities, ethics and boundaries.

However, these guidelines may not include some of the challenging situations that can occur in mental healthcare situations.

Good practices indicates that volunteers have a right to:

- Accurate information on the organisation and its policies
- A clear description of the tasks that they expected to undertake and the skills needed to undertake those tasks effectively
- Opportunities for self-development, through training and support
- Have a safe working environment
- Have agreed, out of pocket expenses reimbursed where possible
- Negotiate a choice of roles and tasks
- A named person they can go to for advice, training, support and peer mentoring
- Protection from exploitation by other volunteers and service users
- Say 'no' without feeling guilty
- Have their contribution valued by all sections of the organisation
- Receive constructive feedback on their contribution
- Be covered by appropriate insurance
- A clear understanding of accountability

The Responsibilities of Volunteers

- To treat everyone associated with the organisation – children and adults - with courtesy and respect
- To be reliable, particularly with agreed arrangements
- To undertake relevant training when necessary
- To exchange information and feedback
- To ask for support when and where it is needed
- To carry out agreed roles and tasks
- To respect the confidentiality of parents, visitors and the organisation

- To be reliable and communicate the agreed level of commitment
- To notify the appropriate person if they are unavailable or unable to fulfil their volunteer duty
- To be aware of national policies and procedures
- To follow organisation safeguarding policy

Pre-group

Have a meeting with volunteer before the group starts to go over main topics and to check if there are any issues re understanding of the content.

To make the volunteer aware of the possibility that they may be hearing stories/experiences and situations which they themselves may find upsetting. To consider together what support they may need.

For volunteer to be very clear on their role i.e. they don't feedback or refer to their own issues but are there to support the group leaders and parents

Give volunteer copies of handouts in advance of the group

To have an agreement on where the volunteer sits in the group.

During the group session

Allocate 10–15 minutes in advance of the session to brief the volunteer about the session topic and to enable them to brief group leader about any issues which may have bearing on the session.

After the session

For group leader or co leader to allocate 10 minutes to ask the volunteer if they have any questions or if they need any information given in the session clarified