



Volunteers' Guidelines

Guidelines for volunteers who look after children in the family's home

There may be occasions where it is necessary to look after the children of the family in the family's own home, for example while the parents:

- keep a hospital appointment
- go shopping

Volunteers left in sole charge of the children, assume responsibility for those children in their parents' absence. The following checklist should be used to ensure all points have been considered beforehand and that boundaries are set to ensure children receive appropriate care and volunteers do not feel taken for granted.

Looking after children in the family's home: a checklist
The welfare and safety of the child should be considered at all times
1. Volunteers should have the following information:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The volunteer should have clear details of where the parents are going and when they will return. It should be agreed how they will contact the volunteer if they are held up. What will happen if the parents are late and the volunteer has other commitments?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which parts of the house are the children allowed to play in? What are parents views on what the children are allowed to do (are they allowed to watch TV/play outside etc)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• where clean clothes and nappies are kept
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do the children have any allergies? What are the rules for giving the children food and drink? Make sure the volunteer knows of any prescribed treatment or medication for emergency purposes only.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special needs: If a child has special needs, ensure that the family's procedure for dealing with incidents is known.
2. Volunteers should negotiate clearly:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• how long they are prepared to stay
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The volunteer must stress to the parents the importance of keeping within the time limits agreed.

It is important that the child(ren) know that they are being left with the volunteer, and if they are old enough to understand, they should be told how long it will be for.

Guidelines for volunteers who take children out without their parents

There may be occasions where it is necessary for a volunteer to take children out without their parents. If the parents are not with the volunteer, then s/he assumes responsibility for the welfare of the children.

The following checklist is to remind volunteers of things to remember and the boundaries to set.

Taking the child(ren) out: a checklist	
1. Adult/child ratio:	To be discussed with your Organiser/Coordinator
2. Contact telephone numbers:	have to hand the telephone number of person to contact in an emergency if you cannot reach a parent. Carry a fully charged mobile phone checking that it works in that area.
3. Venue:	when deciding where to go try to include everybody in the planning, including the children. Consider how many pairs of hands you have to cope with the children's needs.
4. Parental permission:	Parent and child (age appropriate) signs permission form. Make sure the parents are fully aware of where the volunteer and children will be and for how long and are in agreement with the arrangements. In case of an accident take the children to the nearest Accident and Emergency unit, if treatment is necessary, and get a message to a parent as a matter of urgency.
5. Special needs:	if a child has special needs, ensure that the family's preferred procedure for dealing with behaviour is known. Do the children have any allergies? Find out before giving them anything to eat or drink, or letting them have their faces painted. Make sure the volunteer knows how to administer any prescribed treatment or medication (in an emergency), and that all the necessary equipment is available.
6. Transport:	if children are being taken out in the volunteer's car s/he must have informed her/his insurance company of the possibility. Staff and volunteers must follow HSUK child safety seat guidance at all times
7.	Volunteers must keep the children in their care within sight at all times.
9.	If there are any court orders in force restricting a child's movements these must be taken into consideration.