



Early years employers want to consider all options to find and develop the best staff. Providing opportunities and investing time in people yet to be qualified can be a fantastic way of bringing a wider choice of potential staff into the early years sector.

Unpaid work opportunities which could be offered include volunteer opportunities, work experience opportunities, early years qualification student placements and apprenticeships

Student placements and work experience are where an individual from a college or school participates in working in a setting for a specific amount of time. Organisations such as Jobcentre Plus also facilitate work experience for individuals over 18. The time frame and learning elements to be covered are set by the educational establishment or organisation.

What is a volunteer? - Volunteering is, 'a voluntary act of an individual or group freely giving time and labour.'

- A volunteer may approach an early years setting directly, and the setting can choose the hours and duration they are prepared to offer
- To count as a volunteer, no money other than reasonable expenses can be received

The Benefits of Volunteering

For the setting:

- 'Trial' a potential future staff member
- The volunteer's life skills and experience from other roles and industries can further enhance the setting
- The volunteer sharing their culture can further enhance the setting
- Gain an extra pair of hands to help with a range of jobs and activities
- Develop and practice coaching, mentoring and development skills
- Raise the profile of the setting

For the volunteer:

- See what early years work is like and if it's for you before training or employment
- Gain early years experience likely to be required to enrol on relevant childcare courses
- Try something new and discover previously unknown skills and interests
- Support the local community
- Share your skills, experiences, knowledge and culture
- Build confidence and learn general work skills
- Make connections, friends and social contact in your area



Finding and inducting a volunteer

Advertise for a volunteer role locally or via organisations such as [Volunteer Suffolk Home - Volunteer Suffolk](#)

It is important to be clear that volunteers are different to paid employees as volunteers are not covered by employment law. Avoid words linked to employment, for example use 'expectations and agreement' as opposed to 'requirements and contract'.

Consider a volunteer agreement and induction to cover the expectations the setting has of volunteers and what the setting offers them. This may include:

- DBS check
- Taking emergency contact details
- Any coaching or training offered to the volunteer
- Any expenses or support such as contributions to transport costs or providing lunch
- Key policies and procedures relevant to volunteers in an early years setting they need to read, understand and be supported with such as safeguarding, health and safety, GDPR, equal opportunities, fire drill & evacuation, accidents, behaviour management etc
- What to expect in an early years setting
- Suitable tasks/opportunities volunteers may wish to be involved with
- Tour of the setting and introductions to the staff team

DBS checks for volunteers

A volunteer in an early years setting aged 16 or over needs an enhanced DBS check and this is free for a volunteer position, the update service is also free for volunteers [DBS check application process for volunteers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

However, the organisation requesting the check may have to pay an administration fee. For group settings the cost of this varies depending on the company used to process DBS checks but typically the charge is £7- £15. [Find a DBS umbrella body company - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Further information on DBS checks can be found via the electronic [eligibility tool](#) and in the guidance [DBS checks: guidance for employers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

For childminders or for childcare on domestic premises, Ofsted is responsible for deciding if a DBS check is required and for requesting it [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\) checks for childcare providers who register with Ofsted - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



Ratios

Settings may choose for volunteer/s to be outside of the staff ratio.

Settings may instead chose to count volunteers over 17 as part of the proportion of untrained staff in the ratio if they are satisfied that the volunteer is competent and responsible – EYFS 3.49 [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage for group and school providers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-framework-for-the-early-years-foundation-stage-for-group-and-school-providers). At all times staffing must meet the needs of all children to maintain quality and safety of care.

Other Practicalities

English and Maths- [Multiply - Learn Suffolk](#)

Volunteering and benefits- People can volunteer without their benefits entitlement being affected. This includes jobseeker's allowance (JSA), incapacity benefit, income support, employment and support allowance (ESA), and Universal Credit. There are no restrictions on the hours a claimant can volunteer as long as they keep to the rules and requirements of their benefits [Volunteering and benefits | NCVO](#)

GDPR- Settings must ensure they store information about volunteers in line with GDPR polices.

Support – support the mental health of volunteers [Maintaining The Mental Health & Wellbeing of Your Volunteers - Volunteer Now](#)

Useful weblinks to support you in offering volunteering opportunities

Gov.uk – volunteering
<https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/volunteers-rights>

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/>

Community Action Suffolk
[Volunteering Strategy - Community Action Suffolk](#)

Volunteer Suffolk – post a volunteer role
[Home - Volunteer Suffolk](#)

