

<b>Role:</b>	<b>Early Help Volunteer</b>
<b>Service Area:</b>	Children's Services
<b>Department:</b>	Early Help
<b>Supported By:</b>	Early Help Volunteer Coordinators
<b>Location:</b>	Various across Walsall
<b>Special Conditions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is an unpaid volunteer role, mileage/bus travel and pre agreed expenses will be covered</li> <li>• Applicants must be over 18 years old</li> <li>• DBS – Enhanced is required (we will process DBS applications for successful applicants)</li> </ul>

**What is Early Help?**

Early Help is the term we use to describe the support we give to Children, Young People and their Families when they need extra help to manage. In Early Help we work to ensure that Children and Young People feel safe and listened to, are happy, healthy, learning and progressing well, with resilience and good ambitions and life chances for their future. We take a partnership approach to the delivery of Early Help as it's difficult at times for one single agency to deliver effective support alone. It means we work alongside a number of services (Schools, Health and Voluntary services) to help children and young people aged 0-19 years old across Walsall. Early Help can be provided at any stage of a child's life and we're here to help when families can no longer cope on their own. Children's Services has 4 Early Help Locality hubs based across the Walsall area (North, West, Central South and East Hub) and offers a variety of support and interventions for families on Early Help and Social Work plans. The service is also now developing its Family Hubs responses to ensure that many families across Walsall can access advice and support. The best way to find out more information about Early Help and what is going on is to look over our website: [Early Help | Walsall Council](#)

**Why do we need Volunteers in Early Help?**

- **We need to support families in more diverse and creative ways** - volunteers with lived experience of parenting, or who have received Early Help support in the past might now be the best people to help a family come up with creative solutions to their challenges.
- **We want to support the development and progression of our volunteers** – recruiting and supporting volunteers is a good way of ensuring that those who want to help their communities can have the opportunity to help and also develop their own skills, experience and knowledge along the way.
- **We need to shape and continually learn in our service** – volunteers can have a really powerful input, perspective and voice in shaping services longer term.
- **We are developing new initiatives where volunteers are key to the delivery of services**, such as supporting and training volunteers to run their own parenting support groups.

**We are keen to ensure we have volunteers who represent our diverse communities and the diverse family groups across Walsall.**

**We would like to welcome volunteers who can:**

- Support parents in becoming a new parent or having a new baby and coping with the emotional impact of becoming a parent, or can support a parent of multiple children in their early years (children that are 0-5yrs old).
- Support parents in parenting a child so they are ready for school by the age of 5.
- Run volunteer-led parenting support groups from their local faith groups and community bases.
- Support a family who has a child with a new or existing Disability diagnosis or Special Education Need (SEND).
- Help families to live more healthy lifestyles, healthy cooking and healthy eating.



- Help families who have become mistrustful of services, or families that would benefit from support from a positive peer role model support while they are on an Early Help Plan with a Lead Professional.

### Could you help us by becoming an Early Help Volunteer?

- **Do you want to help families in your community?** We want volunteers who live in Walsall who want to make a difference and make things better in their immediate neighbourhoods to help their communities thrive and be great places to live.
- **Do you feel you've got important lived experiences that could maybe help others in similar situations?** Maybe you have received services yourself in the past, maybe you have lots of skills from supporting your own family, or maybe you have worked closely with supporting families professionally in the past. We will be able to provide you with opportunities for training, resources and ongoing support so that you can 'give back'.
- **Do you want to develop and learn?** Maybe you want to understand more about what it is like working in roles that support children, young people and families or 'pass your existing learning on', or maybe you want to be part of a service that you can help shape, influence and grow.
- **Do you want to support 'groups' of people in your community?** Maybe you can support groups of fathers through a Dads group, or groups of families who are isolated or new to your area. We can help you do this and can provide training, venues, food & refreshments for your group and ongoing support for you to continue to run your group longer term.
- **Do you have some free time in your week or on evenings?** Maybe you can find a few hours a week for a minimum of the next 6 months to become an Early Help Volunteer.
- **Do you speak other languages?** We understand that language is one of the barriers to accessing essential services, you could help people in Walsall who do not speak English to access support from Early Help and partner agencies.

### What could you get out of becoming and Early Help Volunteer?

- Full training is provided to volunteers and you will receive a comprehensive induction into the Early Help Service and Walsall Council.
- DBS costs and out of pocket expenses such as travel and mileage are all covered by Walsall Council.
- For those that want to deliver groups, full training is provided in an evidence-based parenting support programme – such as Barnardos Cygnet Autism Programme, Empowering Parents Empowering Communities and Solihull Approach: Understanding My Child programmes. Full resources will be provided to deliver your parenting support programmes – venues, refreshment, resources etc.
- Additional and ongoing training around supporting Children and Families is provided while you are a volunteer.
- Opportunity to attend ongoing regular support meetings to meet and get to know other Early Help volunteers and to have your say on how Early Help Services and volunteering is delivered to our families.
- Regular 121 supervision sessions with your Volunteer Coordinator who can help you with the families/groups you are supporting and ensure that you are feeling confident to carry out your volunteering duties. Supervision is also the place where you and the Volunteer Coordinator can discuss your own wellbeing, additional training, your support needs and, if wanted, support to further your career in working with Children, Young People and Families.
- If you want to specialise in certain areas such as; supporting new parents/young children, School Ready, SEND and Healthy Lifestyles, it is helpful if you have experience of this yourself, however we can provide some basic training in these subjects to help you support others.
- If you choose to do this, you will be instrumental in improving the lives of countless Children, Young People and Families across Walsall, this role can be very rewarding and is an amazing



addition to your CV where you can gain experiences and new skills that can help you for any future job applications.

- If you choose to join us, you will become a part of an amazing, supportive team of people who all want the best for Children, Young People and Families in Walsall.

### **Don't be put off by time, we are flexible!**

You can fit volunteering around your other responsibilities – we always try to be respectful of your time and always consult with volunteers before confirming dates for meetings and trainings. Many of our current volunteers commit to 1 - 2 hours per week, while others are able to offer more time.

### **Please Note:**

- We cannot offer volunteer roles as placements for studying and we are not in a position to provide feedback to tutors or placement supervisors for volunteers.
- We do ask that you commit to volunteering for a minimum of 6 months.
- We welcome applicants who have a real passion for supporting families and communities and want to build their experience in Early Help roles and are not taking the role solely to further their employment or education opportunities.

### **All aspects mentioned below will be covered in your induction training:**

- Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the Council's Core Competencies, Code of Conduct, Health, Wellbeing and Safety at Work policies, and other policies with reference to Diversity and Equality.
- Volunteers are expected to support the Council strategy, vision, aims, objectives, priorities and continuous improvement programme.
- Volunteers are expected to comply with Council financial regulations, Information Governance and Data Protection.

There are various ways an Early Help Volunteer can support families, this is often based on a volunteer's own skills, knowledge and experience and their own wishes for development. The information below is included to give some more information about what the volunteer role can look like, however this specification has not been designed to be an exhaustive list of all the things volunteers may do to support Children, Young People and Families.

**Early Years & School Ready volunteering:** Alongside our School Ready Engagement Officers, Lead Professionals in Health Visiting and Family Support volunteers can signpost parents to Stay & Play groups and sessions suitable for 0-5 year olds and attend these groups with parents to help them feel comfortable and settle into groups. Volunteers can link in with Early Years campaigns such as; NSPCC – Look Say Sing Play, Book Start and other language and learning projects. Volunteers might also support new parents in pregnancy to be ready for baby's birth, this could be through support visits and helping parents think about all the things they need to plan for a new baby. They may also help parents complete the online Understanding My Pregnancy course, or attend antenatal groups. Volunteers may share their own knowledge and experience about getting children 'ready for school' and offer positive solutions to families struggling to manage children in the early years.

Volunteers might also help new parents with engaging with services to support:

- Planning for labour, birth and baby's arrival
- Feeding and Breast Feeding
- Speech and language
- Infant sleeping issues
- Reducing Parental Conflict and managing your relationship with a new baby
- Emotional support for parents with low mood or post-natal depression
- Toilet Training
- Managing and understanding behaviour and child development in the early years



**Family Support volunteering:** Volunteers will meet with the Early Help Lead Professional (Family Support Worker, Designated Safeguarding Lead/Pastoral worker in a school or Health professionals) to become part of a support plan to families. The volunteer, the lead professional and the family will come up with a plan of how a volunteer can best support an individual child, young person or family for about 8 weeks through weekly visits, sometimes this can be longer depending on the needs of the CYP/family and your own opinions as the family's volunteer. Sessions or meetings might be in the family's home, or at various venues in the community, such as; school, locality family hubs or other community settings.

Here are some of the ways volunteers support:

- Going into schools and supporting with 'direct work' with individual children.
- Supporting children, young people and parents at their Team around the Family meetings with other professionals and people involved in the support plan for that family, helping families plan what they want to say and what they want to achieve while they are on their Early Help journey.
- Spending time with parents in the home while their children are at school and supporting through listening and talking to parents for their own mental and emotional wellbeing, helping them to build confidence in their parenting abilities/strategies.
- Supporting parents in the home to take part in online support programmes.
- Supporting parents with attending appointments and activities outside of the home.
- Completing school applications and helping families to sign up with essential services such as GPs and Dentists.
- Supporting parents in implementing routines and boundaries and keeping on track for chores and housework.
- Helping with homework schedules, supporting play, family time and family games and activities.
- Supporting parents to attend groups, going with them to meetings and other appointments.
- Co-working with Family Support Workers for families where Neglect, Domestic Abuse, Substance Abuse and Parental Mental Health may be a concern to deliver interventions, programmes and packages of support.
- Co-working with Family Support Workers for Children and Young People who are at risk or have been excluded from school to deliver interventions and programmes and packages of support.
- Providing other practical one to one help to families.

**Group Support volunteering:** The Early Help Parenting Team and School Health team are responsible for delivering various groups and programmes across the borough. Volunteers can work closely with running and supporting the following groups;

- Reducing Parental Conflict - Connecting Families
- Understanding Your Child/Baby/Teenager
- Engaging and working with Fathers
- Grandparents Group
- Volunteers can also support with the delivery of various Stay & Play, and other Children's and Young People's groups, as well as our Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) groups and activities that are run during school holidays.
- Barnardos Cygnet Group – 7 week group for parents of children and young people with ASD.
- Mellow Parenting Groups
- Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) – children's groups and activities
- Young Carers Groups
- Other groups for children, young people and parents
- Practical help - Setting up group activities in advance and clearing away afterwards. This might include preparing refreshments/snacks, organising the layout of the room, preparing resources and tidying the room after the group.



Volunteers can also have the opportunity to train and be supported to become Parent Group Leaders of their own Engaging Parents, Engaging Communities (EPEC) Groups. Specific training will be provided if you are interested in focussing on running Group Support.

**Healthy Lifestyle volunteering:** Volunteers focussed on supporting families to live a healthy lifestyle will mainly support those families who are in need of help to be healthier. These families may have one or more members who are in need of support to improve their health and lifestyles. The type of support a volunteer may provide are listed below.

- Establishing weekly menus and helping families to source affordable healthy produce.
- Consulting with families on what foods they like/dislike.
- Helping families sign up to access vitamins and other health benefit initiatives they are eligible for.
- Finding simple recipes that encourage healthy eating.
- Helping families cook a healthy meal and meal plan for a week/month.
- Helping CYP/families to find and access appropriate services, activities and Green Spaces in their local community.
- Utilising the 'Eatwell Guides' and other Public Health tools, information and guidance.

**SEND Support volunteering:** Working closely with the Early Help SEND Practitioners, volunteers with some awareness of SEND will support parents who have a child with a diagnosed/undiagnosed/newly diagnosed Special Educational Need or Disability. This could be done in the following ways:

- Advocating for families to ensure they get the support that they need from the appropriate services.
- Helping families access, understand and utilise the Local Offer.
- Supporting the delivery of specific groups and courses (for example, the Cygnet course).
- Liaising with other services, such as SENDIAS and referring families into appropriate services.
- Helping parents through the process of completing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Supporting families to access the Barnardos Cygnet Programme, and training and delivering Cygnet and SEND groups and Workshops for families.
- Supporting children and young people to access Short Breaks programmes, and helping deliver short breaks to children and young people.
- Co-working with Children and Young People with special education needs, diagnosed or undiagnosed disabilities to deliver interventions and programmes and packages of support.

**Core Training Provided to volunteers:**

After DBS checks and signing a Volunteer Agreement, successful applicants will receive a core offer of training within the first 4 weeks, including; Induction training, Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, Confidentiality & Information governance training, Personal Safety, Safeguarding Children Level 1&2, Safeguarding Adults and Council Code of Conduct training.

**Further training will be provided specific to volunteer roles and could include:** Right Help Right Time, Neglect 1 & 2, NSPCC Graded Care Profile 2 training, Reducing Parental Conflict training, Solihull Approach parenting training package, EPEC parent group leader training, Cygnet facilitator training, Trauma training, Motivational Interviewing, Restorative Approach training, NSPCC Look Say Sing Play, ACE, Mental Health and Domestic Abuse training. (Other training is likely to also be offered to volunteers as it becomes available to the wider staff group).

Skills required by a person to perform in the Early Help Volunteer Support role	Indicate when Assessment is possible: at Application form=A interview=I both=A/I test = T	<b>WEIGHT CODE</b> shows relative importance Low=1 Medium=2 High=3
<b>Abilities/Skills:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reliable, punctual and trustworthy.</li> </ul>	A/I	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being committed to making a difference in the lives of children, young people and families.</li> </ul>	A/I	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passion, enthusiasm, compassion, understanding and having an open-minded approach</li> </ul>	A/I	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ability to empathise with children, young people and families who may be facing difficult times in their lives.</li> </ul>	A/I	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being non-judgmental and having a positive attitude to supporting individuals from different backgrounds, with different circumstances and life chances.</li> </ul>	A/I	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ability to manage and respond positively to challenging situations.</li> </ul>	A/I	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ability to communicate and engage with children, young people and families.</li> </ul>	A/I	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being able to be a listening ear and provide emotional support.</li> </ul>	A	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some knowledge and understanding of supporting parents and carers, and the issues faced by disadvantaged families.</li> </ul>	A	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having personal experience with running a home and/or maintaining family routines.</li> </ul>	A	1
<b>Knowledge/Experience:</b>		
Prior experience of supporting or engaging with vulnerable groups including children and families could be desirable.	A	1
<b>Other Essential Requirements:</b>		
Commitment to volunteering with our service for 6 months or more.	I	3
Commitment to adhere to Walsall Council Core competencies and Policies and willing to undertake training and uphold the Core Competencies of Walsall Council.	I	3
Commitment to providing an agreed set of hours to volunteer with our service and wherever possible meeting the agreed hours.	I	3
Commitment to equality of opportunity and willingness to undertake and adhere to training on equality.	I	3
Commitment to; confidentiality, handling data, health and safety and willingness to undertake and adhere to relevant training	I	3
A willingness to undertake other training as necessary for the volunteer role – Core Training and additional training – where it has been agreed by both parties.	I	3
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Georgina Atkins & Sàdé Hutchinson	<b>Date:</b> February 2023