

# Lower Earley *Family Contact Centre*

## Guidance Notes for Volunteers

### Duty Rota

The rota is circulated to all volunteers by email by the Rota Secretary.

Volunteers are typically on duty on average once per month.

Usually six (including the Coordinator or Team Leader, but a minimum of four, will be on duty during each session.

To ensure smooth running of the centre, volunteers are asked to inform the Co-ordinator and Team Leader if they are unable to attend an allocated session, giving as much notice as possible, and try to arrange a replacement using the list of volunteers' email addresses provided. **If time does not allow for this, you should call or text the Coordinator (07932 014766) or team leader for the session.**

### Organisation of the Sessions

In order to prepare the Centre for the arrival of the families, volunteers are asked to arrive 30 minutes before it is due to open (i.e. by 1.30pm). Please allow a maximum of half an hour after the Centre has closed to allow for de-briefing and clearing up.

All volunteers must wear a name badge (first name only) so that families can see immediately who is a worker at the Centre.

All volunteers must attend the briefing at the start of each session (usually held about 1.45pm).

Particular attention should be paid to new families attending the Centre.

Volunteers will be aware that what happens during a contact session is confidential. All volunteers must always observe confidentiality. Any urgent concerns that volunteers may have should be shared with the Co-ordinator or Team Leader as soon as possible after the session.

The volunteers at reception at both doors (resident and non-resident parents') must note the arrival and departure times of all clients each time they enter and leave the building.

Volunteers should remember that parents are responsible for the safety and supervision of their children at all times – so that means that the non-resident parent cannot go out for a cigarette or to make a mobile phone call. They must always remain on the premises with their child. Volunteers are to remind parents, if they are not with their child.

Parents who bring children can either wait in the lounge or leave and return in time to collect them.

Volunteers will normally be expected to remain on the premises during the period when the Centre is operating.

## **New Volunteers**

Before deciding to volunteer you should visit the Centre in action and the Coordinator or an experienced volunteer will show you around the Centre and explain how each session runs and the key duties of volunteers. You will have plenty of opportunity to talk with current volunteers and ask questions.

An induction checklist will be completed during your first or second session on duty to ensure that you have all the necessary information.

Until you have your enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) certificate, you will not be able to be alone with a child. However, this would not stop you acting as a volunteer as there is a wide range of duties to be covered. We usually get DBS paperwork completed during the second (or third, depending on the Coordinator's availability) session to give you a chance, following your experience of the first session, to confirm that you wish to continue as a volunteer.

Volunteers are required to serve a probationary period of four sessions.

## **Basic tasks for a volunteer**

At each session, volunteers:

- Help prepare the Centre in advance of people arriving.
- Act as a host who explains the use of facilities, provide toys, provide refreshments.
- Listen to and try to relax Centre visitors.
- Keep a watchful eye throughout the Contact Room and outside space.
- Tidy up once the Centre has closed.
- Escort NR parents to the toilet, waiting outside, to ensure there is no unwanted contact with resident parents.

Those on front and back doors, also

- Welcome and register Centre visitors.

## **Dealing with Difficult Situations**

If there is, or is likely to be, a conflict between family members during the contact session; an early opportunity should be taken to defuse the situation and the Team Leader or Co-ordinator should be informed. If the matter cannot be resolved in the public area, the parties should be asked to go to a private area, and the children removed if necessary. If the problem still cannot be resolved both parties should be advised to raise the matter with their respective referrers. Two centre volunteers should always be present when families use a private area.

In the event of any situation arising where a volunteer needs help, the Team Leader or Coordinator should be informed immediately. If all agree that further advice or help is needed, there are a number of steps which can be taken:

- a) Contact the Centre Co-ordinator (if not attending the session)
- b) If it is felt that there is still no immediate solution, ask the clients to leave the premises and advise them to contact their referring agency urgently.
- c) If they refuse and their continuing presence represents any danger to them or to other users of the Centre, contact the police. Dial 999.

Clients will have been told that smoking is not permitted during the contact session, even in the garden. Also, any client arriving at the Centre under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be admitted and the contact for that session cancelled. These precautions are in the interests of all volunteers, clients, and the children.

Volunteers must keep records of important items – cash, documents etc. not e.g children's clothing - passed between parents. Whether recording is considered to be needed will depend on the circumstances, particularly the degree of antagonism, if any, between the parties.

Volunteers must be aware of the information and rules provided in the Parents' leaflet and in particular the Fire Procedure for each 'Volunteer Role'. They should make every effort to attend fire practices.

**Volunteers must not:**

- 'Look after' a child while the parent goes out for a cigarette or to make a phone call.
- Take a child to the toilet, unless the parent asks for assistance and there is another volunteer present.
- Discuss the families outside the Child Contact Centre

## **Other responsibilities and ongoing training**

Volunteers should be familiar with the key LEFCC Policies, which are available at the Centre, on:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Confidentiality
- Health and Safety
- Complaints Procedure
- Equal Opportunities and Diversity
- Domestic Abuse and Conflict Management Policy

Ongoing training will be provided both in house and by NACCC.

Volunteers should try to attend arranged sessions and should complete training modules in a timely fashion.

## **Annex 1: Detailed Duties of Volunteers**

Ideally there should be six volunteers at each session including the Coordinator / Team Leader, although it is recognised that on some occasions there may only be five. During the briefing, volunteers will be allocated to roles, as follows:

- Volunteer 1: Back desk/Non-Resident parent
- Volunteer 2: Contact Room
- Volunteer 3: Contact Room
- Volunteer 4: Parking/Outside space
- Volunteer 5: Front desk/Resident Parent
- Volunteer 6: Runner

If there are only five volunteers on duty, then one of the contact room volunteers will also have to act as a runner during the start and end of the session when most families arrive.

Walkie-talkies can be used to reduce the need for a 'runner'.

The volunteer arranging the parking will then be available either in the Contact Room or garden or to carry out some other duty requested by the Coordinator /Team Leader.

### **Back Desk/Non-Resident Parent**

- Check the 'Parents without Children' notice is put outside.
- Parents who arrive early should wait outside or in the reception area until the start of the session.
- Check each parent in, noting the exact time they arrive on their copy of the register.
- Only people named on the register are allowed beyond the reception area. If any others want to enter the Centre, then the Coordinator / Team Leader for that day must give approval, after checking with the resident parent.
- If parents have any issues they want to discuss, then call the Coordinator/Team Leader
- If NR parents are allowed to take children out of the Centre, then note the exact times of leaving and return (having first checked the resident parent has signed the Outside Consent form). Note the final time of leaving Centre at the end of the session. Give completed register to Coordinator/Team Leader.
- Ensure the register is somewhere it cannot be seen by clients.
- At the end of the session collect in the 'Parents without Children' notice.

### **Contact Room/Outside Space**

- There should be as many tables put out as families attending, and the correct number of chairs per table.
- Ensure there is a variety of toys, suitable for the range of age groups of those due to attend.
- Keep an eye on toys to ensure that they are not causing disruption or representing a safety hazard.
- If families are outside, two volunteers must be outside or in the doorway so they can see both outside and inside the room although we must be aware that the outside space extends down the side of the building so any families must be in sight.
- In cases where parents are not allowed to take the children to the toilet, two volunteers are needed for this. A second volunteer will need to accompany one of the contact room volunteers.

- The purpose of contact is for the parent to establish /maintain a good relationship with the child, so try not to engage in lengthy and unnecessary conversation with parents or children.
- Once all families have left, clear away toys and furniture so that the room is left as it was found. Ensure internal doors and windows are closed.

### **Parking/Outside Space**

- Unlock the shed.
- Put the parking “dots” out, marking the area for cars.
- Unlock the gate, at about 13:55.
- Remain in the car park until the NR parents have arrived, offering parking guidance.
- Either help in the contact room or garden, if it is being used.
- At the end of the session, collect up the “dots” and return them to the shed.
- Lock the shed, the gate, and the back door.

### **Front desk/Resident Parent**

- Check that ‘Parents with Children’ notice is put outside the door.
- Only people named on the register are allowed beyond the reception area. If any others want to stay in the waiting room, then the Coordinator / Team Leader for that day must give approval, after checking with the NR parent.
- If parents have any issues they want to discuss, then call the Coordinator/Team Leader
- Record all exact times of arrival and departure during the session. If parents wish to stay in the Centre during the session, they need to be escorted to the Waiting Room.
- If the child is allowed to be taken out of the Centre by the NR parent, ensure that the resident parent signs the Outside Consent form (making sure that they understand what it is they are signing)
- If no parents are expected for a while, then lock the door and help elsewhere, particularly if fewer than six volunteers are present. Ensure the register is somewhere it cannot be seen by clients.
- Escort any parents from the Waiting Room back to the reception area five minutes before the end of their session.
- At the end of the session collect in the ‘Parents with Children’ notice and give the register, with completed times, to Coordinator/Team Leader.

### **Runner**

- When both parents are present, collect child/children and take into the Contact Room.
- At end of session, once resident parent has arrived, take child/children from Contact Room to resident parent at the reception area.
- Be flexible and adaptive depending on the needs of the situation.
- Help in Contact Room or other areas as needed.

### **All Volunteers**

- Put out refreshments and serve clients.
- Get out cash box and unlock it. At the end of the session lock it and put it away.
- Make drinks for volunteers.
- Make a list of any supplies need for the next session and pass to Coordinator/Team Leader.
- Wash up, tidy kitchen, pack away refreshments.