

## **INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY VOLUNTEERS**

### **Profile**

SSAFA Forces Help runs two summer holidays in the UK for Additional Needs and Disabled Children and one separate holiday for the siblings of disabled children and young carers. The holidays are open to the dependants of regular or reserve military personnel and the age range is 8 – 14 for additional needs/disabled children and 8 – 12 for siblings/young carers. The holidays were initially set up in 1975 to enable service families to have access to summer respite care and to offer the children an opportunity to take part in an adventure activity holiday.



Without the help and dedication of the volunteers who support the children the holidays would not happen.

For each holiday we need:

#### **Calvert Trust Kielder**

14 Volunteer Coaches (providing one to one support to a child)  
2 Team Leaders  
2 Deputy Team Leaders  
2 Waking Night Staff  
1 Nurse

#### **Calvert Trust Exmoor**

24 Volunteer Coaches (providing one to one support to a child)  
3 Team Leaders  
3 Deputy Team Leaders (depending on available accommodation)  
3 Waking Night Staff  
1 Nurse

#### **Siblings/Young Carers**

8 coaches  
1 nurse

Please see below for more information about each holiday

## **Additional Needs/Disabled Children's Holidays**

The holidays for children with Additional Needs and Disabilities are held at two of the Calvert Trust centres, the first at the end of July at Kielder Water in Northumberland for 14 children and the second holiday in August is in Exmoor, North Devon for 24 children. The Calvert Trust is one of the country's leading providers of outdoor activities for people with disabilities. They have specialist expertise in providing a full range of accessible land and water based activities for people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities. [www.calvert-trust.org.uk](http://www.calvert-trust.org.uk)

The volunteer teams are made up of 7 or 8 Volunteer Coaches, a Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader (if there is available accommodation) plus a Nurse and is attended and managed by the Additional Needs & Disability Advisor. In recent years we have asked volunteers to attend in the capacity of Waking Night Staff (please see separate section for more detailed information) to support the children overnight.

Accommodation is in shared rooms (2-4 people per room) with en suite facilities. All food is provided at the Calvert Trust.

### **Volunteer Coach – Role and Responsibilities**

As a volunteer coach we ask you to take on the one to one care of a disabled child, or child with additional needs and a typical day would run from 7am when your child wakes up until 10pm when your child is asleep and you have had your evening team meeting to talk through any issues from the day. The children attending the holidays have a wide range of needs, many have profound physical and learning disabilities and others have severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. Each child of course has different needs and we aim to link you with a child that corresponds with your experience and capabilities. In addition to the day to day care – feeding, bathing, dressing if required, we ask you to encourage your child to participate in all the programmed activities or help to find alternatives if they are reluctant to take part. Each coach helps their child to compile a diary/scrapbook to take home at the end of the week to show their families what they have been doing on holiday with us. We link each volunteer coach with a buddy in their team to offer support to one another and give time out as necessary. You work within a team and would be supported by your Team Leader and Deputy, the Holiday Organiser and the Holiday Nurse.

### **Waking Night Staff - Role and Responsibilities**

In recent years the holidays for disabled children have benefited from the introduction of waking night staff to support the children overnight and give the volunteer coaches a chance to have uninterrupted sleep rather than undertaking night duty after long and busy days looking after their allocated child. This section is intended to give an overview of the role of the waking staff and how this fits into the holiday as a whole.

In the first instance we link each waking nights volunteer with one of the teams so they have a chance to familiarise themselves with the children in that group and the waking night staff attend the evening team meetings to find out how the day has gone and to get an update of any issues that may impact on the night duty. The night staff join the group in time for the evening meal and to participate in the evening activities which usually consist of swimming, games, scrapbooks or art and crafts rather than a formal structured activity. The night staff are welcome to join the groups earlier in the day to participate in the programmed activities but this will depend on the individual volunteer and how much sleep they need.

Once the evening team meetings are finished the night staff commence their overnight duty. For each holiday the children's needs are different but may include helping to settle children who can't sleep, turning children with mobility difficulties, looking after children who wake during the night and occupying the early risers with a quiet activity. At 7am the allocated coaches start their day and take over from the night staff. The night staff keep a communication book to note any events overnight and how they were dealt with in order to feed back information to the other volunteers in the morning. The holiday organiser, team leaders and nurse can all be called upon during the night if extra assistance is required or advice needed.

### **Sibling Holidays**

The siblings holiday is held at Fairthorne Manor YMCA Centre, Southampton over the May bank holiday/half term week. [www.ymca-fg.org](http://www.ymca-fg.org)

At siblings there are 24 children ages 8 – 12 years old who have a brother or sister with additional needs or disabilities. The holiday is also open to children who are young carers for a disabled parent. The volunteer team is made up of 8 Volunteer/coaches plus a nurse and is attended and managed by the Additional Needs & Disability Advisor. As a coach you are there to provide support and supervision to the young people as a team member. You will ensure the children have everything they need for daily activities and that they get to meal times and make sure they have a good time. The aim of the Siblings Holiday is to give the children an opportunity to have a break from the day to day responsibilities they have at home, to meet other siblings and young carers and to have a fun holiday.

The holiday is adventure activity based – climbing, canoeing, raft building, archery, obstacle courses at the centre and includes a day off site to the Pyramids Swimming Centre and funfair or Sealife Centre at Southsea depending on the weather.

The accommodation is a dormitory environment; shared rooms with wash hand basin and communal toilet and shower facilities. The accommodation is arranged over 2 floors the first floor for females volunteers and children and the second floor for the male volunteers and children.

To become a volunteer on the Siblings Holiday you need to have attended one of the SSAFA Forces Help holidays for disabled children. This is to

ensure volunteers get an overall picture of the needs of families when a family member has a disability and the impact this has on siblings/young carers.

### **How to apply to become a volunteer**

To be a volunteer you must be over 18 years of age, have a good sense of humour, have loads of stamina, a reasonable level of fitness and a commitment and dedication to the children. You will need to have a real sense of fun and play. No previous experience is necessary but will be taken into consideration when you apply.

Due to the physical nature of the holidays, it is not recommended for those who have a serious medical condition or are pregnant.

New volunteers will be asked to attend an informal Regional Information and Selection meeting to give you the opportunity to ask questions about the children's holidays as an experienced volunteer will also be present.

All volunteers will be required to attend one of the training weekends we are running in London in April for (5/6 April or 26/27 April) which will cover disability awareness, communication, child protection, moving and handling and how to manage behaviour and intimate care.

A selection panel then sits in early May and volunteers are informed shortly after. If you would like to speak to another volunteer before applying this can be arranged on request.

Places are limited. If you are not selected in the first instance you will be asked if you would like to be put on the reserve list – we frequently need to call upon people at the last minute if volunteers have to drop out for operational or personal reasons.

Every volunteer will need a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check regardless even if they have undergone a CRB check with another organisation. Those volunteers who are serving with the British Forces will also be required to undergo military police checks and this also applies to partners of someone serving who lives in the same household.

SSAFA Forces Help is an Equal Opportunities Organisation. Due to the nature of the work you wish to undertake, you are required by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 to declare all criminal convictions including those which are spent. We are committed to using the Criminal Records Bureau / Disclosure Scotland for obtaining Disclosures. **Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with us.**

**Registered Charity Numbers: 210760 (England and Wales) SC038056 (Scotland) Established 1885.**

You can contact the Additional Needs and Disability Adviser or the Children's Holiday Project Co-ordinator at SSAFA Forces Help to obtain an application form and for more information about becoming a volunteer.

Jane Barnes Additional Needs & Disability Adviser

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