

SSAFA Forces Help Holidays for Disabled and Additional Needs Children

Frequently Asked Questions by Parents and Carers

Q. What will my child get from such a holiday?

- A. An opportunity to participate in a variety of adventure activities amongst their peers who can all relate to another's needs. Many children flourish from having individual 1 to 1 attention resulting in a boost of confidence and self-esteem.

Families gain the opportunity to have a well earned rest and spend time with the child's siblings.

Q. I'm very anxious about letting my child attend as they have never had any form of respite before.

- A. We appreciate this is a huge decision for a parent to make and specific issues can be talked through with the Additional Needs and Disability Adviser or we can put you in contact with another parent who has been in the same position.

Q. How will children be selected?

- A. A panel sits early May; this panel consists of multi agency professionals and includes the Holiday Nurse, the Additional Needs and Disability Adviser and a Sponsor.
- During this selection we will look at each child's needs and other details you supply i.e. respite care, boarding, family near by to assist.
 - A supporting statement giving your reasons why your child should attend is the most important section of the application form for you to provide as much relevant information to help the panel assess your situation.
 - The number of times your child has attended previous SSAFA Forces Help holidays will be taken into consideration.

Places are then allocated depending on need.

Q. How is my child matched to a volunteer coach?

- A. A child is allocated a coach according to their skills and experience. Children with complex needs are matched to more experienced volunteers, if a child has complex / challenging needs and at school has a support ratio of 2-1 we would endeavour to do this. You will have an opportunity on arrival to spend time with the volunteer/coach to have a full handover.

Q. How will my child's volunteer to know how to support my child?

- A. A profile of your child is given to your child's volunteer and they will have access to the application form you complete on your child's behalf. It will help us if you can be honest and detail your child's needs and behaviour difficulties. Other information from other people involved with your child's care would be useful like a school report or therapy assessments, this will help give a pen picture and help us to provide and support your child and enhance the success of their holiday.

Q. How are the children cared for at night?

A. We aim to have permanent waking night staff to ensure those children who may be up during the night have consistent faces. Otherwise all volunteers take turn to cover working nights.

Q. Are Volunteers police checked?

A. Yes. Full-enhanced criminal record bureau checks and military police checks for Serving personnel are taken up. Two references are also requested and new volunteers are interviewed.

Q. How do the children get to the venue?

A. Parents are expected transport their children to and from the venues. If this proves to be difficult we will approach the SSAFA Forces Help Volunteer Service to see if they have volunteer drivers available but parent/carers will still be expected to escort their child.

Q. Will there be any costs involved?

A. Parents are asked to contribute £50 towards the cost of the holiday this will include £20 for pocket money and to cover incidental expenses i.e. the day off site. The actual holiday package includes food, accommodation and activities. Our sponsors and SSAFA Forces Help meet these costs.

Q. What happens on arrival?

A. All children and their parents will check in with the Additional Needs and Disability Adviser and Holiday Nurse to sign consent forms and hand over medication (please be patient this is a very long process but is crucial to the safety needs of your child). You will then meet your child's coach and be shown your child's room and have a handover with the coach and meet your child's Team Leader.

Q. Can my child bring personal items?

A. Children are encouraged to bring familiar toys and objects but we request no electronic games/ mobile phones or items of value in rooms.

Q. How will I know what activities my child has participated in and how their week has been?

A. Each volunteer coach is responsible for keeping a daily communication book to note the day's activities and any issues that may have arisen. Each child has a their own scrap book which they are encouraged to complete with help from their coach and we include certificates and photos of the activities.

Q. Do children have their own room?

A. There are a small number of single bedrooms and these will be allocated according to need. Other rooms consist of twin and triple and four beds; most have en suite bathrooms (which can be locked).

Q. My child needs medication during the day how will this be managed?

A. The Holiday Nurse is responsible for managing the children's medication.

Q. My child has sensory needs and may not be able to join in all the activities. Are there alternative arrangements for quieter activities?

A. Even children with complex needs can access the activities as the Calvert Trust have equipment to support all disabilities. We also have a sensory room for quieter times of the day or for children who need to have time out and recharge.

Q. My child is not a good sleeper and can get up during the night how will you keep him safe?

A. Waking night staff are attached to each team and are aware of individual needs. Children will be encouraged to go back to bed with the strategies written in parental application form as we aim to provide consistent care, as you do as parents. The children will have very busy and constructive days and from previous years experience the majority of children are asleep by 11 – 11:30.

Q. My child has limited communication how will you understand his/her needs?

A. Please supply the ANDA with as much information as possible about your child's communication needs and supply any communication aids like PSL, Makaton and Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) prior to the holiday.

Q. Can we ring during the week or my child ring us?

A. Parents are not discouraged to ring but we cannot guarantee we will be available to take a call straight away, the venues are large and we have full days and evenings of activities. You can always leave a message and your call will be returned. If a child requests a call home or they are slightly homesick this isn't a problem and we will arrange a call to you. However, the children are generally so busy and pre-occupied there is no need. A personal judgement by the ANDA is sometimes made if it is considered a call maybe unsettling for the child.