

Pre-school Learning Alliance
Volunteer for your Pre-school Committee





Why volunteer?

Is your child registered at a Pre-school Learning Alliance parent-run committee pre-school? If so -

- Are you interested in learning new skills?
- Would you like to meet new people?
- Would you like to share your skills, time and ideas with others?
- Have you ever wanted to improve the running of your child's setting?

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, the team at your child's pre-school would love to hear from you.

The benefits

Research shows clear benefits for children when parents become actively involved in their child's learning and development from an early age. Parental involvement has been recognised by the Government as being key to a child's successful development too.

Volunteering for your pre-school's parent-run committee offers an ideal opportunity for you to become more actively and practically involved in

this aspect of your child's life. It will also make a real difference to how your setting is managed.

You will personally benefit from this experience by meeting with other parents, updating existing skills and learning new ones as well as putting something positive back into your local community.

There are also long-term benefits should you choose to undertake further training or decide to return to full-time, paid work in the future.

Opportunities

Working as part of a pre-school committee is all about opportunities – for the pre-school, but also for yourself – and from small beginnings, you could find yourself taking a new direction in life.



What do parents think?

Some parents share their personal experiences of volunteering for their child's pre-school committee.

"I moved to a new area where I did not know anyone. My oldest daughter was attending school and I took my youngest daughter to the local parent and toddler group (P&T). I met people and then got involved with running the P&T group, then St Columba's Church Playgroup. I then started doing some work for the Birmingham branch of the Alliance. The rest, as they say, is history... From my experience in pre-schools/playgroups I learnt that it was a fantastic time not only for my daughter but it gave me so much. New friends, a support system, self-confidence and a route back into a whole new career."

Carole DaCosta, Head of Early Years in Walsall

"My experience at the local playgroup, as a dad, a helper and a committee member, sharpened my sense of the huge potential of parents to enhance the development of their own and their community's children... It was a vital part of our lives that enabled us and our children to move forward with confidence, with friends with whom we still keep in touch, after 25 years."

David Grugeon, Bedfordshire County Councillor

"It was in 1971 that I first went to Reedley Road Playgroup, where I found friendship, support and a different way of enjoying my young family. Life revolved around play dough recipes, glue, collage, finger painting and activity circuits. I was soon involved as a rota mum, regular helper and committee member. There were always new parents becoming involved. My experience working actively with young families and local communities ...undoubtedly helped me."

Sandra Fielding, former Head of Strategy and Policy, Bedfordshire Social Services



What is involved?

Your child's pre-school committee leader will be happy to tell you in more detail about how you can become involved. There are lots of ways you can contribute to the committee and you can choose to give as much or as little time as you can spare. The good thing is you don't need any experience to make a difference.

Your pre-school committee is responsible for the overall management and smooth-running of the setting. This can mean anything from organising a summer fundraising event to negotiating with a landlord over the terms of a lease. Your committee is the employer of staff in the pre-school so has overall responsibility for recruiting, training and developing staff, paying their salaries, and managing their contracts of employment.

Your committee also has responsibility for things like developing a business plan, managing the daily accounts and, working with staff, ensuring the setting follows health and safety, risk assessment, insurance and first aid guidance and procedures.

What you can choose to do

A lot of the work committees do is fun – building new partnerships with other parents and professionals, coming up with new fundraising ideas, getting exciting plans off the ground but there are some regular jobs too.

The three main roles on the committee are chair, treasurer and secretary. You may find the checklist on the next page helpful as it explains in more detail what each role does. The tasks can be shared between different parents so all the work need not fall on any one person. Your pre-school may even have a budget for specific tasks to be done by paid professionals, for example the monthly accounts. However, overall responsibility for these areas rests with the committee.

Chair

- Decides who will attend committee meetings, for example, staff member, head teacher, governor and so on
- Knows the roles and legal obligations of the committee
- Organises Criminal Records Bureau checks for new employees
- Maintains staffing ratios in accordance with National Care Standards
- Ensures committee members and staff have clearly identified roles and responsibilities
- Updates the business plan or creates a new one

Treasurer

- Reviews fees
- Purchases equipment (if necessary)
- Approves an annual budget
- Monitors the budget regularly
- Gets accounts checked annually and independently
- Submits annual return to the Charity Commission

Secretary

- Organises agendas and makes sure a record is made of minutes
- Sets meetings schedule, deciding how often to have meetings and where
- Updates and circulates contact numbers for committee members and staff
- Informs Ofsted and Charity Commission of any changes

Shared responsibilities

- Manage Annual General Meetings
- Fundraise
- Carry out risk assessments
- Examine existing policy and procedures and update as necessary
- Manage partnerships
- Review and carry out staff appraisals
- Organise inductions with the pre-school leader for staff, parents and children

Support

If you decide to volunteer on the committee, there is a lot of help available to you. Many areas in England have Pre-school Development Workers to support you and your pre-school committee. They are happy to give on-going advice about any aspect of the work of your committee.

The Pre-school Learning Alliance has regional and national networks to assist you. We also run a training programme, 'Behind the Scenes', aimed specifically at getting pre-school committees up and running.

We are fully committed to doing what we can to increase the participation of volunteers in pre-school committees, and have a volunteer strategy that helps us to support all parents involved with running committees by sharing the latest best practice – particularly to support the recruitment, retention and training of committee members.

We provide a number of resources, including the 'Behind the Scenes' workshop mentioned above, a volunteer welcome pack and various factsheets on different aspects of committee work.

Further information

If you would like specific information about how to get involved with your local pre-school committee, please contact the chair or play leader of the group. Alternatively, you might like to talk to another parent who is already involved with the committee.

For any general questions about volunteering, please contact the Information Service team:
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