Volunteering on Thrive Outside Residentials:

Frequently Asked Questions

**When will the projects happen?**

Our full programme is linked from the volunteering page of our website. Places go fast, so please sign up as soon as possible to avoid disappointment!

To provide continuity for the children, it is important that all volunteers attend the full length of projects – it is not possible to volunteer for a part of the week. For this reason as well, all volunteers must be residential (accommodation will be provided at the project site).

**Where do the projects take place?**

Our projects happen in buildings we hire (usually residential schools or outdoor education centres) in rural locations within a couple of hours drive of London. The buildings contain all the facilities we need for the project, including a large kitchen, a dining room, outdoor space to play and sleeping areas for the children and volunteers.

**Do I need any special skills to volunteer with you?**

No! Just lots of enthusiasm, energy and a desire to throw heart and soul into giving our children a holiday to remember! We provide full project training for all new volunteers (we’ll let you know about the dates for this once we have received your application) and you will be working closely with experienced team members who have done the projects before and know the ropes, so you’ll always be well supported. That said, we are always on the lookout for people with specific skills and training in First Aid, Catering and Food Hygiene and Minibus Driving. If you are interested in doing any of these things, but don’t hold the relevant qualifications, we can usually arrange training for you to, so please let us know.

**I’ve never worked with children before, will I be OK?**

Yes, please don’t worry! So long as you bring a sense of fun, positivity and some determination to the project, you’ll be fine! We’ll give you some pointers on what to expect and how to manage the sorts of challenges that might come up. The most important thing is that you have the right attitude and approach – that you’re willing to be flexible and patient when plans change or things go a little wrong, that you can work reflectively and inclusively, that you don’t mind ‘roughing it’ a bit (you will be sharing basic accommodation with other volunteers and probably won’t have the luxury of nice long baths and showers!) and you are prepared to not get a huge amount of sleep for a week!

**What does a typical day on a project involve?**

Our projects are usually a whirlwind, but you’ll soon find your feet! Most people work as Group Helpers, attached to a small group of similarly aged children, alongside another volunteer. Each day, after breakfast, your group will head out in a minibus, accompanied by another group and their helpers, to take part in a range of outdoor activities, (things like raft building, fire lighting, visits to a farm or trips to a beach). You’ll be joining in as much as possible with the children, encouraging them and sometimes (for the things that don’t require a qualified instructor), working with the other volunteers to lead the activity. You’ll have a packed lunch whilst you’re out and then, in the afternoon, everyone will come back to the project site for a snack and some time to play. Depending on the size of the project and the time of year, everyone may eat dinner together before heading out again in different combinations for another activity, or you may go off site again for the whole evening, to do an activity which includes your dinner (such as a night walk with fish and chips, a barbeque by a lake or cooking over a fire, before camping out for the night). Finally, you’ll put the children to bed with hot chocolate and lots of bedtime stories before having some well-deserved down time with the rest of the volunteers and heading to bed yourself.

**Is there any cost for me?**

The only cost you will incur is your travel to and from our project site (usually, if you are coming by train, we can collect you from the nearest station). Once you are with us, all food, accommodation and activity costs are covered by us.

**I’m still keen! How do I sign up?**

You can sign up by completing our online application form (which you can access from the volunteering page on our website). Once you submit it, you will receive confirmation that it has reached us and we will be in touch with information on next steps. Please bear with us - depending on where we are in our recruitment cycle, it may take us a little bit of time to get back to you, but in the meantime, if you have any questions, you can contact us at recruitment@freetobekids.org.uk.

As part of the next stage of your application, you will be invited to attend some training and offered a 10 minute interview with our senior team. Its compulsory that you complete both a successful interview and the relevant training prior to the commencement of your project with us. We’ll also need you to complete an enhanced DBS check, unless you are already subscribed to the DBS Update Service. We will make arrangements for this with you ahead of your training.

**If you have any other questions that we haven’t answered here, please feel free to email us at:** recruitment@freetobekids.org.uk