



Free to Be Kids

Growing children's emotional health

**Residential Project Coordinator and Youth Programme
Worker
Recruitment Pack**

Thank you for your interest in working for Free to Be Kids (colloquially known as 'Free to Be' by our staff, children and volunteers). Our mission is to help some of the most disadvantaged children and young people in London and beyond to increase their sense of their own capacity, ultimately helping them to change their stories about who they are and who they can be.

Our main Thrive Outside programme takes particularly disadvantaged children on week-long countryside breaks, helping them to feel special, valued, brave and successful. For those most in need, we provide follow-on support through further small group residentials, one to one mentoring and our youth leadership programme. In 2022 we supported 229 young people who would otherwise have had no respite from very challenging home circumstances.

We believe in childhood, muddy trainers, new challenges, self-expression, and real human relationships. Our aim is to open up a sense of adventure, freedom and possibility for children who are struggling, whatever life's circumstances. - From our website

We founded Free to Be in late 2015 with a small team of key volunteers. From then, we've grown into an established organisation with fantastic outcomes, with a paid core group of staff and an over 200 strong volunteer team. In 2019 and 2022, we won the London Youth Award for Excellence in Outdoor Education. The successful candidate will help us to build on the excellent engagement work we do with particularly vulnerable children through our residentials, developing our streams of ongoing work to reach more young people and have a deeper impact. They will also coordinate/take other prominent roles on a minimum of ten residential projects each year, helping create incredible experiences for children who really need our support.

If successful, you will be joining our team at a particularly exciting time - working alongside our small, dedicated staff team to grow and develop the organisation. You'll be at the centre of our work, with opportunities to grow and shape our work with young people, as well as helping us to create the foundations for the charity's ongoing success and growth.

Free to Be is a charity built around the core idea that people coming together with passion and commitment can achieve incredible things for vulnerable children. We are proud of our determination and can-do approach - our staff and volunteers go the extra mile, whether it's sticking with a young person through the wind and rain as they figure out a problem, or learning new skills ourselves to respond to challenges as they arise. If this approach resonates with you too, we look forward to receiving your application!

Rachel Mugan and Mike Gee, Co-Founders and CEOs



Job Description

Salary: £29,000 to £31,750 dependent on experience.

Hours: Fulltime: 37 hours per week spread over 5 days. Attendance on at least 10 residential projects a year.

Leave: 46 days per year, inclusive of bank holidays and pre-set reward days. (Yes, we know how generous this is! But we ask a lot in return - see note 2)

Start Date: Mid-March

Contract Length: Fixed Term until March 2025, with likelihood of extension.

Reports to: Management team

You'll be joining a small team of 7, supplemented by a vibrant and committed group of volunteers.

The position is based in Lambeth, at our small office space. Optional home working is possible for two days per week after successful probation. In addition, attendance at a minimum of 10 six-night residential projects outside London per year is a core component of this role. (See notes 2 & 3.)

Job Purpose:

The position is a dual role. You'll join as the organisation's sole dedicated Youth Programme Worker and will lead on a portion of Free to Be's year-round follow-on support for vulnerable young people who we have initially engaged via our Thrive Outside residential. This will involve working with a member of the management team to run our Young Leader and Mentoring programmes as well as working one to one with a small caseload of our children who have more complex needs.

You'll also help lead at least 10 of our residential projects across each year - working on the ground with the children, leading the volunteers, and helping make the projects special, safe, and transformative for vulnerable young people.



Key Responsibilities:

1. Youth Programme delivery (approx. 60% of workload):

When not on residential (see below), you'll help to lead the delivery of our year-round work. All of our young people come to us initially through our Thrive Outside 'Gateway' residential. Through that residential week they'll build deep trust with the organisation. Many however have complex life situations requiring longer term support. Your role will be to deliver and lead the youth work elements of this longer-term support. This will include:

- a) Assisting with our 'Young Leader' Programme. This programme currently consists of a weekend residential training project to skill up young people, aged 14-17, who have previously attended residential as younger children, to return as volunteers on those projects. Young Leaders also attend a thank you and feedback weekend each Autumn. We have recently begun to develop this programme further to offer greater year-round support including 1:1 keywork and support through challenges; sessions focusing on life skills development; linking them into work experience/capacity building experiences. We would also like to develop a 'Youth Board' or similar in the coming couple of years. You will lead the youth development aspects of the programme: delivering support sessions and keywork to Young Leaders, arranging development opportunities, building participation, and growing the offer over time.

- b) Hold a small caseload of higher need young people. Working with a caseload of 4-6 young people at any one time you will deliver targeted 1:1 keywork sessions supporting young people with significant needs – offering advice, support, activities, and crucially help to work through sensitive or complex issues including difficult relationships with parents/carers; low school attendance; challenges with emotional/mental health.

- c) Hold a small caseload of volunteer mentors and their mentees - providing regular support, supervision, and guidance meetings to the mentors; ensure mentors are running sessions safely and in line with policy; leading Start of Mentoring meetings with children, parents and mentors; taking the lead on liaising with the wider network of support around the child including advocacy, attending multi agency meetings and safeguarding referrals. Mentoring is one of Free to Be's follow-on programmes.

2. Thrive Outside Project Coordination (approx. 40% of workload):

Our residential projects are immersive, exhausting in all the right ways, and full of opportunities for children to feel included, valued and successful. Children usually spend 5 days at a time with us - many will paddle in the sea for the first time, play hide and seek in the woods, build rafts, canoe across lakes, visit farms, forests, ruined castles and splash through streams. A small number of projects are camping based, but most run from a variety of residential centres that we hire for the purpose. The majority of these projects take place during the school holidays.

We want you to play a key part in at least 10 such projects a year. Initially spending time in the different project roles (working intensively with small groups of children; providing floating support to the project coordinators; perhaps overseeing catering or driving our minibusses.). Once you are familiar with the way projects work, we will support you to progress to lead and coordinate them, working alongside a member of our staff team or an experienced volunteer. This will involve managing teams of between 5 and 25 volunteers, to oversee the wellbeing of between 8 and 20 children and young people per project.

Jointly with the other project coordinator, you will:

- Take lead responsibility for the organisation, structure, and safe running of the project.
- Provide leadership, support and direction to the project's volunteer team. Set the tone and ethos of the project, understand and model Free to Be's approach to supporting young people, and lead the team to create the best experience possible for the children.
- Build excellent working relationships with Free to Be's children and young people, ensuring they feel welcomed and included and that their safety and support needs are fully met during the project.
- Support the volunteer team to respond effectively and in a positive manner to children presenting behaviour, risk issues (including safeguarding issues), or other challenges which may arise.
- Liaise with the parents/carers of Free to Be children, building positive and supportive relationships, understanding many may have been let down by statutory or other organisations in the past.
- Work to ensure safety and quality standards on residential are of the highest level by ensuring Free to Be's policies and processes, (including safeguarding, health and safety) are implemented at all times and issues are efficiently and constructively problem-solved, with the support of the leadership team.
- Be the ultimate problem solver on the project - anything can happen, and frequently does!

As a small but fast-growing charity, we may also, from time to time, ask you to step in and support with other tasks in line with the development of the organisation.

Important Notes about this Position

Note 1: Leave consists of 25 days annual leave, 13 reward days which are pre- set by Free to Be (usually a fortnight in mid-late September and 3 days at Christmas) and the 8 bank holidays. Where bank holidays fall during a residential, alternative dates will be agreed in lieu. Due to Free to Be's core work falling in the school holidays, leave at these times of year is restricted.

Note 2: Weekend and late working is an ordinary part of Free to Be's residential projects. All staff attending a residential are given two 'rest days' (in effect, days off) which are always taken immediately after return from a residential. We do not run a time off in lieu system in relation to residential and the significant extra hours worked during these times are rewarded via the 13 pre-set reward days in September and at Christmas each year.

Note 3: Attendance at 10 residential projects each year (totaling approximately 60 days and nights) is a requirement of the role. Some additional non-overnight travel may also be required. Car ownership is not required.

An amazing part of working with Free to Be is the community you become part of. I've met so many funny, passionate, and positive people through this organisation. - Volunteer

Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity and our Code of Conduct

As a charity working with vulnerable children, some of whom will at times display behavioural challenges and all of whom have experienced real hardship within their childhoods, we uphold the highest levels of safeguarding practice. We will support you to develop knowledge and skills in this area as it is a requirement of the role that you respond effectively, safely, and robustly to safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection issues arising within your work with us.

We require all staff to work in accordance with Free to Be's Code of Conduct, values, ethos, and core principles and to build positive and respectful relationships with all other staff, volunteers, children, their families, and other organisations encountered as part of your work with Free to Be.



Person Specification

Ultimately, we're looking for someone with strong experience working with marginalised young people, who believes in the deep potential of children who are not thriving elsewhere in life. We're looking for passion, energy and the drive to go the extra mile on these young people's behalf.

You'll have multiple years' experience working alongside young people who might struggle in other settings and will be used to dealing with a range of challenging behaviours, with a good understanding of safeguarding. You'll have the flexibility to work away from home on up to 10 week-long residential projects per year.

Ideally, you'll also have some experience of leading projects for children – whether residential or non-residential. Experience of working on or leading residential is not required but may be an advantage. We are particularly keen to encourage applications from those who can help us represent the lived experiences of our children through their own lived experience or background.

Previous Experience	Essential/Desirable
A minimum of 2 years (more preferred) experience of direct work with children and young people, in a youth work or other relevant setting	Essential
Work with children presenting complex behaviour	Essential
Experience of leading projects and sessions with young people	Strongly Desired
Experience of working on or leading residential trips or projects	Desired
Experience of coordinating projects for young people including liaison with parents, activity/session planning, risk assessments	Desired
Experience of managing others - staff, volunteers, students on work placement	Desired
Core Skills	Essential/Desirable
A real passion for working with marginalised or vulnerable young people - we're looking for someone who's calling is in this work, and who is driven to invest heart and soul into it.	Essential
Skilled at building relationships with disadvantaged young people aged 8-17	Essential
Leadership and presence - you'll be the lead person on many residential projects, and it is vital you're able to present a calm, confident, containing, and supportive presence for both children and adult volunteers/staff	Essential
Capacity to lead a team - supporting other staff/volunteers, helping them develop, solve problems, and meet the myriad challenges of running projects for vulnerable young people	Essential

Good situational judgement. We will develop your knowledge around subjects like safeguarding and risk assessments, but you need existing skills in making balanced, sensible, but sometimes quick, decisions in fast-paced environments. If you have existing experience of dealing with safeguarding issues, this will be an advantage.	Essential
Organisation - you must be able to work quickly and accurately, prioritising competing demands, and managing your time efficiently.	Essential
Flexibility - we can't stress how key this is. Our shared responsibility is to do whatever it takes to deliver the projects our children need. This can involve stepping into unfamiliar areas of work, doing the unexpected, out of hours working, and taking a dynamic, proactive role to Make Things Happen.	Essential
Interest in outdoor activities - our residentials are built around nature and the outdoors. You certainly don't need to be Bear Grylls, but you do need a capacity to "rough it" a little, be happy to spend time camping and be comfortable with the idea of helping young people to access adventure by being the first to jump in the lake or get a bit muddy.	Essential
Able to work both independently (sometimes remotely) and as part of a tight knit team.	Essential
Keen to take on responsibility, to grow and to develop.	Desirable
Practical Requirements	Essential/Desirable
Have held a licence for over two years, with 3 points of fewer, and willingness to drive a minibus or car as part of the role. (Minibus training provided.)	Desirable
Able to work away from home on up to 12 week-long residential projects per year.	Essential



Staff Benefits

As a Free to Be staff member, you'll benefit from:

- Generous holiday allowance (see Job Description for details)
- Paid sickness and emergency leave (up to 10 days per year)
- Reward scheme membership, with access to discounted cinema tickets, free and discounted entry to a variety of attractions and days out, discounted restaurant meals and a range of other benefits to supplement your salary and recognise your commitment
- Employee health plan through SimplyHealth, allowing you to claim money back on your payments for everyday health treatments, including opticians appointments and dental check-ups
- Enrolment in NEST pension scheme - Free to Be pay annual employer contributions, equivalent to 4% of your base salary, rising by 1% for every two years of service, up to a maximum of 6%

Free to Be has really changed my life. The attention I got from the adults was just unreal. I could actually trust someone outside of my family and that was really helpful. Before, I wasn't really an outgoing person, but it's weird because now I'm motivated to do things - it unlocked that door for me - Jordan, Young Leader, 15

How to apply

Please complete our [application form](#) and send it by email to employment@freetobekids.org.uk. The closing date for applications is midnight on 15th January 2024.

Initial interviews will be taking place on Tuesday 6th and Wednesday 7th February. Shortlisted candidates will be asked to join us, and some of our young people for an assessment day, on Saturday 17th February. We aim to confirm appointment by 20th February with the role starting in March 2024.

The role requires an Enhanced DBS check. Whilst a previous conviction will not necessarily prevent you from joining our team, we would expect you to disclose any convictions or cautions as part of your application. The appointment is subject to references (taken up after offer). We will also need to obtain proof of your right to work within the UK prior to appointment.

If you have any questions about the role, you can contact us by emailing the above address and we'd be happy to arrange a chat over the phone. We look forward to hearing from you!



Further Information about our work

Thrive Outside is Free to Be's main programme for children and young people. It uses therapeutically structured residentials to support children and young people to develop self-confidence, build capacity to overcome challenges and create a sense of belonging. Gateway residential projects, based in countryside settings, engage and build relationships with children and young people at the start of their involvement with Free to Be. Nature based activities, time spent with animals, cooking and the arts are used as vehicles to engage children in relational work alongside high ratios of adult volunteers. The intensity, sense of immersion and belonging built through these projects allow Free to Be to assess children's core needs, whilst also building trust and positive relationships, creating a valuable opportunity to understand and begin to work alongside children who may struggle to engage with more traditional, clinic-based interventions.

Having engaged children and young people through a Gateway residential, longer term Journey Plans are then created for the highest need children who need ongoing support. These are tailored to need and may consist of recurring respite, individual mentoring, or follow on more specialised, residential work through sequenced series of Journey Projects across the year. Journey Projects have a focus on developing confidence, relational skills and self-belief in young people who schools or other referrers see as particularly at risk. They have an adult to child ratio approaching one to one.

The majority of children we work with are aged 8 – 14. Most are referred to us by schools, local authority social workers, other family support organisations or parents/carers who self-refer. Most children and young people we support are in mainstream school, though many are struggling to manage, and some may be at risk of exclusion. All have experienced hardship including severe poverty, housing instability, parental difficulties with drugs or alcohol, historical trauma or abuse. As a result, some display a level of behavioural difficulty, but never at a level of requiring specialist knowledge or skills, and training and support in responding to such challenges will be provided. Familiarity in working with disadvantaged children will provide a good foundation for this role.

You may also like to have a look at...

Our website: www.freetobekids.org.uk

Our latest Impact Report which is available [here](#)

Our Code of Conduct, Safeguarding and behaviour policies: extracted from our Policy Handbook [here](#).

Our volunteering recruitment video: available on the volunteering page of our website or on [YouTube](#)

