

## Ben



I chose to volunteer with OxFSN as part of a 35-hour work placement I had to complete for one of my university modules. This was the first time for me volunteering. As someone who cares for a sibling with autism, I know and understand first-hand the extra support and advice that families need. As OxFSN helps to provide support to families like mine, I felt like I could really make a difference.

I have been able to help with updating the website, creating 'how-to videos' for Excel for staff, and helping to design and write the 2019/20 impact report. The impact report involved researching the projects that OxFSN has been involved in and how they have helped and impacted families. I participated in weekly team meetings and gained a better understanding of how a charity organisation is structured and run.

What is unique about OxFSN is how it works in partnership with so many other health and social care providers across the county. I felt I got an insight into these different providers, how they interact with each other and what is happening at broader level across Oxfordshire for family carers. The staff here are very friendly and approachable. I felt they accommodated me really well and I found the work meaningful. If I was stuck on a piece of work or something was not clear, I was able to ask one of the team or send email and they would get back to me to answer any questions or queries. I would definitely recommend volunteering with OxFSN!

## Cosima

I first started volunteering with OxFSN as work experience at school and have volunteered and been part of various projects since. I saw the organisation as one where I could gain skills whilst contributing to an organisation whose values align so closely with my own.

As a sibling carer, I understand the significance of the work that OxFSN does in supporting families with members with special needs, and I do my best to only work for organisations that I really believe in.

As a volunteer, I have helped with admin tasks and produced life-story work on older carers of people with learning disabilities. OxFSN has a great team and a great working atmosphere and I have always felt like I can ask any questions I need to and seek support when needed.



### Charlotte



I started volunteering with OxFSN in my school holidays. I have worked with Angeli to reformat the 'About Us' section of the charity's website, and have found the work very rewarding and engaging. It is lovely that I am able to contribute to a charity that supports families like mine across Oxford. As a sibling carer I understand the value of charities like OxFSN.

### Sara

I started volunteering for OxFSN when I was given the opportunity to get involved in the Embolden project. This was looking at the experiences of older carers in the county and I took photos of several older carers while Kathy Liddell, an OxFSN staff member interviewed them. It was a very moving project as people described decades of caring, expressing so much love for their children. I have to say it was a really fun experience as the people who work at OxFSN are great (and all family carers). The interviews and photos were made into an exhibition which has been shown across Oxfordshire and featured in the Guardian newspaper!



### Steve



The opportunity to do some volunteering with OxFSN came about through my wife who works with the organisation. I hear and see what a difference they make to families who have a family member with a learning disability across Oxfordshire with the work that they do, and though I work full time myself – I like to be able to volunteer when I can.

This usually takes the form of photographer at some of the events OxFSN run, photographing the family carers and professionals who attend. It's a small role compared to what many do, but I like to think it helps capture the many families who have a story to tell and the great work that OxFSN do.

## Volunteer FAQ's

### **Who is in charge of the volunteers and who do I contact to volunteer?**

Angeli Vaid is in charge of the volunteers and can answer questions and queries. You can contact her at: [angeli.vaid@OxFSN.org.uk](mailto:angeli.vaid@OxFSN.org.uk)

### **Who can volunteer?**

We are looking for people who share our values in supporting family carers of people with learning disabilities. You may be a person who is caring for a family member with learning disability, a parent who wants to build up skills to return to work or doing a placement as part of a university or college course. You will need to be 16 or over to volunteer, people under 18 will need consent from their parent or guardian.

### **What sorts of volunteer work can I do?**

Examples of volunteer work include

- helping to set up and run events and training days for family carers and professionals, attending events and talking to family carers on behalf of OxFSN
- working as part of our family support team
- taking part in our research projects
- helping to update our website

If there is something specific you would like to do, we are happy to discuss it with you.

### **How does volunteering help OxFSN?**

We are a small organisation with limited resources and need to raise all our funds. There are always more families that need our help and support and by volunteering your time we can help them. In our work, it is always important to get other people's, views and perspectives. We enjoy meeting new people and it helps us bring fresh ideas to the organisation.

### **How much time can I commit?**

You can commit as much or as little time as you want: a one-off for a few hours, a few weeks on a specific project or perhaps on-going. You might do a block of time or dip in and out.

### **Where can I volunteer?**

The OxFSN offices are in Slade House, Horspath, Oxford and you are welcome to come and work with us here, or you can work from home if you prefer. If you are volunteering at an event you will need to travel to the venue which will be Oxfordshire based and accessible by public transport.

### **Can you cover my expenses?**

Yes OxFSN can cover travel expenses and 'out of pocket expenses' – money that you spend whilst doing your work for us eg things like, paper, ink, telephone calls or postage.

**Will I be given any training?**

Yes, any training you need will be given.

**Do I need a DBS check?**

A DBS check is a Disclosure and Barring Service check and looks at whether you have a criminal record. You will not need a DBS check as you won't be left alone with children or vulnerable adults.

You will be given a photo ID badge to use when representing OxFSN at events or when visiting our office.

**What if I get stuck/or don't know what to do when I'm volunteering/ where can I get support?**

Angeli will be able to provide help, support and guidance.

**Will it affect government benefits if I'm a carer?**

You can volunteer and your benefits shouldn't be affected. However, depending on the benefits you receive, there are a few things you should know before you start. We suggest you get advice from the Job Centre or Citizens Advice if you are concerned..

[How volunteering affects benefits Citizens Advice.](#)

**Is there anything I should know before I start?**

We are a small organisation spread across the County and most of us work part-time. Therefore, we are not always based in our offices and work from home too.. There is car-parking onsite at our offices in Slade House.