



SuperTroop Volunteer Handbook

The purpose of this document is to provide a basic overview of the activities of SuperTroop to:

- ✓ Provide guidance on appropriate support in specific areas
- ✓ Introduce new volunteers to the basics of what we do
- ✓ Provide a distilled summary of key policies and procedures for helpers, group leaders and senior team
- ✓ Share the **Helper Code of Conduct**

Other available documents you might like to look at are:

- The **Statement of Purpose** which sets out the function and activities of SuperTroop including more detail on most information in this handbook
- The **SuperTroop Handbook** which collects together all of the organisational and operational policies and procedures of SuperTroop in full
- The **Helper Best Practice Guide** which provides a quick-check reference for key aspects of good practice, useful during the holiday itself
- The **Group Leader Best Practice Guide**, as above, but specifically for the Group Leader role
- The **Holiday-Maker Guide** which provides an introduction to the SuperTroop scheme for children and young people who attend the holidays.

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Good Practice on our Holidays

In this section, we will try to outline some notes on good practice in a few key areas. The recommendations here will be reiterated in training meetings and informal discussions throughout your time as a SuperTroop volunteer.

Communication:

Communication is essential. A breakdown in communication can lead to distress and sometimes crisis behaviour.

Many children and young people attending our holidays will have limited speech and may use other ways to communication. This can include:

- Signing, including a simplified sign language called *Makaton*
- Use of images and symbols, printed on paper and given or shown to a communication partner, often known as PECS (pronounced like “pecks”)
- Use of a voice-output communication aid, sometimes via an iPad, which produces a synthetic voice in response to the user selecting symbols or typing
- Idiosyncratic or non-systematic communication such as leading someone to a place of interest, exchanging real objects, or other subtle behaviours which indicate likes/dislikes and needs

Key ways to improve communication include:

- Read how holiday-makers communicate on their kid’s sheet.
- Keep language clear, simple, appropriate for level of understanding.
- Slow down – give them time to respond
- Offer simple concrete choices: use real objects to help them understand (e.g. swimming towel for swimming)
- Give attention to the other person. If needed come down to eye level.
- Share attention with the holiday maker. Play nearby or alongside, or join in with the child's play. Use commentary and point things out.
- Exchange objects and symbols; show them what you are talking about.
- Use eye contact, monitor and interpret facial expressions or body language
- Learn and get the children to teach you the simple, every day signs they use.
- Use gentle, verbal and physical prompts and gestures to guide and support.
- Show listening and understanding by mirroring “you said you would like....”

Health & Safety:

The holiday-makers who attend the week often have little or no sense of danger. They may also have problem with motor control which can make them seem clumsy or make walking difficult. It is our responsibility to watch out for dangers and ensure the holiday-makers remain safe. To do this well you should:

- Monitor the environment for risks: hard surfaces, kerbs, hot drinks, sharp or dirty items.
- Tidy up after messy activities or ask another volunteer to do this for you if necessary
- Practice common sense when operating electrical items including turning off at the socket when not in use
- Safely store any risky items in your possession, e.g. medications (stored in a central locked location), razors, lighters. Ask for help if you don’t have a safe way to store these.
- Model appropriate and safe behaviour at all times, including when off-duty



- Ensure the building remains secure – shut doors behind you, challenge visitors
- Understand the fire evacuation procedure and think about the route you will take if needed
- Read and sign-off on the risk assessments and share key reminders with helpers before each activity (for Group Leaders and Senior Helpers)

Mobility, Lifting & Handling:

This section applies both to safe lifting and handling of holiday-makers, where they require support for mobility, but also safe lifting and handling of objects. To be a good volunteer, you need to take care of yourself which means protecting yourself from injury. So, when lifting anything:

- Plan in advance: who is lifting what? Where are you taking it? Is the route and destination clear of obstacles? Is there plenty of space?
- Don't lift at all if you aren't certain you can lift independently. Wherever possible, lift with a partner, or reduce the weight by lifting less at a time, or use a trolley
- Keep your back as straight as possible, lift with your legs. Keep your chin up and look around you.

In particular, when lifting a holiday-maker, for example into or out of a wheelchair:

- Always lift in pairs: on the rare occasions we permit single-person lifting, you should have a second person present to help if needed
- Communicate and co-ordinate with the person being lifted and with your lifting partner
- As above, planning is essential. Make sure everyone knows the timing, where you are going and ensure that your route and final destination are clear of obstacles

There are also many holiday-makers who may need support for mobility which falls short of lifting, or who need help to get around using wheelchairs. In these cases:

- Communication is key, again. Before moving a wheelchair, speak to the occupant and ask what they want to do, or describe your plan to them.
- Move at a reasonable pace: when going down slopes or steps it is often best to go in reverse
- Remember that just because someone uses a wheelchair a lot of the time, that doesn't mean they can't walk or move around in other ways
- When supporting someone to walk, take the same care you would when doing a full lift.

Managing Behaviour:

The vast majority of experiences you have with holiday-makers during this week will be happy and positive. However sometimes crisis points do arise. These can happen because holiday-makers often find it difficult to express their needs, or may find specific experiences – such as crowded noisy environments – extremely hard to handle. Other sources of stress include anxiety about transitions (e.g. moving from one place to the next), confusion about what is happening next, or how long something happening now (e.g. a bus journey) will last. Keeping communication lines open is the single best tool for preventing a crisis. This means **listening** and **watching**, as well as speaking.

During the normal day, here are some key ways to prevent a stressful situation arising:

- Use timetables, or clear simple language, to help them understand what's happening next. Remember some people may only want to know about the next step, not a whole day's worth of activities
- Give holiday-makers warning when an activity is coming to an end, try to allow time to finish what they are doing.



- Keep holiday-makers entertained during waiting times, or recognise and praise them for waiting nicely – “*good waiting*”, “*lovely sitting*”, “*thanks for waiting so nicely*”
- Sometimes it is possible to offer a chance to return to an activity later, or on another day
- Make sure the individual has plenty of time to process what you are saying – use communication aids if needed / appropriate
- Try to find out about the usual bedtime routine of your ‘bedtime kid’ and follow that. Routines like this can be reassuring and helpful so that the individual knows that bedtime is approaching and settles to sleep

A common situation is that a holiday maker may be reluctant to try something new, or start a less interesting activity (e.g. go in to lunch instead of playing). In addition to the above you can:

- Offer choices and options so the young person feels they have control
- Lead by example: do it yourself, have fun, and show them what they are missing
- Let other people start first and watch them – you can talk about what you can see other people doing, and then suggest joining in with the group / a favourite person
- Offer to help with whatever the individual is finding tricky / wants to finish
- Explain what the next activity is going to be like, and check they have understood
- Give reasonable explanations about why the next activity is a good idea – e.g. eating meals is important so you have energy to play
- Use gentle encouragement – don’t push the issue and reassure them if they are anxious
- Don’t be reluctant to ask for help from group leaders or senior helpers

If you are with a holiday-maker who is becoming upset or showing signs of impending crisis

- Remember the kid’s sheet. Think about what strategies other people have used successfully, and what are common triggers which upset that person
- Try not to over-crowd them. Step back, keep a low calm voice, give time and space
- If the holiday maker becomes rude or aggressive, don’t respond, and try not to take it personally. Try to detect if there is a reasonable message in there.
- If something specific is causing the distress, see if you can remove that thing, or move them away from it (e.g. a noisy toy)
- Don’t make threats, or offer rewards which cannot be met. However, it is OK to point out reasonable consequences: “*if you don’t get ready now, we won’t have time to go swimming*”
- Remember your MAPA training if you have it, or ask for help from someone who does

Meal times:

This is a time when a lot of important issues about managing difficult behaviour, and also personal care, come together. At mealtimes it is important to remember:

- There can be a certain amount of waiting. Include holiday-makers in a conversation (even if they don’t speak themselves) and praise them for waiting / sitting nicely
- Offer simple choices and give as much control as you can
- Model good behaviour – manners, cleanliness, healthy eating
- Make sure the person you are working with has any special things they need for meals (e.g. a particular cup)
- At the end of the meal, and at intervals during eating, help them to keep clean and tidy
- Make sure you are aware of any allergies or special dietary needs
- During the day, keep yourself and the person you are with hydrated and topped up with balanced snacks as needed



Personal care:

Most of the holiday-makers on our week will need some support with aspects of personal care. This can range from supervision and prompts while dressing and washing, to full support for all aspects. It is essential for their personal dignity that all of our young people look and feel clean and tidy. Helpers are responsible for day to day personal care but also for aspects such as making sure holiday-makers have enough clean clothes for the remainder of the week, and for taking care of their belongings.

Personal care includes: getting dressed (in clean, weather-appropriate clothes), washing, going to the toilet, brushing hair and teeth, taking medication. Key issues to consider include:

- Dignity and privacy are the key components of good personal care. Ask yourself what you would want in a particular situation.
- Some personal care situations – e.g. changing an incontinence pad – can be unpleasant and embarrassing. Try to be matter of fact about the situation and complete the process with minimum fuss.
- Planning is important. Make sure you have everything you need before you start, and that the available facilities will be comfortable for the individual you are helping
- It is essential to find time in the day for toilet trips. Make sure the person you are with has plenty of opportunities to go, and that they are not rushed on the toilet.
- Make sure you have good hygiene standards at all times. Keep yourself clean, and use gloves for intimate care / handling bodily fluids
- When starting out with personal care, or supporting a new person for the first time, it is OK to be anxious and to ask for help. In fact, we would always recommend partnering with a senior helper the first time you do any intimate care such as a pad change or bedtime.
- If you can, get help from someone with specific experience of that young person. They may have useful knowledge about preferred changing positions, how much support is needed and so on. This also helps to preserve the dignity of the person being supported.

Medical care:

Another aspect of personal care is medical care. On our holiday all medical care, including first aid and administering regular prescription medications, is managed by a medical team. They follow a detailed procedure for ensuring high standards in this work. For most helpers, your role will be to:

- Remember to take your 'bedtime kid' to the meds room for any regular medications in the morning and before bedtime
- Witness administration of any medications or first aid and sign-off to say this has been done correctly
- Ensure that you, and no-one apart from the designated individuals, ever gives any medication or administers first aid to one of our holiday-makers
- Respond quickly and calmly whenever medical attention is needed by calling for the appropriate support
- In the case of an epileptic seizure the key things to remember are:
 1. Time the seizure
 2. Protect the individual's head and / or limbs – e.g. using a folded-up jumper as a pillow
 3. Do not restrict their movement or put anything in their mouth
 4. Call for back up



Safeguarding:

Safeguarding means protecting children and young people from abuse. Abuse can come in many forms. As well as physical violence or sexual abuse, children and young people may suffer as a result of neglect, emotional abuse (e.g. bullying, shaming) and financial abuse (i.e. exploitation of resources meant for the child or young person). Sadly, our holiday-makers are vulnerable to abuse and may not be able to report this to others. We all have a responsibility to look out for signs of abuse and report these, and to protect our holiday-makers, as well as protecting the young volunteers in our organisation. We can do this by:

- Not using full names when talking about holiday-makers in public, to protect their full identity
- Safely managing all personal information relating to them and to each other
- Getting to know the people in our care, and monitoring their behaviour for signs of upset
- Building strong relationships of trust with holiday-makers and with each other
- Speaking frankly and honestly if we have concerns
- Knowing who are the child protection officers in our organisation
- Following our Helper Code of Conduct

What to expect for a new Helper

Timings:

The holiday week normally begins on the first Sunday in July and ends on the second Saturday in that month. Helpers are asked to arrive on the Sunday morning for a helper briefing before lunch. The holiday-makers then arrive after lunch on the first day, and go home on the morning of the last day. *This is what happens in an average year - please check for this year's dates and timings!*

On arrival:

At the helper briefing you will be asked to provide details of any current medical conditions using a form, and any medication you have will need to be stored centrally. When you arrive you will be shown where you are sleeping. You will not need sleeping bags or bath towels, but bring a plentiful supply of informal clothes, and your swimming kit including a towel. Ladies, please bring a full swimming costume or have a spare t-shirt to wear over a bikini in the pool. All meals will be provided and all entry fees will be paid; bring your normal spending money.

Your groups:

After the briefing you will be split into groups of four or five helpers. Each group will have a group leader and possibly one other experienced volunteer. You will also be told if you are looking after a particular child. If you are, this means that you will greet the child on arrival and unpack his/her case, list its contents, and do the reverse on the final day. At night you will sleep in the same room as the child, sometimes in a room with another holiday-maker and another helper. You are responsible for calling the on-call team overnight, if there is any emergency. Every morning you get the child ready and take her/him to breakfast; every evening you take the child after our last activity and help him/her go to bed and settle.

The Rota:

Your helper group will work with a different set of children each day; there will be four groups of four children on the holiday. On Sunday (day one) you will stay in your helper group with the



children who are being looked after by volunteers in the group. By Monday morning you will find that the children have been divided into their groups and you will see a different group on each of the next five days, with one rest day. On the evening before a rest day you are 'on duty'; i.e. you stay in the house watching over the children from bed time until the whole house reassembles for bed at 11.00 p.m. On one other evening your group will also need to stay in the house in reserve and on hand in case of an emergency. On the other evenings we will have a place to relax and hang out, after the children have gone to bed, from 9pm until 11pm. On your rest day, you will have things to do, and you will have some time completely off; the main thing is you will not have direct responsibility for any children.

You and your group will have your meals with the group of children you are looking after for the day. You will have information sheets which tell you about the children, including any dietary needs and allergies. At meals and at other times you should make sure the children behave well; we do not want to send them back spoiled, nor do we want to send them back pounds heavier, or lighter! If you find they are getting a crush on you, please deflect it gently: 'I already have a boy/girlfriend.' Otherwise you can find the attention very wearing. The whole system of group-rotation is designed to protect individuals from too much exposure to any one child as well as to give you the fullest range of experience.

After breakfast you are likely to have a planned activity in Edinburgh before lunch, swimming and then art or games after lunch, supper at Fettes, and more planned activities before the children go to bed. An alternative pattern will be whole day coach trips away from the city, and a picnic lunch. The planned activities are such things as arts & crafts, playground games / wide games, a show or a band. You have the benefit of a large team leading you, who are all experts in this field, and they will have devised the programme in detail to give you a structure within which you can feel confident to improvise and develop.

Working one-to-one:

When you are working with a group of children your group leader will decide who works with which child. Please keep your group leader informed of successes and difficulties. They and the senior helpers are there to support you. If you need to leave a child, e.g. to go to the lavatory, you must make sure there is a hand-over in consultation with the group leader. If you are responsible for a child you remain in contact at all times, and that means close contact, certainly within sight and often within touching distance. Safety is considered absolutely paramount at all times. Every instruction in this document goes back to that, including bed times: you have to be fit for another tiring day in the morning, and handovers at night have to be punctual or we risk putting the children in jeopardy. For the same reason, please do not spend time on your phone while you are with a holiday-maker, unless you are using it together (e.g. to take a selfie).

Personal care:

Whenever you are dealing with bodily fluids, like blood, or if a child has vomited or needs cleaning up, always use the rubber gloves which are provided. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you are squeamish. Medication will all be done centrally. You will be given instructions about your own medication, which needs to be kept securely away from the children. You will be shown on the morning of the briefing how to lift a child safely and correctly if the need arises. You will also be briefed about good practice in assisting children if they need it in the toilet or bathroom.



Safety:

Always remember that these children are likely to have very little sense of danger: you have to do their thinking for them. Whenever we are in hazardous locations like the seaside or a fun fair you have to be ultra careful that you do not expose them to any inappropriate risk; notes in their files may tell you of things to be avoided. When in public places keep close contact all the time and if you are walking near traffic keep firm hand contact. But also be careful around the Fettes campus. The children love to play in the group, but they can thoughtlessly injure each other if you are not vigilant, and you must be sure that they are always handled safely by you. Err on the side of caution and always look for hazards like curbs, hard surfaces etc.

Your behaviour:

Your behaviour has to be very correct whenever you are anywhere near the children. You will be a powerful role model and things you say and do will be copied. There is no smoking on the Fettes site or while acting as a SuperTroop volunteer. Under no circumstances should alcohol or illegal substances be brought back to or consumed in the boarding house or its surroundings. If you come back to the house in any way unfit to look after the children perfectly safely, we will have no option but to send you home. Finally, we depend very much upon the School's generosity, so our behaviour in the house at all times, and particularly at night, must be considerate to the resident staff as well as responsible to the good order of the buildings.

What If I need help?

The group leaders and senior team will always be close by and can lend a hand whenever you need them – just eye-contact can be enough to summon them to your aid. Although the team are all experts with children, they do not have all the answers. Sometimes you will. Please use them but also let them know when you want space to try things your own way.

If this all sounds very serious it is because we are collectively undertaking a huge responsibility – other people's children, and very vulnerable ones at that; but provided we maintain full respect for the children and fullest concentration on their safety at all times and the fact that this is their holiday, you will find that we all have a lot of fun and a marvellously rewarding time. Don't panic. You will be in a very supportive group, in a very well-designed programme, led by a very experienced team. You will cope, and at the end of the week you will be very (very) tired, probably emotionally super-charged, and above all triumphant.

Our Staff and Holiday-Makers

SuperTroop holidays are staffed entirely by volunteers.

Holiday-makers: On the SuperTroop holiday we welcome 40 young people each year, aged 8 - 18 years old. These children and young people have a range of different learning disabilities. Some of the most common are Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy and global developmental delay. These individuals tend to have a range of support needs in areas like personal care (e.g. washing, dressing), communication, and personal safety.

Helpers: Helpers are largely recruited from Fettes College. Groups of four or five helpers (some new, some with relevant experience) work together in a group, managed by a group leader. During the day, each group of helpers supports a group of four holiday-makers, with each helper assigned to one-to-one care of a single holiday maker. Overnight, most helpers will also be responsible for the care and supervision of one holiday maker: this is a 'bedtime helper'.



Group Leaders: There are 5 group leaders who have at relevant experience in disability support. They manage a group of new and experienced helpers, as described above. Group leaders meet with the holiday director and volunteer manager every evening. In addition, group leaders meet daily with their helper group before bedtime, to review the completed day and prepare for the next. Group leaders have radios so they can keep in contact with each other and with the senior helpers.

Senior helpers: Senior helpers (or the senior team) are about 10-12 experienced volunteers with relevant professional skills. Within the senior team specific duties are assigned to people, such as administration of medications; co-ordinating on-site activities; or managing special diets. In addition, the senior team are responsible for support of group leaders and helpers. On day trips senior helpers often shadow a group leader, providing an extra pair of hands to fetch and carry, helping to support any children with complex needs, and modelling ideal helper behaviour. Senior helpers also set-up and clear away activities and ensure that the infrastructure of the holiday is secure and functional. During the holiday, the senior team meets every morning to assign duties for the day ahead and share updates. The senior team normally have about three evenings off per week.

Medical Team: The medical team is compiled from members of the senior team based on experience and professional qualifications. Together they take responsibility for meeting the medical needs of the holiday-makers including: administering first aid and PRN / as-needed medications; booking in and administering both prescription and emergency medications; managing on-going health conditions.

Holiday Director: Sue Fletcher-Watson is the registered manager of the holiday scheme. Sue is a psychologist with 12 years' experience in learning disability and autism research, and 20 years' experience on a similar holiday scheme.

Trustees: Trustees do not hold a special role during the holiday week, though some may visit. Trustees perform the usual functions as outlined by the Office of the Scottish Charities Register including monitoring of the registered manager, creation of annual reports and submission to governing bodies, annual policy reviews and updates, and monitoring of finances.

How We Keep People Safe: A Policy Overview

We have a range of policies to ensure the health and welfare of our holiday-makers. These are designed to maintain the highest standards in the delivery of care and conduct of activities and are briefly listed below. Please contact us if you want to see the full policy in any case.

- a. **Application Form:** each holiday-maker submits a form, normally completed by their parent or guardian. This provides essential information such as emergency contact details and medical conditions, dietary requirements and care needs. Parents also provide information on likes and dislikes, and areas where support may be required.
- b. **Kid's Sheet:** drawing on information from the application form, direct discussion with parents or guardians, and experience during the holiday, each child has a personal record which details their preferences and needs. Sections include: My Personal Care Needs; How I Communicate; About Me. This document is updated daily and accessible to all volunteers on the holiday, while being securely held by the day's relevant group leader. It may also be supplemented by additional information where a holiday maker has a particularly complex medical, dietary or behavioural plan.
- c. **Medications Policy:** this provides for the safe receipt, storage and administration of all medications including basic first aid, emergency medications and regular medications. The Medications Policy and Procedure is enacted by named staff who are fit to do so, with specialist training provided in-house or externally as required. This policy is backed up with



standardised records for: recording medications administered and by whom; recording first aid; checking emergency medications in and out of the holiday site; recording medical incidents, especially epileptic seizures. We also have an Infection Control policy in place. If any event arises to which SuperTroop staff feel unable to respond, local services (e.g. GP surgery) will always be used as needed.

- d. Health and safety for the holiday-makers and for the scheme as a whole are overseen by a named health and safety officer with relevant training. Our H&S policy specifies procedures for maximising safe conduct in all holiday activities. It is backed-up by an activity-based risk assessment and fire evacuation procedure. In addition, we adhere to the H&S policies of Fettes College.
- e. Behaviour Management SuperTroop adopts a preventative approach to behaviour management, with all staff working hard to help maintain well-being in holiday-makers and thus minimise risk behaviour. When risk behaviour does occur, key staff will employ a range of agreed behaviour management techniques. In addition, a suitable percentage of senior staff are trained in the use of MAPA¹ techniques to minimize negative outcomes, reduce the likelihood of having to use physical intervention, and to use safe physical intervention if absolutely necessary. This is detailed in our Behaviour Management Policy which is also accompanied by a Risk Behaviour Record system to allow monitoring of incidents and suitable adjustments to procedure if needed. We also have a Missing Child policy which details our response in the event that a holiday maker goes missing. Ultimately, due to the fact that we are a volunteer organisation reliant on non-professional staff, we may consider removing a holiday maker from the scheme if their behaviour is outside our ability to respond.
- f. Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults: this policy incorporates aspects such as whistleblowing, and procedures to be followed in the event of a concern being raised. PCVA is overseen by a named Protection Officer and a named deputy, both of whom have suitable specialist training and are familiar with local Protection services. The policy is supported by Safeguarding Record Forms which permit thorough and appropriate collection of relevant information in the event of a concern. In addition, our Recruitment Policy specifies appropriate recruitment, background checking and monitoring of staff and our Equalities Policy affirms our commitment to quality and diversity. If you have any concerns about the way any child, or another volunteer, is treated you should report them to a member of the senior team.
- g. The Complaints Policy outlines procedures for responding to both informal commentary on our work, and formal complaints. Our goal is always to deal with concerns at the moment they arise through direct and open discussion with those involved. Where it is not possible to address an issue at the time, our senior team hand out 'Lodden cards' which provide our contact details and are also designed to reassure the public that we are well-placed to deal with the varying behaviours and needs of our holiday-makers. Our Disciplinary Policy outlines the procedure for dealing with poor performance among volunteers.
- h. Resources On the holiday we use radios to keep in touch. These are normally taken by all senior team and group leaders, and are also carried by any helper who is in one-to-one care of a child or young person with specific needs (e.g. epilepsy) which might need emergency attention. We also use iPads to store confidential information about the holiday-makers which we carry with us when we are off site. In the full SuperTroop Handbook there is information about how we protect personal information which we hold about holiday-makers and volunteers.

¹ <http://www.crisisprevention.com/en-uk/Specialties/MAPA-Management-of-Actual-or-Potential-Aggressio>



The Helper Code of Conduct

At all times:

- Put the holiday-makers' safety and well-being first
- Respect and support your fellow volunteers

This means:

- ✓ Ask for help when you need it, give help without judgement when you are asked
- ✓ Be compassionate and patient when others are struggling
- ✓ Lead by example and model positive behaviour
- ✓ Treat holiday-makers as you would want to be treated
- ✓ Take your time, especially when lifting or in personal care situations, and do not cut corners
- ✓ Do not shout, threaten, restrict or punish
- ✓ Stay informed: pay attention during briefings; read risk assessments, kids' sheets, handbooks and guides.
- ✓ Take care of yourself as well as taking care of others

And finally, have fun – it's a holiday!