



Flexicare (Oxford and Abingdon) Charitable Incorporated Organisation  
Registered Charity Number 1172635

**FLEXICARE**  
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## Flexicare Policies, Standards and Information

### 1. Volunteers

Flexicare takes the safety of our volunteers seriously.

Volunteers are encouraged to notify Coordinators at any time during or following a sit, if they have any comments or concerns. A Flexicare Attendance Record, signed by families, provides written permission for a volunteer to carry out their instructions, including administering medications. Volunteers are asked to not carry out any task which they are not trained or qualified to perform, or which may result in injury to themselves or the children in their care. Volunteers are not allowed to accept personal gifts or bequests. Volunteers may not witness documents or undertake financial transactions for or on behalf of any family. Our families are required to notify the Coordinators if there is any change in the condition of their child, household or circumstances which might put the safety of a sitter at risk.

Flexicare volunteers sign a declaration to the effect that they have read and understood the following statement:

*It is your responsibility to ensure that you have been given adequate verbal and written instructions by the parents or carers, in any family that you are assisting, before you perform any tasks that you have been asked to carry out. For those sitters with the appropriate skills this may include a range of tasks including giving medicines, suction, tube feeds or using feeding pumps. You should only use clinical equipment you have been signed off for by the Children's Community Nursing team or had demonstrated by a parent / carer in the case of bathing or mobility equipment. **You must obtain written authorisation on the duplicate 'Attendance Record' in the family's Red Folder on every visit for any such tasks that you are asked to do. You should ensure that the family's Red Folder is made available to you at EVERY visit and that the information in it is still correct. If this information is not made available to you, it is up to you to make the decision as to whether or not you wish to take responsibility for the child/children.** You are reminded of the legal risks of doing anything that you have not been specifically asked to do and you must also understand that the tasks which you do carry out are undertaken at your own risk.*

### 2. Families

Families using Flexicare services are required to understand the following responsibilities: to give clear and sufficient verbal and written instructions to any sitter assisting them, to ensure that the instructions are understood and to ensure that the sitter is willing and able to comply with them. It is also their responsibility to ensure that the sitter is clearly informed of any risks to which she/he may be exposed (for instance, building work in progress, unfriendly pets, infectious diseases or unsafe conditions in the home,

where keys are kept exiting the house etc). Families should ensure that sitters know who is or could be in the house or may let themselves in during a sit. If you know this when booking a sit, please let us know and we will inform the sitter. Families must ensure their sitter is familiar with any equipment you would like them to use and if necessary, provide the sitter with equipment specific training. Families are also required to keep Flexicare Coordinators updated with regards to any **relevant** changes in the child's condition, change of GP, or changes in household situation. When booking a sit, Families should be clear as to who sitters will be handing over to at the end of a sit.

Sitters will require you to complete and sign the duplicate 'Attendance Record' in your Red Folder giving them permission to care for your child and detailing what you expect them to do (i.e. bath your child, give them their lunch). A Sit Medication Record section will need to be completed in full in accordance with the Administration of Medication section of this document for any medications you wish to be given.

***Specific information relating to your child can be recorded on the 'Child Specific Information' sheet under the 'Standing instructions' section of their Red Book. Families should also keep the "Registration Care Instructions" in this section up-to-date as well. Providing this information is current and complete, you may wish to leave instructions by noting on the Attendance Record 'Per Standing Instructions'. This cannot be used in the case of medication.***

### **3. Standards**

Flexicare offers services in a manner demonstrating respect for privacy, dignity, diversity and cultural values of the child and their family.

Flexicare can give no guarantee that any sit request can be fulfilled but will always strive to fulfill sits.

Flexicare regularly assess children and young people to ensure they still meet Flexicare's criteria as illustrated on our website. Where the Coordinators establish that the criteria are no longer met, they will try to provide the family with at least one month's notice before they are removed from Flexicare's books.

### **4. Zero Tolerance**

As an employer, Flexicare has a duty to care for the health and safety of its staff and volunteers. The charity also has a legal responsibility to provide a safe and secure working environment for staff and volunteers. All families are expected to behave in an acceptable manner and violent or abusive behaviour towards staff or volunteers may result in removal from our books or even criminal proceedings. Flexicare follows the NHS guidance concerning Zero Tolerance and has a zero tolerance of verbal and physical violence towards volunteers and staff.

Staff and volunteers are expected to behave in ways that are consistent with their role and duties, in line with all Flexicare policies and procedures policies. All members of the team are in a position of trust, and it is their professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of children in their care.

### **5. Statutory Responsibilities**

Flexicare complies with the Data Protection Act. Paper and computerised records are held on all families, volunteers and staff. A family, volunteer or staff member may make a request at any time to see the data held on them. Flexicare will contact families by email, text and telephone, unless requested otherwise except where it is necessary to provide the service. All records are kept safe and secure in compliance with the standards required by current data protection legislation and the Care Quality Commission.

Flexicare implements appropriate Health Care policies and complies with Oxfordshire County Council guidance. This includes safeguarding procedures, Health and Safety Guidance, Administration of Medications, Confidentiality and Equality issues. Flexicare works in accordance with and consults the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board's safeguarding policies and the Oxfordshire Delegation of Health Care Tasks protocol. Where necessary Flexicare consults the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adult Board's safeguarding policies.

Flexicare is a registered charity. Flexicare is also registered with and inspected by the Care Quality Commission and has a 'Good' rating as of November 2018. The current CQC report is available via a link on the Flexicare Website.

## **6. Staffing**

Flexicare is staffed by part time Coordinators, and a Manager (who also undertakes sits), plus a part-time Office Manager. The Manager undertakes vetting by the Care Quality Commission to become the Registered Manager. In addition, they are also the Designated Safeguarding Lead. All the Coordinators are fully trained in safeguarding matters and can be contacted about safeguarding in the absence of the manager. The team meet most weeks when the phone lines are open. Otherwise they work from home when they are not undertaking sits.

Staff and volunteers undergo a rigorous selection process, including an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and reference checks and face-to-face interviews. All recruitment is in accordance with Safer Recruitment guidelines and best practice. Potential volunteers will meet with two Coordinators prior to being offered the opportunity to register as a volunteer.

As both physical and mental strength are necessary to care for severely disabled children, volunteers will only be taken on at the discretion of the Manager. Flexicare is legally required to check whether any potential volunteer has any past prosecutions or is currently under investigation for any offense and this is done using the Enhanced DBS checking process. Such DBS checks are repeated for volunteers and staff every 3 years.

Photo ID is carried by volunteers and Coordinators and are renewed regularly. Copies of DBS identification is kept in accordance with CQC requirements.

Volunteers and Coordinators are regularly provided training in medication administration, seizure awareness, moving and handling hygiene, first aid and safeguarding. Some volunteers and all staff also undertake training in tube feeding, suction and hoist use. Where necessary further training is sourced if a child requires it.

In the event a volunteer requires support or guidance during a sit, one Coordinator is always on call with the Flexicare mobile. Volunteers are also provided with direct lines to the Coordinators should the Flexicare mobile not be answered. These numbers are reserved for the volunteer's use only.

In the event of severe weather, sits will be cancelled where travel to a sit would put a volunteer or staff member at risk. Should a sitter become unavailable prior to a booked sit, then the on-call Coordinator will attempt to find another sitter suitable for the sit. Families will be kept informed by the on-call Coordinator about changes to a sit, including cancellation, as soon as possible.

In the event of insufficient Coordinators being available to run the service and support volunteers, the phone lines will be closed to new bookings until the service can be resumed. Depending on the circumstances, Flexicare will try to ensure that all booked sits go ahead. As a last resort, bookings will be cancelled. Families and volunteers will be kept informed.

## **7. Sitter Ratios**

When a sit is requested, the on-call Coordinator will assess the number of sitters needed based on their knowledge of the family, the number of siblings and the time of day. Without a parent or carer's express, prior permission, a single Flexicare sitter can only look after one child under one.

## **8. Health and Safety Statement**

Flexicare's Board of Trustees accept the responsibility and duties of an employer to ensure a safe working environment for all staff and volunteers, as far as is possible to do so within the constraints of the way the service operates.

On a day-to-day basis, the Trustees responsibilities for Health and Safety issues will be exercised by the Manager, with support from the Coordinators.

An initial risk assessment of the family home will be performed upon registration. Risk assessments are updated verbally when a sit is booked and following feedback from volunteers after sits are performed. This information is recorded on the family's record and/or the volunteer's record.

Volunteers are informed of any identified risks via child's written care sheet or verbally, before agreeing to care for a child.

Volunteers and coordinators working in homes of registered families have a responsibility to ensure a safe environment is maintained. This is for their safety and for the safety of the children in their care.

Written information and training sessions on Health and Safety issues, as relevant to the work undertaken for Flexicare, will be made available to volunteers and coordinators. Volunteers and coordinators will be made aware of all policies, procedures and guidance followed by Flexicare with regard to Safeguarding, Moving and Handling and Personal Safety.

Any untoward incident or event occurring during a sit, which may result in injury to a child, volunteer or Coordinator, is to be reported to the Manager. The Manager will inform Trustees or the authorities immediately if appropriate.

The Manager is responsible for reporting and investigating accidents and dangerous occurrences, taking appropriate action, recording the outcome and ensuring lessons learnt are disseminated. This includes RIDDOR and transmittable disease reporting.

Trustees are notified of any situation that results in a family or volunteer being removed from the register.

## **9. Bathing, Moving and Handling**

**Volunteers and Coordinators are advised NOT to lift or carry any child manually unless it is absolutely essential.**

The risk assessment completed at registration includes risks involving moving a child and any aides available.

Volunteers are offered appropriate training in the use of moving and handling aides if they are likely to be asked to use them.

Trained volunteers and Coordinators must request advice and guidance from families regarding the use of any lifting and moving equipment in the home before assuming responsibility for a child.

If lifting aides are available, they should be used appropriately by the trained volunteer or Coordinator, as directed by the parent. If there is any uncertainty about the use of a lifting or moving aide, or the sitter has not received hoist training, they should not attempt to use it.

If a sitter is asked to bathe a child or young person during a sit, they must only do so if they believe they are capable of getting them safely in and out of the bath. Before a child or young person is placed in the bath, everything must be in place (for example towels and night clothes) and the temperature of the water checked, either with a provided thermometer, or an elbow to ensure the temperature is appropriate. In no circumstances must the child or young person be left unsupervised. Such supervision shall be appropriate to the needs, age and ability of the child or young person.

Volunteers and Coordinators should not agree to undertake any sit which they are not physically able to carry out.

The Manager should be notified as soon as possible of any concerns a volunteer or coordinator has regarding lifting or moving of a child. This may be done by calling the Flexicare mobile.

If a volunteer or Coordinator is put at risk by manual handling/lifting expectations requested by a parent, the Manager is to be notified as soon as possible. Coordinators will discuss the situation, with the Trustees as necessary, and may consider removing the family from the register.

If an injury to a volunteer or Coordinator occurs during manual handling, the parents and Manager must be informed immediately. The Manager will take appropriate action to prevent a recurrence, as well as notify the Trustees if necessary. A record of any incident will be made in both the child's and volunteer's records and noted in the accident book.

## **10. Administration of Medication**

In accordance with the CCN (Children's Community Nurse) Guidance on the Delegation of Health Care Tasks, sitters can only administer medications to children with healthcare needs where the parents/carers complete and sign the Sit Medication Record including medication, dose and time to be given. Flexicare can give all medications that have been prescribed for the child plus unprescribed paracetamol and over-the-counter creams. Other than these, no over-the-counter medications can be given. Flexicare will complete with the family a list of all medication the child is taking prior to the first sit and will ask parents or guardians to review this list periodically. In the case of PRN (as required) medications, clear, written instructions regarding indications for use are also needed. Flexicare ask that they are notified of any medication changes.

Only the medication and dose specified and signed for on the Sit Medication Record(s) (or in the CCN (Children's Community Nurse) yellow folder as detailed below), can be administered and sitters must verify this matches the information on the pharmacy label and that all other information is correct, specifically: name of medication matches, it is prescribed for that child, the dose is as specified and route of administration is correct and that the expiration date has not passed. For children with multiple medications, sitters shall also verify the medication to be given via the CCN (Children's Community Nurse) child specific yellow folder which contains an up-to-date list of medication. The medication sheets contained in the CCN (Children's Community Nurse) folder will be used to record any medications given, including a signature and time given. A photograph of the relevant pages/ will be taken and sent to the Flexicare mobile or emailed to [bookings@flexicare.org](mailto:bookings@flexicare.org) after the sit is

completed. Medication labels must be clearly legible. If a sitter has any concerns over the administration of a medication or there is a mismatch between the written instructions and the details on the medication, they should not proceed and should contact the parents for guidance. Where no CCN(Children's Community Nurse) yellow folder is available and multiple medications are required during a sit, each medication must be listed on the Sit Medication Record as a separate line. Where possible a sitter shall find a quiet area to prepare medication for dispensing.

Sitters will document on the Sit Medication Record(s) / CCN yellow folder medication form the time the medication was given and sign the form(s). In the case of Emergency medication this can only be given by Flexicare sitters in accordance with the Oxfordshire Delegation of Health Care Tasks Protocol, when there is a current emergency protocol available to them and the child / young person has previously received the medication concerned. In a medical emergency all sitters will dial 999.

Any child who has been prescribed a Controlled Drug can be administered by Flexicare staff and volunteers in line with the relevant training. There will be clear instructions and care sheet that reflects what is to be done, which includes weighing the container before and after and recording the amounts.

## **11. Equality and Confidentiality**

***One aspect of our philosophy is that every individual has the right to have their beliefs, dignity and values respected at all times.***

The decision to accept a family is based on whether the child meets Flexicare's criteria and if the family's/child's needs can be matched by the volunteers/coordinators available at the time.

The reasons for not accepting a child/family will be explained to the family and the person who referred the family.

The ethnic origin data form will be provided along with the registration form. Any information supplied will only be used for monitoring purposes when requested by statutory bodies such as Oxfordshire County Council or the CQC.

All information given by and to Flexicare volunteers, families and coordinators will only be used to ensure the best level of care and safety for the children, families, volunteers and coordinators. When requested we will do our best to fully participate in any type of multiagency meetings regarding your child/ren. Where we are unable to attend, we will provide as much information in advance as we can.

Without your prior permission, no information will be shared with other organisations unless there are serious concerns about a safeguarding issue. In this rare event families will be kept as fully informed as possible.

Please also refer to the Flexicare Data Protection Policy and associated Privacy Policy.

## **12. Registering a Comment, Complaint or Safeguarding concern**

Flexicare welcomes comments and suggestions regarding our services and the care provided by our volunteers and coordinators. An Advisory Committee consisting of current and former family representatives, volunteers and staff meets 4 times a year to hear from all those involved with the charity. Should you wish to speak to a member of the Committee, this can be done through the on-call coordinator.

You have the right to make a formal complaint or raise a safeguarding concern. A simple leaflet is

provided with your registration documents detailing the complaint process. If an allegation is made about a Flexicare volunteer or staff member by a child or young person, the Manager must be informed immediately.

Similarly, all staff and volunteers are required to immediately inform the Manager or the Chair of Trustees if you have any concerns about a child, if you are unsure if a referral needs to be made or if an allegation has been made against a member of staff. If the allegation is about the Manager, the Chair of Trustees will be immediately informed. The Manager or Chair of Trustees will consult with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on how to proceed about any allegations regarding staff or volunteers in relation to a child/ren.

The outcome will be either

- The LADO advice's that the Flexicare Trustees must undertake an internal investigation and decide what the appropriate outcome should be; or
- there is a child protection matter to be dealt with by the appropriate authorities such as the police or social services; or
- it is agreed with the LADO that the allegation is demonstrably false.

### **13. Data protection Compliance Information**

#### **Children, families and donors**

We collect personal information with the consent from adult members of each family to help us to provide a high-quality baby-sitting service for their child(ren) (disabled and non-disabled). Flexicare constantly updates care records according to the changing needs of the children. Specifically, we collect data about families using us such as names, addresses and contact details, plus details of interactions with Flexicare such as events attended, and all sit and other assistance requests. Some of the information about children includes date of birth and can include clinical records, medication regimes and sitting arrangements.

We also keep contact details of our direct donors and those that attend our fundraising events. We use Mailchimp to inform previous attenders and other supporters of upcoming events.

Flexicare's Privacy Policy is published on our website.

#### **Staff and volunteers**

We collect data about staff and volunteers which includes names, addresses and contact details, application details, records of sits and other interactions with Flexicare families and DBS checks. In addition, we are required by our Regulator and Commissioners to keep information relating to staff and volunteers such as copies of identity documents relating to DBS applications.

#### **Retention of records**

We keep information securely electronically and/or in paper form by:

- Using well renowned software providers who use security methods in line with current legislation; having virus protection software to protect our records and devices and using encryption on our mobile devices.
- For paper records: by keeping records in lockable filing cabinets and only taking the minimum personal details out that we need to undertake our service.

Type of record	Length of retention
Referral records	6 months
Care records including medication records and diary sits	Until the child's 26 <sup>th</sup> birthday or 8 years after leaving Flexicare's books
Unsuccessful staff/volunteer applications	1 year
Staff and volunteer records	6 years after leaving the service

Prior to destruction we check for any other involvements that could extend the retention such as serious incident retentions. We audit the records yearly and report to the Board of Trustees.

### Data sharing

Data sharing, in this instance, is the sharing of data with other organisations. We are committed to complying with the ICO Data sharing code of practice (<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/key-data-protection-themes/age-appropriate-design-a-code-of-practice-for-online-services/9-data-sharing/>)

The Coordinators will only pass on the information to a third party:

- In the case of safeguarding concerns, in most cases, we will inform the family first or use a names consultation before talking to a family;
- When a family requests for instance when liaising with other organisations;
- Gift aiding;
- HMRC;
- CQC;
- In case of an emergency, with or without prior consent;
- It is legally required.

### 14. Care Quality Commission(CQC)

Flexicare is registered with and inspected by the CQC and complies with their standards.

Policies are reviewed annually or more often if deemed necessary.

**Reviewed by: Maureen Tossi June 2025**

**Trustees Approval: 15th July 2025**

**Next Review: July 2026**

Flexicare Registered Charity 117263



# **Flexicare Contact Information and Useful Numbers**

## **24 hour line 01865 321881**

This number is available for bookings and general information. Calls go to voicemail and messages are checked frequently during the day Mon-Fri. The line is usually answered in person on Wed from 9am / 10am-12 pm / 1pm. Messages left at weekends will generally be handled on Monday. Phones are closed for bookings for 2 weeks over Easter and Christmas, as well as the month of August.

## **Mobile phone 07342 041388**

The mobile phone is for bookings and general inquiries. Bookings may also be made by WhatsApp, text message or emailing [bookings@flexicare.org](mailto:bookings@flexicare.org). The Coordinator on call carries the mobile.

Email: [admin@flexicare.org](mailto:admin@flexicare.org)

Mailing address:

14, The Park, Cumnor

OX2 9QS

**James Ross, Chair of Trustees**

**01235 524990**

**Care Quality Commission**

**03000 616161**

**Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**

If you have immediate concerns regarding a child in Oxfordshire relating to child protection of safeguarding, you should contact the MASH for guidance on **0345 050 7666**.

Outside office hours: Emergency Duty Team: **0800 833 408**

**Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advice on safeguarding concerns**

**01865 810603**

**NSPCC Help Line**

**0808 800500**

**Family Lives, parent and family support (formerly Parentline)**

**0808 800 2222**

**Childline**

**0800 1111**

## **Complaints**

**In the case of a complaint regarding personal information, complainants have a right to contact:**

Information Commissioners Office

Wycliffe House, Water Lane

Wilmslow, Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Telephone 0303 123 1113 Website <https://www.ico.org.uk>