

WHAT ARE THE TASKS OF A HELPLINE VOLUNTEER?

Where will I work?

You will work from home. The helpline number is transferred on to your landline number when you are on duty. Your own landline number will continue to function in the usual way.

How many hours will I work?

This is up to you. The day is split into 2 sessions: 10.0 a.m. to 1.0 p.m. and 1.0 p.m. to 4.0 p.m. You can work as many or as few sessions in a month as you wish. The average is 3 sessions per month.

Can I choose when I am on duty?

Each month you will be asked to submit a list of dates when you can be free to cover the helpline. A rota is then drawn up; allocating you the number of sessions you wish to do from the dates submitted.

Who calls the helpline?

Most callers are newly diagnosed fibromyalgia patients, although we also get a few calls from medical professionals & the legal professions.

What sort of information do callers want?

Most callers want to know more about FM (symptoms, possible causes, treatments, its progression etc.) Some want to know if there is a local support group near them.

What should I do if I do not know the answer to a question that I am asked?

Do not be afraid to explain to the caller that you are unsure of the answer and will need to check this out for them. Ask the caller if they will give you their telephone number and you will call them back when you have the answer **OR** ask the caller to ring back about 30 minutes before your shift ends and you will hopefully have the information they require.

Then call your mentor and ask for their assistance.

I am not sure if I can answer all those questions. Will I be given training?

FMA UK has a policy of providing training through the Telephone Helplines Association. However, the current financial situation doesn't allow us to do this. You will be

provided with a comprehensive on-line handbook which explains about the organisation of FMA UK and fibromyalgia. You will also be provided with a mentor, who will be an experienced helpline volunteer.

I have an answer machine. What do I do about messages left on it?

Callers who leave messages expect a reply, so we would ask you to call them back. If you have to pay for your calls, give them a quick ring and ask them to ring you back.

Are there any other duties apart from answering the phone?

FMA UK collects statistics about the calls it receives, so there is a small amount of paper work. You will be provided with a form which should be completed and returned to the National Helpline Coordinator every month.

What happens if I am scheduled to be on duty and I am not well enough to do the duty or I suddenly find that I have an appointment that I really need to keep?

As soon as you are aware that you are unable to undertake your duty on the specified date and time you have been allocated you should contact the National Helpline

Coordinator: by email or by telephone and let him/ her know that you are no longer available to cover the duty.

He/she will then ask if you are willing to do a swop with another National Helpline Volunteer. If you are he/she will arrange the swop and will contact you again to notify you of the changes.

If you are unable to swop he/she will arrange for another National Helpline Volunteer to undertake your duty for you.

Is there any cost involved in undertaking this duty?

National Helpline Volunteers are asked to print out copies of the “Answer Sheet” which they are expected to use and complete when taking calls. These sheets are then retained by the Volunteer and used at the end of each month when transferring certain pieces of information onto the FMA UK monitoring sheet.

If you are able to fill in your monitoring sheet on line you can email it to the National Helpline Coordinator at the end of each month.

If you are not happy doing this and wish to fill in your data on a hard copy of the monitoring sheet then there is the cost of posting this sheet to the National Helpline Coordinator.

What happens if the Helpline Coordinator is away and not able to deal with any problems which arise?

If the National Helpline Coordinator is not available he/she will arrange for alternative cover and will advise all National Helpline Volunteers of the contact details of the person who will be covering during his/her period of absence

For any further information please contact the National Helpline Coordinator by email or by telephone who will be pleased to discuss any further questions that you may have.

Contact Details for FMA UK National Helpline Coordinator:

Name:

Email address:

Telephone number: