

Apprentices & Mentors

Guidance for Folk Camps Staff

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1. **WHO SHOULD READ THIS? THE AIM OF THIS GUIDE**

This manual is written to lay out some guidelines for apprentice staff and their mentors. It has been put together by members of the Council of Management who have experience in the different Folk Camp staffing roles. We hope that it will help apprentices have a happy and productive experience and make it easier for many of you to move on to independent staffing. By giving some guidelines, we hope to make it clearer to both Mentors and Apprentices what is expected of them.

Usually, people will be apprenticing a role when they already have a fair idea of what is required. We hope that you will feel confident enough after this experience to move on to a full staffing role. However, we understand the demands on our volunteer staff and the high expectations of campers that are ever rising, and in many cases, people feel they need further support when staffing. So, in some cases, people can staff as assistants, in other cases, they may staff jointly. In both cases, it is possible to have a mentor if you feel it is necessary. This may simply be someone with a lot of experience who you can turn to for advice.

2. **WHAT SORT OF PERSON CAN APPRENTICE?**

So, who is suitable to be an Apprentice? Generally speaking, we like all staff - including Apprentices - to have attended several Folk Camps, so that they understand our special ethos and the way things happen. Having said that, there will always be exceptions, so occasionally someone will be invited to apprentice at their first camp; however, this will only ever be in exceptional cases. Apprentices must be over the age of 18. This is important for the following reasons: you will be a member of the staffing team, and although everyone will understand that you don't have the same experience as those who have been staffing for years, you will share in confidential discussions about campers, about situations that occur and problems that arise.

What personal qualities will you need? First of all, you will need to be someone who is reliable. Whichever role you are interested in taking on, people will be relying on you to try your best to carry it out. After that, it really depends on which role you are apprenticing. Obviously those who wish to be Musicians will need to have good musical skills already. Most Leaders will need to feel comfortable with the idea of coordinating and animating. If Apprentice Wardening is your aim, then it will help if you are good at thinking laterally and working out solutions to odd little problems. Apprentice Caterers need great organisational skills and an understanding of basic cooking. All roles require excellent skills with people: you will need to negotiate with campers over various things, such as duties, workshop groups, team management, etc. etc.

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From time to time, Council will specifically ask for people to volunteer to apprentice. We need a large number of volunteers to keep our camps working. However, you don't need to wait to be asked. If you think it's for you, start talking to the staff you know, find out more about it and then let Council know - either speak to a member of Council, or email the Administration Manager, who will pass your message on. You may find that you don't get asked. Mostly, this will just be that we haven't found an appropriate camp or Mentor; occasionally, it might be that we don't think you are ready yet - in that case, we'd hope to give you some advice about how to prepare.

3. **WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME AS AN APPRENTICE?**

As an Apprentice, first of all, you usually won't be expected to put in quite the amount of time that a full staff member needs to do. However, we hope that you will show a similar commitment, in terms of prioritising the needs of the camp and being prepared to get stuck in if required. If you are apprenticing on a summer catered week, like the other volunteer staff, you will need to arrive on the Friday before your camp starts: this means the staffing team have a chance to assess the site and coordinate with each other before their campers arrive. Before your camp starts, you can make sure you have read the appropriate Management Manual, this Apprentice Guide and any other guidance that Council or your Mentor may have provided. If you have some specific ideas, do get in touch with your Mentor beforehand to sound them out. You will be a member of the staffing team, so you can expect to be included in any team briefing organised by the leader, either prior to camp or during the camp. These meetings are about more than just managing your own role, as it is essential that staff are aware of what the others are doing. Coordination is invariably a good thing, so whenever changes are mooted to an expected schedule, they need to be communicated to all staff members. On some camps, this will be via an informal daily team meeting. So for example, if you are an apprentice caterer, it is obvious that you will need to know of any proposed outing, as that may require a swapping round of meals, duties, additional cooking. However, you may think that it isn't too important for you to know about changes to the workshop schedule. But even that may have an impact on the cooks of the day, who may need to tweak coffee-time, etc.

Each precise Mentor/Apprentice relationship will be different, but you will usually shadow your Mentor in the many aspects of their role. We encourage Mentors to give their apprentices responsibility for something, be it coordinating workshops, running the kitchen for a day, organising an evening, sorting out the duty rota. Some Mentors may be able to tell you about this prior to the camp; others will prefer to wait and judge the "feel" of the camp before specifying. You can expect them to give you suitable advice and support, but please do remember that they are not professional trainers. And at all times, their first priority must be the camp. So if your Mentor is not the most pro-active of advisors, try to choose an appropriate, quiet time to ask their advice. And focus on how you can assist them in making the camp a success: almost invariably, you will learn most by trying things out and debriefing afterwards with your Mentor.

4. **WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME AS A MENTOR?**

First of all, if you have agreed to take on the role of Mentor, thank you. You will be well aware that campers have high expectations of the volunteer staff, and how we need to help more people to gain expertise and confidence in volunteering. You do not need a professional level of counselling skills or a teaching degree to mentor! You already have most of what an Apprentice needs: experience. So, what do we expect you to do as a Mentor? Some Mentors are not also carrying out a staffing role on the camp, but are purely there to act as back-up and advisor to staff who have not "flown solo" before. If this is the case, then it is possible that the person or people you are mentoring will be able to carry out their role pretty much on their own. You may simply be their safety net or advisor over any tricky points. In this case, you should be sure to allow the inexperienced staff the space to forge their own identity in their role, whilst keeping a friendly, watchful eye. Sometimes, you may need to proffer advice even if it is not sought, where you think the situation requires it.

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More frequently however, you will be mentoring someone whilst yourself being a staff member. It is helpful to make contact with the Apprentice prior to camp: as the “senior”, experienced person, it is much better if you make the first move! A brief chat or exchange of emails will really help the Apprentice prepare for the camp in a productive manner. Try to give them an idea of what you may be asking them to do. And encourage them to read the Management manual properly beforehand; it really does contain a lot of useful information.

We all know that staffing can be stressful; certainly, things can get hectic at times. We expect Apprentices to be sensitive to this and to respect your first priority: the campers. Conversely, please try to involve the Apprentice as much as possible, both in your particular role and by including them in “team talks” or meetings with other staff on camp. We all know how a really successful camp is one where all the staff are in tune with one another and able to pick up on each other’s moods, problems, challenges!

The main aim of apprenticing is to be able to learn by doing; please try to ensure that the Apprentice does have something suitable to get their teeth into. Encouragement beforehand and sensitive feedback afterwards are the best ways to help the Apprentice improve.

5. **ROLE SPECIFIC ADVICE:**

For a full description of each role, please read the relevant section of the Management manual and the Catering Manual. These notes are intended as additional suggestions for Apprentices.

a. **Apprentice Leaders**

Most leaders will probably tell you that you can’t teach someone to be a Leader. It is certainly true that not everyone has the particular skillset needed. It’s a role where you need to move between leading loudly from the front and encouraging quietly from behind! Diplomat, enabler and energiser of the campers, you will also be the representative of Folk Camps in the host community. There are all sorts of styles in leading a camp and a good leader will manage to forge their own style. But imperative is a desire to get to know people, and the energy to make things happen. Your Mentor should include you in staff meetings, keep you abreast of any plans and give you some specific responsibilities or tasks. These might be leading one evening’s entertainment – song circle and dancing – helping to coordinate children’s games (it is a good idea if the Apprentice Leader doesn’t stick purely to this) or taking on some other ‘project’. Although the Leader does not have to call dances themselves all night every night, it is their responsibility to organise callers and to do the job where necessary.

b. **Apprentice Warden**

We hope that anyone who apprentices as a Warden will have already helped out with site-type matters on previous camps. It seems obvious that a Warden needs to be good at fixing things, but one other very important quality is people management, as the Warden is the person who negotiates the camp Duty Rota on a week-long camp, consulting with the Caterer over kitchen needs. The Warden also has the last word on all site safety matters. The Apprentice will find that there are usually helpful campers who are happy to lend a hand with any difficulty – indeed, that is probably what you have done yourself in the past. Your Mentor should give you some responsibilities – asking you to help sort out a particular problem, for example, or making some of the necessary announcements – but you will not be given total responsibility for camp safety at any time.

From 2015, all wardens – including apprentices – will need to take an online first aid course. The costs are refunded by Folk Camps and you will be sent information about the course by the Administration Manager.

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c. Apprentice Musician

As a minimum, a prospective apprentice musician should have demonstrated enthusiasm for, and participated in general morning workshops at previous camps. As a result they will have gained some experience of method, of campers' expectations and what does and doesn't work. They should have some experience of playing for dancing at camp and/or elsewhere. e.g. joining in with the band at Folk Camps with a variety of musicians. They will need to have a repertoire of relevant tunes for various dance types and, preferably as a result of dancing and playing at camp, have some understanding of what is involved in leading the band. This is particularly important when working with inexperienced callers. So, whilst being a competent musician and performer is important, we believe this is only the first step in becoming a successful staff musician. It should be remembered that a camp musician or joint musicians need to, where necessary, be capable of playing for dancing and run workshops as a self-contained unit on a suitable melody instrument.

Some of the activities that an apprentice could be expected to undertake (these are examples of activities which an apprentice may have contributed voluntarily at previous camps):

- participate in (rather than lead) the morning workshop offering support to campers where appropriate.
- run a short section of the workshop independently, e.g. prepare and teach an arrangement over the course of the camp. At a week camp this could be performed on party night.
- run a separate workshop based on their particular skill set.
- organise and lead the band for early evening dancing.

Obviously they would be offered help and support in these activities.

Non folk camp apprentices should have some experience in folk art education and playing for dances. Whilst they may find some aspects easier given their previous experience, they will still need time to adapt to the particular Folk Camps way of doing things!

d. Apprentice Caterer

Some areas of the Caterer's role present more challenges than others. In our experience, these are: stock-taking and managing the "Cash & Carry" order; managing the daily orders; managing challenging personalities in the kitchen. The Mentor can best help the Apprentice by involving them in as much of the ordering process as possible. The delicate question of how to cope with "difficult" people in the kitchen isn't easy! It is worth suggesting to the Apprentice that it's always a good idea to liaise with the Warden before duties are allocated, so that good, balanced teams of Cooks of the Day are achieved, and hopefully so that each Breakfast team will have a couple of experienced campers, so that the Caterer does not need to be in the kitchen at 7 a.m. every day. Although we hope that Cooks of the Day are capable of being left to organise themselves, this is often not the case and the Apprentice will need to know when to offer a lot of support at the outset (with guidance on time management, job allocation, etc.) and when to step in and insist, for example that the meat goes into the oven "now". Where there is friction between the Cooks of the Day, the Caterer may have to take over direct management, occasionally even asking someone to leave the kitchen. How to manage this without being rude is quite an art, and a Mentor can be very helpful to the Apprentice by suggesting ways this can be achieved!

Being able to judge quantities, cooking times and portion sizes when serving are also skills gained with experience and are important for mentors to teach to apprentice caterers.

All caterers – including Apprentices – need to take an online hygiene course every four years. The Administration Manager will give you information about this. Folk Camps will refund you

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the cost of this course. In addition, all caterers and wardens will be asked to take a First Aid course (which can be on line). Again the Administration Manager will give you information about this and the costs will be refunded. The full Cooks Manual – which can be found online on the website – contains a very detailed breakdown of many of the tasks required of a caterer and is essential “background” reading. If you are reading these notes because you are wondering if staff catering is for you, it’s also a good idea to think if there is someone who you would be very comfortable working with. As two joint Caterers are now almost always appointed for a week-long catered camp, we are happy to have two friends apprentice together for the role.

6. **FEEDBACK**

It can be difficult to give useful feedback to people you know well. This is true both in the case of the Mentor (or Council member) debriefing the Apprentice and where the Apprentice feeds back on their experience. However, it is extremely useful to reflect on how things went. Council is concerned that to date, there has been no formal way of securing or giving feedback. Council is currently working on developing an informative task-based feedback system that is non-judgemental. If you are asked to complete a feedback form, please be aware that this is still in a trial phase.

7. **WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?**

Please read the manuals and documents that can be found on the members’ pages of the website at: <http://www.folkcamps.co.uk/membersStaffManuals.asp>

Amongst other documents, you can find:

- Management Manual for each different type of camp
- Caterer’s Manual, with detailed breakdown of tasks
- Document on staffing roles and responsibilities
- Code of Conduct for sites

8. **WHO WROTE THIS?**

Manuals and policy documents are written and amended by members of the Council of Management or experienced volunteer staff, who hope that by writing down some of the custom and practice of Folk Camps, it will be easier to pass on good practice and to improve our standards where needed.

If you would like an informal chat with one of us about future staffing, please contact the Administration Manager, who will forward your details to the current Staffing Coordinator.

9. **CONTACT DETAILS**

Administration Manager email	info@folkcamps.co.uk
Telephone	0208 12321 36