

Overseas Volunteers at Leonard Cheshire Freshfield

Leonard
Cheshire
Disability



What is my role?

At Leonard Cheshire Disability, we value the role our Overseas Volunteers have in our services throughout the United Kingdom. Due to the length of the placements for overseas volunteers (12 months) volunteers have the opportunity to acquire a range of skills, improve their English, enjoy the best of British culture and life, and develop fulfilling working relationships with our residents, staff and local volunteers which often develop into long-term friendships.

Overseas volunteers help support our staff teams in providing an active, involving and stimulating environment for our residents. Through our overseas volunteers, disabled people in our care homes are able to access their local community services and social opportunities more easily and regularly, thus improving their independence and quality of life. This means that in their roles overseas volunteers are engaging in a wide range of activities both inside and outside the home.

Volunteers may be required to accompany residents on activity weekends and short holidays, as well as providing support to those service users who have regular work, education or volunteering commitments. Volunteers will support groups of people with art and craft, gardening, cooking, exercise and social clubs and outings. While it is a lot of fun going out with residents, it is also very challenging as volunteers experience first hand the issues faced by people with disabilities everyday.

Overseas volunteers will be expected to volunteer 35 hours within a week. They will be entitled to 2 days off. These may not necessarily be at the weekend or consecutive. There can be a greater requirement for volunteering at the weekends to attend sporting events and other activities.

What opportunities can I expect for training & skills development?

Thorough training on working with vulnerable adults is provided to all our volunteers, and Leonard Cheshire Disability staff helps volunteers during the induction process to understand each individual. Risk assessments ensure that volunteers are not asked to contribute outside of their capability or boundaries.

Volunteers will use their existing skills in a different context. They will use their social, practical and communication skills, to do everyday things e.g. getting to know people, helping them with an activity, celebrating a birthday, taking them shopping, making drinks, etc. but in a different and unfamiliar environment i.e. supporting people with a range of abilities.

Volunteers acquire a range of knowledge, skills and experience including a greater understanding of the issues affecting disabled people. They gain improved interpersonal skills and the ability to interact with a wide range of people. There will also be an opportunity to learn about the wider activities of the charity, for example our campaigning/lobbying activities and fundraising events.

About Freshfield

Freshfields has been active supporting disabled people since 1975, in a low rise building which is mostly purpose built. It offers a safe place to live in a friendly, homely atmosphere where residents are encouraged to enjoy activities, engage with the local community and live as full a life as possible. Our facilities include a day care area, a large 'function room' for social use, a large garden, computer area, sensory room, pottery studio and we offer hairdressing, chiropody and complementary therapies.

The Home is a residential care home for 33 adults with physical disabilities, and some residents also have mild learning difficulties. They are cared for by a team of trained nursing and support staff. People from the local area are able to access our day care facilities and join residents in a range of table-top activities like crafts, baking, and board games as well as an informal singing group.

Freshfields Cheshire Home is in Formby, a small town a few miles north of Liverpool. Formby is the EU constituency 'North West England', it is 13 miles north of Liverpool. It is a small town with population 25,000 with good schools and a small high street with shops, cafes and restaurants, banks,

post office, doctor, dentist, library, churches, swimming pool and gym all within 20 minute walk from the home. There are groups holding book clubs, moderately priced dancing and exercise classes. A limited number of formal classes are offered through Sefton's adult education service - but they are more expensive. Freshfields is close to sea. Sand dunes, pinewoods and wildlife are protected by coastal nature reserves, perfect for those who like open spaces and walking outdoors.

Many people commute to work in Liverpool, Warrington or Manchester. It is close to the sea, the sand dunes, pinewoods and wildlife are protected by coastal nature reserves, perfect for those who like open spaces and walking outdoors. There are good train and bus links north to Southport and south to Liverpool - a city offering art, culture, leisure and shopping 30 minutes away.

Leonard Cheshire Disability has a service hosting overseas volunteers also in Liverpool and volunteers from both homes will be able to meet, support each other, and develop their social life along with their working goals.

Expectations & Accommodation

Accommodation for the two volunteers is separate from resident areas and reached by a set of stairs. There is a bedroom each, shared lounge, toilet, bathroom. Plated meals will be provided by the main kitchen for midday and evening meals, 7 days week. Ingredients will be provided to make snacks and breakfasts. A food allowance will be given during holidays. Volunteers will be expected to look after the flat and keep it clean and tidy.

Volunteers are expected to comply with Leonard Cheshire policy & procedures & codes of conduct. Failure to comply with this could result in the programme being terminated. Behavior that causes concern as a result of excessive alcohol is not tolerated. The misuse of illegal substances will not be tolerated and will result in instant dismissal. Volunteers are expected to behave in a socially responsible way, and in consideration to fellow volunteers and residents. Overnight guests are permissible only a temporary basis, and with permission.

Volunteers make a commitment to work closely with the residents. While they will be supported, we would like to be sure that their basic skills are an adequate base from which to build and that they have enough physical and mental resilience to complete their program.

Residents understand home sickness and will help new volunteers settle in but we would not be able to host for 12 months people who are deeply unhappy, unable to adjust, or for whom a period of increased anxiety triggers some pre-existing condition.

This is a year-long placement and volunteers are expected to commit to the service for the whole duration of their project.

Volunteer Profile

It is important that the volunteers are eager to learn and have an interest in working with people with disability. Simultaneously, it can be demanding and emotionally difficult to support people with disabilities, and require patience, understanding and confidence. It is therefore an advantage if the volunteers have some experience with and/or exposure to disability prior to their placement so they have better idea of what to expect. It can be everything from volunteering in a disability organisation, working in a care home or having a friend/family member with a disability. We also encourage volunteers that are interested in a career in social or health care to apply for a placement as it will allow them an insight into the sector, and thereby a better idea of whether it is something they want to pursue.

Since we work with vulnerable adults, it is essential that the volunteers understand instructions, policies and procedures explained in English. Therefore, it is a requirement that the volunteers can carry a conversation in English, and understand basic instructions. This will also ensure, from a health and safety perspective, that our volunteers follow all procedures in place for their own and our residents' safety.

Some aspects of Freshfields that may make it less suitable for some volunteers: their accommodation is reached via a flight of stairs; the residents will expect volunteers to push manual wheelchairs, so a certain level of physical fitness is required. We are required to ensure every volunteer working regularly with vulnerable adults in the service completes an enhanced DBS check.

It is helpful if volunteers have interests they are willing to share with the residents and staff through activities and one-to-one conversations. Furthermore, we are looking for volunteers with a proactive attitude, and willingness try new activities and encourage residents to do the same.

Activities

We aim to ensure that residents at Freshfields are given the same opportunities as anyone else. Volunteers bring new skills, share different interests, passions, and culture. They are involved in social opportunities, and give the people we support, the best opportunity to get out and about and experience new things.

EVS volunteers' tasks will vary over a 35 hour week according to the routine the home is scheduled for that period and around their mandatory training which will provide the framework for the volunteers' own rotas, time for their On line Linguistic Support, and work on one of their projects:

- Organising and facilitating table-top activities, arranging a room for entertainments and socials, decorating for parties where they

will support staff to serve snacks and drinks and clear up.

- Volunteers may join the day centre where, under supervision of the Day Centre supervisor, they'll meet and greet, make drinks, chat and befriend, provide 1:1 assistance with table-top activities, price donated sale items etc.
- In our pottery they will join other local volunteers help make 'flatware' by rolling, cutting shapes, also moulding slipware and firing, then assisting residents with painting.
- Volunteers escort wheelchair users on daytime trips to cinema, bowling, Blue Planet, Gretna Green, canal boat and vintage train rides, cruising on Lake Windermere where they will help with packed lunches and meals out in cafes. Evening trips out to theatre, musical fireworks, Blackpool lights, amateur dramatic productions, carols, community socials. Volunteers also act as escorts with residents travelling long distance to Vitalise holiday sites, usually at weekends. In all cases a staff member or another adult volunteer will be present.
- Activity staff and volunteers work together to compile a monthly timetable, fitting in things to do with the residents. As they gain experience, we will expect the volunteers to plan their own activities and we hope they will bring new ideas with them. There are opportunities to use a day out to inspire creativity with colour or clay, or research new venues to visit.

Specific areas we would like to develop:

- 1) Improve access to our Soundbeam, an inclusive way for anyone to make music.
- 2) Research and development of a garden project, we'd like some help to grow some vegetables in containers.
- 3) While we make pottery to order, we don't actively market it. We would like volunteers to help find places to sell locally, and make it happen.

Contact details

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