

Overseas Volunteers at Leonard Cheshire Edinburgh Services



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 staff, local volunteers and the people that use our services. Sometimes these working relationships develop into long-term friendships.

Overseas volunteers are often involved in directly supporting service users 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. Although volunteers will be have the opportunity to visit a range of services, most of their time will be spent in two or three services. Experience has shown that this will give you the best opportunity to build meaningful relationships with staff and services users and really become an integral part of the team.

There is no typical day for volunteers as our services users' individual needs and interests determine what volunteers will be doing on a daily basis. The support that volunteers provide may extend to supporting people on activity weekends and short holidays, as well as providing support to those service users who have regular work, education or volunteering commitments. While supporting people in this way can be a lot of fun, it can also be very challenging as volunteers experience first-hand the issues faced by people with disabilities.

Overseas volunteers will be expected to volunteer no more than 35 hours within a week. They will be entitled to 2 days off per week although 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?

Training is provided to all our volunteers including specific information about each person receiving direct support. This information is likely to include individual support needs, interests, likes and dislikes, etc. Risk assessments ensure that volunteers are not asked to contribute outside of their capability or boundaries.

Volunteers acquire a range of knowledge, skills and experience including a greater understanding of the issues affecting disabled 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.

Edinburgh Services

Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) provides twelve residential services in Edinburgh and the surrounding area. Within each service, support is provided to up to 8 service users in either a Residential Home or Supported Living model of support.

Leonard Cheshire services in the Edinburgh area are located within residential communities just a few miles from Edinburgh City Centre, close to local amenities and served by an excellent bus service.

Expectations & Accommodation

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. Volunteers will not be assisting with feeding, taking part in personal care, or doing domestic activities for the services.

Volunteers are expected to behave in a socially responsible way, and in consideration to fellow volunteers and residents.

The accommodation provided is within services and may include sleepover rooms for the use of staff members. Overnight guests can be permitted on a temporary basis, and always with prior permission. Visitors staying for longer than three nights are encouraged to use our Edinburgh Guest house and this is provided at a discounted rate. More than two guests per volunteer would not normally be permitted at any given time.

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

Service Users

The people who use our services can have either learning or physical disabilities or a combination of both. Training is provided including specific training in manual handling and communication. Leonard Cheshire Disability does not provide support to anyone under the age of 16. Each service operates on a Person Centred Planning (PCP) basis and therefore the input of service users is essential when arranging the EVS timetable.

Volunteer Profile

It is important that the volunteers are eager to learn and have an interest in working with people with disability. It can be demanding and emotionally difficult to support people and will require patience, empathy, 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 is essential that the volunteers have a sufficient grasp of English to carry out a conversation, read and understand policies & procedures and follow basic instructions. It is particularly important that from a health and safety perspective, we can ensure that volunteers follow all procedures in place for their own and service users' safety.

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.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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