



CYRENIANS COMMUNITIES

There are five Cyrenians residential communities: The Farm, The City, Crighton Place, the Village and our new Lotus Community. Residential volunteers are an integral part of the model at four of the five communities.

THE LOTUS COMMUNITY

Background

Working alongside City of Edinburgh Council and other partners, the new Lotus Community houses up to 14 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children aged 16-18 across 2 adjacent properties in the North of Edinburgh. These young people have been referred by the UASC Accommodation Panel and are all engaged in education at local colleges and/ or employment.

Purpose of Community

The Lotus Community is a step towards independent living. Many of the residents have already gained basic living skills such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting. Support is required to help them gain confidence and knowledge of the local area to enable them to take further steps towards independence and integration in the local community, with a view to moving on to accommodation that better suits their needs including, in some cases, their own tenancies.

Volunteers and staff

A small staff team of keyworkers and managers support the Lotus Community residents, with further assistance from the Communities Team. The staff role is to assess the residents, provide structured guidance to them, uphold the rules and community agreements, supervise volunteers, and have overall responsibility for the project. Staff work fixed office hours but are available on call if required. Two volunteers live alongside the residents for a minimum of six months. Volunteers are aged 18-30 and study or work part-time alongside their volunteering.

THE ROLE OF SUPPORTIVE FLATMATE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are peer mentors to the community residents and do not substitute the work of paid staff. Volunteers and residents live within our community facility and manage the day-to-day domestic tasks and decisions within the building, which is their home. The process of being involved in decision-making empowers residents and helps to develop their confidence, skills and abilities. We endeavour to create an environment where residents and volunteers have an equal voice in the running of the house, but volunteers must note that the young people who come to live here come as a



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result of their need for support. Volunteer support for a resident may include:

- Supporting residents to explore new areas of Edinburgh
- Assisting with bidding for housing and moving on (training provided)
- Facilitating community activities
- Acting as a sounding board for a problem or difficult situation
- Offering mature and calm guidance

Outside staffing hours, volunteers maintain a presence in the house (worked out on a rota). Volunteers are encouraged to be alert to any conflict or other emerging problems and are expected to remind community members of the rules, if necessary, and use their influence to maintain a homely environment. They will be vigilant to any issues threatening the health and safety of those present and will call staff and/or emergency services if required. Overall, the role is less supervisory and more one of promoting a positive environment where residents feel safe and supported to gain the confidence, knowledge and skills to live independently.

Volunteers placements are for a minimum of six months. This commitment is required as it ensures continuity and stability within the community. The role is part-time and it is expected that volunteers will be studying or working part-time alongside their volunteer placement. Two volunteers live at the Lotus Community and will co-ordinate to ensure that there is **always a minimum of one volunteer** in the community in evenings and at weekends.

WHAT VOLUNTEERS GET FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH CYRENIANS

- A studio bedroom within the community.
- Free rent and bills including internet.
- Role specific training and the opportunity to access wider Cyrenians training
- Regular support and supervision sessions
- The opportunity to contribute to and help shape a new service
- A reference on completion of their placement
- An excellent experience to describe when applying for jobs or courses.

Volunteers use the experience with us to learn about psychology, social policy, youth work, social work, and community education and a range of other caring professions. Volunteer placements can be used to gain practical experience alongside study of a relevant field.

NB: volunteers are covered for any personal liability (i.e. the cost to the organisation of any incident in which they are involved) by the Charity's insurance. The charity is **not** responsible for insuring volunteers' personal belongings. The charity is responsible for the health and safety of volunteers while performing their role.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF VOLUNTEERS

- A good grasp of written and spoken English.
- A positive attitude and willingness to get involved.
- To be approachable and available to residents within set boundaries
- To work within a confidentiality framework
- To be willing to share their time with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to pass on skills and knowledge while promoting a safe environment
- To be actively involved in supporting residents (e.g. exploring new areas of Edinburgh together, facilitating community activities)
- Knowledge of Edinburgh local authority housing bidding systems or an interest and willingness to learn
- To see the potential in the young people who live here and recognise the challenges they may have faced
- To be enthusiastic and optimistic for positive change and progression



RULES

We encourage the Communities to discuss their own rules as a group, however, some rules are set in stone to keep everyone safe. Everyone in the Communities, both residents and volunteers must abide by the following:

- The Community must be your primary place of residence (volunteers are not required to stay in the Community in their time off.)
- Sexual relationships between volunteers and residents are totally inappropriate and strictly prohibited. Residents are looked after children and so any sexual relationship between volunteers and residents will lead to immediate cancellation of the volunteer placement and may result in criminal prosecution
- Volunteers and residents must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol whilst in the community
- Volunteers must deal with community funds in an appropriate and trustworthy manner
- Volunteers must uphold the policies and practices of Cyrenians, such as the health and safety policy etc.

If volunteers breach these rules, they may be asked to leave. The final decision lies with the Service Manager.

Please think carefully about these rules: if you do not think you can live by them then this volunteering opportunity is not for you.

HOW IT WORKS

Recruitment

You have already made the first step to recruitment by reading this information. If you want to proceed with your application follow the steps below: each subsequent step is dependent upon success at the proceeding stage.

- Complete an application form making specific reference to this information.
- Provide two referees who we can contact to find out about your suitability
- Interview, either in person or by video call/ phone.
- Guest visit if possible.
- Submit a police check from your country of origin (except for UK applicants)

Induction and information workshops

- Introduction to staff, residents and volunteers
- Join the PVG scheme
- Regular meetings with staff to explain unfamiliar ideas and processes
- Tour of the premises
- A Community handbook containing information on policy and practice
- Sessions on a variety of relevant topics covering practice issues and background information

Support

All volunteers will be given an individual staff supervisor who will meet with them approximately every two weeks to find out how things are going. The purpose of the meetings is:

- to identify personal objectives for the volunteer placement.
- to support volunteers in dealing with the communal living environment
- to support problem solving for any specific difficult situations they are struggling to cope with.
- to support volunteers to get the most from their volunteering

There are monthly Peer Support Sessions where volunteers get to spend the day together away from the community.

Rota

The volunteering 'shifts' cover evenings and weekends, with an additional weekly commitment of approx. 3hrs at other times to allow for meetings, training and supervision. This equates to a commitment of approximately 20hrs per week. The rota is organised by the volunteers themselves, meaning you can take time off when it suits you, so long as it is agreed by the other volunteer.

Training and Development

All volunteers attend monthly workshops on topics such as addiction, mental health, conflict resolution and teamwork. Where possible, we encourage volunteers to attend additional Cyrenians and external workshops and training.

Leaving

An exit interview at the end of placement will help the volunteer to assess their contribution and personal development and give staff feedback on their perceptions of the experience. On completion of the placement volunteers are given both a certificate of thanks and reference.

SOUNDS LIKE THE CHALLENGE FOR YOU?

If you're interested in volunteering with us, please complete the online application form. If you have any questions, please email rcsvolunteers@cyrenians.scot