

## **Project Environment**

The community we work with generally have a high rate of social housing, with high unemployment and social deprivation. Many of our service users would have a history of offending, engaging in some form of substance misuse and/or experience mental health issues. We offer volunteers a chance to work in a social care environment which can be complex and challenging yet supportive and energizing. We work with individuals with a wide range of health and social difficulties and we have trained, experienced staff and resources to provide interventions to this client group. The environment is one of constant change and requires flexibility from volunteers as the needs of our service users are constantly changing. We offer volunteers a chance to work closely along with our staff in a safe and professional manner. We will provide an induction and training opportunities to volunteers to maximize the benefit to them so that they will have a fulfilling and valued experience in their placement.

## **Project Details**

12 month EVS volunteering position, starting in September 2018, at Peter McVerry Trust in Dublin, Ireland.

## **Role**

Many of the young people need help and guidance with basic tasks on a day to day basis. The role of the EVS volunteers will be to help young people with their daily living skills as set out in an action plan which was drawn up after an assessment of needs. Help in this area is a vital building block to achieving independence and autonomy for our homeless community. Volunteers will have a range of tasks depending on their placement. They will have the opportunity to gain new skills and experiences of working in a team and also directly with our service users. The types of tasks will be as follows:

- ♣ Befriending and general social support
- ♣ Budgeting and help with managing money
- ♣ Cooking nutritious meals
- ♣ Family support
- ♣ Help with appointments, forms and applications
- ♣ General support with housekeeping
- ♣ Advice and support with self-care

We would also like EVS volunteers to innovate and develop new ways of engaging and relating to the disadvantaged young people we work with. We are willing to support ideas or projects they might have.

We are seeking volunteers who are motivated to work in the social care environment we work in, especially in the area of social disadvantage in inner city areas. In their application, potential EVS volunteers need to demonstrate their interest to become involved, to ensure that we can match their interests appropriately.

In particular we look at a range of the following skills and interest from volunteers. This will form the basis of an EVS volunteer description which we use to assess all applications fairly and transparently:

- ♣ Basic English Language (written and oral)
- ♣ Interest in personal development
- ♣ Interest in professional development in the area of social problems/housing/health issues
- ♣ Interest in gaining knowledge of Irish health and housing sector
- ♣ Ability to work well in a team
- ♣ Able to deliver practical skills to others
- ♣ An interest in gaining an understanding of the needs of homeless people
- ♣ Enthusiastic to set up mini projects to engage our service users.

The volunteer will spend 35 hours weekly working on activities in their project. This may also include, training, team meetings and meeting their mentor. The volunteer is entitled to two days annual leave for every month volunteered and they are also entitled to take Bank Holidays.

The aim of the activity is to add value to the lives of the service users and to the work and development of the organisation.

The health and safety of EVS volunteers will be managed under the Peter McVerry Trust Health & Safety Policy. We are committed to providing a safe working environment and in compliance with the relevant sections of the Health & Safety at Work Act 2005 and Irish legislation. Volunteers will receive organisational training on our induction course in relation to Health & Safety and also specific training in the service they are placed. All volunteers will have close access to other staff at all times and they will be allocated a supervisor to ensure risk assessments are completed for activities involving staff and service users.

### **Accommodation**

Volunteers are accommodated in a city center location, they will have their own private bedroom which has a shared kitchen and living room. Bed Linen, towels and pots and pans are also provided. There is also a monthly sum of pocket money provided to the volunteer.

### **Selection**

We select volunteers according to the Youth in Action Guidelines and we seek a balance of varied ages, genders and nationalities amongst our EVS volunteers. In order to fairly and transparently assess each candidate's suitability for an EVS placement, we ask each candidate to submit to us an application form which generally addresses the following:

1. Volunteer's motivation for applying to participate in EVS
2. Volunteer's motivation for applying to the project

3. Volunteer's general understanding of the factors that lead people to become homeless and an ability to demonstrate an understanding of the client group.
4. Challenges that the volunteer anticipates when working in our project
5. The skills and abilities a volunteer feels they will bring to the project
6. Volunteer's general expectation of a placement in Ireland
7. We also request a motivational letter outlining the reason why one is interested in securing an EVS placement with Peter McVerry Trust.

Once all the applications are received, applications are collated, scored and shortlisted. Due to the nature of the work and the client group we work with we would be looking for volunteers who are interested in working with disadvantaged individuals and can see both the support that is needed as well as the potential that people have. Volunteers should choose our project not only the city or county which is on offer, but also because of the experience and development they will gain. We also look for a volunteer who could bring something of their own experiences and culture to enrich the hosting project and local community. As a lot of the volunteer's activities will be aided by communication our volunteers would need a basic knowledge of English.

### **Motivation and EVS Experience**

We are a long established charitable organisation who target those most marginalized in society and offer a safe, challenging and supportive environment through direct service provision. We work with people who can present with drug and alcohol dependencies and often poor mental health. Often our client group would have a history of criminality and we provide accommodation and services to support and assist each person to re- establish himself or herself in the community and to move towards greater independence.

Many of our service users would never have been away from Dublin or outside their social catchment, often meeting people from other European counties can generate an interest in other aspects of life formerly unknown to our residents and work against perceptions, prejudice and xenophobia they may have. For the volunteer the experience could be very enriching as they come in contact with a side of modern day life they may not have encountered previously. Volunteers will gain a broad range of experience which will be beneficial for their future and personal development. These include communication skills, responding to challenging behavior and situations and the basic skills needed and challenges experienced in providing care for disadvantaged clients.

### **Description of the organization**

Peter McVerry Trust is committed to reducing homelessness and the harm caused by drug misuse and social disadvantage. Peter McVerry Trust provides low-threshold entry services, primarily to younger

persons with complex needs and offers pathways out of homelessness based on the principle of the Housing First model and with a framework that is based on equal opportunities, dignity and respect.

Our aims and objectives are to target those most marginalised in society and offer a safe, challenging and supportive environment through our service provision. We treat participants with warmth and respect and actively encourage them to be involved in all aspects of their own support plan. We offer a comprehensive package of support that will provide the best opportunity possible for them and assist them in planning a pathway out of homelessness or drug use, or if they continue to use drugs to assist them towards some level of stabilisation in order to live a life of dignity, with respect and opportunity. We also assist each person to re-establish himself or herself in the community and move towards greater independence.

We provide a wide range of services including day services and supported temporary accommodation, which is a residential service with varying capacities, usually male residents, who are over 18 years of age and may present with drug or alcohol dependencies or poor mental health. Volunteers complete day and/or evening work, with timetables agreed in consultation between the EVS volunteer and project manager.

We have over 300 staff who work on a full and part time capacity across our services throughout the Dublin, Kildare and Limerick areas. Our services are constantly expanding and changing in order to meet the demand of our service users. In 2017 we worked with 4,971 people across all 35 of our services.

Our work allows us to provide accommodation and food to all residents and to treat everybody in a respectful, person centered and non judgmental manner. Each resident has a shared or private bedroom, with access to a communal kitchen, TV room and shared bathroom. Trained staff offer support, advice and assistance in linking the clients into services and day centers outside of the project as well as resettlement services and move on options.

### **Contact Point**

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