



Volunteer Information

April 2016

Who we are

We are a small life sharing community of some 16 people in the market town of Stroud near Gloucester. We are part of St. Luke's Trust which next door also supports a centre for complementary therapies, a Waldorf Kindergarten and a housing scheme for elderly residents. A medicinal herb garden, small lake and wooded area are part of the grounds that surround us.

Two house communities form our core at Gannicox. One is formed by four residents with support needs and a co-worker couple. The second household comprises four residents with support needs and a family including late teenage twin girls. A small number of colleagues come in on a part-time employment basis who share our daytime support tasks. There is a lot of interaction between different initiatives in Stroud. Most of us take an active part in forming this wider network.

Our residents like the town environment and have their individual work and activity schedules. Some go to a local pottery, bakery or a textile workshop nearby, all help with domestic tasks and some take courses at Stroud Further Education College. Some may at times seek voluntary or paid employment in the Stroud area. The large garden with lake is one of our own work facilities that also offers an opportunity for supported work therapy for patients of the Therapy Centre. Some of our residents are elderly and have considerable personal care needs. We have a few residents who are on the autistic spectrum, often with severe communication barriers.

Your core tasks

You will help to establish and maintain work routines for and with our residents, take on some cooking, housework, crafts and possibly sport activities, support residents with going to town, do personal shopping etc. Following extensive training you will be involved in tasks of personal care; this will involve medication administration, possibly assist with feeding, showering and general personal hygiene. You will be involved in some of the outdoor gardening and estate work together with an experienced gardener and some of our residents. An important strand of our life and work in which you will get involved is the support and fostering of life skills, of individual social relationships, and of the cultural-spiritual needs and interests of our friends with support needs.

Conduct & Responsibilities

In our community you will be living and working alongside people who are often vulnerable, insecure and easily exploited, and we therefore expect that your conduct will at all times be suited to the demands of life with those we support, which includes sensitivity, tact, punctuality, active communication, flexibility and attention to detail. We expect you to show a responsible attitude towards alcohol, and no forms of illegal substances are acceptable on the community's premises. We ask you not to smoke inside our houses and to use any audio equipment in your own room at a volume that does not disturb others. Following your initial induction training you are expected to adhere to the various areas of community policy, including fire, health and safety and adult protection procedures.

Participation in shaping the community

Life sharing is great when everyone works co-operatively in answer to the needs of the Community and its individuals. Although co-workers with more experience will initially guide you into the tasks and rhythms of everyday life, we hope you will bring your own strength and initiative to the work and social fabric and share in the responsibility. You will be participating in a number of organisational and other meetings, both with the whole community as well as with the co-worker group here at Gannicox. We welcome any artistic gifts, e.g. musical, poetic, dramatic, crafts etc. and would encourage you to take your musical instrument along if you play one (we have a piano and cello).

In harmony with the Camphill ethos, the cultural and spiritual life of the community is based on broadly Christian and general humanitarian principles, with the celebration of the Christian festivals central to this. The end of the week is often marked by a special gathering which usually includes a reading from the Bible or another text that reflects the deeper spirituality of humanity. You are encouraged to participate in these. At the same time we respect the spiritual and religious orientation of each individual that joins our community.

Training

Throughout your stay you will be provided with training to ensure you are able to carry out your role effectively and to assist your own personal development. Much of this training will be in the field of social care work. There will be an initial intense period of induction training which will include completing the 'Care Certificate' required in England to be involved in social care support. This will include topics such as understanding your role, duty of care, health and safety, protection and rights of vulnerable adults, first aid, food safety, medication administration and a range of other policy areas. You may be participating in a broader foundation programme if there is sufficient interest and participation by others.

Mentoring and support

The nature of our work makes considerable demands upon the time and energy of all co-workers and volunteers, but this is compensated by the richness and value of experiences to be gained while living in our community, which strives to serve therapeutic, social, economic and spiritual ideals. During your time here you will have a 'Mentor'. She or he will be an experienced co-worker of this community who will be available to you for on-going, regular conversation and support. We also hold a more formal review with anyone joining us after a three-month period in order to make sure that the continued living and working together is experienced as mutually fruitful. We will provide you with a written testimonial (reference) at the end of your stay.

Accommodation and Internet

You will have your own furnished room with shared bathroom facilities in one of the Community's houses. All of our meals and basic living necessities are provided for by the Community. You will have free access to computer facilities, including email and internet for personal and vocational use; if you have your own laptop computer we suggest you bring it along.

Expenses, travel, visas

Live-in co-workers and volunteers give their work freely in answer to the needs of the Community and hence are not paid any wages or salary. At the discretion of the community you may receive a financial allowance of up to £40 per week to cover your reasonable expenses while you live and work with us. Any financial obligations, in the form of loans, debts, dependants etc will remain your own responsibility. We are also unable to make contributions to any national Social Security fund, old age provision, accident or life insurance to which you may be contributing at home. You are responsible for your travel costs to and from the community as well as for any visa applications and associated costs. We may, before completion of a full year's stay with us, refund your return journey home.

Working time, days off and holidays

As live-in co-workers and volunteers we do not work in a fixed shift arrangement. However, we ensure that each of us has some time to ourselves each day. We each also have a full day completely off every week and much of another day at weekends. An element of flexibility is asked from all of us who live in to respond to the variable needs of our residents and be aware of personal situations and needs of all live-in co-workers and volunteers. You will have evening commitments on some days of the week.

In consultation with the community you will be able to take up to 1 ½ a week's holiday for every three months of stay. At the discretion of the community you may receive an additional financial allowance for these periods.

Medical and insurance

You will be able to register with our local medical practice and, if you are a citizen of an EU or EEA country, receive free treatment under the UK National Health Service, including emergency hospital treatment. In this case you need to bring your European Health Insurance Card along. If you are a citizen of a non-EEA country you will be required to pay the UK Immigration Health Surcharge of £200 which then enables you to register with the UK National Health Service. Other services, such as dental and optician's treatment are not free of charge in the UK and can be expensive. Any such charges incurred will remain your own responsibility. We therefore advise you to consider your needs prior to your arrival in the UK. Gannicox is insured for liability in case of any act of negligence. We also insure your personal belongings in case of fire or theft, but please note that jewellery, contact lenses and money are not covered by our insurance. You should make your own provision for insurance when travelling.

Language proficiency

It is essential for our work that you have a high proficiency in both spoken and written English. If you are uncertain about your level of spoken or written English, please take lessons before you come, or, you can take an IELTS test (International English Language Testing System: www.ielts.org) and work towards grade 6 or 7.