

**BVS/BRETHREN SERVICE  
PROJECT FORM**

Name of project/organization: L'Arche Belfast  
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E-Mail or Web Site Address: volunteers@larchebelfast.org.uk / [www.larchebelfast.org.uk](http://www.larchebelfast.org.uk) / [www.larcheireland.org](http://www.larcheireland.org)  
BVSer's job title: Volunteer Care Assistant  
BVSer's immediate supervisor(s): Katrina Hiesterman - Volunteer Coordinator,  
House Leader in The Ember or The Hearth

**L'Arche in Belfast...**

*L'Arche (French for the ark) is an international federation of 131 communities worldwide, where people with and without learning disabilities choose to live together in a spirit of friendship where everyone's presence is valued. We welcome and celebrate our humanity.*

*We believe that L'Arche communities create opportunities for people with learning disabilities (our 'Core Members') to take up their places in the world, to offer their gifts, to realize their potential and to make an active contribution to society.*

*The first house in L'Arche Belfast (The Ember) was opened in 2001. It is now a thriving house with five core members, and two live-in volunteers. We have another house called The Ark, which is a five bedroom volunteer living space, and community celebrations venue! In early 2014 we opened our third house, The Hearth, which includes 4 core members and two live-in volunteers.*

*As well as living day to day life, and supporting the core members in all of their personal activities, we recently started a catering social enterprise called Root Soup. In Root Soup, we work together with adults with learning difficulties, and people transitioning from homelessness, to create meals, learn about nutrition and healthy eating, and to cater events. We also have a growing art program, In Other Words; and how can you forget our bustling allotment, Green Buds, which supplies many of the vegetables and fruits we use in Root Soup. All of these projects are staffed by assistants, volunteers, core members, and other adults with learning difficulties in the area.*

*We are located in the heart of South Belfast on the Ormeau Road, just a bus away from city center and all of its fun.*

*Here in L'Arche Belfast we are committed to being a 'soft space' at the heart of Belfast where we can offer hospitality to all who come and invite people into simple relationships that will transform their lives. We are a place where people can discover their gifts, using their hands, hearts, and minds, to make something together they could not create alone.*

*We cultivate community in our gather spaces, garden, kitchens, and around our tables as we share food, fun, faith, and friendship with one another.*

**JOB DESCRIPTION:**

*The main role of a house assistant in L'Arche is to live and build community by creating a home with people who have an intellectual disability and with the other assistants in the house in which they are living. As a house assistant they would be living in one of the community houses and sharing in responsibility for the life of the house. House assistants carry responsibility for creating a home and building community. Assistants need to be flexible with their time and space.*

*The responsibilities of an assistant include:*

- *Building relationships of mutual trust and care with all those with whom you live and work.*
- *Supporting personal care of some of the core members—bathing, dressing etc.*
- *Helping the core members budget their money.*
- *Caring for the household needs—cooking, cleaning, shopping etc*
- *Fostering the spiritual life of the home (encouraging prayers at meal and bed times, accompanying the core members to mass or their various prayer services)*
- *Nurturing a spirit of welcome and celebration in the home.*
- *Supporting the residents to develop the personal skills that will enable them to take as much responsibility as possible for their own lives.*
- *Facilitating appropriate use of core members' leisure and holiday time.*
- *Attending meetings—house, community, regional etc and writing reports for same.*

*All of these particular responsibilities are exercised as part of a team of assistants working together in mutual respect and care under the leadership of a house leader.*

*We need you...*

- *Are you looking for something more?*
- *Would you like to be part of a community?*
- *Are you interested in getting to know people with learning disabilities?*
- *Have you got time to spare?*
- *Do you want to explore your own spirituality?*

*We invite you...*

- *Into relationship with others*
- *To discover the gift of the person with a disability*
- *To get to know yourself*
- *To build community*
- *To reflect on your own values and those of the society in which we live*
- *To open your heart and mind to welcome other points of view*
- *To live your daily life in the spirit of the Gospels*

*L'Arche is also a place for the volunteers to grow in their personal journey. It is a place where they get a deeper self awareness and also a deeper self reflection, where they learn and improve their interpersonal skills e.g. listening, sharing, welcoming, communicating and organizing.*

*They also learn to care (physically, emotionally and spiritually) for themselves and to cope with stress. They learn to work within a team, how to cooperate and negotiate, as well as some peacemaking and relationship- building skills.*

*They can also develop and improve skills on:*

- *Nutrition & meal preparation. Food safety and hygiene*
- *Housekeeping, cleaning & laundry skills*
- *Budgeting & shopping*
- *Basic medical care, record keeping and writing reports*
- *Fire safety*
- *Emergency procedure*
- *Driving*

*There are many opportunities in L'Arche to reflect on one's personal journey:*

- *Accompaniment with the Assistants' Coordinator or another long term member*
- *Times for reflection and community prayers*
- *An evaluation process*
- *Volunteers are encouraged to make time for personal prayer/reflection and journaling*

***Minimum requirements or prerequisites:***

- *Women or men with a minimum of 18 years (for BVSers: 21 years)*
- *Free to commit and live full-time with others in community*
- *Flexible and willing to respond to the needs of the community*
- *Physically, mentally and emotionally balanced*
- *Able to communicate in English*
- *Open to the spirituality of L'Arche & willing to participate in the faith life*
- *Tolerant and appreciative of differences.*
- *Friendly, mature and have a sense of responsibility*

*We don't require any specific education or experience but it is an asset to have.*

*Couples? Can you take married couples? YES*

*Disabilities? Can you take a volunteer with a physical disability? YES (We don't have a wheelchair access.)*

***Housing for volunteer:***

*~in community*

*Description of housing, if already provided:*

*We currently have 3 houses. All houses are shared with core members and/or volunteer assistants. The houses are located within the same neighborhood, on the Ormeau Road. Ormeau is a busy road full of shops, pubs, cafes, restaurants, and churches.*

***Youtube Video about the project work available online?***

<http://youtu.be/pIubXex7mtM>

*(This is a link to a video on Youtube made by one of our past volunteers on a community holiday.)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfIIYAvoZAY>

*(This is "Google Larry" from the L'Arche International "As I Am" video series.)*