

## ROLE OF A HOUSE ASSISTANT (volunteer) IN L'ARCHE

The main role of a house assistant in L'Arche is to live and build community by creating home with people who have an intellectual disability and with the other assistants in the house in which you are living.

L'Arche is first and foremost a "Community", where the emphasis is on "sharing life" as opposed to "being cared for" or "giving care". As an assistant you are asked to enter into real, respectful and meaningful relationships with both the residents and assistants in your house. We aim to create family type community and therefore the relationship we build with those with whom we are living is that of sister and brother.

Within each home there is a **house leader** to whom you are directly responsible in your role. The **Volunteer Coordinator** is responsible for your welfare as an assistant. He/she will arrange to meet with you from time to time throughout your stay in the Community. You may **request to meet with them** at other times as you wish.

You will be required at all times to relate as part of a team in ways which foster the principles outlined in our Charter & our Statement of Identity:

*"If human beings are to develop their abilities and talents to the full, realising all their potential as individuals, they need an environment that fosters personal growth. They need to form relationships with others within families and communities. They need to live in an atmosphere of trust, security and mutual affection. They need to be valued, accepted and supported in real and warm relationships". (Charter of L'Arche 11:2)*

*"At the core of L'Arche is the relationship between persons who have an intellectual disability and those who chose to support them in community. We believe that this relationship is one that is mutually transformative, a sign of hope and a powerful witness in our world" (L'Arche Ireland statement of Identity)*

The emphasis therefore is on building and fostering relationships of mutual respect and caring with **all** those with whom you live.

### An Assistant is expected to:

1. Respect and promote:
  - The Charter of L'Arche,
  - The Community spirit of L'Arche Cork,
  - Community traditions,
  - Community policies & Community structures of authority.
2. Have regular support and supervision meetings with your house Leader
3. Work as part of a team in your house
4. Be available to respond to the needs of the community.

## **PARTICULAR AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

### **Relationship building**

To build relationships of mutual trust and care **with all those** with whom you live and work involves:

- Taking time to listen.
- Spending time together.
- Being willing to share on a personal level as appropriate.
- Being willing to work on difficult relationships.
- Asking for help.
- Being willing to ask for and give forgiveness.

### **Spiritual Life:**

Foster the spiritual life of the home by participating in and facilitating:

- Times of prayer together.
- Prayer around mealtimes and celebrations.
- Community liturgies.
- Accompanying those who need it to enable their belonging to their Church.
- Respecting and supporting the spiritual welfare of individuals.

### **Support of Residents:**

Help all the Residents you live with to develop the personal skills that will enable them to take as much responsibility as possible for their own lives by:

- Encouraging and supporting the development of friendships and helping to maintain contact with past assistants.
- Encouraging active participation in the local community.
- Encouraging participation in cooking, cleaning, gardening and household shopping tasks.
- Encouraging people to maintain a high standard of personal hygiene, assisting them with laundry and ironing as well as encouraging regular bathing/showering.
- Assisting as appropriate with road safety skills and the use of public transport.
- Encouraging an awareness of the needs of other people living in the house and fostering the desire to help out when one can.

Give appropriate care and support to residents in a spirit of mutual respect, such as:

- Personal hygiene and health needs.
- Clothing choice and care.
- Supervising or Administering prescribed medication.
- Provision of First Aid.

### **Use of Leisure time:**

Facilitating appropriate use of residents' leisure and holiday time, for example:

- Encouraging the resident to participate in appropriate leisure activities.
- Accompanying the residents to recreational activities.
- Searching out appropriate recreational activities.

### **Home life**

Achieving domestic standards which create a good quality of life in the home by:

- Cooking; the preparation of nutritionally balanced meals.
- Shopping - in a spirit of simplicity and integrity.
- Cleaning, maintaining a high standard of cleanliness in the home
- Laundry and gardening.
- Preparing celebrations and events in the house and in the community.
- Creating an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality.

### **Teamwork:**

All those particular responsibilities are exercised as part of a team of assistants working together in mutual respect and care where it is expected that:

- You respect and support the leadership of your house leader
- You have regular support/supervision meetings with him/her.
- You participate fully in the weekly team meeting and use it as a place of mutual sharing, support and decision-making.
- You participate in the community's internal reference meetings, community reviews, P.C.P. meetings as appropriate and maintain good working relationships with relevant professionals
- You are committed to using the weekly house evening as a place of community building and shared decision-making.
- You assist in the maintenance of records regarding the Residents as required.
- You assist in the management of the annual budget for the house and the maintenance of financial records and share responsibility for the community budget by **appropriate use** of community goods and property, e.g. vehicles, telephone and fixtures and fittings.