

ALICE

WARD BEFRIENDER VOLUNTEER



“Volunteering with CLCH has really opened my eyes to the nature of how hospitals operate. Helping the staff, speaking with patients and generally just offering a helping hand can really go a long way and I am proud to serve as a volunteer here at CLCH.

Why did you decide to volunteer with us?

I'm interested in studying medicine and always love lending a hand, so I thought it would be good to expose myself to a healthcare setting. This allowed me to put myself forward and learn how to properly interact with patients. I wanted to gain a lot more than you would from a week of work experience where I could feel like I had an impact even if it was only small. With this being said, I know CLCH to be a great organisation for volunteering, so I thought why not get involved at such a place.

What does your role as a volunteer consist of?

I start by preparing the menu and taking orders from the patients for their meals all whilst chatting to them and maintaining conversation. This can take very little time or a lot depending on the patients there that week. If I finish early, I talk to some of the patients and get to know them. Then by lunch I help serve the food. Sometimes I serve tea and coffee to the patients after lunch. I find it really helps with patients by just being someone they can talk to and express their feelings towards, even if it is just to entertain them whilst they wait for their treatment.

How would you say becoming a volunteer has changed/affected you?

I believe I have grown greatly as a person. The role definitely helped me gain a lot more confidence and especially communication skills. I get to meet many different patients with different stories as they all come and go. From them I learn about different conditions and their struggles like Multiple Sclerosis or Parkinson's disease and usually tend to look them up once I get home.

Have you faced any obstacles whilst being a volunteer with us? If so, how have you overcome these?

When I started volunteering, I was shy. It's always difficult being in a new environment with new people. My main challenge was adapting to the needs of different people. Some patients can hear perfectly fine and speaking loudly to them can seem condescending, whereas others feel frustrated when they can't hear you.

Some patients are always enthusiastic to see me, whereas others are unhappy about being there and usually don't want to do much talking. Distinguishing which type of patient they are just takes a bit of practice and getting used to. Ultimately, with their difficult situation, the priority is to make them feel as comfortable as possible.

For somebody who is looking to volunteer at CLCH, how would you encourage them to join? And why?

I would say just go for it, you learn so much and it gives you experience all whilst making you feel helpful. Volunteering at CLCH is rewarding, it is very difficult for the patients who are in their rooms all day with limited visiting hours so being there for them is important and often leaves a smile on their face. If you are finding it hard as a volunteer, the staff are always extremely supportive and pleasant, and will go out of their way to make you feel as comfortable as possible, working through any obstacles that may be faced with having a new volunteer working.



CASEY

WARD BEFRIENDER VOLUNTEER

ATHLONE HOUSE NURSING HOME



“There was one time where I spent an hour with a patient who I felt was very lonely and by simply adjusting my speech and the speed of it, I found it to be extremely rewarding and we had a great talk and I think these things go a long way.

How was your experience in joining the volunteers team?

I came across volunteering at CLCH when arriving to the UK as I wanted to do something that could provide a positive service. I have always wanted to work for the NHS and by chance I came across volunteering opportunities at CLCH. The process was quite easy, there was a bit of paper work but the staff were really good so I did not find any issues there!

I have not been in the UK for too long and although I had masters in nutrition, I had not had any healthcare volunteering experience – so this was a great opportunity as I was able to put my knowledge into practice, especially with the nutritional side of things. Here, I am able to speak to clinical professionals, dieticians and although it can be hard at times, being able to shadow current professionals really has helped me.

What does your role as a volunteer consist of?

My day to day is really to keep the patients occupied and engaged. A lot of the patients here are of elderly age and like to do things such as read newspapers; so each morning I go to the shop and pick up about 10 newspapers and I will go around to rooms and deliver them to patients – It also acts really well as an icebreaker between them and I, especially where English was not my first language. It really gives me a chance to get to know each patient individually as well.

There are around 20 rooms and usually get to speak to around 4-5 patients before lunch time. From here, I help out delivering food to the patients, offering teas and coffee's, really in attempts to keep them as comfortable as we can.

How would you say becoming a volunteer has changed/affected you?

Volunteering has really changed me in a positive change. As I said, I am new to the country and I do not know many people. Usually I would be spending time on my own, which can get lonely, but by coming here, it has really helped me in adapting to a new place and also one of the things is that it has helped me grow more compassion, I see a lot of people having a difficult time here, recovering – and I have learned to have more gratitude in life by seeing how even my small efforts as a volunteer can go such a long way for them.

As somebody new to the country, how have you found yourself adapting to caring with a diverse range of patients at Athlone?

My role is as a befriender here and being in a city like London, which is so diverse, I have found myself adapting to people and manoeuvring to suit everyone's needs. We all have our own mother tongue and accents and some of the patients here do not speak English – so I have found ways to communicate in other ways to show my support towards them, that has been really rewarding. For instance sometimes I simply use body language to communicate.

There was one time where I spent an hour with a patient who I felt was very lonely and by simply adjusting my speech and the speed of it, I found it to be extremely rewarding and we had a great talk and I think these things go a long way.

Do you have a moment which particularly stands out to you during your time as a volunteer with us?

I would say one example the stands out was where I was caring for a dementia patient, who would get really confused, leading to them repeating themselves or asking the same questions. At times it was hard to communicate and really see where I could assist them in their care. I managed to get to a point where I could latch onto certain parts of their questions and be able to make jokes with them and we shared a really great conversation after this, it was really rewarding for me. I would say that volunteering at CLCH really helps with the current demand that is on the healthcare service and its hard working staff.

AMIR

WARD BEFRIENDER VOLUNTEER

Adam's Ward – Finchley Memorial Hospital



“Volunteering with CLCH has really opened my eyes to the demands placed on hospitals. Helping the staff, even with small tasks gives me great satisfaction. I know that I am offering support to make the team's day a little easier.

Why did you decide to become a volunteer with CLCH?

As somebody who wants to study medicine, I needed to enter the clinical setting to really get a feel for what it is like. This is my first time volunteering with the NHS, and I have always also had this innate feeling to help in a hospital wherever I can.

Whether it's the small things for patients, such as helping to make them comfortable with extra bedding or larger jobs, I am helping anywhere I possibly can. Putting that into action is extremely important to me.

What does your day look like as a volunteer?

It's very interesting, you're constantly learning. From how to conduct yourself with patients and other healthcare professionals, to patient confidentiality and skillsets, I find that every time I volunteer, I'm gaining skills.

Sometimes, you also have to learn on the job and it's very rewarding. I have also found that, the more you volunteer, the more you learn, as you build a stronger, trusting relationship with the patients and also with the team.

What impact has volunteering had on you?

I feel like it has definitely matured me. Healthcare is very serious, and seeing patients, as well as getting a real idea of how the staff work endlessly to meet demands, has really boosted my determination to do anything I can to further assist them.

It has also taught me to take on responsibility better and manage my workload. It has also taught me the importance of being personable.

What challenges have you found while volunteering?

At the beginning, I was a little unsure of how to communicate with the patients and make them feel comfortable around me. I spoke with the nurses and they explained to me how I can practice this better; so by being aware of my speech for instance, as some patients are more hard of hearing than others.

I now adjust my tone and my delivery to suit each patient's needs, something which CLCH values in their ethos. I think it all comes down to keeping the dignity of the patients.

Would you recommend volunteering at CLCH to anyone you know?

Yes! The CLCH website is very easy to navigate and I would encourage anybody to volunteer at CLCH, because you learn so much.

Being able to learn on the job is not something we are taught at school. Getting first hand experience makes you realise the lengths the NHS and its staff go through to provide the best level of care for their patients.

What difference do you think your volunteering makes?

Everybody you see in the hospital, from all levels, work so hard for those that need help. As a volunteer, I realised that even for them to have someone like me who is willing to pick up on smaller jobs, it allows for them to be alleviated of some stress. It could give them even a few minutes break, which is really valuable.

It can also get very hectic in hospitals, so having someone like me to help can make that small difference not only for the team, but to the patients I am supporting. It can go a long way.



PAUL

VOLUNTEER DRIVER

PEMBRIDGE HOSPICE



“Volunteering with CLCH has allowed me to apply my driving skills towards an important cause. To serve creative materials to those who are in a perhaps lonely and isolated state really fills them with joy and helps drive them through their treatment.

How did you find out about volunteering with CLCH?

I looked online. I live in South West London and I was looking to do some volunteering with the NHS, with a skill that I had. I enjoy driving, so I wanted something where I could apply this. The website was easy when it came to finding out information about volunteering.

Why did you decide to become a volunteer with us?

I have done a lot of volunteering in my past; I am a running coach and I volunteer at my club a few times a week, however, with the NHS, I wanted to volunteer somewhere substantial and where it was somewhat more rewarding.

I noticed that CLCH were looking for volunteers and I thought it would be a great chance to support the hospice. Being a palliative care unit, the idea of helping those in such a sensitive state is very important to me.

What volunteering work do you do at Pembridge Hospice?

So I deliver art and crafts kits, which I drop to the homes of our patients. I can have upwards of 25 deliveries each day, all within West and North West London. Due to Covid-19, face to face interactions were reduced, unfortunately, so these kits enable them to still feel part of a community.

Patients also send in their works, which we then share. It's really important to keep this community feel amongst us, and I think we achieve this well. We want everybody to feel valued and appreciated, no matter their circumstances.

How is volunteering with Pembridge Hospice different?

As I mentioned, I have done a fair bit of volunteering in my past. But what is different here is the fact that I am working to support people who are really in need, and it has opened my eyes to realise how much of a difference I am making to their lives, and that is very rewarding, it keeps me going.

It drives me to be more efficient in delivering these packages to patients who cannot come into the Hospice. We know how much of a difference it makes to their daily lives.

Would you recommend volunteering at CLCH to anyone you know?

Most certainly! If you can make the time, then I would really recommend it. It is very worth while to help CLCH keep providing better services. It is also giving back to the community, and there is great satisfaction that can be gained from that.

What difference do you think your volunteering makes?

With what I do, especially, I think it makes a huge difference in ensuring the services that CLCH run here at Pembridge are still efficient. The problem with Royal Mail, for instance delivering for us, is that sometimes there are delays or they get lost. However, with me, I ensure everything is delivered to a tight time frame, so nobody misses out on this great service. It's the certainty and confidence we can guarantee.

Volunteers offer that extra hand that the NHS needs, especially during these tough times. We offer compassion and genuine care and that in itself goes a long way.



ZEHRA

SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT VOLUNTEER

SPECIALIST WEIGHT MANAGEMENT SERVICE,
KENSINGTON



I have a unique and unconventional volunteer role since all my work is online. This has seen me creating a Facebook community for the clients of the Specialist Weight Management Service (SWMS) where I moderate and approve their activity. I also curate content with the guidance of the SWMS experts. I cannot wait for everything else this role has in store for me! Its been fantastic.

Why did you decide to become a volunteer with us?

My desire to give back to my community, a growing interest in what it's like working in a hospital, and the impressive services offered by the trust prompted me to be a volunteer with CLCH.

From what I have seen at CLCH, their care is all about tailoring to the patients and making each and every person feel like their care plan is personalised. I found that this both motivates the patients as well as their families.

What does your day-to-day look like as a volunteer

I have a unique and unconventional volunteer role since all my work is online. So far, it has consisted of me creating a Facebook community for the clients of the Specialist Weight Management Service, moderating and approving their activity & curating content with the guidance of the SWMS experts.

I cannot wait for everything else this role has in store for me! I would definitely say that this experience has allowed for me to grow and become much more confident as a volunteer.

Please let us know about one particular experience that has truly stuck with you as a volunteer here

As strange as it might sound, feeling valued and appreciated in the workplace was a rare experience that has stuck with me. At a lot of places where I've worked, my well-being was neglected which led to me feeling stressed, exhausted and frustrated.

At CLCH, wellbeing and satisfaction are prioritised. I always look forward to performing to the best of my ability here and I really appreciate that.

What have you learned about yourself after volunteering at CLCH?

Being a volunteer has allowed me to showcase the qualities of being selfless, proactive, and organized. It has brought out the best in me on both personal and professional fronts and I am really happy with my growth over the time I've been volunteering!

I really feel as if it has equipped me with skills that I can now apply in my normal day to day life! Honestly, this experience has been invaluable

For somebody who is looking to volunteer at CLCH, how would you encourage them to join? And why?

By sharing all the positive experiences I have had during my time here, I feel I'd be able to promote volunteering at CLCH. It's a great way to develop various soft skills and looks great on one's CV, besides being something noble and selfless in which one can invest their free time; I highly recommend it!