

# VOLUNTEER



*Give back, better yourself and overcome your fears*

First Edition, May 2018

## Volunteer Profile: Sebastian Herdman



1. Hi Sebastian, which year are you in?

*Hello! I'm in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the MPharm course.*

2. Where did you volunteer and for how long?

*I volunteered at Leonard Cheshire Disability Home for a year during sixth form.*

3. What do you do as a volunteer? Describe a typical session.

*A typical session for me involved assisting residents with their afternoon social activities, and often having to relay messages between patients with varying physical and mental disabilities.*

4. What were your first impressions when you started volunteering?

*At first, I found it difficult to effectively communicate with the residents, as every patient had varied abilities to speak, move and gesture. Therefore, it took me several weeks before being able to effectively adapt to every person's needs.*

5. How do you feel about the experience looking back at it now?

*Now, I feel a lot more comfortable talking and communicating with mentally and physically handicapped people, where other people may feel awkward or even scared to do so.*

6. What's the best thing about volunteering?

*I know it sounds cliché, but volunteering was a genuinely rewarding experience. Multiple residents told me that they genuinely enjoyed my company, sparking new conversation between not only themselves, but also with the other social care workers.*

7. And what's the most challenging thing?

*Some patients were very resistant at times to engaging in social activities, and they ended up distressing other residents who were trying to enjoy themselves. Dealing with such situations, sometimes involving the removal of patients from the room, and then attempting to diffuse the lingering tension proved to be difficult at times.*

8. How has volunteering changed you?

*Volunteering in a disability home made me realise how so many trivial tasks such as brushing your teeth or picking up a biscuit from the biscuit tin can be so difficult for handicapped patients. I have become more appreciative of being able to live autonomously, without the need to be watched and assisted at all times.*

9. What difference do you feel you've made by volunteering?

*I believe I made not only the residents more engaged in social activities, but I also feel I relieved some of the other full time volunteers from the pressures of patient care at times, making me appreciate how demanding of a job caring can be!*

10. How has volunteering helped you as a pharmacy student?

*Volunteering has made me more empathetic to patient problems, and has increased my ability to clearly convey information to patients, regardless of whether they are handicapped or not. Patient consultations can be scary for both parties, but as a pharmacist, we are required to maintain a level head and ensure that the patient leaves with confidence and a full understanding of how they need to proceed with their treatment. I also engaged in the planning of patient schedules, which I believe has translated well into planning my revision coming up to exam season as well.*

Thank you Sebastian! 😊

If you've been inspired by Sebastian's experience, you can find out more about volunteering at the Leonard Cheshire Disability Home here: <http://studentsunionucl.org/volunteering/directory/organisations/leonard-cheshire-disability>