

VOLUNTEER FAQs



Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Leighton Buzzard Mencap. Below you can find some information that we hope will help answer some of your questions, but if you need to know anything else, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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WHAT VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE AT LB MENCAP?

Opportunity Group, a playgroup for children under 5 that provides a welcoming, secure and stimulating environment with a support system for parents/carers.

High 5s is an active youth club for members aged 8 to 18, meeting once a week on a Thursday evening during term time. The emphasis is on fun and socialising together offering both structured and unstructured play opportunities. Parents, carers and siblings are welcome to come and join in too.

Holiday Club runs for three weeks in the summer providing an action-packed club for children aged 8 to 17 offering invaluable experience for student volunteers and a well-deserved break for parents/carers.

Friends Within meets weekly and offers members aged 18+ a wide range of activities and preparation for independent living. Volunteers support members to build friendships within the group, socialise with the wider public and be part of organised trips out and about.

Becoming a **Trustee** on the Committee is about strategic direction and ensuring our services are the best they can be.

Or you may be interested in arranging a **fundraising** event on our behalf.

WHAT EXPERIENCE DO I NEED?

We very much welcome volunteers who have experience of working with children or adults with learning disabilities and who would enjoy sharing their skills and knowledge in a caring environment.

Equally, we are very open to volunteers who have never had opportunities to interact with people with disabilities.

The volunteer roles are varied and we are happy to play to your strengths, but allow you to explore new experiences too. The most important thing to know is that volunteers are part of a team who are there to support and be role models for our members who have learning disabilities. We need our volunteers to have respectful and positive interactions with our members and to help provide a safe, fun and supportive environment for them.

For a trustee role and Friends Within and Opportunity Group, volunteers must be 18+. However, we positively encourage teenage volunteers for High 5s (age 15+) and Holiday Club (age 17+).

HOW MUCH TIME DO I NEED TO COMMIT TO VOLUNTEERING?

For Opportunity Group, High 5s and Friends Within, we ask volunteers to make a weekly commitment. If there are sessions that you cannot attend, we ask that the leader is notified well in advance so that we can organise enough volunteers to ensure that sessions can be run safely.

Holiday Club requires you to commit to a whole week at a time, not just a day or two in each week. We also welcome volunteers to commit to more than one week.

CAN I START VOLUNTEERING STRAIGHT AWAY?

All volunteers need to complete an **application form**, have two satisfactory references and a DBS check completed. Once these are in place, we would aim to start you volunteering as soon as we have a suitable position.

WHAT WILL I GAIN FROM VOLUNTEERING FOR LB MENCAP?

What you will gain is very personal to you, but many of our volunteers develop their teamwork and organisational skills, gain experiences of working with a wide range of people and create long lasting friendships with other volunteers. In addition, many of our volunteers feel inspired to go on to study or work in sectors related to their time spent with LB Mencap, such as becoming the SENCO in a school, studying Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Medicine, being qualified in British Sign Language, or going on to set up a successful, additional needs performing arts group. We have also had a volunteer at High 5s who was considering adopting and wanted to gain experience of interacting in a playful environment with children.

Some of our youth volunteers have been involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes and we can fill in the paperwork for those undertaking the volunteering as part of the award. We can also provide references for job applications and UCAS forms.

Any reasonable expenses that you incur as a result of volunteering for LB Mencap will be reimbursed, in accordance with our Finance Policy and upon submitting a completed expenses form.

WILL I GET ANY TRAINING?

Training will be provided as appropriate to support you in your role. All volunteers need to undertake Safeguarding training and subsequent updates. Free First Aid training is also periodically available.

NEXT STEPS

If you would like to start the process of becoming a volunteer, please fill in the **application form** on the website, send it back to us and we will be in touch.