

Beannachar Camphill Community



A Training Centre for Young Adults with Special Needs

Information for Prospective Co-workers

Beannachar is a community providing work and training for young adults with special needs aged between 17 and 30. We emphasise the adult status of our students, who display a broad range of learning disabilities such as Down's syndrome, Fragile X and autism as well as behavioural and physical disturbances.

The students, co-workers and children live together in four family units on an estate of 27 acres (11 hectares) on the edge of Aberdeen.

We are a community of approximately 60 people: 21 students (our residents, who stay for a period of between 2 and 10 years); 13 day students, 10 long-term co-workers; 18 shorter-term co-workers and 4 small children. There are several employed members of the community, including two house co-ordinators, a joiner/maintenance person, an administrator, a secretary, a mending lady, a driver and five workshop leaders.

Each co-worker has one free day per week and four weeks holiday per full year, which must be taken during the Beannachar closure periods (2 weeks at Christmas, 2 weeks in July). At all other times it is expected that each co-worker would be a responsive and responsible member of the community. This can be demanding, especially at the beginning, because our days are long and filled with activities, but it makes it possible for all of us to live more like a family and less like an institution.

New co-workers receive £40 per week (at 2011) to cover personal expenses; note that food and accommodation are provided free of charge.

Some co-workers stay for many years; others make a shorter commitment which we prefer to be a full year. The minimum age for co-workers is 19, but we also offer the possibility for school pupils to take part in our life for a short period as a practical experience.

Joining Beannachar

Potential co-workers usually apply by post, email or fax and are then asked to send a detailed C.V., a photograph, the names and addresses of two referees, a medical check and a criminal record check. After being fully informed about our life and work here, or if possible after an initial visit, they are asked to commit themselves for at least six months or preferably for a full year.

Soon after their arrival, every co-worker participates in induction talks with their house co-ordinator which give a framework for everyday life at Beannachar (e.g. timetable, guidelines, procedures etc.) as well as outlining some of the fundamental ideas and attitudes underlying our work. Together with all the registration papers and forms, new co-workers are issued with a handbook containing the health and safety policy, the statement of intent, procedures in case of fire, and other necessary information.

Living in Beannachar

The daily work involves both the co-workers and the students according to their abilities, and includes organic gardening and farming, as well as estate work; work with medicinal herbs; cooking; laundry; woodwork; weaving and candle-making. Co-workers' work is arranged according to the needs of the community; those who have particular skills, interests or needs should mention these before they come and every effort will be made to take these into account, but no guarantee can be given.

The cultural life, in which everyone is expected to participate, includes folk dancing, drama, hobby groups, evening classes, celebration of the Christian festivals, walking, swimming, sports and outings e.g. to concerts, cinema, theatre, local beauty spots etc. There is a weekly non-denominational Christian Sunday Gathering.

Co-workers should come with adequate clothing, including old clothes for outdoor work, boots, a warm waterproof coat and smarter clothes for Sunday gatherings and special occasions. Co-workers do not need to bring towels and bed linen, but of course may do so if wished.

If co-workers smoke, they are asked to do so with discretion and only in designated places. Alcohol and drugs are not permitted on the premises.

Co-workers are expected to uphold the Health and Safety Policy, being constantly aware of the responsibility of their actions with respect to the health and safety of everyone in the community.

Despite the need for the allocation of clearly defined roles amongst ourselves as co-workers, we work actively to ensure that each member of the community can feel that their contribution is unique, valued and valid. We strive to uphold an atmosphere of openness and honesty in all our dealings with each other. Mutually dependent as we are, we try to support and enable one another in our need for privacy and personal choice.

We welcome visits from relatives and friends of co-workers, by prior arrangement.

Co-workers are expected to attend weekly house meetings, co-worker meetings and Sunday gatherings. There will also be the opportunity to attend occasional lectures, study groups and other local events.

Training for Co-Workers

A full induction programme is offered in the first few weeks after arrival.

For co-workers and employees, training serves a variety of needs;

1. It enables them to achieve the qualifications required to meet the criteria for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council;
2. It ensures ongoing professional development for everyone;
3. It fosters the core of Anthroposophical understanding referred to in Camphill's Mission Statement;
4. It meets the needs of the community to keep abreast of changing professional approaches to current issues.

All co-workers completely new to Camphill life are expected to attend the Foundation Course comprising a one-hour session per week as well as visits to other centres, and occasional specific training sessions, evening study groups and lectures. A full year's attendance of the course entitles participants to a certificate. Part of the course's structure is the provision of a tutor to whom they can turn for more objective support, in addition to that available from their house co-ordinators and other experienced co-workers. We do not expect newly-arrived co-workers to take full responsibility for any realm of our life; close supervision and liaison takes place in the house with the house co-ordinators, and at work with a more responsible co-worker.

There is the possibility for co-workers who have lived in Beannachar for more than a year to participate in the officially-accredited 5 year honours B.A. course in Social Pedagogy (at Camphill School, Aberdeen), run jointly with Aberdeen University. This course entails six hours of lectures, artistic work and group tutorials per week plus private study time, and it offers an opportunity for greater involvement and commitment to our common life and work. Two tutors are available for regular guidance and support for each person, one from within Beannachar and one from the course faculty.

More committed and experienced co-workers may take part in other Camphill training courses available on a national level, such as the Anthroposophical Health Care Course; the Bio-Dynamic (Agriculture) Seminar and the Adult Communities Course. In addition co-workers attend day or weekend training sessions and conferences of particular professional interest, as available locally and nationally.

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