

StEP

Steps to Employment Project

ECHO Volunteer Training Pack



Volunteer Manager (StEP) Roz Johnson

roz.johnson@echoherefordshire.co.uk 07719023534

Volunteer Coordinator (StEP) Sue Palliser

sue.palliser@echoherefordshire.co.uk

Outreach Officer (StEP) Frankie Farrell

frankie.farrell@echoherefordshire.co.uk

Welcome to ECHO

We hope you enjoy your time volunteering with us here at ECHO.

All volunteers come to us with their own reasons. Some of our volunteers approach us initially because they want social connections, especially after COVID -19 when levels of loneliness and isolation were very high, or if they have recently moved to the area. Some volunteers want to become part of the community, to work with adults with disabilities, or need a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Some receive benefits and for them, volunteering is a way of feeling they are earning their benefits. An increasing number of volunteers come to us after a bereavement as a way of helping to find their 'new normal' and to make new connections. Some volunteers want to increase their confidence and self esteem, become upskilled or share their skills. Some volunteers require work experience for school or college, or want to volunteer in a professional environment to gain experience in their journey towards paid employment. Whatever your reason for volunteering, we have a little thing we call 'the magic of ECHO' which seems to fulfil people's needs during their volunteering experience.



And, quite simply, as a charitable organisation, we need you!

A History of ECHO

Our full name is ECHO for Extra Choices in Herefordshire. Ltd. ECHO is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

ECHO was established in 1990 in North Herefordshire, to move away from typical day care settings, in order to offer adults with disabilities more educational and leisure choices in their lives. Our mission, aims and vision today show how this has developed over the last 33 years.

Our first Project was an integrated drama group. We made a video story called 'A Saturday Night Out' and this won a National Film Award in 1992. We then went on to write a musical called 'Jasper on the Weir' which we performed in Leominster, Pembridge and Bodenham. In 1993, this drama group became our About Face Project, now based in Leominster and has gone from strength to strength.



An art Project, 'Smart Art' was then established in Pembridge Village Hall. Each week, an artist was employed to work with the group.

This has evolved to become our Storytelling Project, in which participants, volunteers and staff travel the world in their imagination, using drama, dance and role play based on a selection of different texts and literature.



In 2003, ECHO worked in Hereford for the first time. Free bus passes after 9:30am for people with disabilities meant that participants could travel between Leominster and Hereford, therefore giving them more opportunities. Due to the nature of our rural county, travel and transport does however continue to be a barrier for some participants and volunteers.

ECHO's Vision

'A society where all people with disabilities are heard , valued, respected and supported to make choices and flourish.'

ECHO's Mission

'We want to make a positive difference to the lives of people with disabilities in Herefordshire, supporting them to know they are valued members of the community.'

ECHO's Values

- ECHO is positive about disability
- In all our work, ECHO believes everyone should:
 - Be treated as individuals
 - Be valued
 - Be included
 - Be supported to aspire and reach for their dreams

Aims

Our aims tell you how ECHO plans to work and what we are about.





People are at the heart of what ECHO does.

We believe everyone should be valued and supported to be the best they can be, whether they are a participant, volunteer, staff member or part of the wider community.



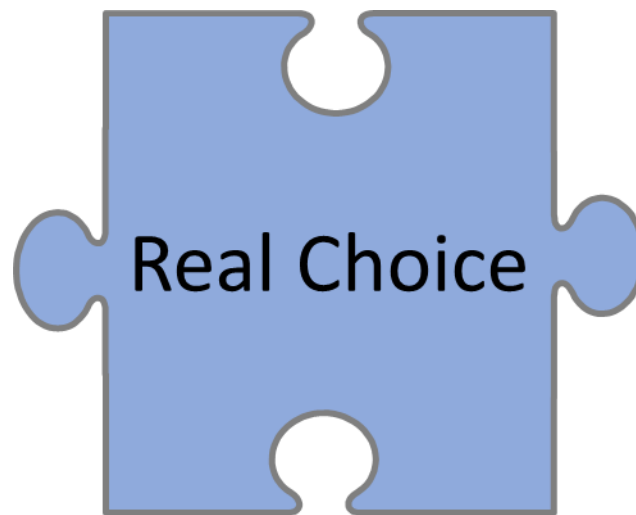


There is strength in people working together.

ECHO will work within the community and invite the community to get involved in what we do.

Within the ECHO community, people and projects work together, sharing support and ideas and developing friendships.





Real choice is more than just offering people different options.

Real choice comes from talking to people and listening to what they want. ECHO helps bring ideas to life.



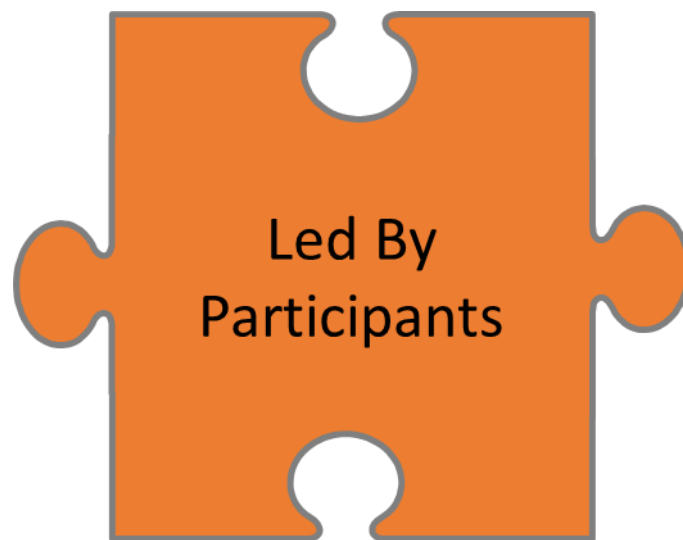


Everyone has the potential to grow and develop.

ECHO encourages everyone to work together to build the confidence and skills they need to help follow their dreams.

Everyone in ECHO can inspire others to explore new possibilities.

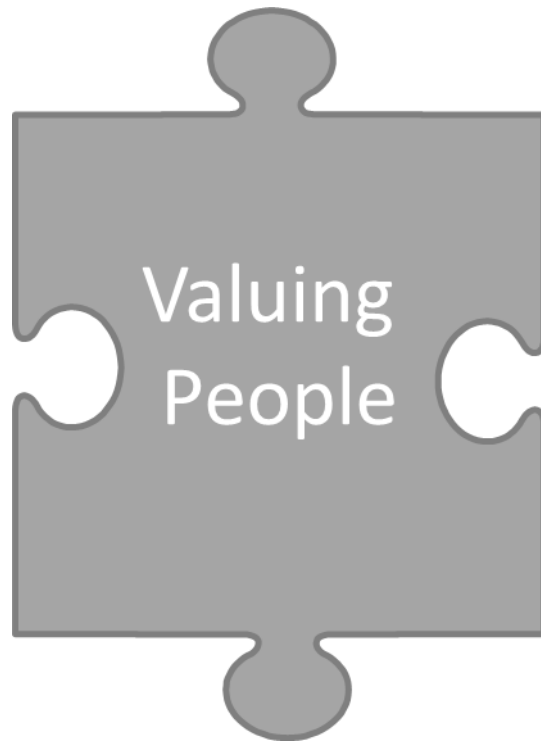




Participants are at the heart of every decision that ECHO makes.

Participants will take a full role in planning and making decisions about ECHO and the projects we deliver.





Everyone has their own individual talents, skills and abilities.

ECHO celebrates what people can do and makes sure everyone has a voice. This is why we pride ourselves on focussing on the individual and what they can achieve.

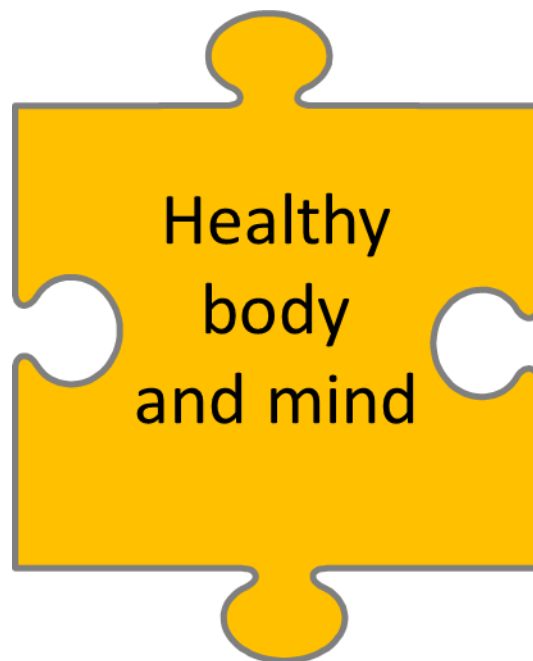




Whether it is the things people create, or the support we provide, ECHO wants this to be as good as we can make it.

We make sure ECHO is well run and can meet the needs of our participants now and into the future.





We will support and encourage everyone to live a happy and active life by taking care of their body and how they are feeling.

ECHO will be a friendly and safe space, helping people keep their mind and body strong and providing support when they need it.



ECHO Projects

ECHO has 30 different Projects.



We have 6 social Enterprises, overseen by our Deputy Chief Officer Nic Bullock. These are all based in Leominster.

Our other Deputy Chief Officer Angela Ayliffe, is responsible for our Social and Leisure and Hereford Projects, as well as The Priory Centre, Storytelling and Radio ECHO in Leominster.



Social Enterprise Projects

About Face



Clever Betsy

Eaton Barn



ECHO Shop

Studio Mirai



Weavers

About Face

About Face provides a wide range of opportunities for people with disabilities to grow in confidence through performance based skills. About Face now runs a range of different activities and sessions five days a week, all at the Forbury Workshop, Leominster, including the Drama for All project, Theatre Skills and Stagecraft groups and the Performance Company, for those interested in public performance. As a theatre company, About Face is just one of a handful of professional UK companies working with actors with disabilities. About Face has a strong reputation for delivering high quality theatre to festivals, community halls and other venues. Our schools projects have successfully integrated performances and workshops, enabling follow-up work in the classroom and support for delivery of the national curriculum. The work of About Face is recognised and supported by The Arts Council of England , and has worked with other theatre companies across the country.



My Apple Dumpling Girl is a story inspired by love. What is the difference between a crush and true love? What are we prepared to go through to make someone love us?

Performance Company: Performances are mainly in Herefordshire but the company has a growing national reputation and has toured both regionally and nationally and have appeared at major theatre, music and film festivals. As well as performing plays devised by the Company, we use professional artists to design shows and produce original music for our shows. About Face also takes a regular programme of workshops and performances into primary and secondary schools across the county.

[Drama for All is a day of fun drama without the pressures of working towards a public performance. It's the place for people who love acting but need a quieter or more supportive day. Using drama, dance, music and art, participants learn new skills, grow in confidence and have fun with friends. Everyone can get involved, whatever ability or disability.

Theatre Skills: In this group participants learn all about acting and different styles of drama. Working with other actors, original material is devised by sharing ideas and participating in workshops to explore and improve skills. Actors can stay in this group or possibly move on to one of the other groups if this best suits the interests, ability and needs of the individual. As well as learning about acting and drama, participants build confidence and social, practical, work and life skills.

Stagecraft: This group is ideal for people who want to develop their creativity to create stories and plays.. As well as improving acting skills, participants have a chance to learn about script writing, make props, costumes and scenery. The work of Stagecraft is project based, giving the opportunity to work towards a specific outcome for the actors involved.



Clever Betsy

Clever Betsy is an ECHO Social Enterprise project providing day opportunities for adults with learning disabilities. We are a tight knit team of paid staff, volunteers and participants who vary in age and ability.

Based in Leominster we are an arts & crafts project with a particular focus on upcycling and producing a range of high-quality crafted items to sell in the ECHO shop and various other outlets within the community.

We rely largely on public donations of wool, fabric, haberdashery and art & craft materials. These are then either upcycled within the project activities or sent directly to the ECHO shop for sale.

Our project endeavours to reflect the ECHO guiding principles of Participant Choice, Participant Support, Community Access, Participant Involvement, Quality and Collaboration. In addition we aim to provide our participants with a safe and calm environment in which to learn new skills, make lasting friendships and above all have fun.



Eaton Barn

Eaton Barn is a horticultural project and retail space where participants grow and sell herbs, flowers, plants, fruit, and vegetables, and learn gardening skills, green woodworking, and craft skills. We aim to enable our participants to gain new skills, and to benefit from a therapeutic outdoor environment.

Individuals are encouraged to:

- Learn practical horticultural skills, how individual plants grow and how to care for each plant from sowing the seed to harvesting the final product
- Learn how to work safely in a horticultural environment
- Work on a variety of indoor and outdoor seasonal activities
- Be a team member in a work based setting
- Learn how to engage with the public and how to present the produce and craft items we produce in our retail space

Learn to take care of their environment and how to create individual environments to encourage a diverse range of wildlife to our project.



ECHO Shop

The ECHO shop in Leominster is a volunteer led Social Enterprise Project. Other than Governance, this is the only Project participants can volunteer with. We ensure that we have at least one participant volunteer working when the shop is open. This enables participants to gain retail and customer service, including using the till, sorting and displaying stock, window dressing and more.

The shop relies on public donations of haberdashery and arts and craft materials. We also display items made by our Social Enterprise Projects.

The ECHO shop is a hub for ECHO, where members of the public can learn more about us and what we do. Through selling our products, we can help to break down negative attitudes towards disability by showing what our participants can achieve. We have regular drop in events for volunteers and supporters of ECHO to thank them for all they do. We also run a Talk Community hub with a specialism on disability one day a week where people can be signposted to services, activities and help throughout Herefordshire.



Studio Mirai

Studio Mirai is a social enterprise selling upcycled and restored furniture as well as wooden products manufactured by people with learning disabilities. We are based in a large well-equipped workshop on Bridge Street, Leominster where we make and sell a variety of hand crafted upcycled and restored items, we also have a retail space at the Retro Station. We also undertake private commissions for clients who require either furniture repair or painting.

We work mainly on donated pieces of furniture and timber thus helping the environment by reducing landfill.

People who attend enjoy a wide range of practical activities which teach them new skills such as basic woodworking methods, upcycling techniques, restoration processes, decorative painting and finishing techniques as well as retailing & marketing skills, customer service, numeracy, and literacy.

During the summer months we take advantage of a large outside space where we can undertake practical work, socialise during breaktimes, and utilise this secure private area for simple ball games and gardening activities.



Instruction is provided by three experienced and skilled staff members as well as support from a team of ten volunteers who all bring something different to the project in terms of their experience and specific skill sets.

A large well-equipped and comfortable kitchen area provides a pleasant social space for break/lunch times and all necessary safety and protective equipment is provided for you.

Visitors are frequent both to view the workshop activities and to purchase items from the shop, so this project also enables you to meet a large number of different people and to help them with their requirements.

Individuals learn:

- Basic woodworking methods
 - Upcycling Techniques
 - Restoration processes
 - Decorative painting and finishing techniques
 - Retailing and Marketing skills
 - Customer Service Practises
 - Project Specific Numeracy and Literacy



Volunteers are encouraged to socialise with each other outside of the Studio, and have attended pub quizzes and Christmas parties together.



Weavers

Our ECHO Weavers learn to weave bags, phone cases, cushions, rugs, bookmarks, table runners and much more, using lots of different looms from simple hand looms to more complicated table and floor ones. Run by Maggie Percy and supported by a team of 3 amazing volunteers, the ECHO Weavers meet every Friday in the ECHO Shop. They attend local craft fairs and festivals to give weaving demonstrations and sell their products. They also sell from Grange Court in Leominster and a range of galleries. Each loom woven item is of the highest quality, and commissions can be ordered. It is a very social Project, with cake through the winter and ice creams through the summer! For the Leominster festival, they created a big weave with help from members of the public, which was displayed at the Priory Church.



Social and Leisure and Life Skills

Projects

The Priory Centre



Storytelling



Friday LifeLinks



Wednesday LifeLinks



Cookery Club



Rose Tinted Rags



Friday Club



Leisure and Social

and Online



Sports



The Priory Centre

This is our venue for life skills, learning and social activities. We run activities and courses which promote independence and improve daily living skills. With the help of our staff and volunteers, we take part in activities include gardening, flower arranging, cooking, pamper afternoons, exercise, yoga, arts and crafts and literacy and signing sessions. We undertake themed, long term projects, for example transport, the Coronation, Frida Kahlo, castles and the 1970's. Into these projects we look at the history, clothes, music and food linked with them, exploring the theme in detail.

This project is especially suitable for people with more complex needs and a one to one service is available, including the use of an Acheeva bed to help ensure that everyone can take part in activities.



We take an active role in the local community and work with other groups such as Leominster in Bloom, Leominster Food Bank and the Meeting Centre.



Wednesday LifeLinks and Cookery Club

Wednesday LifeLinks runs weekly at Belmont Community Centre in Hereford. Participants are supported by volunteers and staff to engage in a wide range of activities, to include arts and crafts, walks, day trips out, games, and especially a lot of chatting! They also go to the local Tesco to shop for their customer in the community. They then take the shopping to her house. Pre-COVID-19, they had lots of customers to shop for, and are hoping to build this customer base up again.

Cookery club cook for the Wednesday LifeLinks group once a month, for themselves twice a month and for a group of around 80 people who attend a church lunch. They have started up a coffee shop in the community centre, trialling it to friends and family first, before opening to the public. Cookery Club participants also learn about nutrition, food hygiene and kitchen health and safety.



Friday LifeLinks

Friday LifeLinks is held at The United Reform Church in Tupsley, Hereford. Once a month, participants help out with the drop off for Herefordshire Community Reuse and Recycling Group, by sorting through donated items—and maybe find some treasures for themselves! This group recycle stuff that we would normally throw away, raise money for local charities, and help create new homes for struggling families.

Participants, volunteers and staff also have fun with craft and gardening activities, going out into the community for walks and coffee, picnics in the summer, games, cooking and days out. It's a fast paced Project with a lot of laughter and banter.



Each week, volunteer Stefan offers massages to participants, volunteers and staff. He trained at The Royal National College for the Blind as a masseur and it's so relaxing that we have even had people fall asleep!

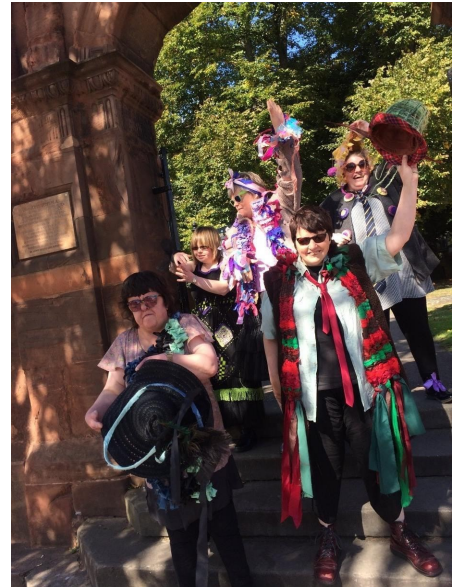


Rose Tinted Rags

Rose Tinted Rags can be found by the bus station in Hereford. It is a shop selling recycled fabrics, wool and lots of other things for sewing and craft work. It's also an Arts Centre where people can take part in arts workshops and help to make things to sell in the shop.

Rose Tinted Rags is run by 2 professional artists, and they often exhibit their art and art installations at galleries and events.

Visit Rose Tinted Rags on Facebook and Instagram to see more.



Threads of Time was an immersive trip through four previous exhibitions; a culmination of four years of creative work by the participants, staff and volunteers of Rose Tinted Rags, working primarily with recycled and donated textiles and other waste resources.

Threads of Time encompassed a series of work inspired by the 18th century costume collections at Hereford Museum and Berrington Hall and included beautifully embroidered waistcoats all made from donated textiles; a crinoline-inspired piece made from butter papers and crisp packets and an installation based on an 18th century banqueting table made almost entirely from recycled gold threads.



Storytelling

This Project works on the premise that storytelling is good for you! It develops imagination and improves memory. Hidden talents are discovered, and confidence is boosted. It widens people's horizons and introduces them to new experiences and friends. Storytelling sessions improve key skills such as teamwork, memory, decision making and communication. The activities are designed to build confidence and a sense of self-esteem. Participants enjoy remembering former stories and the shared memories and experiences help to build a sense of community. Thus, reinforcing their feeling of belonging. Stories open out the world and enable participants to interpret their own lives and emotions in relation to these new experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

The storytellers sing, dance, and use drama to enable everyone to get involved no matter what their ability, travelling the world in their imagination through a variety of texts, to include Greek tragedies, murder mysteries, Shakespearean love stories and Dickensian doom.



Radio ECHO

Radio ECHO provides the opportunity for participants to learn all the skills needed to take them from production meeting ideas through live stream broadcasting.

Each week the participant team research and devise their script, choose a music playlist before broadcasting that afternoon.



LISTEN LIVE Tuesdays 1.30pm to 3.00pm

As well as the live show, each week the team produces a podcast so you can listen anytime. The podcast is being hosted temporarily by our About Face project, here: www.aboutfacetheatre.co.uk/radio-echo-podcast-gallery and details are posted on the ECHO Facebook page each week as soon as the podcast is available.



The participants rotate roles every week to maximise their learning and experience, to include DJ-ing, news reading, research, jingles, learning to use microphones, the mixing desk and other technical equipment, working as a team and aiming for broadcasting excellence.



Sports

As well as providing regular opportunities in sports such as football, tennis, badminton and walking, ECHO also oversees the Special Olympics Herefordshire project. This involves working in partnership with local sports clubs to enable them to provide genuine sporting opportunities within their existing programmes for disabled people. Once accredited as a Special Olympics club, players can then go on to compete with their peers locally and nationally. ECHO has now taken on responsibility for being the hub for the Special Olympics West Midlands football squad. The project also works with other organisation to help stage bigger sporting events such as the bi-annual Community Games.

Sport	When
Badminton (Leominster)	Monday
Darts (Leominster)	Thursday
Inclusive Football (Hereford)	Wednesday
Football (Leominster)	Thursday
Tennis (Leominster)	Tuesday
Walking Group	Wednesday



Social and Leisure

Each month, participants receive an Activities Extra booking form, detailing the next month's social and leisure activities. These change regularly, but here are some examples of what is on offer.

Boogie Nights Club Night

Join Letty at Shooters Bar ECHO's big night out. DJ, sound system, disco lights and a bar. It's only for ECHO participants and their support, so we have the club to ourselves. Let's party!

Life Skills Sunday Roast

Join Letty & Bernice at The Priory Centre, Church Street, Leominster where they will be helping you to prepare and cook a full roast meal to eat. You will also be making your own dessert to have after.

Monthly Meet-Up Cocktail Night

This month we will be meeting in Leominster for Cocktails starting at 35 West (opposite the ECHO Shop) We will be going out for cocktails and mocktails. This is a lovely chance to meet up and have a catch up with your friends. Bring extra money for drinks.

The Rendezvous Young Person's Get Together... At Shooters Bar, Burgess St, Leominster, HR6 8DE,

Our lively night out. Bring some extra money for drinks and snacks...

In the summer, there are outdoor games, dog picnics, walks and barbecues, walks and fish and chips, trips out to places like Barry Island and weekend camping at Eaton Barn. Participants are asked what activities they would like offered.

However, a popular one seems to be a week in Ibiza... watch this space...



Social and Leisure Online

Developed as a response to Covid and lockdown, the online programme was originally designed to provide some continuity of service when groups were not able to meet in person.

However, it was found that the sessions provided a platform for participants to meet when factors such as location made it difficult to engage.

The Online Activities Programme provides fun social activities, both daytime and evening and also gives the opportunity for the project to try different approaches and activities with the participants, some of which have developed into regular activities in their own right.



Friday Club

A Friday afternoon at ECHO sees participants head down to the Community centre in Leominster for a couple hours of fun and social time. Each quarter, the Project Leader sits down with the participants for a planning meeting, to decide what they will be doing each week. Every participant gets to choose a weekly activity to fill a 12 week block and this can be anything from bowling on the Wii to karaoke, dance, stand up comedy afternoons, Friday Club's got talent, picnics and outdoor games on the Grange open space, craft afternoons or a firm favourite (very competitive) bingo.

A lot of our participants come with their PA's and there is always a lot of laughter. Everyone brings their lunch and eat together before they start the activity.

It's always good to know when karaoke is coming up...



Volunteering with ECHO

All our Projects need volunteers, and we cannot do what we do without you. We have way over 20,000 hours of volunteer time per year and around the equivalent of more than 14 full time staff per week provided by volunteers. This is an absolute testament to the organisation, to the staff and participants that we are able to retain these numbers month after month.

Once you have decided which Project you would like to volunteer with, you will find that you are matched with the perfect Project for you, and that you are the perfect match for the Project. This has been shown over and over again, as volunteers moving Projects is a rare occurrence. However, if you wake up regularly and cannot face volunteering, it may be time for you to think about having a change and exploring other Projects to volunteer with. If this is the case, just speak to the StEP staff team and we will support you in this.



Volunteers allow us to work more flexibly with people and introduce our participants to a wider range of contacts. This gives them opportunities for unpaid relationships which is really valuable. You will bring your own experiences, skills and background which enriches ECHO. To create societal change, the volunteer team are passionate about making connections with our local communities and this is done effectively through offering volunteering opportunities, promoting integration. The quality of work and dedication from our volunteers is recognised by ECHO and highly valued.

Many of our participants are also volunteers.

At ECHO, we are very flexible when it comes to our volunteers. We understand that you have lives and commitments outside of volunteering and that this comes first. If you have a holiday booked, or an appointment or social activities, then please let your Project manager know so they can put this in the diary.



What we do ask, is that you volunteer on the same day each week as this provides continuity for our participants, staff and other volunteers. Our participants will worry if you are not there, and while we will not give details about why you are not, we can reassure them that you are ok. You will be a big part of their lives and their routine, and they will be used to you being there on a certain day. It also helps with planning the day and with staff to participant ratios, which is usually 1:4, exclusive of 1:1 participants. Participants with 1:1 support needs often attend with their own PA, but a few are supported by ECHO staff.

We offer volunteering opportunities to people from all walks of life, from the age of 16. Full training is given and we pay reasonable expenses including transport. Volunteer expenses forms are available from your Project manager and we do ask that you submit these to the StEP Manager on a monthly basis. We have money within the StEP budget to pay for this, and we offer .45p/mile for 2 days of volunteering a week and .10p/mile for any days attended in a week after that.

Volunteer Management

The StEP Manager and Volunteer Coordinator are responsible for the active recruitment, training and placement of volunteers.

Each ECHO Project has a manager, and a Deputy Chief Officer.

Project Managers are responsible for the daily management of their volunteer team.



All new volunteers have a 3 month trial period to ensure they are placed in the right Project. During this time, the StEP staff will liaise with the Manager, staff and the volunteer regarding how things are going.

After 3 months, the Volunteer Coordinator will conduct an informal 3 month review with the volunteer and if the trial has been successful then the StEP Manager will 'sign off' the volunteer.

The StEP team will continue to liaise with Project staff and will visit the volunteer for check ins and conduct annual reviews and outcome measures yearly. This will collect data to inform StEP reports and to give the volunteer a chance to speak about their volunteering experience.

Volunteer supervision is undertaken by the Project Manager, as and when required, but volunteers have a right to request a supervision session at any time.

If Something Goes Wrong

ECHO has a grievance policy and a formal complaints procedure. If you would like to see copies of these then please let the StEP manager or your Project Manager know.

Complaints Procedure:

Step 1 – Tell someone

If you have any concerns, then in the first instance you should have a chat with your Project Manager, as they are responsible for daily volunteer management. If you would prefer to do this via email then that is fine too. If you have concerns regarding your Project Manager then you can speak to the StEP Manager or to your Deputy Chief Officer.

Step 2 – Put it in writing

You should write down your complaint if you would like to make a formal complaint, and if the issue cannot be resolved through Step 1. Send your letter to the Chief Officer of ECHO. They will contact you within 7 days and we aim to sort out complaints within 28 days.

Step 3 – The Final Step

If you are still not happy about the way your complaint has been dealt with it will be passed on to the ECHO Chairperson and the Board to sort out. They will ask a special complaints committee to meet within 21 days to deal with your complaint. This decision will be final.

You can also make a complaint about ECHO to Herefordshire Council by talking to their Information Access Team (01432) 260 535.

However, we also want to hear about the good things we do! Please share these with your Project Manager, the StEP Manager and your Deputy Chief Officer. If you would like to have successes detailed in the Volunteer Voice newsletter then email the StEP Manager and let them know!

Volunteer Support

The Volunteer team pride themselves on the quality of support offered to volunteers. We have 4 types of volunteers.

Regular Volunteers

These are people who do not request extra support from the StEP team, although this does not mean that support is not available if needed!

Supported Volunteers

These are people who request extra support, sometimes due to a disability or for mental health reasons. It may be that they want extra support during the induction process and the StEP Manager and Volunteer Coordinator will accompany them on taster days or for their first few sessions of volunteering until they feel settled into their role.

Work experience students from schools and colleges are automatically classed as supported volunteers due to their age and having a risk assessment as opposed to a DBS.

Participant Volunteers

These are ECHO participants who volunteer either in the ECHO Shop or in governance. Our Trustee and REP Group volunteers are supported by our Participant Involvement Officer as well as the Volunteer staff team.

StEP Beneficiaries

While all volunteers are part of the StEP, some people will have chosen to be supported by the Outreach Officer to volunteer or gain work experience in the community, or be supported into paid employment.



Volunteer Support

All volunteers are covered by ECHO's public liability insurance. In addition to this, and unlike many other organisations, we also provide all volunteers up to the age of 80 with personal accident cover as long as:

- They have not suffered an accident in the last 3 years resulting in either loss of use of limb or an eye, or temporary disablement for more than 7 days.
- They have not been refused personal accident insurance, had renewal of a personal accident insurance policy declined, or had special terms imposed on a personal accident policy.



Defining Boundaries

As a volunteer, it's important to establish and honour boundaries with the individuals you work with or support. Boundaries define what is acceptable and unacceptable in your relationship with them. Make sure your boundaries are clear, consistent, and reasonable, and communicate them openly.



Understanding your boundaries helps you to volunteer with more confidence, but this isn't always easy to do even if you've been volunteering for some time.

We all set boundaries in daily life, even if we are not aware of it. When we say no to an invitation because it's too short notice or delay responding to an email or text we are setting a boundary.

When volunteering, boundaries mark the line between what is and what isn't acceptable—in how you help and support other people, in how you represent ECHO and the Project you volunteer with and how you wish to be treated, what you feel comfortable doing and the amount of time you have to give.

Having a clear understanding of what is expected of you in your role of volunteer helps you to not overstretch yourself, protects your wellbeing and safety and that of the people we are working with.

As a volunteer it is common to feel like you are never doing enough or that you need to do more to help. Over time, this can have a big impact on your mental wellbeing and even your physical health.

Therefore, boundaries are necessary for wellbeing and for professionalism to help us to manage the expectations of others, to feel less overwhelmed, prevent burnout and keep you feeling safe and comfortable in your role as volunteer



However, putting boundaries in place can be really difficult to do.

Tip 1:

If you are becoming overwhelmed by your volunteering experience then talk to your Project Manager about any changes that could be made.

Tip 2 :

Give yourself permission to say no. Saying no to the participants can feel really difficult, but being clear about your role helps you to do this. You are within your rights to let staff, other volunteers and participants know that what you are being asked to do is not part of your role, or that it is not something you feel comfortable doing as a volunteer.

You will never be asked to help with or do personal care for participants, administer medication, or do any first aid. There will always be trained staff at a Project to deal with these areas.

Do's and Don'ts

DO:

Recognise your own physical, emotional and professional boundaries. For example, if someone is in your personal space and you feel uncomfortable then ask them to move back.

Avoid getting into situations that could be misunderstood. For example, we have a participant who will say they are going to take you home with them or will invite you to their home. The instinctive thing to do is to joke about it and agree, but she will take this seriously, go home and say you are visiting and then get upset. So, we say “you know we are not allowed to do that.”

Along with this, think very carefully before you say yes. Even if it is that you will bring something in to show them, or agreeing to attend an event they will be at. Some participants will hold you to the answer ‘yes’, so make sure it is feasible and appropriate before you say yes to anything.

You are there to build relationships and trust with participants, but ultimately you are there to support them in a professional work environment.

So,

DON'T:

Give out your home telephone number or address.

Invite the participant to your home.

Become emotionally over-involved.

Get involved in an intimate or sexual relationship.

Accept any kind of harassment or violence.

Buy expensive gifts or give money to a participant/ accept expensive gifts or borrow money from a participant.

Lend money/ material goods to a participant.

ECHO's Board of Trustees

ECHO is a charitable company, meaning the trustees of the charity are also full directors of the company. All of the ECHO trustees are volunteers, with paid staff carrying out day to day work for ECHO on behalf of the trustees. Our trustees are legally responsible for the organisation and bring a wide range of experience and skills to the charity. As the Board is responsible for the good governance and running of the charity, they are accountable to a variety of stakeholders, including participants, members, funders, the Charity Commission, The Inland Revenue and The Registrar of Companies. While the Board is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the charity in line with their governing document, they delegate the running of the operational side of the charity to the Chief Officer.

We have a long standing commitment to involving our participants both directly on the Board and through our participant Representing ECHO Participants (REP) Group. This is an important and in fact integral part of us being an efficient, proficient and well run organisation. We try to ensure that at least a third of the Board are ECHO participants and we provide additional support to make sure they are fully involved. When applying for a paid role with ECHO, there is an interview with a participant panel and an interview with management. The decision is 50/ 50 weighting.

The Board meets 4 times a year and we currently have 15 trustees, 5 of whom are participant trustees. New trustees are voted in at our AGM in December by ECHO participants.

There are also 4 ECHO sub groups to the Board, who meet monthly to discuss key issues—fundraising and marketing group, money group, quality group and people group.

10 of our trustees are twinned with ECHO Projects. This way, participants, volunteers and staff get to know trustees, and vice versa.

Some of our trustees also volunteer at ECHO Projects.





Mand Hamblin, participant trustee and Vice Chair of the Board

'As well as being a trustee I am also on the Rep Group. I have Cerebral Palsy and use an electronic talking aid to communicate.'

'Being a trustee means I get listened to and that my opinion really matters'

'I feel proud to be a trustee and be part of ECHO who make a real difference to people with disabilities.'



'Being a trustee of ECHO is a very important and worthwhile way to support a local charity. It's also really interesting, and a great way to build your own skills and experience.'

'Above all, it's enjoyable – ECHO is a very friendly and caring organisation, and trustees can get involved in all sorts of activities!'

Caroline Arthur, Chairperson of the Board

The ECHO REP Group



ECHO's REP Group meet weekly, with a month's break in the summer, and all members are volunteers.

REP group find out what our participants want and need, and work closely with local councils on a range of community issues, for example accessibility in Leominster and Hereford.

They visit projects to make sure the standard is kept high for everyone who uses the services. REP group members are supported by our Participant Involvement Worker, Claire Mee but the group decide what they want to work on. They develop their own skills in speaking up and gain confidence from being involved in the work needed to run the REP group.

Each member takes on a role and many have progressed to become full Trustee members of the Board at ECHO.



Fundraising

As a charity ECHO relies on fundraising to help us keep activities running for really vulnerable adults in Herefordshire

We also want to make sure that the Projects we run are the highest quality and not just a standard offer. We want to support people to be the best they can be and this takes time and resources.



of

ECHO has 2 fundraising officers. Louise is responsible for corporate fundraising and Penny is responsible for community fundraising.

Some of our big fundraising events have included two colour runs, a fire walk, an alpaca adventure, skydiving and ifly indoor skydives.





2023 saw ECHO's 33rd birthday, and to celebrate this we held an 'All the 3's' challenge. People thought of a sponsorship idea involving the number 3. Such as, walk 3 miles, swim 3 widths, stand on one leg for 3 minutes, hold an afternoon tea at 3.00pm, or give up something you love for 3 weeks, like chocolate!

Nick Baker our Marketing Office undertook a challenge of cycling 3 lots of 33 and a third miles in 3 different countries. One ride was in Parga, Greece and the other in the mountains of Spain. The climate and terrain made both these rides challenging!

For the UK leg, in a ride around North Herefordshire, Nick's son Louis, an ECHO participant, tandem cycled with his dad. This was the furthest Louis had ever cycled! Before the event, Louis said, "I am excited about doing this ride because this is a longer distance for me than I've done before and I like trying new challenges, particularly when it comes to events for ECHO". Accompanying them was Chris Blum, one of ECHO's Trustees.

Participants Simon and Richard also organised a fundraising cycle ride through Herefordshire, with Weaving Group Project Leader Maggie, Trustee Blaise and participant Jason coming along for the ride.





About Face also took part in the 'All the 3's' challenge, by singing 33 songs over 4 days and raised over £1100!



What is a Learning Disability?

Mencap define a learning disability as:

“a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life.”

People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complicated information and interact with other people. The level of support someone needs depends on the individual. For example, someone with a mild learning disability may only need support with things like getting a job. However, someone with a severe or profound learning disability may need full-time care and support with every aspect of their life – they may also have physical disabilities. People with certain specific conditions can have a learning disability too. For example, people with Down’s syndrome and some people with autism have a learning disability.

Mencap describes dyslexia as a “learning difficulty” because, unlike learning disability, it does not affect intellect. Learning disability is often confused with learning difficulties such as dyslexia or ADHD. Mencap describes dyslexia as a “learning difficulty” because, unlike learning disability, it does not affect intellect.



Different Types of Learning Disability

There are different types of learning disability, which can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. In all cases a learning disability is lifelong.

It can be difficult to diagnose a mild learning disability as the individual will often mix well with others and will be able to cope with most everyday tasks. However, they may need support in other areas of their life such as filling out forms.

People with a severe learning disability or profound and multiple learning disability (PMLD), will need more care and support with areas such as mobility, personal care and communication. People with a moderate learning disability may also need support in these areas, but not definitely.

A learning disability occurs when a person's brain development is affected, either before they're born, during their birth or in early childhood. This can be caused by things such as:

- The mother becoming ill during pregnancy
- Problems during the birth preventing enough oxygen getting to the brain
- Genetic disposition - inherited learning disability
- Illness such as meningitis, or injury in early childhood

Sometimes there's no known cause for a learning disability.



Societal Change

Societal change is an important part of what ECHO stands for. We have 6 Social Enterprise Projects, which allow us to sell items made in our Projects.

It is important for our participants, volunteers and staff to get out into the community as often as they can, for walks, coffee, picnics, craft and plant fairs, social and leisure outings, and by inviting the public into their Project shops.

This not only raises the profile of ECHO, but shows the public what our participants do, creating changing attitudes towards people with disabilities.

People are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things. Negative attitudes based on prejudice or stereotype can stop disabled people from having equal opportunities. This is sometimes referred to as disablism.

Examples of negative attitudes include assuming that disabled people can't work, live independently, have sex or get married, have children or manage their financial affairs.

All communities and social movements change. If they don't, they stagnate, lose relevance, and die. The process of change is almost always uncomfortable, sometimes painful, but usually valuable in the end.

This is notably true for disability communities. The movements for disability rights and justice may seem brand new to some, including both non-disabled and disabled people learning about disability culture for the first time. But modern disability culture is old enough now that we can easily see significant shifts, from the practices, assumptions, and approaches of the 1960s and '70s, to those of disabled people in the second decade of the 21st Century.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities said that people with a learning disability have a fundamental right to full and active participation and inclusion in society (United Nations, 2006).

Up until the 1970s many adults and children with a learning disability had to stay in large institutions. Since then, large institutions have been closed and almost all adults and children with a learning disability live in the community.

However, many still feel socially left out and face stigma and discrimination in their everyday lives (Scior & Werner, 2015).

People with a learning disability may face problems getting equal opportunities for healthcare, housing, education, employment and social pursuits. For example, in 2017/18 only 6% of adults with a learning disability known to their local authority were in paid employment in England (NHS Digital, 2018), compared to 76% of people aged 16 - 64 in the general population (ONS, 2019).

Scope identifies the difference in attitudes of non-disabled people and the reality of disabled people's experiences as the 'disability perception gap' (Dixon et al., 2018). It has been suggested that misconceptions about the capabilities of people with a learning disability may be widespread (Scior & Werner, 2015). Misconceptions and negative attitudes can be a barrier to people with a disability living the lives they want (Dixon et al., 2018).

For example, just under a third (32%) of respondents in the 2017 British Attitudes Survey thought that disabled people are not as productive as non-disabled people. This belief may be a factor which contributes to the disparity in employment rates between people with a learning disability and the general population (Dixon et al., 2018).



Increasing positive attitudes

Studies which increase contact (direct or indirect) with people with a learning disability show positive effects on attitudes (MacMillan et al., 2014; Seewooruttun & Scior, 2014; Scior & Werner, 2015). These approaches can include training delivered by people with a learning disability, tutoring



programmes, experiential tasks, and indirect contact through film presentations delivered online and exposure to images that contradict stereotypes (Seewooruttun & Scior, 2014). However, studies have been limited by small sample sizes.

Studies which include both direct contact and education on learning disability have also shown positive outcomes, particularly with people who have had no prior contact with people with a learning disability (Lawson et al., 2017).

Changing people's minds positively happens when:

- Interaction is personal: Contact is one-on-one so that nondisabled individuals can engage with disabled individuals.
- People are equal: Individuals from each group are seen as having equal rank or social standing.
- Social norms exist: Expected behaviour in a given situation promotes contact between respective group members.

Cooperative activities occur: Individuals from each group work together on some project to realize shared, specific goals.

Take a few minutes and imagine a situation where a nondisabled person and a disabled individual could work on a common project and get to know one another in the process. What sort of problem could they work on together?

Once you decide, consider these questions:

- Their interaction will be personal—what can or will make it so?
- Explain how they will be equals in the situation—how will you establish equality?
- Identify and describe the social norms that will be in play—what are they and why?
- Describe the cooperative activities that will take place in some detail.

Remember: You are using your imagination here, so you can be creative in your

answers to these questions. When you finish, ask yourself this: How can this activity be broadened and applied to other disabled and nondisabled people who can learn from one another?



Communication

What is communication?

How do we communicate?

Do we communicate differently with different people?

At the start of your training, you will have had a booklet on communication.

Communication isn't just about talking, it's also about listening. When you are communicating with a person with a learning disability, think about your tone of voice, body language and the words you use.

You may be surprised to know that we get most of our information across through our body language.

The way people communicate is made up of:

Body language = 55%

Tone of voice = 38%

Words = 7%



To be a good communicator with people with a learning disability you need to:

- use accessible language
- avoid jargon or long words that might be hard to understand.
- be prepared to use different communication tools
- follow the lead of the person you're communicating with
- go at the pace of the person you're communicating with, check you have understood and be creative.
- Find a good place to communicate in - somewhere without distraction. If you are talking to a large group be aware that some people may find this difficult.
- Ask open questions; questions that don't have a simple yes or no answer.
- Check with the person that you understand what they are saying e.g. "the TV isn't working? Is that right?"
- If the person wants to take you to show you something, go with them.
- Watch the person; they may tell you things by their body language and facial expressions.
- Learn from experience - you will need to be more observant and don't feel awkward about asking other volunteers, participants or staff for their help.
- Try drawing - even if your drawing isn't great, it might still be helpful.
- Take your time, don't rush communication.
- Use gestures and facial expressions. If you're asking if someone is happy or unhappy, make your facial expression unhappy to reinforce what you're saying.
- Be aware that some people find it easier to use real objects to communicate, but photos and pictures can really help too.

Remember, all communication is meaningful, but you may need to work harder to understand.



Challenging Behaviour

There is a Social care TV video to accompany this topic.

‘Challenging behaviour is how we talk about a range of behaviours which some people with learning disabilities may display when their needs aren’t being met.’ (Challenging Behaviour Foundation, 2023).

Mencap state that 'Challenging behaviour' sounds like a pretty broad term, and it is. Challenging behaviour describes behaviour that is challenging to parents, carers, teachers and other professionals.

Challenging behaviour can include tantrums, hitting or kicking other people, throwing things or self-harming, and is challenging if it is harmful to the person and others around them, and if it stops the person achieving things in their daily life,

Challenging behaviour is not a learning disability, but people with a disability are more likely to show challenging behaviour.

This can be due to people having difficulty communicating and expressing frustrations. Challenging behaviour can also be a sign that something is wrong, like pain or discomfort, that they cannot express in another way.

Challenging behaviour can also be a sign of wider problems, including with someone's mental health. There is no single cause for challenging behaviour, but environment, relationships, discomfort and frustration are all common reasons.

- Work out common triggers - this could be in the environment, or with certain people.
- Find ways to help the person express themselves.
- Help the person to feel happy, and spend time doing the things they enjoy.
- Develop simple coping strategies to reduce stress, such as controlled breathing or counting.
- Stay alert and try to anticipate problems.

As a volunteer, we would ask you to let the staff deal with any challenging behaviour while you support the other participants, reassuring them and distracting them from what is happening if possible.

However, extreme challenging behaviour is a rarity at ECHO. It is more likely that if a participant becomes upset that you will chat with them and offer support. It may be that you will take them away from the main activity to a quiet place, or get some fresh air together.

If you have any concerns at all, please relay them to Project staff.



Safeguarding

You will have received a copy of ECHO's safeguarding policy in your application pack. There is also a Social Care TV video that we will watch.

If you are over 18, you will have had a DBS check and if you are under 16, you will have a tailored risk assessment.

It is the duty of all ECHO staff and volunteers to work to protect vulnerable adults from abuse and young people under the age of 18. Through all our services, ECHO will actively promote the well-being of vulnerable adults and young people. We will not allow any bullying or abuse and will make sure that all staff, volunteers and participants are treated with dignity and respect.

ECHO will do this by:

- Making sure that all staff, volunteers and participants know that ECHO will not allow bullying and abuse.
- Making sure that everybody understands that ECHO will always take action in cases of bullying and abuse.
- Working with all agencies to protect vulnerable adults and young people from abuse.
- Reporting immediately any suspicions of abuse, either within ECHO or in other situations.
- Making sure all staff undertake Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults and Young People Training as part of their induction when they first join ECHO and update this training every 2 years, and refresher training for volunteers when required.

If you have any concerns at all, please let your Project Manager know. ECHO's designated Safeguarding Officer is Mike Cook, our Chief Officer. If you need to speak to him, you can call the office on (01568) 620307..

And so, your volunteering journey starts
here!

Any questions you may have, don't
hesitate to get in touch.

Most of all, have fun and enjoy!

