

Supervisor for Assistive Technologies project

St Gregory's Foundation, UK registered charity no.1002469

Salary: this is a volunteer post, SGF covers travel costs and accommodation

Time: Two weeks in April-May or May-June (tbc with our Russian partners)

Travel: to Moscow and St Petersburg, Russia

Closing date: March 2017 (tbc)

Volunteer: St Gregory's Foundation is looking for an experienced specialist with a physio and ergo therapeutic background and with the practical knowledge of matching various Assistive Technologies devices with certain types of disabilities to help our Russian colleagues in Moscow and St.Petersburg. This specialist will be directly helping with the evaluation of the current project, providing professional advice on how to match low and high tech devices with certain types of disabilities, advising and helping select a bigger range of technical devices / software, arranging and taking part at training sessions for specialists, carers and parents. Time commitment – normal working hours during the week with one extra day off.

Background to the organisation and the project:

- St Gregory's Foundation has worked in Russia and the former Soviet Union since 1991 to tackle the social problems facing children, teenagers, parents and carers. Over the last few years we have helped to build a Centre for disabled teenagers at a special school for disabled children and teenagers: 'Dinamika' in St Petersburg. Our partners from the charity "Physical Rehabilitation" in St Petersburg continue delivering rehabilitation for young disabled people at the centre as well as training parents and practitioners who work with such young people. Recently "Physical Rehabilitation" and the Moscow-based Centre "Communication Space" have suggested bringing assistive technologies to their patients.

-St Gregory's Foundation launched the AT project in September 2016 in two centres: the training centre "Dinamika" for teenagers with motor disabilities in SPb and the centre "Communication Space" for children with heavy multiple disabilities and autistic children in Moscow.

-Our colleagues in SPb and Moscow are highly qualified physio and ergo therapists and also communication specialists. Anastasya Ryazanova is the Director of the AT project and based in Moscow. Our main contact in SPb is Katya Klochkova, one of the leading physiotherapists in Russia, she recently succeeded in establishing their vision of professional standards in physio and ergo therapy at the Ministry of Health. Russia will now adopt these two specialties with new standards accepted widely throughout the western countries.

- We now have two groups, currently helping over 20 children, their parents and carers. Our specialists also hold webinars for the other specialists, parents and carers on how to use devices for different types of disability in daily life.

-In 2015 before we started the project we made an assessment with the help of one of our volunteers, Adrian Mars, technology journalist and a BBC broadcaster and IT consultant, who visited St Petersburg and advised on the technical side of the project. The equipment (tablets, low tech devices and other equipment) was delivered by another Foundation from the US - "Orange Penguin", including software.

What problems is the project addressing?

Disabled young people in Russia face enormous challenges. Only 15% of disabled adults in Russia are in employment. There are multiple reasons behind this: the physical environment is not accessible for disabled people, education is usually inadequate or non-existent, technology to adapt computers and to facilitate independence is not widely available. Underlying all these problems are the attitudes of society which does not see disabled people as having anything to contribute. Disabled young people who have been lucky enough to grow up with their family, rather than in an institution, face a future of being house-bound, living in cramped accommodation with their family with little activity or social contact until their parents die and they have to move to an institution.

-The project suggests the introduction of modern effective rehabilitation for young people living with disabilities in the two biggest cities in Russia.

-The project is addressing issues of social exclusion and isolation of young disabled people and their families and the public opinion about them.

-The project is addressing the lack of knowledge of assistive technologies in Russia. Currently low and high tech devices are only used randomly. At present there is no well-developed structure on the use of assistive technologies and there is a very big gap in the education of specialists and informing the wider community on the problems of disabled people and their potential. There exists very little dissemination of knowledge regarding advanced technologies and physical and social rehabilitation programmes promoting healthy lifestyles and occupational health.

Impact:

We aim to improve the chances of young disabled people to become more independent and communicate better with their peers, parents and carers.

We aim to ensure the best possible effects from using low and high tech devices in everyday life. These technologies would not only significantly improve childrens' alternative and additional communication, but also would help develop their life skills and contribute to play therapy and other aspects.

We also aim to help design the basic devices for children with multiple heavy disabilities and improve their living environment.

The project will help towards gaining new skills on AT for specialists. Parents and carers. It will work towards disseminating knowledge of modern effective rehabilitation and raising awareness of the problems of young disabled and autistic people.

Key competencies:

- Proficiency in the range of aids for communication and organisation of children with multiple disabilities and autism.
- Proficiency in occupational therapy, speech therapy / specialist in communication
- Knowledge of theoretical and practical ergo therapeutic approach.
- Theoretical and practical knowledge and skills in applying and reviewing technical devices for children with multiple disabilities (buttons, levers, smartphones, tablets, and programs for Ipad, buttons and switches to control plate), applications for tablets,

in particular, those which allow making selections, application 'assistive touch' for I-pads.

- Evaluation of each individual case of disability
- Personal qualities such as willingness and ability to work with disabled children and teenagers, patience, understanding of cross-cultural differences
- DBS (CRB) check

Preferable:

- Knowledge and understanding of evaluation techniques by CFCS scale
<http://cfcs.us/>
- Advice on protocols on selection of technical devices / software, able to find specialists who can share with us this knowledge
- Use of Broadmaker software to create a communication book on tablets and in the classic version and PODD version.
- Understanding some Russian

This role will give you an opportunity:

- To travel to the two biggest cities in Russia
- To make new friends and establish new professional contacts
- To add new experience to your CV
- To see some of the best culture Russia can offer
- To be able to bring your expertise to this pilot project and to be at the beginning of introducing Assistive Technologies in Russia

If you think you have something to offer we would be very happy to hear from you! Please contact Julia Ashmore, julia-sgf@outlook.com or call 0203 372 4992.