

Note from *people and places*: this volunteer's placement was designed specifically for them – they went through our full matching process, as we've been doing with you. The placement report indicates their particular skills and experience – yours may be similar or completely different – your own placement will make best use of **your** experience and skills. Every volunteer is different – in what they give and what they gain. Reports from previous volunteers serve to give you as good a picture as possible about the project. If you have any questions about any of the detail in this report please do not hesitate to contact me at dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

Report on Placement at Treak Community School Cambodia Dawn Ryder – retired pediatrician Jan-April 2022

Since I retired, I have had more time for volunteering and until last year was a regular volunteer at our local Food Bank. Unfortunately I have developed a mobility problem and have had to stop many of my activities. This has left a big gap in my life, as doing things to help people is part of who I am.

I learned about e-volunteering from People and Places and it seemed something I could do easily from home. I didn't have to do any bending and lifting, just sit at a table, so it was ideal for my circumstances.

The placement date and project work was negotiated beforehand and I was to cover child health and development, my previous areas of expertise. The information I was to give was to help the school develop their PSHE programme.

I talked with Diane and with Michael in Cambodia and I thought that I had a good idea of what was needed and I expected to advise teachers and answer questions. However, as with in person placements which I have experienced in the past, the actual content of the sessions is slightly different to that anticipated, so any e-volunteer has to be flexible and prepared to provide what is needed on the ground. The teachers needed information, not just advice.

The sessions were from 8:00 to 9:00am to fit in with the time difference in Cambodia, which was fine with me as I am an early riser. I was provided with a programme of what was wanted in each session and information about who would be there and there were two opportunities to discuss and plan the programme at weeks four and eight, which were helpful.

I found that I was condensing what for me were vast subjects into one hour sessions and that was a bit of a challenge. I covered the whole of language disorders and communication disorders in an hour! So the information I gave was fairly basic and I relied on the questions asked to adjust the

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details. Overall, I covered the whole of child development, growth, basic first aid, healthy nutrition, hygiene and the prevention of infection during the 12 weeks. I talked to individual teachers for two sessions and groups of teachers for several sessions. For one amazing session I talked with a group of students. Head teacher Dara acted as translator in the group sessions, which was very helpful as not everyone understood English well. What I didn't anticipate at first was the amount of time it took to translate what I said. This is something for future volunteers to be aware of.

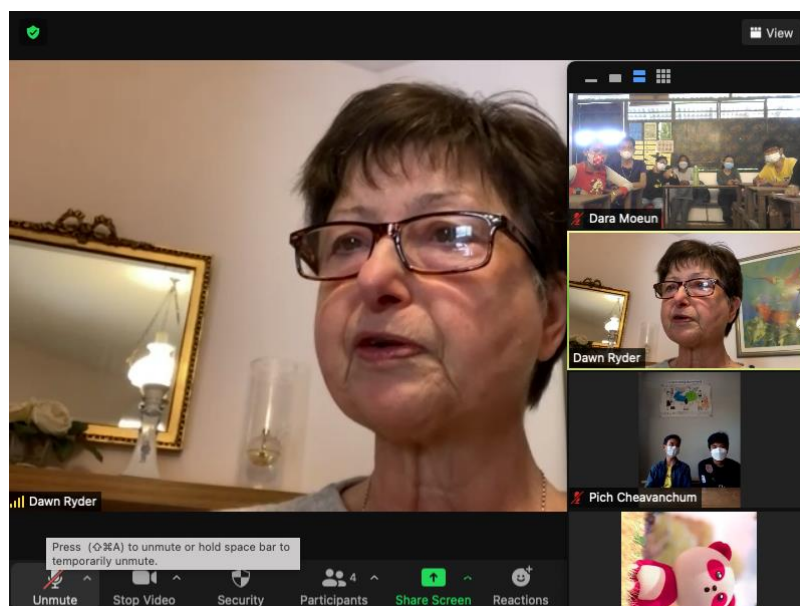
I worried constantly that I wasn't giving information at the right level for the teachers as I didn't know how much they knew about the subjects to start with. This is something that is much easier to find out if you are there in person and difficult to do at a distance. Although Zoom is an amazing tool, it is hard to pick up on individual's reactions in a group setting via Zoom, so I hope that I pitched it at the right level. For me the best sessions were when the teachers asked lots of questions so that we could actually discuss things. I really like personal contact rather than interacting with a large group.

I have some hearing loss, so if anyone spoke while wearing a mask, I found it difficult, but on the whole, there were no technical problems. I use an iPad, so had only a small screen. I'm sure that having a larger screen on a laptop would be an advantage. The Zoom link dropped out only once and that was almost at the end of a session, so nothing was lost.

Looking back, it all went smoothly. Dara was very efficient, helpful and friendly and the teachers were polite, friendly and inquisitive and I enjoyed meeting them all.

I received good support from People and Places and can't suggest any changes to what they do. E-volunteering is a very different experience to physical volunteering. It's very comfortable and secure, being in your own home. It cuts out all the long waits at airports and weary travelling. However, it lacks the excitement of being in a different country, experiencing different cultures, eating different food and meeting people in new situations.

It worked for me in my present situation and I certainly would like to do it again. I would also like to know what the school's PSHE programme looks like in its final form.



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