

Guidance for Organisations – Engaging Asylum Seekers in Volunteering Roles

Volunteering has benefits not just for the individual but for organisations and the wider community too. This document is to support organisations to think about how to engage those seeking asylum in the UK into volunteering roles. You may wish to review your own policies and procedures to ensure there are not unnecessary barriers to asylum seekers volunteering for your organisation.

Definitions and legal guidance	
Understanding the difference between an asylum seeker and a refugee is important.	Refugee facts UK UNHCR (unrefugees.org.uk)
There are rules around working and volunteering for asylum seekers.	Permission to work and volunteering for asylum seekers (accessible) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
You may be able to obtain a criminal record check for overseas applicants.	Criminal records checks for overseas applicants - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

There can be additional challenges with asylum seekers volunteering, however with some creativity and willingness to overcome these challenges it is possible.

Challenges	Possible solutions
It may not be possible to obtain a DBS for the asylum seeker.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider roles where a DBS is not required. Carry out a risk assessment. Consider roles where the volunteers can work in supervised areas such as cafes and charity shops. Request character references from ESOL tutors, faith group leaders etc.
Reluctance to volunteer as not being paid to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare volunteering to help they may already have given to their community such as helping out at their place of worship, tidying up a local park or driving a neighbour to a hospital appointment.

Challenges	Possible solutions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider visits to asylum contingency properties to talk about your organisation and the volunteering roles available. • Explain that in the UK volunteering is widespread and recognised as a useful thing to do if you are aiming to get into paid work in the future. • Explain the benefits of volunteering – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ building support networks ○ practising their English skills ○ building skills to add to their CV ○ improving mental wellbeing ○ alleviating boredom and adding structure to their day ○ improving chances in education and employment for the future
Language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about roles that do not require high levels of English language skills. • Encourage and enable new arrivals to build their English language skills and confidence.
Transport to volunteering roles can be difficult due to remote locations of some asylum contingency properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider reimbursement of travel expenses. • Consider availability of public transport. • Consider signposting or supporting the asylum seeker to obtain a free bike from a reuse centre or cycle scheme. • Consider working with residents living at more accessible/urban sites before looking at opportunities for those based in more remote locations.
Asylum seekers do not have a bank account to receive reimbursement of expenses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay any expenses in cash.
Difficulty completing application forms due to language barriers and digital poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to asylum seekers about what the typical questions on an application form may be. • A sample application form is included below.

Countywide Volunteering Opportunities

- [Working Herts](#) supports the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector by providing best practice, advice, guidance and resources for the sector. They also advertise paid and volunteer roles within the VCFSE sector.
- [Go Vol Herts](#) is a one-stop-hub for volunteering opportunities, queries and best practice advice. There is a “Volunteer Quiz” to match an individual’s interests to volunteer roles - [Talent Scan](#)

Local Community & Voluntary Organisations

- [Community Action Dacorum](#)
- [Community Alliance Broxbourne & East Herts](#)
- [Community Development Action Herts](#)
- [Communities 1st](#)
- [North Herts CVS](#)
- [Support4Dacorum](#)
- [Watford and Three Rivers Trust](#)
- [Welwyn Hatfield CVS](#)

Useful Resources and Information

- Case studies from Herts Welcomes Refugees - [Refugee Stories - HERTS WELCOMES REFUGEES](#)
- Guidance on writing a volunteer agreement - [Writing a volunteer agreement | NCVO](#)

Sample Application Form

First Name

Surname

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Postcode

Mobile phone number

Email Address

I am interested in volunteering for organisations that focus on the following:

- Animal welfare
- Art & culture
- Children & young people
- Faith & religion
- Nature
- Older people
- People with disabilities
- Sport & recreation
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Other comments:

What time of day can you volunteer?

- Any time
- 9am-12pm
- 1pm-5pm
- Other: _____
