

Scottish Refugee Council - Our Vision

At Scottish Refugee Council our vision is for a Scotland in which all people seeking refugee protection are welcome.

It is a place where women, children and men are protected, find safety and support, have their human rights and dignity respected and are able to achieve their full potential.

The following Top Tips have been created for you to think about the important things which need to be considered to ensure a positive experience for involving Refugee Volunteers

TOP TIPS FOR INVOLVING REFUGEE VOLUNTEERS

These Top Tips were produced by Scottish Refugee Council

By reflecting on the following we would hope that these points would help you make your volunteering offer more inclusive

1. Firstly, ask yourself, what would be some of the positive outcomes of involving refugee volunteers in your group or organisation? For instance, will it help you provide services to other asylum seekers and refugees? Can it enable you to plan joint projects/enter into partnership with refugee support groups and organisations? Can the language skills of refugees be useful in making your group or organisation more accessible to a wider variety of people? How about advertising for Arabic, Farsi, Mandarin, Tigrinya, Vietnamese or Kurdish speaking volunteers?
2. Spread this message throughout your group or organisation: **Refugees and Asylum Seekers at all stages of the asylum process (including post-refusal) have the right to volunteer in the UK**, as expressed clearly in current [Home Office Guidance](#). Ensure that your volunteer recruitment staff are consistently trained and embed this message in the volunteering programme of your group or organisation, as part of a wider 'refugees welcome' message.
3. Recruit with confidence, knowing that asylum seekers and refugees can obtain disclosures at all levels, including PVGs. Most will have Home Office-issued photo IDs that Disclosure Scotland is happy to accept (ARC – Applicant Registration Card, BRP – Biometric Residence Permit or Convention Travel Document), and can provide letters from the Home Office, NHS or rental contracts as proof of address.
4. Make it explicit that you can be flexible with references – character references can be obtained from ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) tutors, caseworkers at a refugee support group or organisation, lawyers or members of a faith group.
5. Recruit actively, seeking opportunities for meeting asylum seekers and refugees face-to-face in their own contexts and networks. Contact and visit your local refugee support groups and organisations, find out if there is a refugee support team in your local Council, or ESOL classes for refugees in local colleges.
6. Make it easy to engage with your programme: do not be over-reliant on online adverts, online volunteering registration forms and email communication. These methods can exclude anyone whose first language is not English, and who cannot afford regular access to the internet, including refugees. Ask applicants for their preferred mode of contact.

7. Plan pathways to access volunteering in your group or organisation. Invite asylum seekers and refugees (using existing networks) to your events, then ask attendees to volunteer at ad hoc events, which can lead to longer term volunteering.
8. Create 'refugee-friendly' volunteer roles, support systems and progression routes: create volunteer roles that are suitable for an individual with limited English, with a view to the person progressing to other roles once their English improves and they are confident in your group or organisational context. You can ask current volunteers if they would consider partnering with or mentoring a refugee with (as yet) limited English at the start of their volunteer placement.
9. Make it explicit that you will reimburse expenses, and make sure you reimburse daily, easily, and when necessary, in advance. Asylum seekers receive only £5 per day to cover food, clothing, hygiene and travel costs, and a return bus ticket is a significant, sometimes unaffordable cost. People in the asylum process cannot legally be paid, but expenses can be reimbursed, or travel tickets/tokens can be issued in advance. Many refugees are on benefits, and will need to be reassured that volunteering will not interfere with their benefit entitlements (Read the [DWP guidance on volunteering and benefits](#))
10. Have a conversation with your volunteer about their individual life circumstances and be flexible about volunteering times. Many asylum seekers and refugees have unstable living conditions, and requirements on their time. People in the asylum process have to sign in weekly at immigration or police, as well as attending lawyer's appointments and immigration interviews regularly. Newly-granted refugees are often adjusting to the mainstream benefits requirements and may be trying to arrange for family members join them in the UK. Both asylum seekers and refugees are likely to have insecure multi-occupancy housing and change addresses frequently. They will often be attending English courses at college every morning or every afternoon – this is one of the requirements for receiving welfare benefits.

For more information please see:

- <http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/>
- [National Inclusive Group page](#)