

VOLUNTEER TASK DESCRIPTION

**Wellbeing Project Support: ‘Stitch Together’ Volunteer**

**Location:** Northallerton

**Time commitment:** 3-4 hours a week (including planning time), runs every Thursday 10-12pm

**(Hours can be flexible according to the demands of the project)**

**Responsible to:** Volunteer Coordinator

**Main role:** To plan, create and deliver activities as part of a wellbeing activity group that aims to practice conversational English and promote wellbeing. In the ‘Stitch Together’ group, volunteers will advocate for the wellbeing of women seeking asylum through different craft activities.

**The Organisation**

Founded in 1951, the Refugee Council exists to support people who come to the UK in need of safety and our purpose is to advocate with them for compassion, fairness and kindness. We achieve this by providing expert advice and casework, building the capacity of refugee community organisations, and working with allies across society to change government policy.

The Refugee Council is one of the leading organisations in the UK working with refugees and people seeking asylum. We not only give help and support, but also work with clients to ensure their needs and concerns are voiced and addressed. Volunteers are a key part of many of the services that support our clients and work alongside paid staff across the organisation.

Our vision is that people seeking asylum and refugees are welcome to live safe and fulfilling lives contributing to the UK has never been more urgent and needed. Today 21.3 million refugees and 89.3 million displaced people around the world need of safety, dignity and welcome. We are determined to secure public and government support for safe routes for all people seeking protection through the creation of a fair, effective and compassionate refugee protection system.

Now is an excellent time to join the Refugee Council. Our [strategy](https://media.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/14074348/Refugee-Council-Strategy-Report.pdf) sets an ambitious new direction which will see us defend refugee protection in the UK against the Government’s corrosive plans with refugees and like-minded allies, united in our desire to create a just, fair and humane refugee protection system. It will also see us delivering direct services that improve people’s refugee protection journey through targeted advice and casework and strengthening and connecting Refugee Community Organisations with other service providers and advocates.

**Our Values**

Our values underpin everything we do:

* **Inclusive**: We are inclusive. We work with - not for - refugees and people seeking asylum, so they have an equal voice, co-producing projects and ensuring their expertise and experiences are at the heart of what we do.
* **Collaborative**: We are collaborative. Working with others is a priority in order to have the collective impact that is vital to achieve policy and practice reform.
* **Courageous**: We speak out when we see injustice, cruelty and unfairness. We always stand up for what we believe is the right thing to do to transform the experiences of those seeking protection in our country.
* **Respectful**: We are respectful of all those we interact with. We treat everyone – our staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, partners and people we disagree with – with the same respect, professionalism and understanding.

**About the Hotels Team**

The Hotel Team forms part of the Asylum Directorate at Refugee Council and provides holistic support for clients seeking asylum in contingency accommodation, from practical support to assist them on their asylum journey, basic aid support, opportunities to learn English to advocating for their wellbeing through a number of different activities and mediums. Volunteers in this role will support the volunteer coordinator and hotel support workers in achieving the team’s aim of supporting clients seeking asylum.

For nearly two years, Mears (the contract holder for delivery of asylum dispersal accommodation) have been placing newly arrived asylum seekers in a number of hotels across the Yorkshire and Humber region. This was initially in response to a shortage of dispersed accommodation at the turn of the year. However, since the emergence of the Covid 19 crisis and the resulting pause on people being evicted from their asylum accommodation, hotel use has continued to increase in the region due to a growing lack of available accommodation for new arrivals claiming asylum.

The NET Contingency Accommodation Project has been engaging with residents in hotels in Wakefield and Leeds, Rotherham, Sheffield and Hull, delivering health briefings, English conversation, art therapy and wellbeing sessions in addition to arranging donations of clothing and other items.

**The Volunteer Role**

Volunteers will have the opportunity to support the Hotels Team by planning, creating, and delivering an activity as part of a social group that promotes wellbeing for clients.

**For the women’s ‘Stitch Together’ group:** set up and deliver craft activities including painting, drawing, sewing, and crocheting.

* Set up and supervise use of art materials (including sewing machines if used)
* Help attendees with any issues they might have with the craft activities (including sewing/crocheting project or machines if used)
* Put crafts away (including sewing machines if used) and lightly tidy the space afterwards.
* Maintain a friendly and welcoming atmosphere
* Encourage conversation and practice of English
* Occasionally support other events and activities such as days out and trips
* With the support of the Volunteer Coordinator put together a schedule of activities, giving enough time to gather resources, templates etc and make examples if needed.
* Keep a register of attendees as well as a record of volunteer hours

**Useful Skills and Experience:**

* Good communication and interpersonal skills
* Willingness to empathise and learn about refugees’ experience in the UK
* Reliable and trustworthy
* Friendly and patient
* Pro-active

**This role is subject to a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service check. Repeat checks are initiated every two years.**

**Skills and Experience to be Gained from the Role:**

* **Experience facilitating group sessions and workshops:** Volunteers will gain skills in planning and delivering activities for clients.
* **Experience working with low-level English speakers:** Clients may have low levels of English, and so volunteers may gain experience supporting such individuals.
* **Making a difference:** Volunteers will work with asylum seekers who are often vulnerable, and help them to gain confidence and improve their English. This experience is invaluable for asylum seekers and makes a real difference to their lives.

**How We Support Our Volunteers**

Volunteers are valued members of our teams and we provide them with support and development opportunities. Volunteers will receive regular planned support sessions with their supervisors.

Refugee Council allows volunteers to attend our professional training courses when possible, free of charge. Training will be discussed with you during support sessions with your supervisor.

Through sponsorship from the Marsh Trust, Refugee Council also provides volunteers with the opportunity to design and set-up a new service for new clients. There will be an opportunity to discuss this with your supervisor.

Volunteer roles are unpaid, but we can reimburse volunteers for lunch and travel costs. (Unfortunately, our limited budget only allows for local travelling costs.)

**Unanswered Questions?**

For more information contact **Mohammed Juhar** on **07387 090811**

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Health & Safety**

The volunteer is responsible for:

Cooperating with the Refugee Council in delivering all legal responsibilities in respect of your own and your colleagues, volunteers, clients and others health and safety whilst at work.

Becoming familiar with the Refugee Council’s Health & Safety Policy and procedures including evacuation procedures at your workplace.

Carrying out risk assessments of your own work and especially of your own workstation to ensure that you do not expose yourself or others to unnecessary risk.

**Equal Opportunities Statement**

As part of its recruitment policy, the Refugee Council intends to ensure that no prospective or actual employee or volunteer is discriminated against on the basis of sex, race, nationality, marital status, sexual orientation, employment status, class, disability, age, religious belief or political persuasion, or is disadvantaged by any condition or requirement which is not demonstrably justifiable.