

VOLUNTEER TASK DESCRIPTION

Volunteer Befriender



- Location:** York
- Time commitment:** Minimum of 3 months – 1 hour every week or fortnightly
This role requires availability during weekdays (Monday - Friday, 9am-5pm). The exact time of appointments will be agreed together with the client.
- Responsible to:** Volunteer Coordinator & Resettlement Worker
- Main role:** Volunteer's goal is to help resettled refugees improve their English, build confidence in accessing services, and feel more settled in the community by planning and delivering befriending sessions.

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

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 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 Resettlement Team

The UK Government has committed itself to supporting Resettlement Schemes, whereby people fleeing persecution are selected and processed in the region of origin and brought to the UK with their refugee status already determined. Under these schemes a specific quota of refugees (single or within a family unit) come to the UK for resettlement.

In York, the Resettlement Team works with people from Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan and other countries to help them adjust to life in the UK, access services and establish community links. Working closely with the Local Authority and in partnership with other voluntary sector agencies running similar services in York, the Refugee Council's Resettlement team promotes both the integration and independence of resettled refugees.

The Volunteer Role

Volunteer Befrienders support refugees to build their confidence and to integrate into the local community and work towards self-reliance. The volunteer will have the opportunity to be flexible and creative by planning the sessions with the client, according to their specific needs and interests. The sessions can include visits to various places, and the volunteers will ensure that the refugees are comfortable and safe throughout.

Specifically, the Volunteer Role Includes:

- Planning and organising sessions
- Practising conversational English during the sessions
- Supporting refugees accessing community groups or services, these may include libraries, community centres or groups, parent & toddler groups, leisure centres, etc.
- Working with, and reporting back to the Resettlement Team

Useful Skills and Experience:

- Experience working with individuals who have a low level of proficiency in the English language is desirable but not essential.
- Excellent listening skills and the ability to empathise as well as establishing boundaries to avoid emotional over-involvement
- Willingness to empathise and learn about refugee issues
- Ability to research local activities, and plan activities accordingly
- Sensitivity to working in a multi-cultural organisation and the ability to work with colleagues from other cultures
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- A commitment to the Refugee Council's vision, purpose and values
- Reliable and trustworthy
- Proactive and takes initiative

Skills and Experience to be Gained from the Role:

- The Refugee Council is one of the leading organisations in the UK working with refugees and people seeking asylum; you will have the opportunity to be part of a dedicated and experienced team.
- **Experience working with refugees:** Volunteers will work directly with their clients, and so will become more aware of the issues facing refugees.
- **Intercultural communication skills:** Volunteers will learn to effectively communicate with people from different countries and cultures.
- **Experience working with low-level English speakers:** Clients will often have low levels of English, and so befrienders will gain experience on how to effectively communicate in these situations.
- **Experience planning activities:** Through researching and organising activities, volunteers will gain relevant transferable skills.
- **Making a difference:** Volunteers will be paired with refugees who are often vulnerable and help them to gain confidence and improve their English. This experience is invaluable for refugees and makes a real difference to their lives.
- Volunteers will be given training before starting the role and will have the opportunity to attend further training as part of the Refugee Council team.

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.
- If required, volunteers will be given IT access and a Refugee Council email address whilst volunteering on this project.
- 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 Olivia Snook on 07570 721367 or Olivia.Snook@refugeecouncil.org.uk

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.