

Factsheet

Involving Refugees & Asylum Seekers in Volunteering

Welcoming and involving refugees and asylum seekers not only benefits the individual, but also helps to develop your organisation or group.

What can refugees and asylum seekers bring to your organisation?

- Unique perspectives, skills and experiences (some are highly skilled professionals)
- Increase diversity of your organisation and awareness of other cultures
- Support your organisation to connect with refugee communities and build relationships
- Language / translation opportunities

How can volunteering benefit refugees and asylum seekers?

- Sense of meaning / purpose - an opportunity to contribute to their local community
- Boost mental and physical wellbeing
- Practical opportunity to improve English language and communication skills
- Social inclusion and integration - an opportunity to make friends!
- Skill development / pathways to employment

How can you ensure your volunteering programme is inclusive to refugees and asylum seekers?

- **Language accessibility**; can resources be available in multiple languages, could you connect with other groups to facilitate translation / peer support opportunities?
- **Cultural sensitivity**; do you have an EDI strategy, are there training opportunities for staff and volunteers around culture and diversity?
- **Flexibility of opportunities**; can individuals volunteer on different days / times to fit in with other commitments?
- **Volunteer-led roles**; consider individual skills / experiences and explore interests to match volunteers up to an existing role, or to develop a new role that works to their strengths
- **Start the expenses conversation**; refugees and asylum seekers are often unable to volunteer unless travel is reimbursed - be clear at the outset if expenses are available
- **Welcoming & supportive environment**; volunteers should feel valued and respected, assign them a point of contact (a buddy) so they feel comfortable expressing their needs and concerns, and check-in with them regularly, providing feedback and encouragement

- **Clarity**; explain how the organisation works, what the expectations of them are, and the support that is available

What does the law say?

There are **no restrictions preventing asylum seekers and refugees from volunteering**; as in all cases of volunteering there should be no payment (other than reasonable expenses), and no contractual obligation in place. A DBS can be obtained if required for the role, but the process is more complicated and usually requires a fingerprint check - see [GOV UK website](#) for details.

Additional Resources

- NCVO - [Involving Volunteers from Overseas](#)