

Resettlement Community Interest Company

Supporting Refugees in the Southeast

Volunteer Handbook



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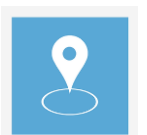
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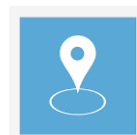
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Thank you for volunteering to support Resettlement



Some volunteers who sign up with Resettlement will already have worked within the voluntary refugee sector, but for others it will be a completely new experience, and it will be perfectly normal to feel a little apprehensive. So, this handbook is slanted towards those who are new to the sector; think of it as a **guide** which will tell you a lot about what you will need to know, but inevitably, not everything.



Responsibilities

English Support

Often, language barriers are the most difficult to overcome when establishing yourself in a new community. Providing English support is a wonderful way to make a huge, positive impact on the lives of refugees.

You do not need training or qualifications to undertake this role, but you will need to have a strong grasp of the English language. There are online materials on our website that you can use for the basis for your classes. You can also choose to teach less formally, by reading regularly or by simply keeping in regular communication in English.

The time commitment for this role is flexible, typically anything between 1-5 hours a week, depending on how regularly you can meet. How much time you are willing to spend is down to you. To make a meaningful impact on the people we support, we would ask that you volunteer for a minimum of 3 months in this role.

Mentoring

Mentors play a crucial role in helping refugees rebuild their lives and confidence. In this role, you will be put in contact with someone who could benefit from help with navigating services. The basic things we often do, such as rent a house, write a CV, or call up for a doctor's appointment, can appear very daunting and confusing – especially when English is your second language.

You do not need specialist knowledge in any of these areas. All you need is the time to sit down with your mentee and enable them to access the services they need.

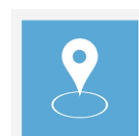
The time commitment for this role is also flexible, typically anything between 1-5 hours a week. It is flexible, and you can carry out your volunteer work on evenings and weekends, according to the schedule of you and your mentee. The commitment need not be long term, but we ask the volunteers to agree to dedicate themselves to supporting their mentee for at least 2 months.

Event Organisation

We usually hold events twice a year. These typically are around celebrating the local community, creative performances, and sharing stories. We ask for volunteers to help facilitate these events by assisting us with catering, setting up and taking down spaces, staying at stalls, and technical equipment.

There will not be any training for events, but you will be working with a member of our staff as part of a team, so you will always be well supported in this role.

The time commitment for this role will be the length of the event, plus two hours either side of it starting and finishing, depending on the specific role you undertake. You may also be asked to support in the preparation for the event if you are available. Your commitment will only extend



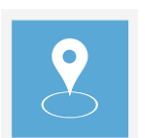
to the specific event you volunteer for, and you will not be expected to volunteer at future events if you choose not to. You may be contacted and invited to support in future events unless you otherwise request to be removed from our contact list.

Night Shelter

In partnership with Faith Christian Group, we support the refugee Bed for a Night in Reading. This is a night shelter for homeless refugees and runs three months during the winter period. The commitment of volunteers is crucial for the shelter to run, and it provides a vital lifeline to those facing homelessness during the bitterly cold nights. This role may involve helping to set up beds, cooking, and generally chatting to guests, playing games, and making them feel welcome.

You will be given some basic training for this role, including safeguarding, boundaries, and working with refugees. You will never be on your own during a shift and will work in a team.

The time commitment for this role is 3-8 hours per shift, per week. This is a fixed time commitment and runs seven days a week. The shift patterns are 7pm-10pm, 10pm-7am, 7am-9am. You can volunteer for a one-off shift, but we would ask volunteers to try and take weekly or fortnightly shifts for the duration of the shelter to help us maintain consistency for the people using the service.



Code of Conduct

Resettlement volunteers come from a variety of cultural, work, and voluntary sector backgrounds; they often fulfil their roles in surprisingly different ways but are expected to uphold the highest standards of conduct in all interactions and activities. This Code of Conduct outlines the behaviours and principles that guide our work and ensure a positive and respectful environment for both volunteers and those we serve.

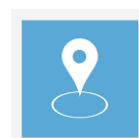
It cannot possibly cover all scenarios, so use it to make the most informed decisions and to follow the best practice that you can.

1. Respect and Dignity

- Treat all individuals, including refugees, other volunteers, and staff members, with respect, kindness, and dignity, regardless of their background, beliefs, or experiences.
- Understand and respect the cultural, religious, and personal differences of those you are working with.
- Refrain from making assumptions based on gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion, culture, ethnicity, or nationality.

2. Confidentiality

- Maintain confidentiality regarding any personal information shared with you by the refugees or other volunteers. Do not disclose sensitive information without explicit permission, except in situations where there is a legal obligation to report.
- Handle all data and information with care, ensuring that it is stored securely and only accessed by authorised personnel.
- Respect the privacy of those mentored and do not share information with third parties.
- The client's consent must be obtained in all circumstances where sensitive information is concerned. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Medical Information: If a client discloses health issues such as trauma-related conditions or chronic illnesses and requests support in sharing this information with healthcare professionals.
 - Immigration Status: If an agency, such as a landlord or employer, asks about the client's immigration status or asylum claim details.
 - Personal History: If a client shares sensitive details about their past experiences (e.g., persecution, violence, or human trafficking) and you believe this may be beneficial for support they may qualify for from the local authorities.
 - Financial Situation: Supporting people trying to set up a bank account.
- Never mention the names of clients in casual conversation with people outside the organisation.
- Never divulge contents of information obtained at Resettlement to outside agencies, without written consent.



3. Professional Boundaries

- Maintain appropriate boundaries, ensuring that your relationship with refugees and other volunteers remains professional.
- Refrain from engaging in any personal or financial relationships with refugees outside the scope of your volunteer role.
- Avoid any behaviour that could be construed as harassment or discrimination.
- Do not promote goods or services from sources in which you have a financial or personal interest.
- Either party may dissolve the relationship at any time in the least disruptive manner possible.

4. Commitment and Reliability

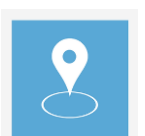
- Fulfil the time commitment agreed upon for your volunteer role. If you are unable to meet your commitment, provide as much notice as possible to allow alternative arrangements.
- Attend any required training sessions and follow all guidelines provided to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone involved.
- To keep an adequate record of the impact of the sessions based on goals set and attained, which are to be passed onto the Resettlement coordinator at regular intervals or when requested.
- To manage expectations effectively by not over-promising and by following through with agreed actions.

5. Safety and Well-being

- Prioritise the safety and well-being of yourself and others in all volunteer activities.
- Follow all safety protocols, especially in roles that involve direct interaction with vulnerable individuals, such as in the Night Shelter.
- Report any concerns or incidents immediately to a staff member or supervisor by the channels provided.
- To seek help from Resettlement staff on matters outside your capabilities and experience, especially where issues related to clients' asylum are concerned.

6. Communication

- Communicate openly and honestly with your mentee, other volunteers, and staff. Address any issues or challenges promptly and seek guidance when necessary.
- Use language that is clear, supportive, and free from judgement.
- Focus on matters pertaining to the future, and not ask questions regarding mentees' refugee experience, i.e., to keep conversations forward-looking and solution focused. Respond to the clients' needs and aspirations, rather than imposing your own agenda.
- Provide clients with relevant and comprehensive information so that they can make informed decisions.



- Refrain from offering advice on legal, housing, or benefits issues. This is a constantly changing landscape in relation to the clients and is not always based on conceptions of common sense. It is perfectly normal to sympathise with a clients' situation but avoid giving what could be false hope.

7. Cultural Sensitivity

- Be aware of and sensitive to the cultural and religious practices of refugees and respect their rights to practise their traditions.
- Avoid imposing your own cultural values or beliefs on others.

8. Integrity and Accountability

- Conduct yourself with integrity, honesty, and transparency in all volunteer activities.
- Take responsibility for your actions and decisions. Seek to resolve any issues that arise promptly and fairly.

9. No Gifts or Donations

- Volunteers should not give or receive gifts or money from the refugees they work with, to avoid creating dependency or inequality.
- If you wish to contribute materially, please do so through the appropriate channels within the organisation.

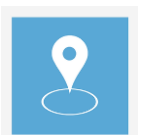
10. Substance Use

- Abstain from the use of alcohol, drugs, or other substances during volunteer activities. Arrive in your volunteer role sober and ready to engage fully.
- If you have concerns about people we support or any other volunteers to be misusing substances, you should notify a member of staff.

11. Conflict of Interest

- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest that may arise during your volunteer work, and refrain from engaging in activities that could compromise your objectivity or the interests of the organisation.

If you have any questions about the above 'Code of Conduct', please email us at enquiries@resettlement.org.uk



Volunteer Communication and Forum

Effective communication is crucial within our network of volunteers and staff at Resettlement. If we approve your application to join our team, you will need to download and use the app “Slack.” Unlike WhatsApp and other messaging platforms, Slack offers a more efficient way for our team to communicate and collaborate, without the need to share your personal phone number.

Please ensure that you keep notifications enabled on Slack and remain attentive to any messages directed to you. This will help us maintain clear and effective communication within our team.

The app is compatible with Microsoft Windows, macOS, Linux, iOS, Android.

If for some reason you will be unable to down this app, please speak with a member of our team by emailing enquiries@resettlement.org.uk

Claiming Expenses

If you incur a petty expense when carrying out your voluntary work, such as a bus fare, you may be able to claim the money back from Resettlement. Because of limited funds, we recommend that you consult with us before undertaking any activity that may incur a cost to ensure we are able to reimburse the monies to you.

You can enquire about an expense by emailing enquiries@resettlement.org.uk to receive an expense form. You will need to fill this out and return it to the same inbox, along with a clear copy of the VAT receipt.

Raising a Grievance

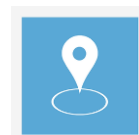
If you are dissatisfied with your experience volunteering with Resettlement, you can raise a formal grievance. Depending on the nature of the grievance, you may be asked to attend subsequent meetings with the management team at Resettlement to help strengthen our relationship with the voluntary team and the community we support.

Discriminatory and Inappropriate Behaviour

If you experience or witness discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour while volunteering, you should report it as part of the grievance process. Discriminatory behaviour includes any actions or remarks that unfairly target individuals based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or other protected characteristics. Inappropriate behaviour might involve harassment, bullying, or any conduct that disrupts the respectful and supportive environment we strive to maintain. Your report will be taken seriously, and appropriate measures will be taken to address and rectify the situation.

Welfare Risks

If you identify any risks to the welfare of yourself or others while volunteering, it is crucial to raise these concerns promptly. Welfare risks may include physical safety issues, mental health concerns, or any other factors that could negatively impact the well-being of volunteers or individuals in our care.



Reporting these risks helps us take necessary actions to ensure a safe and supportive environment for everyone involved. Your feedback will be used to enhance our procedures and ensure a high standard of care and safety.

Staff and other volunteers

If you have issues or concerns related to interactions with staff or other volunteers, please include these in your grievance. This could involve conflicts, communication problems, or other difficulties affecting your experience. Addressing these issues is essential for maintaining a positive and collaborative working environment. We will review your concerns and work towards resolving any issues to foster a harmonious and effective team dynamic.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the protection of people's well-being, health, and human rights, allowing them to live safely without neglect, harm, or abuse. Resettlement expects all volunteers to understand, recognise, and report any suspected or actual abuse in line with our safeguarding policies and procedures.

Abuse and neglect can take many forms and can be unintentional. It can include physical, sexual, emotional, financial or material, discriminatory and institutional abuse. Abuse of vulnerable people does not have to be deliberate, malicious, or planned. It sometimes happens when people are trying to do their best but do not know the right thing to do.

Volunteers have a responsibility and duty of care to the people they care for and support. If you see or are given information that causes you to be concerned about a vulnerable person,

You must raise this with the safeguarding lead, Oliver Welzen-James, immediately via the email: OWJames@resettlement.org.uk.

Data Protection

We are committed to ensuring that your personal data is handled in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and UK Data Protection Act 2018. Your data will be processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently for legitimate purposes related to our charity's activities.

For more detailed information on how we manage personal data, please refer to the privacy policy on our website, www.resettlement.org.uk. If you have any concerns or queries, you can contact the controller of personal data at Resettlement CIC is Oliver Welzen-James, contactable at OWJames@resettlement.org.uk.

