Voices in Exile

*Supporting refugees, those seeking asylum, and those with no recourse to public funds*

**VOLUNTEERING WITH VOICES IN EXILE**

**Background information:**

There are a number of ways in which volunteers can support our work. Some of our volunteer roles are short-term, while others demand longer-term commitment. We aim to recruit new volunteers at regular intervals throughout the year, as needed. Once we have received and assessed your application we will invite you for an informal interview to assess your suitability in relation to the roles we currently have available. You will be required to provide two referees and, depending on the role, may need to apply for an enhanced Child and Adult Workforce DBS check. If successful, you will then need to commit to a number of training sessions before you begin work with us.

Once you begin we will provide an induction to the project, a written volunteer agreement, and training as needed. Every volunteer receives support from our volunteer coordinator, a staff supervisor if appropriate, and regular volunteer support group meetings. Reasonable travel expenses (within Brighton & Hove) can be reimbursed, and lunch expenses up to £5 reimbursed where volunteers are working a full day. Regrettably, we cannot cover childcare costs at the moment.

We value the support and commitment of our volunteers, and look forward to new members joining our team.

**Volunteer role descriptions**

For all roles a commitment to human rights and to working with migrants is essential, and experience of working with people from a range of backgrounds and cultures desirable. Additional languages are also always useful! We usually ask for a minimum commitment of at least one regular 6-hour day a week (during working hours) for 6 months.

**Mentoring**

**Accompanying/advocacy**

Mentoring is goal-focused and time-limited. It uses many of the techniques of coaching, although it includes some elements of both befriending and advocacy. Mentors will be matched with clients depending upon the skills & support needed, and will work closely with the ViE team who will provide oversight, guidance and support. As a mentor you could be working with refugees, asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers, people with no recourse to public funds, people who have experienced domestic violence or trafficking, and people with mental health difficulties. You might be accompanying clients and their children. Goals might be practical (registering with a library), learning-focused (improving English), or to do with positive ways to improve wellbeing.

Good communication and interpersonal skills are essential. You will also need to have patience, to be flexible, and to be able to travel as needed (to e.g. GP surgeries or hospitals) to meet the client. Experience of working with people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures is preferred. You will need to be able to work on your own initiative, prepare carefully and have good organisational skills. Some lone working is involved in this role.

**Mentoring**

**1:1 language support teachers**

**ESOL classroom assistants**

We are committed to delivering dedicated ESOL teaching both (as part of our Syrian Vulnerable Persons’ Resettlement Programme contract) to our Syrian family clients and to our non-Syrian refugee and migrant clients. A core structured ESOL course is delivered by our delivery partners the Friends’ Centre; but we also need volunteer support to provide both additional one-to-one ESOL conversation support outside of classes, and to provide additional classroom support to those with additional learning needs.

We are looking for volunteers with strong communication skills; qualifications and experience of teaching English as a second language; and the ability to deliver clear, engaging and well-organised lessons. You will need to have patience, to be able to listen and to encourage, some experience of volunteering, and the ability creatively to deliver lessons with very few resources! You will help plan and deliver lessons, meet and liaise with other teachers to plan and evaluate lessons, and pass on any concerns about particular learners to the casework team.

**Food bank/destitution drop-in**

Our food bank and destitution drop-in runs weekly on Fridays and is Voices’ most long-established service. Service users who are destitute and eligible (including asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers not in receipt of asylum support, and vulnerable migrants who are not asylum seekers and who have no recourse to public funds) can register to receive both weekly hardship payments of £10 (provided by the Red Cross) for up to 12 weeks, and weekly access to our independent food bank, stocked entirely through donations. People presenting may also have practical and advice needs, which we will address as far as possible during the session (complex cases may need internal referral to our advice & casework service). We need volunteers to help us make this a friendly, non-judgmental and accessible session, and to ensure that it runs smoothly. We need volunteers able to commit regularly to working on Fridays to help with:

**Reception:** preparing and clearing reception space and kitchen at beginning and end of session, including washing up dishes and emptying rubbish bins; welcoming service users;

signing people in; making teas & coffees; chatting and establishing whether people might need to talk to an adviser; raising any concerns to the session advisers and/or manager.

**Food bank:** receiving deliveries; checking use-by-dates; organising and carrying stock; clearing the space at the end of session, including washing up dishes and emptying rubbish bins; chatting to service users; keeping clear records; undertaking feedback with service users to ensure we are providing the goods they need.

**Advice & practical support:** establishing advice and support issues and, under the supervision of the caseworker/manager, carrying out follow-up work as needed, including making phone calls, writing simple letters, photocopying and scanning relevant documents, working with telephone interpreters where appropriate etc.

**Advice & casework support**

**– including work for our Syrian Vulnerable Persons’ Refugee Settlement programme and for our immigration, benefits, housing, homelessness and asylum support work**

Voices provides crucial advice to vulnerable migrants on immigration matters, housing and homelessness, benefits and asylum support. Immigration advice and casework is especially crucial in Brighton and Sussex since the last remaining legal aid solicitors’ firm gave up its legal aid contract in 2016. We need committed volunteers with good advice, legal and casework management skills to assess clients’ cases at our drop-in sessions to establish their support needs, help clients fill in forms, and advocate on their behalf by phone, in writing, or in person – including accompanying clients to meetings, appointments or interviews. We also need volunteers to provide dedicated casework support to our staff advisors including our Syrian programme caseworker.

All advice work will be carried out under the supervision of experienced staff advisors, and volunteers will be provided with basic training in all advice areas and in key issues like client confidentiality, professional conduct and case management before working directly with clients. We’re looking for quick learners with a basic understanding of the UK benefits, housing, and immigration systems, the ability to speak and write effectively in English, and good IT skills. An ability to speak a community language (particularly Arabic) is an advantage, but not essential. An interest in migrant issues and a commitment to basic human rights for all is essential. You will need to commit to one or two days a week (weekdays during office hours) for a minimum of six months.

**Drop-in reception:** to help us with our advice drop-ins we also need volunteers to help with practical set-up and clean-up including preparing and clearing reception space and kitchen at beginning and end of session, including washing up dishes and emptying rubbish bins; welcoming clients; signing people in and making teas and coffees. You might also be asked by the caseworker to scan or photocopy documents as needed.

**Back-office roles including website/comms; admin/fundraising**

We are a very small staff team and also need help with a range of other back-office roles. We are looking for friendly, committed and competent volunteers with good IT skills and spoken English (the ability to speak a community language would be an added bonus) to help us with, for example:

**Reception & admin**, including finance admin: answering phones, welcoming visitors to the building, explaining our services, signposting, providing information to clients, maintaining up-to-date sign-in and other records, sorting mail; photocopying, faxing and scanning documents; administering petty cash; and keeping clear financial records.

**Website & social media**, including help to maintain our new website (once it’s up!) and social media presence.