



Supporting refugees, asylum seekers & those with no recourse to public funds

Voices in Exile

Migrant support volunteer: Groups

Background

Voices in Exile works with adult refugees, asylum seekers and migrants with no recourse to public funds in Sussex. We offer both practical and legal support to those who would otherwise be unable to access justice. We work with both individuals and families, including refugee families resettled in the UK from Syria and Afghanistan.

Voices in Exile clients come to us through several channels, and the groups are an important initial contact point from which group members may go on to access other services both within Voices in Exile and beyond. We run three groups every week during term time offering an informal welcoming, supportive and safe space, with planned activities to help people feel at home in Brighton and Hove. All group activities are chosen by the group and based on their expressed interests. People in the group may have experienced isolation, trauma, racism and other difficult circumstances. The groups provide a space for developing mutual support networks for members and are very successful at reducing social isolation through improving social networks and connections to the city.

Purpose of the role

In addition to benefitting from the support and activities that the groups have to offer, group members regularly need time to discuss additional issues 1-1. The purpose of this volunteer role is to support some of these issues, and to provide essential signposting and information on accessing other services to individual group members while the group facilitator runs the group sessions. There will also be occasional one to one support needed outside of the sessions eg accompanying the group member to open a bank account, join the library etc.

What's involved - The specific tasks will depend on the needs of the client, for example:

- Listening to the client about their practical needs
- Supporting clients to find out about what is available locally to them and how to access services.
This can include:
 - opening a bank account
 - using online services
 - finding foodbanks
 - understanding a bill
 - joining community groups
 - finding out about sports and leisure activities
 - applying for charity baby items
 - discovering arts and culture
 - accessing domestic abuse services
 - accessing health services (eg contacting a GP surgery)
- Referring clients to Voices in Exile advice and casework for housing, destitution, immigration, benefits
- Occasionally accompanying clients to different venues and appointments when needed

- Keeping brief records and updating the group facilitator after each meeting; reporting safeguarding issues

We are looking for people who are:

- Friendly and empathic
- Non-judgmental
- Reliable and trustworthy
- Respectful of confidentiality
- Easy to talk to and a good listener
- Good IT skills, including word processing, email and internet
- Able to maintain strong boundaries
- Have a good local knowledge, or are willing to learn
- Able to work with an interpreter where necessary

To volunteer with Voices in Exile you should have an interest in migration issues and a commitment to basic human rights.

Time commitments - This role requires a commitment to:

- initial induction and training
- 2-4 hours per week (term times only) per group
- volunteer for a minimum of 6 months

Benefits - Your role will provide you with opportunities to:

- connect with people from different countries and cultures
- experience the working environment and gain an understanding of different careers in the migrant sector
- share your knowledge and skills, making a difference to someone's life

Support - You will:

- receive a full induction into Voices in Exile and your role
- have a named staff member at Voices in Exile for 1-2-1 support and supervision
- have regular volunteer support group sessions where you can meet other volunteers for peer support and learning
- be reimbursed for reasonable travel and other agreed out of pocket expenses

Practicalities - Due to the nature of this role, we will require you to:

- attend our induction and training sessions
- follow the policies and procedures of Voices in Exile
- give permission for an enhanced Disclosure and Barring check to be made

We welcome applications from people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and people who speak a community language in addition to English, as well as people who are native to the UK. We would particularly welcome applications from speakers of Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Dari and Ukrainian.