



## **Involving Refugees and Asylum Seekers as Volunteers**

Volunteer managers are usually keenly on the look-out for new volunteers and we all want to ensure volunteering can be inclusive, open and beneficial to everyone. Involving a diverse group of people with a variety of skills and experiences can help you deliver effective services and make for an interesting and welcoming environment for new volunteers.

Have you considered how you might welcome asylum seekers and refugees amongst your volunteers? Individuals may be highly skilled, bring useful perspectives and experience and be very motivated to participate and yet there can be some barriers to address.

For the individuals concerned this can be a great way to do something interesting and constructive, integrate into British life, improve English language skills and get to know the local community. It may open up work opportunities for the future – perhaps even with your organisation!

Although asylum seekers in the UK are not usually permitted to work whilst their claim is processed, they can volunteer. This means they can voluntarily take part in mutually agreed activities so long as there is not any obligation, payment or other consideration. Note that reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses incurred for volunteering does not count as payment. Guidance: [Permission to work and volunteering for asylum seekers \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)

Given the circumstances of individuals, you may need to consider whether you can be flexible – either with your standard recruitment process or with the arrangement for carrying out volunteering roles, in order to involve asylum seekers and refugees, around issues like ID, references and DBS checks.

Your ability to provide a reference may be particularly important for a refugee or asylum seeker. Ensure you discuss with the individual what you will be able to provide.

Asylum seekers and refugees may need some extra support to get started and confident in their volunteer role, as there may be language issues and cultural differences. Individuals may be able to get support from another charity to help them in this process and where possible you can build in your own support mechanisms too.

Garden House Hospice and The Red Shed have collaboratively produced a very useful leaflet with questions, suggestions and links to help you welcome refugees and asylum seekers into your volunteering community: [INCLUDING ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN YOUR VOLUNTEERING COMMUNITY](#)