



Refugee Support Group

RSG

Trustee Recruitment Brief

January 2024

Trustee



www.rrsg.org.uk

Refugee Support Group is looking for new Trustees!



Could you be an RSG Trustee?

We are looking for new Trustees to strengthen and diversify the skills and experience of the Board of Trustees at Refugee Support Group (RSG). This is an exciting role for individuals who want to shape the future development of the organisation to make a big difference to the lives of increasing numbers of destitute people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants.

A full role description is available towards the end of this document.

We are particularly looking for people with experience of:

- Lived experience of the asylum and immigration system, homelessness and/or destitution.

- Youth - we welcome the energy and fresh perspectives that young people bring to our work.
- Income generation and fundraising for a charity.
- Digital campaigning
- Networking with businesses and people of high net worth.

RSG usually has six full board meetings a year, which last 2 hours. The preference is for face-to-face meetings, but online attendance is also possible.

The Board may also meet for an away day with RSG staff once a year. Trustees also sit on sub-committees that help to guide the development, management, safety and membership of RSG.

Reasonable travel expenses/costs will be covered for attending all RSG board-related meetings and for any agreed development training.





Letter from our Chair Mike Martin

Dear Applicant

Thank you for your interest in becoming a trustee of Refugee Support Group. I am enclosing/attaching an application pack to help you understand more about what is involved in these roles, what we are looking for and what the organisation does.

This pack consists of:

- an organisation structure chart
- a description of the Role of Trustee in the Organisation
- a description of the Requirements of Trustees
- a statement of our Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Objectives
- our last Annual Report and Accounts

Please also have a look at our web site which is about to be upgraded but will nevertheless help you to better understand our work: <http://www.rrsg.org.uk>

If, having digested this information, you think you might like to become a trustee of the organisation then please contact Nick Harborne, Chief Executive, on 0118 950 5356 or nick@rrsg.org.uk. We can then arrange for you to meet Nick and/or myself for an informal chat. Please tell us if you have any special needs. We do not have an application form but if you have a CV that would be helpful for us.

If, after meeting us, you are still interested and we think you have some of the qualities we are looking for, there will be an opportunity to attend a formal board meeting. This will allow you to explain to trustees what you think you could bring to the work of the board and give trustees a chance to ask you questions. After the board meeting the existing trustees will decide whether or not to invite you to become a trustee.

New trustees will be given will be given a proper induction into the organisation.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

M. T. Martin

Mike Martin - Chair

About RSG

Refugee Support Group was formed in 1993 at a refugee conference organised jointly by Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC), Oxfam and Churches Together in Berkshire. This conference responded to the civil wars and oppression in Somalia, Zimbabwe and Sudan and the many refugees coming to Reading.

As one of only 2 charities in Berkshire solely dedicated to supporting refugees, we are regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), overseeing our support for asylum seekers in Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham, reaching into Hampshire.

We provide access to free immigration advice and legal services for asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable migrants responding to the shortage of immigration advice services in Berkshire, and the Thames Valley through collaboration with other refugee charities.

We advocate for a fairer and more humane asylum system, which has never been so important as the sector faces unprecedented challenges.

In 2014 RSG set its Reading City of Sanctuary programme. We supported Reading Borough Council in its application for City of Sanctuary status, which was gained in 2017. Since then, we have worked with the University of Reading to establish a refugee scholarship programme and achieve University of Sanctuary status, as well as churches, schools, museums, Hempen Farm, the theatre group Rank and File, and Greyfriars church all have gained Sanctuary Status recently.

RSG was awarded the prestigious Queens Award for Voluntary Services in 2017.

Our three strategic objectives are:

1

To improve the quality of life experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in the Berkshire area by:

- providing direct support and advice and assisting individuals and families to integrate with, contribute to and benefit from the wider community.

2

To maximise the resources available to support refugees and asylum seekers by:

- building constructive partnerships with other agencies that work with them.
- pursuing an active fundraising programme that increases the financial sustainability and stability of RSG.
- to continually improve the sustainability, governance and management of RSG
- developing a team of employees and volunteers that is skilled, effective and well supported.

3

3. To increase the awareness of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in the area of benefit by:

- raising the profile of the work of RSG
- developing a greater understanding of the size and nature of the refugee and asylum seeker population
- openly challenging practices that unfairly discriminate against refugees and asylum seekers.

Learn more about our work here or download a copy of our Annual Report 2022 - 23



Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Objectives

Vision

Our vision is for an inclusive and supportive society where refugees and asylum seekers are treated with humanity, dignity and respect.

Mission

Our mission is to improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers through providing support and advice, promoting awareness and facilitating integration into the local community.

Values

The staff and trustees of Refugee Support Group hold the following values which state that:

- Social justice, human dignity and respect as prescribed by the European Convention on Human Rights and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) must be upheld.
- Diversity, including race, culture, ability, sexuality, gender, age, religion and other beliefs, is beneficial to the community and should be celebrated.
- The rights of individuals defined in the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the responsibilities of signatories to that convention should be respected and upheld.
- Working in partnership with other organisations improves effectiveness and spreads understanding.
- Maintaining confidentiality in working with those we seek to help is of the greatest importance in generating trust and security.
- The services and activities of the organisation should be accessible to all people who need them regardless of their individual circumstances.
- Maintaining a positive and inclusive workplace culture is crucial to the success of the organisation.

The Role of Trustee in the Organisation

Summary

Trustees work as part of a board that has overall responsibility for the performance of the organisation i.e. its effectiveness in terms of delivering the objectives of the charity, its strategy and direction, its role as an employer, its financial stability and its compliance with the requirements of both the law and best practice.

The role of trustee is voluntary and there is no remuneration beyond the reimbursement of legitimate expenses and the reward of making a positive difference to the future of people whose lives have been decimated by the ravages of war and conflict.

Time Commitment

Trustees are expected to attend 6 board meetings a year of 2 hours duration plus the Annual General Meeting. Board meetings currently take place on Wednesdays at 7pm. They are hybrid meetings with attendance online and in person. Trustees are encouraged to attend in person when possible.

In addition to formal meetings, there will be work taken on by individual trustees or working groups of the board and occasional board development events which trustees should attend. Attendance at key RSG promotional events will now and then be asked of trustees. It is also a requirement that trustees participate in email dialogue about the development of the organisation.

There is a lot more to being a trustee than simply attending board meetings, important though that is. Potential trustees need to think carefully about the time commitment.

Key Aspects of the Role

1. Being an active and constructive participant in board meetings, which requires reading and digesting the paperwork before attendance. Additionally, there is a requirement to engage in trustee discussions that take place outside of board meetings.

2. Willingness to participate in working groups/committees.
3. Agreeing a business plan for the charity, which charts the way forward over the coming years to deliver the best possible support to asylum seekers and refugees in the charity's area.
4. Agreeing an annual budget and monitoring the income and expenditure of the charity to make sure it stays within budget.
5. Developing plans with the Chief Executive for income generation that will ensure the sustainability of the organisation beyond the current year of operation.
6. Being responsible for the staff, both employees and volunteers, making sure they have the skills, training & resources to carry out their roles and that their welfare at work is maintained.
7. Ensuring that Refugee Support Group develops as an inclusive organisation that is open to the involvement of people who are under represented in public life or who experience discrimination.
8. Developing and reviewing policies that ensure compliance with the law and best practice key areas are employment, health and safety, data protection and confidentiality, equal opportunities and the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.
9. Ensuring that the organisation is informed by and responds to the needs and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees.
10. Acting as ambassador for the charity when in contact with stake holders, partner organisations and the public by raising awareness of its work and the challenges being faced by refugees and asylum seekers.

Click here for further guidance on the role of trustee is available in the Charity Commission's publication "[The Essential Trustee](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1171397/CC3_feb20.pdf)"

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Requirements of the Role of Trustee

Introduction

There are some general qualities that people will need to bring to the role of trustee if they are to be effective. These apply to all trustees. There are also some quite specific attributes that we are looking for. These are qualities that we see as necessary to build the strength of the board and we attach particular importance to these specific qualities in our search for new trustees. We do not expect prospective trustees to have all these specific qualities. Any one of them would be useful.

General Qualities

1. A commitment to meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and to providing a welcoming and supportive environment for them in those areas where the charity works
2. A willingness to commit the time required to be a reliable member of the team (see Trustee Role Description). Attendance at and participation in board meetings is important in this respect.
3. The ability and confidence to work effectively in meetings.
4. The ability to understand financial statements and forecasts
5. Good listening skills and a willingness to learn and attend training where new skills and understanding are required.
6. A co-operative and friendly approach to collective decision making which understands that personal views will not always prevail.
7. A commitment to the development of an inclusive organisation which enables the participation of people from communities that typically experience discrimination or are under-represented.
8. The ability to think strategically about the development of the organisation.

Specific Qualities

In 2023 we conducted a skills audit of the board. We also received the resignation of a few long serving trustees. In consequence, we are particularly interested in people who, in addition to the general qualities described above, have one of the following attributes:

1. Lived experience of being a refugee or asylum seeker. There are currently two trustees with such experience, in addition to which our Deputy CEO has a refugee background. We want to increase the influence that people with lived experience have on the organisation.
2. Experience and understanding of the safeguarding of vulnerable people and good practice in supporting mental wellbeing. The latter is important both for our clients and our staff.
3. Youth. There is no-one on the board under the age of 30. We recognise that, nationwide, young people are at the forefront of support for refugees in the context of the hostile environment promoted by the government. We welcome the energy and fresh perspectives that young people bring to our work.
4. Experience of income generation for a charity. We raise income from public giving, fundraising events, trust fundraising and local government contracts.
5. Experience of digital campaigning. This is crucial in our objective of raising awareness of the refugee experience and countering the hostility and misinformation promoted by the press and media and government.

In order to promote diverse perspectives amongst trustees we welcome interest from members of black and minority ethnic communities and the LGBTQ+ community who can help us tap into potential support in their particular networks and benefit from their perspectives.

To apply:

Send us your CV and a supporting statement (2 sides a4 max)

Email: nick@rrsg.org.uk

Or post to: 1st Floor RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS.

Or: Arrange to have an informal chat with the Chair or CEO

Telephone: 0118 950 5356

RSG strives to be a diverse and inclusive employer and a place where we can ALL be ourselves.

We welcome applications from all sections of the community and encourage applications from the refugee, BAME and LGBTQ+ communities with lived experience.



**Refugee
Support
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