
Policy:	Volunteer Guidelines		
Date:	Feb 2024		
Approved: Trustees Meeting	21st Feb 2024		
Review:	Annually	3 yrs	5yrs
Review Date:	Oct 2029		

1. Purpose of Guidelines

Refugee Support Group (RSG) exists to provide advice and support to asylum seekers and refugees and uses volunteers to develop these services.

In line with this RSG seeks to involve volunteers to:

- Ensure that our services meet the needs of our clients and the refugee community.
- Provide skills and perspectives.
- Increase our contact with the refugee community.

Volunteers from all walks of life are welcome. RSG particularly welcomes volunteers from the asylum-seeker and refugee community. Clients of the organisation may be accepted as volunteers, where such service does not constitute an obstruction to, or conflict with, service provision to the other service-users. Relatives of clients may also serve as volunteers, but will not be asked to carry out any work that impinges upon their relationship.

Asylum-seekers and those in the process of appealing against a decision are legally able to volunteer.

RSG values the contribution of volunteers, and this document outlines RSG's policy on involving volunteers with its work. The policy provides guidance to both staff and volunteers recruited by RSG, in order to ensure the quality of the volunteering experience.

This policy applies to both those volunteering as a trustee and those engaged in RSG work in our communities.

2. Principles of Involving Volunteers

RSG values the work of volunteers and wants all volunteers to have a positive experience whilst volunteering for RSG. The work of volunteers is intrinsic in delivering RSG services to our clients. RSG recognise that the time and effort given by all volunteers and the wider RSG team enriches the lives of many.

RSG will required The following principles reflect this commitment:

- RSG will strive to ensure that volunteers are effectively integrated into the organisation with regular updating with newsletters, volunteers' meetings and taking part in events.
- RSG expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers.
- Working with volunteers helps RSG ensure that its services meet the needs of its clients.
- RSG provides opportunities to help volunteers develop and acquire new skills that are relevant to the volunteering role.
- Working with volunteers increases RSG's contact and involvement with local communities.

3. How do you become a volunteer with RSG?

All prospective volunteers will be interviewed informally to find out what they would like to do, what skills they offer, their suitability and how best their potential might be realised within the organisation.

They will be asked to complete an application form (assistance will be provided if necessary) and provide two references with the aim of establishing both suitability of character and confirmation of identity. If possible, one reference should be from a previous employer.

A volunteer will be asked to agree to a disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service at the relevant level. If the role involves 'regulated activity' with children or vulnerable adults, then a check will be required at the 'Enhanced and Barring List Check level'. We will tell you at the time of applying for the position which level of check you will be asked to complete. RSG will cover any costs arising from the DBS checks.

Assuming a successful interview, satisfactory references and disclosure have been obtained, a volunteer will be notified as accepted for the position. They will then need to sign a volunteer agreement and confidentiality document.

4. How RSG works with volunteers

a. Induction and training

Volunteers will receive a RSG induction pack, including a copy of lone-working guidelines, and this volunteer policy. They will receive training as appropriate in their own area of volunteering. Particular emphasis will be laid on training concerned with the establishment of "boundaries". A written task description will also be agreed between the Volunteer and their direct supervisor.

- For volunteers with the right to remain in the UK and proof of residency for more than a year, support may be given for acquiring a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Administration, Customer Service or Advice subject to discussion and agreement with the Volunteer Coordinator.

- RSG will support volunteer caseworkers to OISC Level 1 training. This is subject to discussion and agreement with the Casework Team Manager and will require a commitment to a minimum time period of volunteering.

b. Volunteer Expenses

All Volunteers undertaking voluntary work may have all reasonable and genuine out of pocket expenses (e.g. travel, childcare, lunch) reimbursed upon production of a receipt and according to the Expenses Guidelines (2008).

Travel expenses may not require a receipt and will be paid according to the Expenses Guidelines agreed by the Board of Trustees (2008). The Manager has the discretion to not reimburse expenses that are considered unreasonable.

The Manager has the discretion to reimburse travel and subsistence costs to a maximum of £without receipts for people volunteering over 4 hours in a single day

Any such reimbursement for expenses is not a consideration for services, and so does not affect benefits in any way and is not subject to income tax or national insurance.

c. Support and Supervision

Volunteers will have a named member of staff as their direct supervisor. They will be provided with regular one-to-one supervision to feedback on progress, discuss future development and air any problems. Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning the organisation. RSG aims to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage and build on good practice. All volunteers may attend the weekly casework meetings and the fortnightly staff meetings.

d. Insurance

All volunteers are covered by RSG Employer's Liability insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any voluntary work on behalf of RSG.

e. RSG Policies and Procedures

Volunteers with RSG are expected to adhere to the Policies and Procedures of the organisation. It is the responsibility of each volunteer's supervisor to ensure that all policies and procedures are read and understood by the volunteers.

Ref:- Data Protection, Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities policies. See https://docs.google.com/document/d/1F_KquHWkq9jWpnZbWEycOoHLEi9P-8G3GT4_CoZWmwA/pub for background and guidance for specific situations.

f. Procedures for Problems or Complaints

If a volunteer is not happy with any aspect of their involvement with RSG, they should first discuss the matter with their supervisor. The supervisor will in all cases try to resolve the matter in the most appropriate manner. If the issue is about the supervisor, the complaint will go to their line manager.



If it is not possible to resolve the matter, RSG reserves the right to end the volunteer's volunteering at RSG (see below).

5. Ceasing to be a volunteer of RSG

RSG reserves the right to end a volunteer's role with the organisation if it is thought to be in the best interests of the organisation. If RSG wishes to exercise this right the volunteer will be advised of the reasons why and offered the opportunity to have the decision reviewed by an appropriate manager or trustee. The chair will determine who this will be. The volunteer will be advised of the decision of the review which will be final.

It is intended that this process will be a last resort and be used in exceptional circumstances.