

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

For volunteering with Refugees Welcome

Objectives

To support all Refugee and Evacuee individuals/families settled in Cheshire East and Host families for Homes for Ukraine or groups providing independent housing to families.

Our expectations

All Refugees Welcome Volunteers will work collaboratively with other volunteers, and with the individual/ family themselves to:

- Respond to each individual /family's strengths and needs as they settle in an unfamiliar environment.
- Respond to the needs of host families in relation to the Ukraine Evacuees where needed.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect, encouraging independence and integration and always maintaining confidentiality.
- Follow the Equality Act, celebrating diversity and avoiding any kind of discrimination.
- Ensure adults and children are safeguarded.
- Provide opportunities to make links with the wider community.
- Report back to Refugees Welcome Supervisor and Supervising Trustees on families' needs to enable this to be recorded and integrated into continuing services
- Empathize with the experiences of Refugees and Evacuees and have an understanding of the cultural differences of the refugee groups.

Best practice principles

Support will embody the following best practice principles:

- Enable the individual/family to settle within Cheshire East, to access the community and local services, and to develop their English speaking, if necessary, through practicing informally or volunteer led classes.
- Support host families over the term of the hosting arrangement.
- Seek to foster independence in every contact.
- Recognize and accept when individuals/families can do things independently of any voluntary support and step back and/or cease voluntary support as needed.
- Be aware of possible tensions and signpost for help at the earliest opportunity to try to prevent breakdown in relationships.

Remember - manage expectations & promote independence – it is easier to relax later than to tighten up later. - “as much as necessary, as little as possible”

Values and Principles of Refugees Welcome

Refugees Welcome supports vulnerable adults and family members, and delivery of the service is informed by the following values and principles:

Privacy: The right of individuals/families to be left alone or undisturbed and free from intrusion or public attention to their affairs.

Dignity: Recognition of the intrinsic value of people, regardless of their circumstances, by respecting their uniqueness and their personal needs and treating them with respect.

Independence: The adult, child or young person will be encouraged to maintain independence, even in circumstances when they need personal assistance. This should be provided in an enabling and supportive way.

Choice: The adult, child or young person's opportunity to select independently from a range of options and to influence the nature of their support or services provided, and the style in which these are provided.

Rights: The adult, child or young person will have all the entitlements associated with citizenship and will be aware of their right to comment upon the quality and the support of services they receive.

Fulfillment: The adult, child or young person will be supported in his/her right to have control over the quality of his/her life in their own home.

Equality and Diversity: The adult, child or young person will receive the same quality of service as delivered to other residents within the borough, with recognition of their unique additional needs due to their experiences.

Opportunity: Irrespective of gender, culture, race, disability or special personal requirement, opportunities for the adult, child or young person will be considered individually to support maximizing their potential to learn, be active and work.

Confidentiality: Provide confidential and safe services which respect the individual/family and preserve people's dignity.

Policies and procedures

Volunteers must always adhere to the Refugees Welcome policies and procedures (available to all volunteers on the Policies page of the Refugees Welcome website), in order to safeguard individuals/families, other people involved and volunteers themselves. This should also ensure equity of experience for individuals/families/hosts and volunteers across Refugees Welcome.

Your Personal Safety

- Please always work to maintain safe practice. This requires you to work within the boundaries of the Safeguarding Policy and Health and Safety Policy for Refugees Welcome and Risk Assessments.
- Do not undertake any task for which you feel that you have insufficient knowledge or training.
- Report any incidents or “near misses” to the Volunteer Supervisor/ Supervising Trustee/ Trustee Board.
- Ensure someone knows where you are going and the time you are expected back if possible.
- Take your mobile phone with you to use in case of emergency.
- You are under no obligation to remain in a situation in which you feel unsafe, e.g. if you think the person you are visiting may be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Report your concerns to the CVSCE (Council for Voluntary Service Cheshire East) Volunteer Supervisor or Supervising Trustee as soon as possible.

Managing Boundaries

- Volunteering is a service in which the relationship between volunteer and individuals/families/hosts is open to scrutiny by others.
- This relationship is distinct from friendship, which is a private, mutual relationship, although it can become a friendship by mutual consent over time.
- The volunteering relationship with refugee individuals/ families carries a high level of responsibility. When working with those new to the country and culture, the volunteer can often be seen as a role model.
- To protect both families, and volunteers and other people involved it is essential that appropriate boundaries are always maintained.

If you are concerned about where the boundaries should lie, you should talk to the Volunteer Supervisor if available or a Trustee and ask yourself the following questions: -

1. Does the individual/family/host understand my role as volunteer?
2. Is this relationship meeting my needs more than those of the individual/family/host?
3. Am I being completely open about things, and if not, why not?
4. Will any action I undertake leave me or Refugees Welcome open to reasonable criticism?
5. Does this action undermine the work of others in Refugees Welcome or other agencies?

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Specific Boundaries

The list below, whilst not exclusive, sets out examples of boundaries that volunteers are expected to maintain:

Personal Boundaries and Your Safety Do's and Don'ts

- Do Ensure the individual/family or host understands the nature of your relationship with them: that you are there to help them to settle and **be clear about what you can and can't do**. The 'Refugees Welcome' leaflet can be used to help explain your role and the help they can reasonably ask for from Refugees Welcome.
- Do Ensure that the individual/family or host know how to contact you appropriately and when you will be able to respond.
- Once a relationship of trust has been established volunteers should communicate with individuals/families and hosts in the way most convenient for everyone.
- Do arrange to meet individuals/ families/ hosts in places where you and they feel safe and comfortable that do not put either party at risk.
- Most meetings will take place in the refugee/ evacuee's place of residence or in a public place.
- In the early days of volunteering we pair volunteers with a more experienced 'buddy' to ensure everyone is comfortable with arrangements.
- We do not recommend volunteers invite individuals and families into their own homes, certainly in the early days of the relationship, as we do not want to create any presumption or expectation that all volunteers will be able or willing to do this. However, if you feel over time, it is appropriate and you feel comfortable to do so, it is up to your own judgement.
- Do not embark on a relationship which could lead to accusations against you e.g. sexual or emotional relationships or financial involvement. Refer to the Safeguarding Policies for further details.
- Do not use your position to establish an unfair or improper relationship.
- All volunteers are asked to read and understand their responsibility under the Safeguarding Policies of Refugees Welcome

Professional boundaries

- Be aware of cultural norms.
- Avoid physical contact, beyond what is culturally acceptable as greeting or expression of sympathy, as this may be misconstrued by the individual/family or an observer.
- Do not disclose or discuss any of your own personal issues or problems.
- Do not use illegal substances with the individual/family or undertake volunteering whilst under any such influence.
- Do not impose your own personal beliefs, views, values or attitudes on to the individual/family.

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- Avoid comments and discussions which could be misinterpreted or cause distress or embarrassment e.g. politics, religion or sexual comments.

Money matters

- Do not lend money to individuals/families or make payments on their behalf unless authorized.
- Do not give financial advice, we are not qualified to do so.
- If individuals /families are in need consult the Supervisor or a Trustee about the appropriate use of the 'Small Grant fund'
- Small Grants can be made for those moving to independent accommodation, in an emergency or requests for specific items, but must be approved by Trustees in advance.
- It is ok to accept small tokens of appreciation e.g. chocolates, but **NEVER** money or services offered. E.g. Cleaning, hairdressing, which they would normally be paid to provide.

Communication/Social media

- Communicate clearly to avoid misunderstanding.
- We are aware that most individuals/families like to use digital communication, e.g. Text, WhatsApp, Telegram. If used it should only be for the purpose of the volunteering roles. Email contacts are stored with written consent.
- Be careful about the use of abbreviations or emoji's in text, WhatsApp or Telegram as these can be misinterpreted.
- Be careful about developing any relationship with individual/families and hosts through social media to maintain their privacy and yours.
- Adding individuals/families to any social media accounts (e.g. Facebook) as friends can mean they have access to personal information about you, that they do not need to know.
- If using 'What's App' or Telegram for the purpose of communication between a group of volunteers for ease of passing on information, this should be solely for the purpose of the volunteering role.

Children and young people

- Always be aware of the safeguarding principles in any contact.
- All communication with under18's should be via a parent and needs to be transparent and supervised whether it is in-person or digital.
- Volunteers should **NEVER** be entirely alone and unobserved with those aged under 18 years.
- If supporting learning this should be in the family home or a public space such as the library for older teenagers.

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- Do not take responsibility for caring for children in the absence of their parents, we are not able to offer a childcare service and this is a risk for volunteers.
- In some circumstances, for support purposes, volunteers can have an enhanced DBS certificate.
- You will not normally be expected to carry individuals/ families in your car.
- In an exceptional situation where you may be asked to do this, e.g. a hospital appointment, especially if there are children, you must only do so if you have seat restraints which meet statutory requirements for children of correct age/size, and where you have written evidence that your insurance covers transport of passengers in your volunteering activity. **Children must always be accompanied by a parent.**

If you have any concerns that any of your actions or words may have breached any of these boundaries or may have been misinterpreted, or if you feel an exception should be made in any of these areas, discuss these with the Volunteer Supervisor/ Supervising Trustee.

Confidentiality

- There is sensitivity surrounding the resettlement of Refugees and Ukrainian evacuees and their integration into the community, and therefore particular attention should be always paid to confidentiality.
- All volunteers must sign the Confidentiality Agreement before starting their involvement and must always comply with Refugees Welcome Confidentiality Policy and Procedures.
- All interactions with individuals/ families need to be as transparent as possible to avoid accusations of misconduct.
- By agreeing to Refugees Welcome Policies and Procedures as a volunteer you are agreeing that if there is a request for information in any Text, 'What's App' or Telegram chat needed for an investigation of a complaint or issue, you as volunteers will 'export' the chat to another format where it can be viewed by RW Trustees, the CVS Supervisor or any other statutory organisation requesting the information.

Reliability

- Volunteers are expected to offer the level of commitment they have agreed to and are able and comfortable to offer.
- If you will be unavailable for a period e.g. because of holiday or personal circumstances or are unable to carry out a pre-arranged task, you are expected to give reasonable notice to those involved.
- Contact the Volunteer Supervisor for longer absences so that alternative arrangements can be made.

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Expenses

Travel and out of pocket expenses (to be agreed in advance if possible) will include:

- Travel expenses between home and place of volunteering activity, which is usually within the Cheshire East local area, can be reimbursed.
- This includes public transport or a mileage allowance. If the volunteer is using their own transport, a record of all mileage must be kept. If travelling by public transport, the ticket must be retained, by way of a receipt.
- The mileage allowance paid will be 45 pence per mile in line with the tax-free limit. Volunteers must notify their motor insurance company and obtain written confirmation that their policy specifically includes use for volunteering.
- Car parking charges. The car park ticket must be retained, by way of receipt.
- Expenses claims for Volunteer's mileage and resources for routine support of families, up to the value of £50, are submitted to the CVSCE Supervisor and authorized for payment by the CVSCE Supervisor and the Treasurer. These will be sent to the Treasurer as encrypted files.
- Any out-of-area travel should be discussed with the Supervisor and agreed with Trustees before taking place. This should only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- Volunteer claims of over £50 must be sent to TWO Trustees for agreement in advance before being authorized by the CVSCE Supervisor.
- Expenses claims over £100 e.g. school uniforms should be referred to a trustee meeting (or by email or at an exceptional meeting if urgent) for discussion before they can be agreed and any help given or expenses claimed.

Travel and insurance

- If using your car for Refugees Welcome activity, it is your responsibility to ensure that your car is fully taxed, insured, maintained and serviced as Refugees Welcome can accept no liability for this.
- You will need to contact your insurance company to check whether volunteering is covered by your insurance and obtain written confirmation of this.

Personal Interests

- We ask that you do not act in such a way that your personal or professional interests come into conflict with the best interests of Refugees Welcome or the individuals/families we support.

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- If you have a conflict of interest by volunteering with Refugees Welcome, this should be noted up front at the time of appointment so that it can be managed by the Volunteer Supervisor.

Refugees Welcome is grateful for all the support you give to individuals and families who have settled in our area. You are 'Refugees Welcome' and we hope these guidelines, although long and serious sounding, will ensure you have a safe and fulfilling relationship with Refugees Welcome.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually for currency and accuracy by the Chair of Trustees or individuals delegated by him/her. This does not prevent any changes taking place to this policy at any other time due to changes in practice or legislation.

V1 March 22

Reviewed: March 2025

**SIGNED BY: N.A. Campbell
[Trustee/Chair of Trustees]**

DATE:

POSITION in REFUGEES WELCOME: Chair of Trustees.

Next Review Date: March 2026