

Refugees Welcome Volunteering Policy

1) Introduction

Refugees Welcome was set up on the 10th October 2016 as a Charitable Incorporated Organization. Refugees Welcome's main objective is to:

- To advance the integration in Cheshire East and its environs, of those granted refugee status and their dependants, in need thereof so as to advance them in life and assist them to adapt within a new community.

The Trustee Board oversees the work of Refugees Welcome and this will be accomplished by:

- The recruitment, training and deployment of volunteers to assist refugees settled in Cheshire East.

Refugees Welcome recognizes the significant and valuable role that volunteers have in creating and implementing our services and believes that volunteering should be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for volunteers, with volunteers encouraged and supported at every stage.

For the purpose of this policy, a volunteer is a person who does voluntary work on behalf of Refugees Welcome, with voluntary work defined as:

“ Any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment” (helping out Survey volunteering England 2007).

Refugees Welcome believes that its relationship with its volunteers is one of mutual responsibility and commitment within which both the organization and its volunteers have rights and responsibilities.

2) Purpose and Advantages of adopting a Volunteer Policy

This policy provides a framework of best practice and procedures which Refugees Welcome will follow when recruiting, selecting, managing and supporting volunteers.

The policy will:

- recognize the respective roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers and Refugees Welcome
- establish clear principles for the involvement of volunteers
- give a framework for recruiting and supporting volunteers including people from underrepresented groups
- commit Refugees Welcome to identify and adequately meet the financial and personnel costs of all the volunteer projects within Refugees Welcome
- support volunteering through funding expenses and other forms of help as appropriate, reasonable and agreed.
- recognize the contribution all its volunteers make in a range of ways

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3) General

In involving volunteers Refugees Welcome will be guided by the following principles of good practice:

- Volunteers receive guidance about what is expected and volunteer agreements, ensuring they have clear expectations of their role.
- Volunteers have a named person as their main point of contact who will communicate on a 1:1 and group basis to consider progress, share ideas and discuss any concerns.
- Training and support will be offered to volunteers along with opportunities to provide feedback to support organizational learning and development
- Information given to volunteers, and forms they are asked to complete, is clear and easy to understand
- Volunteers are reimbursed for reasonable and agreed out-of-pocket expenses as outlined in the Guidelines for Good Practice
- Within resources currently available, Refugees Welcome will try to enable disabled people to participate fully as volunteers
- Refugees Welcome does not regard volunteers as unpaid employees and does not expect volunteers to undertake inappropriate responsibilities or roles.
- All volunteers are expected and required to follow Refugees Welcome's Equality and Diversity Policy and treat each other and all service users with respect and fairness. Volunteers will be treated in the same way by Refugees Welcome.
- Refugees Welcome's Health and Safety Policy covers all volunteers, and the organization takes all possible care not to expose volunteers to risks to their health and safety, and that of others
- There is no formal/legal agreement between Refugees Welcome and its volunteers. When volunteers give their time, this is entirely at their discretion
- Refugees Welcome will update its guidance in line with relevant changes in either law or in the scope of volunteer roles

4) Volunteer Role

Volunteer role guidance ensures volunteers are clear as to what is required and expected of them and will minimally include:

- The tasks and responsibilities which are likely to be offered to families /groups
- Times/days and location of volunteering activity should be agreed
- Skills/experience that are required/desired/essential will be discussed
- Whether the role is anticipated to be short term or ongoing
- The person who will be their main contact

5) Recruitment

The recruitment process for volunteers will help establish whether potential volunteers and Refugees Welcome meet each other's interests and needs. The process will include an informal interview, an application form and taking up of two references, and will be in line with Refugees Welcome's Equality and Diversity Policy and current legislation. DBS checks are required. We would ask that everyone who has a DBS organized by Refugees Welcome signs up to the 'DBS Update service' so that occasional checks can be made without anyone having to go through the process again. DBS certificates will be updated every 3 years for all Volunteers. They can also be updated if there is a change in volunteer activity (i.e. needing an enhanced DBS) or if volunteers report a change in circumstances or we become aware of a significant change in circumstances.

As the organization develops, we will use a variety of approaches to ensure we recruit volunteers that

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are representative of the community and the people who use our services.

However, it is not possible to recruit young people under the age of 18 as volunteers as we do not have the resources needed to safeguard them in working with families. They may be able to join us and help at some events as guests, under the supervision of trustees or volunteers, by agreement.

6) Selection

The selection process for volunteers interested in volunteering for Refugees Welcome will include:

- Attendance at a meeting either in person or on Zoom, as an introduction to the scope of Refugees Welcome. In this session they will learn about Refugees Welcome and be given specific information on the volunteer requirements.
- This will also give Refugees Welcome an opportunity to get to know something about potential volunteers and their suitability for Refugees Welcome
- completing a volunteer application form, having an interview and providing two referees.

References will be accepted from suitably qualified people, who do not need to have been former employers, but should not be close relatives. Two references are required. Any prospective volunteer, for whom this may prove a difficulty, should seek advice from the Volunteer Support worker.

Each volunteer will be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check paid for by Refugees Welcome. If a recent DBS check has been made for a similar role the number can be accepted for RW.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to anyone who applies to be involved with Refugees Welcome work and only relevant convictions will be taken into account when considering a prospective volunteer's application.

Before any volunteer can begin regular/unsupervised engagement with any family, both references and the DBS check must have been received and approved as satisfactory, a Confidentiality and Volunteer Agreement must be signed, and Induction Training for Safeguarding and Boundaries/Good Practice must have been completed.

At any point in the selection process, if a potential volunteer is considered unsuitable for a role, Refugees Welcome will explain their reasons to that volunteer.

7) Induction

All volunteers will receive an induction, led by the Volunteer Support worker and a further representative of Refugees Welcome. This will be in keeping with the duration and nature of the volunteering activity.

The Volunteer Support worker shall be responsible for:

- Ensuring that volunteers are aware of their agreed responsibilities with regard to confidentiality.
- Organizing a planned induction to Safeguarding and Boundaries within Refugees Welcome
- Ensuring volunteers are aware of the applicable policies, procedures and forms required and are given the information needed to access these on the website 'Policy and forms' page.
- Any forms and guidelines which the volunteer needs to use will be sent by email for the volunteer's reference
- Ensuring volunteers have adequate support to perform their tasks effectively and safely via the Volunteer Support worker and a more experienced 'buddy'.
- Arranging a short, trial period during which volunteers will be allocated a buddy so they can get used to the family.
- Have an opportunity to give feedback on their views and concerns if any...
- If at any time, it is decided that the volunteer is not best suited to the needs of Refugees Welcome, the volunteer may be signposted to an alternative voluntary role. If a volunteer does not wish to continue, they will be asked to give appropriate notice and will be supported to withdraw with dignity and discretion.

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- All personal information about the volunteer will be securely held by CVSCE in line with the Data Protection Act. This includes the application form, references, the volunteer agreement, induction record, reporting forms to record the dates, times and activities undertaken, supervision record, training record and emergency contact details. This will be kept for one year after a Volunteers resigns or ceases contact with RW.
- Providing on-going support including individual and group meetings and phone calls.

8) Volunteer Agreement

All volunteers will sign a 'Volunteer Agreement which outlines the voluntary arrangement between the volunteer and Refugees Welcome. It also asks new volunteers to confirm that they have attended Induction training for Safeguarding and Boundaries and have read and understood their responsibilities for Safeguarding. It will also be signed by the designated Volunteer Support worker for the volunteer.

It is binding in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment. This agreement is intended to be flexible enough to take account of changes in a volunteer's circumstances or in the requirements of Refugees Welcome.

9) Volunteer Expenses

Refugees Welcome believes that no one should be at a financial disadvantage, through volunteering their time on a freely chosen basis, and is committed to meet, within resources available, reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by our volunteers.

Details of expenses payable will be set out in the Guidelines for Good Practice for Volunteers of Refugees Welcome

Claims for expenses and travel costs should be made on the relevant Refugees Welcome Volunteer Expenses Claim/Travel Expenses forms and are paid retrospectively usually by Bank Transfer, but alternatives can be made available.

10) Problem solving

In any organization, problems can sometimes occur and whilst it is hoped that this will not be the case, if there are any concerns volunteers should, in the first instance, speak to the Volunteer Support worker Project Manager or Supervising Trustee, who will try and resolve the matter informally.

If the matter remains unresolved, reference will be made to the Refugees Welcome Complaints Procedure for volunteers, a copy of which is available on the Refugees Welcome website www.refugeescheshireeast.co.uk.

All complaints will be dealt with within 1 month maximum as far as possible (subject to any external procedures invoked) and treated in a confidential manner.

Volunteers will not be subject to disciplinary procedures nor have access to grievance procedures.

If there are concerns about the conduct or performance of a volunteer, the Volunteer Support worker will investigate to find out what is happening. This includes talking with the volunteer concerned. If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the volunteer will be informed that s/he will be offered 'special guidance' for a period. The object of 'special guidance' will be to encourage improvement. If a volunteer does not meet Refugees Welcome standards of performance or the steps that have been taken to encourage them to improve do not work, the volunteer may be asked to withdraw. If behaviour which, in Refugees Welcome's view, is equivalent to gross misconduct has occurred, then the volunteer role will stop immediately. In the event of a safeguarding issue requiring investigation, a volunteer must stop

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carrying out their role (with immediate effect) pending the outcome of the investigation.

11) Ending Involvement

Although both Refugees Welcome and a volunteer can end their volunteering arrangement at any time and without any notice, unless there is an emergency or misconduct, Refugees Welcome will aim to give a volunteer at least 2 weeks' notice, hoping that they will offer the same to us.

The decision to ask a volunteer to leave will be a last resort. It might not be possible to keep a volunteer, for reasons nothing to do with the person's performance, due to, for example, a project ending. It may be necessary to ask a volunteer to leave due to, for example, poor performance, misconduct, attendance irregularities, DBS issues or criminal convictions.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the reasons for ending an involvement are clarified, recorded and shared with the volunteer. Where a specific volunteer role within Refugees Welcome has proved not to be suitable for a particular person, the Volunteer Support worker or the Volunteer Programme Manager will, where possible, assist them to explore other options.

At the end of their time as a volunteer the Volunteer Support worker will ask for feedback.

This will gather information on the following areas:

- Their "highs and lows" whilst volunteering with us
- Their views on the training and support they were offered or received during their time
- Feedback on how the volunteer performed

12) References

If asked, either during a volunteer's time with us or when it ends, we will supply a reference, based on a volunteer's service with Refugees Welcome, indicating the skills and knowledge acquired as well as personal qualities observed.

13) Insurance

Refugees Welcome Volunteers are covered by its Public Liability insurance policies.

Refugees Welcome will take all reasonable precautions to prevent or minimize accident, injury, loss or damage through the Refugees Welcome Health and Safety Policy and Volunteers Risk Assessment

14) Monitoring and Review

It will be the responsibility of the Volunteer Support worker and Trustees to ensure that the Volunteer Information is in accordance with current legislation, best practice in relation to managing and supporting volunteers, and the Local Compact for Cheshire East where applicable.

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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.

V2 March 2019

Reviewed and amended: March 2026

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

DATE: 19.3.26

Next Review Date: March 2027