



West End Refugee Service
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West End Refugee Service

Welcome Letter

Thank you for expressing an interest in becoming a volunteer with the West End Refugee Service. I am enclosing a volunteer application form and some information about our charity. If you would be kind enough to complete the form and return it to our office we will then get in touch with you and invite you to meet with us to talk about the work you would like to do.

As part of our recruitment policy we will ask you to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check which will be administered through the CRB Umbrella organisation 'Caring Hands'. We are not able to recruit any volunteer who is unwilling to do this.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

With best wishes

Carol Willis
(Volunteer Co-ordinator)

Encs.

WERS



Volunteer Application Form

Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	E-mail:
Date of Birth:	Nationality:
Two Emergency Contact Names and Numbers:	

Please attach a passport sized photo below

1. Why would you like to be a volunteer?

2. Have you been a volunteer before?

Yes No

If yes, please give details of your previous volunteering.

3. What kinds of activities would you like to be involved in?

- Visiting refugees in their homes/befriending
- Working in the clothing store
- Advice/Support work
- Teaching English
- Helping in the office

(We will do our very best to accommodate you but sometimes there are no vacancies for certain jobs)

4. Have you been on any relevant training courses? Please give details.

5. What days and times are you available?

6. Do you have a disability or health problem that you would like us to know about?

7. How/where did you hear about the West End Refugee Service?

8. Are there any further details you think we would be interested in or you feel are relevant: (Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

9. REFERENCES Please give the names and contact details of 2 referees. Referees can be tutors, employers, support workers or friends. They must have known you for some time and must NOT be related to you.

Referee 1, name:

How they are known to you:

Contact address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Referee 2, name:

How they are known to you:

Contact address:

Telephone:

E-mail:



West End Refugee Service

West End Refugee Service (WERS) is a registered charity which provides support services for asylum seekers and refugees in a friendly, welcoming environment. The range of integrated services aims to address the disadvantage, exclusion and poverty which affect asylum seekers and refugees living in the West End of Newcastle upon Tyne.

How the work began

In February 1998 a small group of volunteers led by the current Project Director Lindsay Cross began to work with asylum seekers living in Benwell, in the West End of Newcastle, providing second-hand clothing, blankets and food parcels. The clothing and blankets were initially stored in Lindsay's garage. With the support of many of the local churches, the work quickly developed and in 1999 West End Refugee Service was formed.

Funding for 3 part-time posts was initially secured from the Church Urban Fund, St Hilda's Trust and the J Paul Getty Trust. An office became available in a local church and the clothing and bedding were housed in the loft area of Cornerstone, a community project in Benwell. The organisation continued to grow quickly, going from strength to strength, and in February 2000 WERS moved into its present accommodation in St Philip's Vicarage in Arthur's Hill.

Currently WERS has 5 paid staff, 60 approved volunteers and 860 clients. The charity is supported by Community Foundation, Big Lottery, Northern Rock Foundation and Greggs Trust, all of whom have given additional grants following monitoring and evaluation of the impact of its work. Funding has also been received from Lloyds TSB Foundation, Allen Lane Foundation and many smaller charitable trusts.

WERS is highly regarded by other service providers in Newcastle and forms a vital link in the chain of local support services.

Why the work is needed

Life for asylum seekers in the UK is tough. Many have been tortured, imprisoned or raped in their home country and all have suffered bereavement and separation from family and friends. The situation is then made worse by the many problems of life as an asylum seeker in Britain; sub-standard housing, low income, social isolation, racial harassment, unemployment, prolonged separation from family, difficulties with cultural adaptation and the fear of being returned to dangerous situations should their asylum applications be unsuccessful.

Negative media reporting, political antipathy, a lack of educational and employment opportunities and hostility from local communities have created a climate which does little to aid the integration process of refugees. Much needs to be done to create an inclusive and welcoming society which recognises the enormous contribution to the UK that refugees can make.

Services WERS provides

WERS' approach has been to establish services not provided for asylum seekers and refugees as part of their statutory support. Services to address the urgent practical needs of its clients are provided alongside services designed to improve well-being and psychological health

Drop-in advice sessions are run by multi-lingual support staff and a small number of trained volunteers. 20-25 clients are seen at each session. Clients present with a wide range of issues and problems. Advice includes signposting to other agencies of which the client may be unaware, liaising with solicitors (but not giving Immigration advice), training and employment advice, and giving help to destitute clients. **Home visits** can be arranged for clients unable to visit the project.

The **Clothing Store** offers good quality second-hand clothing, bedding, kitchen equipment and toys to clients free of charge. Everything in the store is donated to the project. WERS continues to receive a huge amount of support from churches and other faith groups across the region, universities, schools and numerous individuals. There is also a great deal of information available in the store, where clients can pick up leaflets and details of other projects and special events. 150-180 clients visit the store each week.

Many destitute clients seek help from the project and small emergency payments and food parcels are provided, when funds permit, from the **Emergency Hardship Fund**

The **Befriending Scheme** receives referrals from many health professionals and other agencies working with asylum seekers and refugees. Volunteers offer the

clients all kinds of support – practising English conversation, accompanying them to appointments, going out on trips etc. WERS aims to put the widely differing skills of its volunteers to good use.

Some clients become very depressed and fearful, particularly when they are facing the prospect of being returned to their home country and are frightened that their lives will be endangered. Some have never started to come to terms with the ill-treatment and sexual violence they have suffered. WERS runs a **Counselling Service** and employs 3 part-time counsellors at the project. Through interpreters, clients have the opportunity to talk about their problems to experienced professionals in their own language.

A number of agencies run weekly sessions at WERS, including Victim Support, the Move-on Team of Your Homes Newcastle, BME Welfare Rights

WERS' **Education, training and awareness-raising programme** offers talks and presentations on asylum issues to local groups and schools. One of the WERS staff, himself a refugee, works with the Project Director, developing new ways to disseminate information to a wider audience.