
Phone Support Volunteer (Emotional Support & Befriending)

JRS mission and work

The Jesuit Refugee Service has projects all over the world. In the UK, we are a small organisation based in East London, supporting people who have been made destitute by the asylum process and those held in immigration detention. We are a Catholic organisation, but we serve people of all faiths and none. Our staff and volunteers are very diverse and many are refugees themselves.

Our mission and purpose is to accompany, serve and advocate on behalf of refugees. To accompany means literally to 'be with'. We stick with people, regardless of how difficult things get, and we try to create spaces for friendships and community to develop. Because of the importance of friendship to us, we refer to those we support as *refugee friends*, not clients or beneficiaries.

JRS UK runs a Day Centre, activities, a legal advice service and hosting scheme (*At Home*) for destitute asylum seekers, detention outreach services to Heathrow IRC and support to people who have been released from immigration detention. We work to raise awareness of the situation facing refugees we accompany and serve by enabling their story to be heard.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we have had to make temporary changes to our services, and as a result need to recruit new volunteers to help us reach those we serve.

Role description: Phone Support Volunteer (Emotional Support & Befriending)

The people we support have precarious housing arrangements and are destitute (unable to work or claim benefits) as a result of the asylum process. The food shortage brought about by the coronavirus outbreak is dire for some refugee friends, and the suspension of most day centres supporting destitute migrants has left many with no source of support. In response, JRS UK has set up a new Emergency Response Team to distribute food parcels and hygiene packs to the most vulnerable refugee friends we support, taking the essential help from our Day Centre out onto the road. We are also supplying mobile phone top-ups, as these have become essential to maintain connections with families, friends and other sources of support.

Alongside their practical needs, our refugee friends also need advocacy and support around housing, asylum support, health and mental health. Our Advice and Support Team work holistically with refugee friends to provide essential advice and casework during this time. In line with our mission to accompany, we also provide emotional support and befriending to those we serve – both staff and a team of volunteers accompany our friends over the phone during this time.

JRS UK are looking for volunteers who can assist with making regular phone calls to refugees to provide emotional support and friendship during this time. Many of our refugee friends feel even more isolated and lonely as a result of the pandemic and their needs often become more urgent, sometimes falling in and out of crisis. In line with the JRS mission of accompaniment, this role offers the chance for encounter, mutual relationship, and companionship by lending a listening ear to those of our refugee friends who need somebody to talk to.

The ideal volunteer would commit to making between 5-10 phone calls per week (days and times are flexible), but we would also welcome enquiries from potential volunteers who can commit to helping on a more limited basis. All volunteers are expected to report any necessary updates to

designated JRS supervisors, to follow the guidance attached to this role and to attend group and/or individual meetings as required.

JRS will provide induction and support to all volunteers.

Person Specification

- Commitment and ability to relate with respect, sensitivity and empathy to refugee friends, particularly those who may be experiencing anxiety or distress
- Commitment to abide by JRS UK's policies and protocols, including those on safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection
- Highly developed listening skills and empathy for one-on-one support.
- High levels of personal resilience, patience and emotional maturity for working closely with people in distress
- Reliability and flexible disposition
- Confident speaking on the phone, including with people who may speak limited English
- Attention to detail and good record keeping
- Commitment to the values of JRS: dignity, justice, solidarity, compassion, hospitality, participation, and hope.
- Experience of supporting and accompanying refugees or vulnerable migrants is highly desirable.
- An ability to speak other languages is highly desirable, though not necessary