

Job Description: Accommodation Officer

JRS Mission

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation at work in over 50 countries around the world with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate on behalf of refugees and those who have been forcibly displaced. In the UK, JRS works with those who have been made destitute during the asylum process, and those detained for the administration of immigration procedures.

JRS Values

JRS work is based on hospitality, carried out in a spirit of compassion and solidarity, encouraging participation and community, aiming to kindle hope, secure justice and affirm the dignity of refugees and forced migrants. Reconciliation, rooted in justice and sought in dialogue, is a theme of JRS work around the world. JRS work is grounded in Catholic social teaching and draws on the charism and principles of the spirituality of the Jesuits; participative discernment and reflective practice are part of our ethos. We serve people of all faiths and none, without favour or proselytising in return for services.

About JRS UK

JRS UK provides advice and casework, practical support, creative and therapeutic activities, a small hosting scheme (*At Home*) and a specialist legal advice service for destitute asylum seekers; we also run a detention outreach service to Heathrow and Colnbrook IRCs, including a befriending service, as well as a peer support group for people who have experienced detention. JRS UK undertakes research for advocacy to policy makers, alongside communications and outreach to the Catholic community, to raise awareness of the real situation facing asylum seekers and to argue for a change in policies that undermine their dignity and a just society.

JRS' distinctive ethos of accompaniment radically alters the beneficiary–service provider relationship and affects all that we do: we place a high value on coming to know refugees as people with gifts and personalities, not only defined by their situation in immigration law. Through our services, we seek to offer specialist intervention and respond to practical needs, but also to create spaces of hospitality, community, friendship and participation, which enable refugees to heal and shape their own future. Our advocacy, communications and outreach are similarly rooted in accompaniment, beginning with listening to the experience of refugees, bringing opportunities for their experience and voices to be heard, understood and create change.

JRS UK is based in the Hurtado Jesuit Centre in Wapping, East London. Although our centre is currently closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we are still providing support to people remotely by phone and online. JRS currently has 22 full and part-time staff and around 100 volunteers, drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and nationalities, generations and beliefs, including refugees, young graduates and vowed members of religious congregations; this diversity of perspectives and experience is a source of particular strength for our mission. We seek to work collaboratively with others, including JRS offices around the world, Jesuit works in the UK and many others in the Church and refugee and migration sector.

JRS UK is a project of the British Jesuits' Charitable Trust (TRCP) and shares the same charity number.

Accommodation Officer

The Accommodation Officer is a new full-time post helping to set up and run an exciting new project providing stable safe accommodation for women made destitute by the asylum system. The postholder will also facilitate our hosting scheme providing temporary accommodation for men and women through placements with religious congregations, parishes and families. The post is offered initially on an 18-month contract, but is likely to be renewable. This is a rare opportunity to be part of a project as it begins and to shape its direction, and to make a tangible difference to the lives of people who would otherwise be street homeless or living in unsafe situations as a result of the asylum process.

JRS UK has been working with destitute asylum seekers for many years and providing temporary accommodation through our hosting scheme 'At Home' since 2012. Following a recent partnership with the Sisters of the Holy Family of St Emilie, we are now able to expand our accommodation provision to also include a 10 bedroom house in Stockwell, South London, Emilie House, specifically for women in need of more stable housing. The Accommodation Officer will work closely with the Accommodation Manager to set the new project up and then oversee all placements in both our existing hosting scheme and the new provision in Emilie House. JRS works in a highly relational way, and the postholder will need to be able to form strong relationships with the people we support, who we call *refugee friends*. They will accompany the refugee friends that JRS houses or hosts and ensure that their holistic support needs are met whilst they are accommodated with us, engaging with staff in the destitution services and with legal advisors to facilitate a long term route out of destitution.

As many of our hosting placements are with religious congregations or families who have volunteered to help as a result of our parish connections, it is important that the postholder respect and be able to build rapport with people whose life is motivated by faith.

Specific responsibilities

The Accommodation Officer will coordinate placements on the hosting scheme; providing the link between hosts and guest, recruiting new hosts and facilitating moves, as well as coordinating Emilie House in Stockwell.

Responsibilities

- Assessing referrals for both At Home and Emilie House and deciding who JRS can accommodate in coordination with the Accommodation Manager.
- Coordinating transition of guests between At Home and Emilie House as appropriate.
- Working with the fundraising team for any grant reporting needed.
- Liaising with staff in the Destitution Team and Legal Team to keep up to date with any advice and casework progression for hosted guests and residents in the JRS house.
- Liaising with other staff members, through sharing of information and experience, to develop materials for advocacy.
- Overseeing the moving on process once a placement has come to an end.
- The role will involve travelling within London to visit hosts as well as the property in South London with some evening work required.

At Home Hosting scheme

- Facilitating the encounter between host and guest - matching guests with hosts sensitively.
- Providing ongoing accompaniment and support to both hosts and guests, enabling the hosting relationship to flourish.
- Recruiting new hosts for the scheme- undertaking assessment visits and conducting necessary safeguarding processes.
- Promoting and publicising the hosting scheme, working in conjunction with the JRS UK Community Outreach Officer and communications team.
- Leading discussions at small community meetings for those considering hosting.
- Organising meetings designed to facilitate the sharing of experience between hosts and responding to training needs.

Emilie House

- Overseeing a 10-bedroom house in South London- to be used as accommodation for destitute JRS refugee friends.
- Being a supportive presence for guests in the house, and acting as a mediator for any difficulties that arise between guests.
- Arranging house meetings on a regular basis.
- Working closely with Emilie House volunteers to ensure residents have the support they need.
- Ensuring that the house guests are compliant with health & safety standards.
- Arranging practical matters, such as food & toiletries delivery to the house.
- Dealing with any housing maintenance issues and liaising with contractors when necessary.

Person specification

Essential

- Sympathy and congruence with the values of JRS and enthusiasm for JRS' mission of accompaniment, service and advocacy on behalf of refugees.
- Experience of coordinating short-term accommodation placements for vulnerable people.
- An understanding of the asylum process and causes of destitution amongst asylum seekers.
- Experience in mediation and managing relationships.
- Highly developed listening skills and empathy for one-on-one work.
- Experience of maintaining clear and accurate records.
- Experience of carrying out monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of support and intervention.
- Ability to work flexibly as part of a small and varied team.
- Experience of working with people from varied backgrounds and faiths.
- Good oral and written communication skills.
- Computer literacy: competent IT skills with Word, Excel and willingness to learn to use other databases.
- Commitment to ongoing personal growth and development.
- Ability to reflect on experience and learn from it.

Desirable

- Experience in housing management, engaging with contractors and addressing maintenance issues.
- Experience of working or volunteering in a faith-based organisation or similar setting.
- Experience of working with interpreters.
- Experience of working with volunteers.

Key Relationships

- Reports to the Accommodation Manager.
- You will need to build relationships of trust with refugees served by JRS.
- You will build strong relationships with volunteers and hosts involved in the Accommodation Project.

Duration: 18 month fixed-term contract; potentially renewable;

Location: JRS UK office, Hurtado Jesuit Centre, Wapping, London
(Currently working from home but will require some travel within London to coordinate placements)

Salary: £24,000 – £28,000

Pension: Additional 10% of salary of employer's contribution

The person must be permitted to work in the UK; (JRS UK is not able to obtain a work visa for this post).