

Job Description: Destitution Caseworker

JRS Mission

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

JRS Values

JRS is grounded in Catholic social teaching and draws on the charism and principles of Ignatian spirituality. Our 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. As a work of the Jesuits, participative discernment and reflective practice are part of our ethos.

About JRS UK

JRS UK runs a Day Centre, 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 IRC, 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. It 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 work collaboratively

with JRS offices around the world, Jesuit works in the UK and many others in the Church and secular refugee sector.

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

Destitution Caseworker

We are seeking a Destitution Caseworker to support JRS UK's accompaniment, service and advocacy on behalf of those made destitute by the asylum process, joining a small tightly knit and diverse team at the JRS UK offices in Wapping. The post is one of a number of connected changes at JRS UK intended to enable us to increase our capacity to provide quality advice and support to refugees through our mission to accompany.

JRS UK has been working with destitute refugees for many years and would now like to expand the services we provide and increase the capacity of our team to provide support and assistance. Reporting to the Casework and Support Manager, this busy and varied role combines holistic advice, casework and accompaniment of refugees, referrals to specialist agencies and JRS Legal and Accommodation Project liaison, as well as supporting JRS' advocacy and policy work.

The Destitution Caseworker will be responsible for providing holistic advice, information, advocacy, casework support and accompaniment to asylum-seekers and refugees registered with JRS UK's Destitution Services currently through home-based remote working but usually at our office in Wapping, including at our weekly Day Centre. Working alongside the Casework and Support Manager, Advice and Support Assistant and Day Centre Officer, as well as volunteers, the Destitution Caseworker will support refugee friends to positively progress with their lives. The work will cover a broad range of issues including housing and homelessness, asylum support, destitution, physical and mental health.

The Destitution Caseworker will also work closely with our Accommodation Project staff to provide advice and casework support to guests of our hosting scheme and accommodation project, liaising with other staff where needed.

The post-holder should have in-depth knowledge of the issues faced by destitute asylum-seekers and refugees, and a good understanding of the challenges faced by these groups, with particular focus on homelessness and destitution support. They will need highly developed listening skills, personal resilience and emotional maturity to respond to the emotional and practical needs of asylum seekers, accompany them and support them to positively progress with their lives. They need to have and maintain an up-to-date knowledge about the immigration and asylum context as it relates to our work with destitute refugees and be able to apply that to situations affecting individuals in practice.

The Destitution Caseworker will be enthusiastic about working in a small faith-based organisation and have a willingness to integrate JRS UK's ethos of accompaniment in their approach whilst also demonstrating sensitivity in responding to the needs of destitute individuals.

Specific responsibilities

Advice and Casework

- Provide pro-active casework and advice (e.g. homelessness and housing options, destitution, health and mental health, asylum support, solicitor liaison).
- Work closely with other teams including Legal Project, Accommodation Project, and other Destitution staff to provide a holistic service to refugees.
- Develop positive working relationships and referral pathways with relevant statutory and third sector partners.
- Participate in case meetings with other staff and volunteers responsible for providing support for people with complex needs.
- Non-legal form filling.

Accompaniment and service of destitute refugees

- Provide pastoral, emotional and practical support to refugees attending Day Centre and coming for one-to-one appointments.
- Collaborate with other JRS UK staff and volunteers to ensure refugees are supported holistically and in line with the JRS ethos of accompaniment.
- Ensure high standards of data recording for individuals, which is compliant with GDPR.

Advocacy work

- Work closely with the Communications and Policy staff to enable refugees' experiences of destitution to be heard by others and advocating for positive change.
- Together with the Destitution team, explore ways for refugees and asylum-seekers to share their experiences, where appropriate.
- Attend relevant sector meetings where needed on behalf of the JRS team (e.g. ASAN, NACCOM, London Destitution Forum).

Administration of files

- Ensure paper and electronic casefiles are kept up-to-date and maintained in accordance with data protection legislation.

Personal growth and development

The Destitution Caseworker is expected to engage with opportunities for training and development, and to reflect regularly on practice. This includes:

- ongoing training and formation in areas such as asylum & immigration system, housing and homelessness, mental health support/therapeutic care, rights and entitlements of those we serve, etc.
- attending non-managerial supervision and psychological support to support self-care.
- day workshop and training relating to JRS' mission and ethos.
- taking part in team reflection mornings.

Other

To undertake such other duties and responsibilities as the Casework and Support Manager or Director may from time to time request. JRS UK is a small team and all staff are occasionally called upon to support the work of others.

Person specification

Essential

- Empathy and congruence with the values of JRS and enthusiasm for JRS' mission of accompaniment, service and advocacy on behalf of refugees.
- Outstanding written and oral communication skills.
- Educated to degree level or equivalent qualification or work experience in a relevant area.
- OISC Level 1 accreditation or willingness to undertake training to achieve this level
- Highly developed listening skills and empathy for one-on-one work.
- A good understanding of asylum support system, legislation relating to rights and entitlements regarding asylum seekers and issues affecting asylum seekers and refugees.
- Experience of delivering high quality and confidential advice and casework including needs assessments to vulnerable individuals.
- Experience of maintaining clear and accurate records of advice and casework.
- High levels of personal resilience and emotional maturity for working closely with people in distress.
- Discretion, tact and sensitivity.
- Ability to work flexibly as part of a small and varied team.
- Experience of working with people from varied backgrounds and faiths.
- Excellent communication skills.
- IT literate and competent with Word, Excel and databases.
- Commitment to ongoing personal growth and development.

Desirable

- Experience of working or volunteering in a faith-based organisation or similar setting.
- Experience of working with interpreters.
- Experience of supporting and supervising volunteers.

Duration:

18-month fixed term contract 37.5 hours/ 5 days per week. We are willing to consider 30 hours/4 days per week or flexible arrangements like job share.

Location:

JRS UK Office, Hurtado Jesuit Centre, Wapping, London (currently working from home but may be required to attend the office periodically for appointments. Phased return to work from our Hurtado Centre base likely during the course of 2021).

Salary scale: £26,000 - £34,000 pa

Pension: includes 10% employer contributory pension

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

