**At Home – Accompaniment Volunteer**

**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.

**Role description: At Home Accompaniment Volunteer**

One of the greatest challenges faced by the refugees supported by JRS UK is the lack of accommodation. Destitute refugees are often forced to seek respite on night buses, rely on friends who might host them for a night or two, or else find themselves street homeless. In response, the JRS At Home scheme aims to match destitute refugees with individuals, parishes and religious communities who are able and willing to offer accommodation for a three-month period. The relationship between the host community and the refugee guest is at the heart of the hosting placement and we have seen the change that hosting makes to both the host and the refugee guest. For refugees who have spent nights nodding off on the bus, having a roof over their heads brings peace of mind and the opportunity to recuperate from the affronts to their dignity that they experience daily.

We are looking for a volunteer to support the At Home scheme - to accompany our refugee friends as they move between hosting placements, meet with prospective hosts to assess their suitability, and assist our Accommodation Officer.

This will involve arranging travel between placements for guests and if necessary, accompanying them on their journeys. The volunteer will need to be a good communicator, who can be relied upon to liaise consistently with the At Home Coordinator during guest moves, and reliably report any issues or concerns. Moving between hosting placements can be a distressing time, and we are looking for a volunteer with a sympathetic disposition, who can be a reassuring presence for our refugee friends.

The role will also involve supporting the recruitment of hosts, communicating with prospective hosts, and answering their questions about the hosting scheme, as well as conducting home visits and assessing a placement’s suitability. The volunteer will then be required to report back to the Accommodation Officer, highlighting any specific requirements from the host and their availability for hosting.

There is also potential for this volunteer role to include accompanying At Home guests to other appointments, and to offer some office support to the At Home scheme. This will be discussed with the potential volunteer.

**Person specification**

* Accompany refugees in their moves between At Home hosting placements – being comfortable with navigating London would be ideal
* Good communication skills to enable discussions with refugee friends and potential hosts
* Commitment to the values of JRS: dignity, justice, solidarity, compassion, hospitality, participation, and hope
* Ability to relate with sensitivity and empathy to refugees and persons experiencing anxiety or distress. Commitment to confidentiality
* Flexible disposition
* Reliability and personal resilience
* Commitment to support refugees and other forced migrants- knowledge of the issues destitute refugees face in the UK would be beneficial.

**It is likely that requests to accompany a refugee friend for At Home will be made on an ad hoc basis. JRS will provide induction and support for this volunteer role. There is also potential for attending meetings at JRS and attending internal and external trainings. This volunteer role reports to the Accommodation Officer. Travel and other expenses will be paid.**