
Job Description: Accommodation Officer

About JRS

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) accompanies, serves and advocates alongside and for the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people around the world. JRS in the UK supports people made destitute by the asylum process through advice and casework, practical support, emotional befriending and accompaniment, a programme of creative and therapeutic activities, accommodation, and specialist legal advice. JRS UK also runs a detention outreach service supporting people detained for the administration of immigration procedures at Harmondsworth and Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centres, including befriending, social visiting, and casework support. JRS UK undertakes research for advocacy to policy makers, alongside communications and community outreach, to raise awareness of the situation facing asylum seekers, to give asylum seekers a voice, to argue for a change in policies that undermine their dignity, and to call for a just and person-centred asylum process.

JRS UK is based in the Hurtado Jesuit Centre in Wapping, East London. JRS UK currently has 29 full and part-time staff and around 100 volunteers, drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, nationalities and generations; people of all faiths and none; including refugees, young graduates and vowed members of religious congregations. This diversity of perspectives and experience is a source of particular strength for JRS' work. We work collaboratively with JRS offices around the world, other Jesuit projects in the UK and many others in the Church and wider refugee sector.

A Global Mission

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation with a shared global mission to accompany, serve and advocate alongside and for the rights of refugees and forcibly displaced people. 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.

JRS' values and ways of working are rooted in Catholic Social Teaching and Jesuit (Ignatian) spirituality: JRS actively encourages reflective practice and participative decision-making at all levels of the organisation, as well as investment in, and care for our staff and volunteer teams.

Equal Opportunities

JRS is committed to encouraging and recruiting candidates from refugee and migrant backgrounds to ensure our staff teams reflect those we serve. We particularly welcome applications from people with lived experience of destitution and the UK asylum system.

The Accommodation Officer

The Accommodation Officer is a full-time post helping to run an exciting and varied project providing safe accommodation for people made destitute by the asylum system. The postholder will be supervised by the Accommodation Project Coordinator to oversee placements across our housing and hosting projects.

JRS UK has been working with destitute asylum seekers for many years and began providing temporary accommodation through our hosting scheme 'At Home' since 2012. In March 2021, following a partnership with the Sisters of the Holy Family of St Emilie, we were able to open a 10-bedroom house for women in South London. We are now seeking to expand our Accommodation Project further to open a house for men.

This role is open to candidates who would like to work in the sector but do not yet have direct experience. The postholder will need to demonstrate that they meet our values and have a desire and aptitude to develop in this role. You will receive training, guidance and regular supervision to develop your skills and knowledge.

JRS works in a highly relational way, and the postholder will need to be able to form strong relationships with colleagues, volunteers, and the people we support, who we call refugee friends.

The postholder will support guests, hosts and residents to live in safety and dignity. They will accompany refugee friends that JRS houses or hosts to ensure that their holistic support needs are met whilst they are accommodated with us. They will work alongside the Destitution and Legal teams at JRS 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 through our parish connections, it is important that the postholder respects and be able to build rapport with people whose life is motivated by faith.

This is a rare opportunity to receive personalised training and support 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.

The role is offered initially on an 18-month contract and is subject to references and an Enhanced DBS check.

Key Relationships

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

Specific Responsibilities

General

- Working closely with the Accommodation Project Coordinator to support refugee friends and volunteers and respond sensitively to concerns.
- Assessing referrals and deciding who JRS can accommodate in coordination with the Accommodation Project Coordinator.
- Coordinating the move-on process from housing and hosting as appropriate.
- Developing Accommodation Support Plans with refugee friends to identify and reach goals.
- Supporting volunteer hosts and other volunteers.
- Maintaining clear and accurate records on our databases and CRM.
- 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/s.
- Travelling within London to visit host homes, as well as the property in South London. Some evening work is required, but time in lieu will be provided.
- Working with the Communications team to develop materials for advocacy, grant reporting, fundraising and stewardship.

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.
- Providing feedback and support to hosts and responding to training needs.
- Organising quarterly meetings for hosts, designed to facilitate the sharing of experience between hosts and build greater connection for our volunteers to the work of JRS.
- Recruiting new hosts for the scheme - undertaking assessment visits and arranging training.
- Promoting and publicising the hosting scheme, working in conjunction with the JRS UK Community Engagement Officer.
- Leading discussions at small community meetings for those considering hosting.
- Coordinating food and travel grants for hosted refugee friends.

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.
- Responding promptly to any housing maintenance issues through liaison with contractors.
- Organising and supporting monthly house meetings and weekly activities.
- Upholding the house rules and values.
- Liaising with activity volunteers and contractors where needed.
- Ensuring that residents are compliant with health & safety standards.
- Arranging practical matters, such as food & toiletries delivery to the house.

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 working or volunteering with vulnerable people.
- The ability to understand the needs of refugee friends and sensitively support them.
- The ability to maintain boundaries and effectively manage incidences and safeguarding concerns.
- High levels of personal resilience and emotional maturity for working closely with people in distress.
- Highly developed listening skills and empathy for one-on-one work.
- Experience of maintaining clear and accurate records.
- Ability to prioritise competing demands.
- Ability to work flexibly as part of a small and varied team.
- Experience of working with people from varied backgrounds, cultures 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

- An understanding of the asylum process and causes of destitution amongst asylum seekers.
- Experience in mediation and managing relationships.
- Experience of supervising or supporting volunteers.
- Experience of working or volunteering in a faith-based organisation or similar setting.
- Experience of working with interpreters.
- Foreign language proficiency.

Duration: 18 month fixed-term contract; potentially renewable

Location: JRS UK office, Hurtado Jesuit Centre, Wapping, London. Travel within London to coordinate placements and weekly visits to house in Stockwell.

Salary: £27,000-31,000

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).