

## **Working with refugee children and young people**

**Sunday workshop, 16<sup>th</sup> November 08**



These are notes of the participants' answers to discussion questions, we hope they are useful reminders.

This is not a 'how to' guide to running projects - if you would like advice, support or training on setting up and running a volunteering project with refugee children, the National Support Office is here to help you!

Please contact Kim Hawkins, Volunteering Support Officer, on 0208 980 7036, ext 206, or e-mail on <volunteering@star-network.org.uk>

### **Presentations of STAR groups' projects:**

#### **Bristol – Primary Schools Project**

- *Activities:* classroom help, 1-1 help with reading and language
- Partnered with 2 local primary schools + Student Community Action
- Works with children at Junior level
- 1 morning or afternoon session per week
- 15 volunteers
- *Best bits:* Fun, rewarding, challenging,
- *Challenges:* Keeping attention of kids, volunteer reliability

#### **KCL Club**

- Out of school kids club
- 5 years old!
- Held at the Katherine Lowe Settlement (partner organisation)
- 35 children aged 5-15
- Wednesdays: Juniors 4:30 – 6, seniors 6:30 - 8
- 15-20 regular volunteers
- *Activities:* tutoring, games, arts and crafts, special guests and workshops, day trips
- *Best bits:* Funding, progress / success, day trips, recognition (award)
- *Challenges:* retaining volunteers, CRB checks, child behaviour issues.
- *Partners:* KCL Students' Union, London citizens, KLS, Amnesty group at KCL

#### **Saint George's – Summer Scheme**

- Started 2003
- 2 weeks of activities + trips, with minibus transport.
- 2 Annual 3-day residential

### **Why?**

- Something to tell peers – integration
- Long summer break = boredom, stress
- Rowntree foundation report – structured activities improve life chances of children.

Volunteers: 30 student volunteers, 10 young vols, 10 community/refugee vols

Refugees: 80 children 3-15 years, from club/mentoring/ Roehampton outreach project

Funding: £4,500, from Jack Petchey, Youth Service

### **Saint George's - STAR FC**

- Started 2004
- 1 x weekly football training, 1 x weekly football match
- 30 refugee men & boys >14 years
- Referred from after-school club, youth club + mentoring

**Why?** Young males most isolated group

Difficulty accessing support + services

### **Benefits:**

- make friends
- enter local leagues – integration
- chat informally – access support
- run by refugee and asylum – seeking boys / men – empowerment

### **How do these projects help refugee children?**

Primary school project and out of school club:

- Improves understanding of subjects
- educational support
- literacy.

Out of school club and summer scheme:

- Gives parents a break and free time, and children a break from home and parents.

Football club:

- Fitness, access to sporting activities

All projects:

- Provides role models.
- Helps integration and cultural orientation to the UK,
- Meeting and making friends – from own and other cultures
- Increased confidence and self esteem

- Improved English language.
- Aspiration raising - personal development.
- Having fun!
- Trying new things: Activities and so on.

**What part do refugee children, STAR groups and volunteers have in meeting the needs of refugee children through volunteer projects?**

**i) Refugee children**

- Making friends and supporting each other
- saying what they want the project to do / feedback on activities
- spread the word to other refugee children

**ii) STAR group (making it happen):**

- Also beneficiaries!
- Finding the right partner organisation and keeping a good relationship with it. Recruits, provides and supports volunteers, sometimes training and CRB checks also (administration)
- Fundraising
- Nationwide links

**iii) STAR volunteers:**

- Also beneficiaries!
- contact, building individual relationships with children
- positive
- patient
- sensitive to the experiences of the children
- enthusiastic and fun
- good role models
- Facilitate sessions
- surveillance
- friendship and support to children, and to other volunteers
- Recruiting more volunteers
- Feedback about what works and what doesn't, and new ideas
- Time and commitment to the project

**A large part of volunteering is interactions between the volunteers and the refugee children.**

**What might cause unsatisfactory interactions / good interactions?**

**Good interactions**

- Patience
- empathy, bonding moments
- Cultural awareness
- emotional guidance

- unprejudiced
- happy
- natural
- stability
- continuity
- reliability
- trust
- mutual respect
- confidentiality (with limits)
- listening
- letting them be kids
- don't just be an authority figure
- ground rules

### **Unsatisfactory interactions**

- unreliability / inconsistency / lack of commitment of volunteers
- patronising
- discrimination
- initiating touch
- difficult behaviours in children.
- Lecturing / giving personal views,
- talking about other kids,
- contradicting parents.

### **How can good interactions be promoted?**

- calm environment,
- everyone involved,
- have time for the children.
- Training by professionals.
- Encourage and support volunteers,
- discussing problems, debriefs,
- end on positive note

### **Support for volunteers:**

- Training (including responsibility, child protection, refugee issues, difficult behaviours)
- clarity of role
- evaluation of sessions
- debriefing,
- counselling
- space to discuss issues
- supporting each other