



4.4 Volunteering in partnership

For all types of volunteering you'll need to work with at least one other organisation. We call these your 'partner organisation'. Here is some advice on how to find your perfect partner!

Find an organisation to volunteer with

Possible partner organisations could be:

- ★ Voluntary organisations e.g. Refugee Council
- ★ Council e.g. Social Services
- ★ Schools or colleges
- ★ Your university (if they support student led volunteering projects)

The benefits of working with a partner organisation are that you can:

- ★ Make sure what you are doing helps refugees
- ★ Learn from the experience the organisation has of helping refugees
- ★ Get help to develop the project and know that the organisation will make sure it continues
- ★ Get the right kind of help for the refugees you are working with by asking your partner organisation
- ★ Be sure that the organisation is making the volunteering safe
- ★ Benefit from funding, resources or facilities they have
- ★ Get training and support

Ask STAR national!

You may already know some organisations in your local area that work with refugees but if not you can contact STAR National for ideas – we have contact with lots of organisations all over the UK and are also happy to do a bit of research for you to find you a good project. We can also give you advice what to say to organisations you want to volunteer with.

How to spot a good volunteering organisation

If you find a good volunteering organisation you'll get a better volunteering project that works well and which has happy volunteers!

This will give you an idea of what you should expect from a good volunteering organisation. However, all organisations are different and what they can offer will depend on their size and how much money they have. Your STAR group may be able to do some of these things but only if you feel confident and it is agreed with your partner organisation.

Have a quick look at the list below. If the organisation you are (or are planning to be) volunteering with does not offer some of these then you should consider whether this is a suitable project for your group.

A good partner organisation will give you (as volunteers)....

- ★ **A clear role and project description and details of how volunteers can get started** e.g. do they need a CRB check, an application form, references? How long might it take before they can volunteer? This is really important information so you are able to recruit volunteers.
- ★ **A named contact** at the organisation
- ★ **Induction training** for new volunteers so they know what they are supposed to be doing – you might be able to do some of this yourselves but speak to STAR national if you are unsure.
- ★ **A safe volunteering experience.** The organisation should be doing the following:
 - Checking that you are a suitable volunteer. This can be done in many ways depending on what you will be doing e.g. application form, references, informal chat, CRB check, in depth training. They might think that because you are part of STAR that you have already had to go through an application process so it is important to let them know that you haven't.
 - Checking the project is safe on a regular basis (e.g. through risk assessments)
 - Ensuring STAR volunteers understand their policies e.g. health and safety, volunteer policy, child protection policy
 - Insuring the volunteering activity
- ★ **Volunteer expenses** – these should ideally be offered to all volunteers to ensure that no-one is out of pocket and people who have less money are not excluded from volunteering. However, not all projects have the resources to offer expenses. Your Student Union might be able to cover these costs so check it out with them. Don't forget that even if you don't need to claim expenses other people might not be able to volunteer without them.
- ★ **Volunteer support** – If you are volunteering with an organisation they should make sure that everything is going well on a regular basis. They can do this in lots of ways from having individual meetings with volunteers or termly group meetings with everyone. If you don't feel that you are getting enough support let the project know and speak to us at STAR national for advice. It is also a good idea to hold your own volunteer get-togethers to chat about how everything is going.

Working in partnership – how to get the most out of it

If you are going to be doing some volunteering as a group with a local organisation its a good idea to think about how you will work together to help refugees best. Here are a few tips...

Start off on the right foot!

- ★ **Agree who is going to do what and write it down** - It doesn't have to be anything very formal but putting down on paper who is going to do what, means everyone is clear about what their responsibilities are. We call this a 'partnership agreement'. (see the useful documents for an example) e.g.
 - '*STAR group will provide...*' –volunteers, ensure volunteers are trained on child protection and will plan weekly activities
 - '*Volunteering partner organisation will provide...*' – venue, resources, volunteer support, induction training

Ongoing

- ★ **Good communication** – keep in regular contact with your partner organisation and keep them up to date with information that affects the volunteering e.g. term times or exams
- ★ **Be reliable** – remember many organisations you work with have little money and rely on volunteers, so if you make a commitment its important you keep to it
- ★ **Feedback** – let them know if there are any problems
- ★ **Handover** - At the end of year make sure they know who will be their contact in the next academic year and let them know they can contact STAR national over the summer if they need to.