

## 4.6 How to set up a STAR student led project

---

If you are setting up your own volunteering project, whether it is something completely new or is adding to something that is already happening, before you start you need to take a bit of time to plan what it is exactly you are going to do. This is really important if you want it to work well.

You might have an idea of what you would like to do already in which case you need to ask yourselves:

- ★ How exactly will the project help refugees?
- ★ How are you going to find out if the refugees in your local area really need this kind of help?
- ★ Is someone doing it already?

If you aren't sure what kind of project you want to set up you'll need to find somewhere to get some good ideas.

### **Do your research!**

Find out what is already happening in your local area. Speak to organisations that are working with refugees and asylum seekers and get in touch with STAR national to find out what other STAR groups are doing and what has worked well.

### **Find out if the project is really needed**

The best way to do this would be to ask refugees themselves, but be careful not to promise anything unless you are sure it is going to happen.

If this isn't possible the next best thing is to speak to organisations in your local community that work with refugees. They will have a very good idea of the gaps in services and the needs of the local community e.g. they might have lots of refugees asking for English classes but there currently aren't any, so setting up a conversation class would be really useful. STAR national has good links with refugee organisations across the UK, so if you are not sure who to contact in your local area get in touch with us and we can help you.



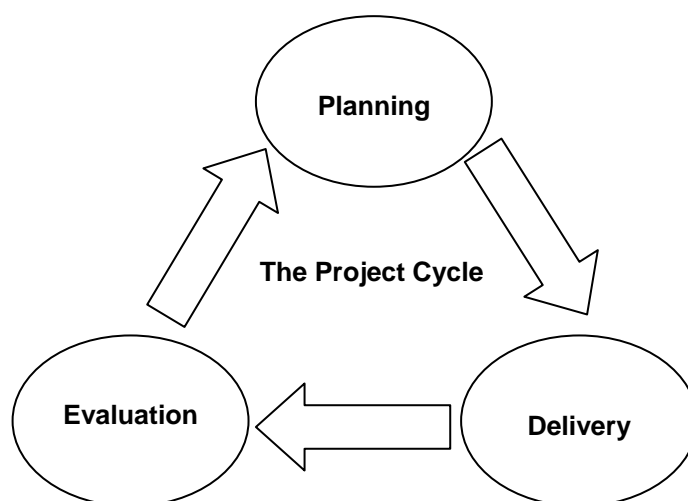
### **Find a partner project**

Through doing your research you might have already found an organisation you can set up a project but if not, STAR National can give you advice on how to find and approach organisations.

You need to be able to show a potential volunteering partner organisation what your STAR group has to offer and why it will benefit their organisation and refugees in the local community to set up a project with you. Many organisations don't have many staff or much money so working with an organised STAR group who can help run a project is a great advantage, you just need to show them how fantastic you can be! So what do you have to offer? Things like:

- ★ **Enthusiastic** and committed volunteers
- ★ **Being self organised:** a great advantage is that you are ready made group of volunteers who can self organise and recruit your own new volunteers. This is great for organisations who don't have the time or money to do this themselves. It is also worth mentioning if you are able to do your own CRB checks at your uni.
- ★ **Responsibility:** Show them that you are keen to take on responsibility for helping to set up and run the project.
- ★ **Knowledge:** Does your group have specific skills to offer from the courses they are studying – e.g. law, social work, medicine? Let them know that you already have an understanding of refugee issues.
- ★ **Shared interests:** Depending on the project you may all be a similar age to the refugees you will be volunteering with which means you will be just the right kind of interesting fun volunteers they will have things in common with.
- ★ **Support from STAR National:** STAR groups can access support and training from STAR National and we are also happy to provide support and be a contact point for volunteering project partners.
- ★ **Provide examples** of successful STAR student led projects - have a look on the website or get in touch with STAR National for some relevant examples.

## Make an action plan!



The first thing to do is to decide what the aims and objectives of your project are. This is simply what you are trying to do and how you are going to do it. You'll need to discuss all of this with your partner organisation of course.

- ★ An **aim** is the change you are trying to make e.g. improve the English conversation skills of refugees.
- ★ An **objective** is what you will do to get that change e.g. run weekly conversation classes during term time in the local drop in centre

You need to make sure that you are being realistic about what you can actually achieve. It is a good idea to put these down on paper so you can keep checking that the project is going in the right direction.

*Once you have decided what your aims and objectives are you need to think about the following....*

### **Timing**

This can be crucial for the success of a volunteering project. Think about the academic year and how your project needs to fit in.

Ideally, have it ready to go so you can recruit new volunteers in freshers week and get them started when they are still really enthusiastic. Be aware that during the holidays and exam times volunteer numbers might drop. Think about what this might mean for the project and what you could do e.g. you could decide to only run it in term time or volunteer with a school where term time volunteering fits very well. Speak to your volunteering partner organisation to see what they think, they might have staff or other volunteers who can help out in the holidays.

### **The set up**

These are the tasks you need to do to get the project set up. You need to think about how long they will take and decide who will do them e.g. finding a partner organisation, finding a venue, advertising for volunteers.

### **The regular stuff**

The regular tasks you will need to do once the project is running e.g. make up the volunteer rota, plan activities for the conversation class, buy refreshments, organise meetings. Again think about how long they will take and who will do them.

### **Safety first!**

Think about what you have planned to do - is there anything that could go wrong or might be unsafe? What could you do or change to make sure it doesn't and isn't (see section 4.7) Think about this carefully and if there seem to be too many potential problems with your idea it is probably worth rethinking...

### **Communications**

Who should you be keeping in touch with and how often e.g. the volunteers, your partner organisation, STAR National, your student union, the people who come to your project.

## **Training**

Think about what kind of training you need to be able to volunteer. The minimum new volunteers will need some kind of introductory training when they start. Find out what kind of training your volunteering partner organisation will give new volunteers. You might also be able to access some training at your university, for example child protection training. Don't forget to get in touch with STAR national to see what we can offer!

## **Budget/resources**

Will you need any money, equipment or resources for your project? You might be able to borrow everything you need or get it from your volunteering partner organisation. You might also be able to access some funding from your university. If you decide you need more money you could hold a fundraising event.

## **Monitoring and evaluation (see 4.7 for more information)**

This is how you check that what you have been doing has been successful, i.e. that you have been meeting your aims and objectives, and find out how to make your volunteering project even better.

## **List of local services and support organisations**

Have a list of the local services and organisations that refugees and asylum seekers might need so if someone needs help, e.g. with healthcare or immigration problems, you know the best place for them to go. Ask your partner organisation if they can give you one or contact STAR national if you need help with this.

## **Handover**

Make sure that you plan this well in advance and give the new committee all the information they need to easily carry on with the project next year e.g. contact details of partner organisation and volunteers (see the useful documents for a template handover sheet). This will ensure that they can continue to build on the great work you have done and they don't need to start from scratch. Make sure you let your volunteering partner project know who is in the new committee so they know who to contact. Also let them know that if they have problems getting in touch with people they can contact STAR national.