



## Helpdesk Volunteer Advisor - Role Description

### Background

ASSIST runs a Help Desk every Wednesday afternoon for people seeking sanctuary who have been refused asylum in the UK.

This is part of the bigger multi-agency Drop-In service at Victoria Hall, managed by City of Sanctuary, where people who are part of the asylum process come for help and advice.

The role of Help Desk is to meet people referred to our service, to better understand their situation. We also offer welcome appointments to those newly taken on for support in understanding ASSIST and helping them access local services and provisions; from the clothes bank to attending English classes.

It is a drop-in service where we see people who come to seek support and have a variety of needs. Appointments can be made for new clients whilst existing clients drop-in for ad-hoc casework support.

Help Desk is a busy environment that can be challenging and fluctuating. Volunteers are presented with many different queries and urgent situations, but there is always support available from the Client Support Staff team.

### Role purpose

- To meet with people who approach ASSIST for support, possibly for the first time
- To refer on to other agencies or signpost to other ASSIST teams, where appropriate
- To provide advice/information/support to existing and potential clients of ASSIST

### Tasks

- Help set up the ASSIST desk space
- To meet with people who come to ASSIST for support
- Provide an overview of what ASSIST support entails
- Run welcome and local signposting appointments to help new clients best use ASSIST and access other local services (wellbeing, social, educational, cultural services)
- Issue emergency payments or first welfare payments for new clients

- Communicate via an interpreter when necessary (using telephone or face-to-face interpreters)
- Check & update client records accurately on our electronic database CIVI
- Scan and upload documents to CIVI
- Consult with the Client Support Staff team to determine best way of providing support if unclear
- Liaise with other local services (eg to British Red Cross to avoid duplication of work)
- Attend pre-brief and debrief after the helpdesk session
- Attend regular team meetings (approx every 6 weeks)

### **What you need to begin the role**

- Understanding of, and willingness to work with, diversity and cultural difference
- Ability to be respectful, non-judgemental, honest, sensitive and patient
- Good verbal communication skills (including on the telephone)
- Confidence in one to one settings
- Ability to engage with people in an empathetic manner
- Ability to encourage others to make their own decisions, within realistic constraints
- Ability to stay calm in a busy and stressful environment
- Ability to manage boundaries and not over-promise
- Ability to recognise when to ask for help
- Willingness to be part of a team, and function within the team's decisions.

### **What you can gain from the role**

- The basics about the UK asylum system and the experience of people seeking sanctuary
- How to use the ASSIST database and maintain electronic client records
- Knowledge of other agencies which support people seeking sanctuary, and of local services and community groups in Sheffield
- Ability to communicate through an interpreter
- Ability to maintain focus within a busy working environment
- Skills in handling challenging behaviour
- Working in a team, and developing relationships across different ASSIST teams
- Being in a supportive team environment

### **Time commitment**

- 4.5 hours every week from 12:00 pm until 4:30pm
- We expect a weekly commitment, with the understanding and flexibility for time off when needed
- Team meetings last 1.5 hours, they are held Wednesday mornings, every 6 weeks
- Initial ASSIST & Client support-specific training

- Because there is a considerable amount to learn and become familiar with before a volunteer can work on their own, a 9 month minimum commitment to volunteering with Help Desk is required

### **Essential Training Provided**

- Introduction to ASSIST and the Asylum Process
- Safeguarding and Boundaries
- Confidentiality and Data Protection
- ASSIST casework training
- Use of CIVI database

### **Support provided**

- Training and/or information sessions on different relevant topics
- Shadowing
- Direct support by the Helpdesk coordinator and other experienced Help Desk volunteers
- Team briefings and debriefs each week
- Supervision sessions from the Client Support Staff team

**Volunteering days / time:** Wednesdays, 12.00pm – 4.30pm weekly

**Locations:** Victoria Hall Methodist Church, Norfolk St, Sheffield S1 2JB. Team meetings take place in the ASSIST office, which is in the same building.

**Resources:** We cover travel expenses and other ad-hoc essential costs related to your volunteer role. If you are doing a full day we will cover lunch expenses.

**ASSIST team:** This role is within the Help desk team, which is part of Client Support Services

### **Any questions?**

If you would like a chat about our roles or have questions, contact Leah, our Volunteer and Community Outreach Coordinator:

☎ 07422655683

✉ [volunteer@assistsheffield.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@assistsheffield.org.uk)

**To apply, head to our website:**

<https://www.assistsheffield.org.uk/content/volunteer-us>