

Tip sheet



RESOURCE
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HUB



Safeguarding practices for recruiting and managing volunteers



For organisations responding to the refugee crisis in Eastern Europe.

Organisations responding to the refugee crisis in Eastern Europe are recruiting a high number of volunteers. It is important to ensure that an organisation's safeguarding measures are extended to volunteers at all times. Volunteers:

- **Play a role in protecting staff and refugees** from sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) and other harm and abuses (e.g. physical or emotional harm etc.).
- **Contribute to an organisational culture** where everyone who interacts with the organisation understands their right to be safe from all forms of harm and abuse.
- **Need to be supported** to know what the organisation's safeguarding measures are and how they apply to volunteers.

Examples of safeguarding-related risks when working with volunteers:

Risks for the volunteers themselves:

- There may be a **power imbalance between volunteers and staff**, which increases the risk of SEAH and other harm and abuse against volunteers.
- Some organisations may not have **formal procedures for managing volunteers**. This can affect how volunteers are treated and supported, including in relation to safeguarding.
- Volunteers are less likely to have someone trusted in the organisation to talk to. They may also be less likely to know the safeguarding policies, how to report, who to report to or even what to report.

Risks for other staff and for refugees who interact with the organisation

- Volunteers may **not know what behaviour is expected of them**, if there is a code of conduct, if it applies to them, and why it is important to uphold.
- In situations where rapid and large-scale volunteer recruitment is needed, e.g. in an emergency, it **may be hard to keep to strict recruitment procedures**. Harmful behaviour may go unchecked.
- **Recruitment of volunteers can be complicated**, e.g. they may not have formal references.
- Through working with the organisation, some volunteers may be in a **position of power compared to the refugees**, which may lead to abuses of power such as harassment or sexual requests.

The volunteer management process covers three steps:

1. Safe recruitment and vetting

Job description and advertising

- Write a job description for every volunteer position. It does not have to be a formal or long job description. **If you have little time these can be in relevant bullet points.**
- Include a **statement on the organisation's commitment to safeguarding** in the job description, advertisement (where relevant) and marketing.
- If the volunteer has access to people at higher risk of safeguarding abuses, including refugees and children, it should be stated in the job description and considered in recruitment. This is important for ensuring **safe programmes** or service delivery.
- Proactively aim for a diversity-balance across your volunteers, e.g. consider gender, disability, language and other different characteristics relevant to where you are working.

Interview and references

- An **interview is important**, especially for volunteers who will be working directly with refugees.
- Aim to collect **at least one reference** for every volunteer including asking about their behaviour. A reference can be a verbal confidential conversation in person or by phone, a written email or letter.
- Where possible or for longer term volunteers, carry out a **background or criminal check**.

Interviews with little time:

- An interview can be a short conversation in a space where others cannot hear.
- In this conversation make the safeguarding and behaviour requirements clear.
- Ask the potential volunteer a question about their behaviour, e.g. "How will you carry out your work duties in a way that does not harm or abuse others?"

2. Supervision and support, including orientation and training

- Share and explain a job description, agreement, the Code of Conduct and relevant policies, or summaries, in the relevant language. Once a volunteer understands the documentation, ask them to **sign a contract and the Code of Conduct**.

- Provide **training** so all volunteers know:
 - Who the safeguarding focal point is and how to contact them
 - What SEAH and other harms and abuses are
 - How to report potential safeguarding abuses
 - How they should behave as a volunteer
 - What will happen if they behave inappropriately
- Make sure volunteers working with refugees know what the **reporting mechanisms** are for reporting a safeguarding concern.
- Set up a **Human Resources management system** to track the safeguarding needs for every volunteer.
- Make sure **supervisors** can be approached for support and advice, e.g. on expected behaviour.
- Ensure that the pre-agreed steps are taken in all potential safeguarding cases.

Orientation with a large group of volunteers:

- Lead an orientation with a large group of volunteers together, or
- Give an immediate initial orientation (or just share visual materials) to those who need to start quickly and follow up with more detail later.

3. Closing the relationship between organisation and volunteer

- It is important to acknowledge the **end of the volunteer relationship**. This can be in a group conversation.
- Make sure the volunteer has **no further access to the organisation's information or data** and reaffirm the importance of confidentiality on any safeguarding issues or cases the volunteer may be aware of.
- Make it clear to the volunteer and the refugee community that the volunteer has ended their role.
- In an **exit interview**, discuss any safeguarding-related issues, e.g. on training or if the volunteer believes the reporting mechanism is working and how it can be strengthened.