



in

ASSIST has one full time member of staff, and 2 part time short term members of staff.
At the end of March 2012, it had 192 volunteers.
It is a volunteer led organisation, and relies completely on its volunteers to deliver its services.

Why volunteers?

Volunteering is “unpaid activity where someone gives their time to help an organisation or an individual who they are not related to.” [<http://www.volunteering.org.uk>]

From ASSIST’s point of view

- ✓ Ensure our services meet the needs of our service users
- ✓ Provide new skills and perspectives to the charity
- ✓ Increase our contact with the local community we serve
- ✓ Learn and constantly improve the quality of ASSIST’s services
- ✓ ASSIST could not function without them!

From the volunteer’s point of view

- ✓ A channel for caring and political passion
- ✓ Work experience to enhance a CV
- ✓ An opportunity to make friends, and prevent social isolation
- ✓ Enjoyment!

Draft policy:

“ASSIST is committed to equal opportunities, and will actively encourage representation and participation within the organisation by promoting equality and diversity. It is committed to providing an effective service for destitute asylum seekers, delivered through its volunteer teams. There are task profiles for all volunteer roles, and volunteers are recruited as far as possible to roles appropriate for their skills, experience and interests. While we seek to find appropriate volunteering opportunities for all who would like to be involved, we cannot guarantee to find a role for everyone.”

In practice, we are willing to provide extra support to asylum seeker and refugee volunteers. Our minimal resources mean that we are generally unable to take on volunteers looking for sheltered work experience placements and those with extra support needs.

How do volunteers find us?

- ✓ Word of mouth
- ✓ Fund raising and awareness raising sessions eg stalls at festivals, talks in churches
- ✓ Voluntary Action Sheffield – website and in person
- ✓ ASSIST website

The recruitment process

Most of the recruitment process is handled by volunteers

1. Initial enquiry

Telephone calls, emails, messages from website

Respond with an email (or paper equivalent)

- ✓ Invitation to a “Drop in and check it out” session
- ✓ A brief outline of volunteer roles
- ✓ An explanation of ASSIST’s recruitment process.

2. Drop in and check it out session

A 3 hour session every 2 weeks, on different days and at different times

- ✓ Short presentation (once an hour): what ASSIST does and volunteer roles available

- ✓ Task profiles for the current roles available, including what the recruit needs to be able to do before beginning the role, and the time commitment [http://www.sheffieldvolunteercentre.org.uk/nuts_bolts]
 - ✓ Opportunity to talk with current volunteers
 - ✓ Support to complete paper application and “celebrating diversity” forms if needed
 - ✓ Informal initial screening of potential applicants
3. **Application form and celebrating diversity forms** emailed to recruits, who complete and return them. Recruits apply for a specific role.
4. The admin volunteers send for 2 **references**, and file when received. ASSIST is introducing DBS (Disclosure, barring and safeguarding – was CRB) for some roles, as required by insurers.
5. Volunteer Co-ordinator,
- ✓ screens the applications
 - ✓ draws on any further information
 - ✓ **makes a decision about team allocation**
 - ✓ sends the application forms to the volunteer team leaders.
 - ✓ Monitors recruitment admin
- Some recruits, at this stage, are not offered volunteer roles, and are informed.
6. **The team leader then interviews the recruit**, for their team and for ASSIST. For some roles (eg admin) there is a skills test. If successful, the recruit is asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. If unsuccessful, I may offer the recruit another more suitable role, or let them know there is no suitable role for them. The recruit begins to volunteer with the team. Team based training varies between teams.
7. We provide a half day **induction session** for all volunteers, to find out a little more about ASSIST and the experiences of asylum seekers. We provide each volunteer with a volunteer induction pack.
8. Volunteers sign a **Volunteer agreement** with their team leader.
9. Volunteers information is stored on a **database**, and we are gradually issuing volunteers with a “**Volunteer card**”.
10. **The volunteer continues in their team.** In some teams, there is a regular formal supervision session; in others it is more ad hoc. There is ongoing training – some organised centrally eg a one day course on the basics of asylum law and processes; some organised within the team.

The challenges of the recruitment process

- ✓ The large number of people who are looking to develop their CV and gain work experience
- ✓ Keeping the paperwork and the people matching!
- ✓ It can take a while to process new recruits, which some find frustrating.
- ✓ One off unusual roles which require a specific set of skills

The benefits of the recruitment process

- ✓ Working on task profiles with team leaders and teams provides opportunity to clarify what volunteers are being asked to do. Identifying skills and understanding that are needed by a volunteer before they begin, and what they can learn, provides the basis for a volunteer training programme.
- ✓ Before recruits meet team leaders, ASSIST has time to screen new recruits and some who are not committed to volunteering with ASSIST leave the process
- ✓ The process gives equality of access to volunteering, and a steady supply of volunteers, with minimal staff resource.

Jenny Richardson
Volunteer Co-ordinator
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