



Volunteer Guidelines

Introduction

Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network (EERN) is part of Good Company (Surrey). EERN volunteers support refugees and asylum seekers in our local area.

The purpose of these guidelines is to share more about the work of EERN, and set out the parameters of what is, and is not, acceptable behaviour for our volunteers. Clearly defined boundaries are essential to protect both the volunteer and those we work with and create a positive and meaningful environment of support and collaboration. Volunteers must always know the boundaries of the scope of their role and work within these.

These guidelines are issued alongside EERN’s Safeguarding policy and agreement, Confidentiality Agreement and your role description.

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Our support to refugees and asylum seekers

Through the Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network (EERN), we work closely with children and adults who are refugees or asylum seekers, and we take our responsibility for their safety extremely seriously. We provide support through initiatives including:

- Support Work
- Help Desk
- Music and community events
- English lessons
- Homework support
- Education support
- Housing support

Appropriate conduct when working to support refugees and asylum seekers

All staff and volunteers of EERN must ensure that we are treating each person with respect and dignity. Those we work with should always be involved in the support they receive and be consulted with before any actions are taken to support them. We understand that being forced to leave your home and move to a new country is a big challenge for anyone and that a person or family might struggle to adjust to a new culture and language. We will always try to take into consideration the difficult experiences that someone may have faced and survived, without asking questions about what these experiences have been. We want to support those we work with to learn how things work in the UK, and to gain the knowledge and skills needed to navigate life in the UK and build a life that is meaningful to them.

Below you will find important information about appropriate conduct when volunteering with EERN. Please read these carefully and make sure to keep them in mind in the course of your volunteering role.

Maintaining healthy boundaries

Understanding the scope of your role and what activities you are responsible for doing will ensure that you always strive to work within healthy and appropriate boundaries. If you are asked to do something outside of the scope of your role, or you are not sure, please have a chat with us about it so we can support you and those you work with.

While some level of emotional involvement is an inevitable part of work with us, it is important to draw a clear line between activities conducted on our behalf and actions that would be conducted by a friend. If you find that you are doing tasks outside your role to help those we support, or engaging in informal social activities with them, you must notify the Volunteer Coordinator. In this case, you need to assess with us whether your position is the best fit, and we may agree to end your work with us.

Safeguarding

We have robust safeguarding policies, which we will share with all volunteers to ensure that we are always taking an active approach to safeguarding those we work with. It is your responsibility to read and understand the Safeguarding policy, and if you have any concerns do not hesitate to speak to the Volunteer Coordinator. In an emergency, always ring 999 first. If the concern is not an emergency, please speak to the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible or call the Safeguarding Leads directly. Our Safeguarding Policy can be found on our website.

If at any time you do not feel safe or you feel uncomfortable, particularly if you are in a client's home, you should leave immediately and contact the Volunteer Coordinator or Safeguarding Lead.

Respecting and upholding privacy

During your role as a volunteer, it is possible that you may learn information about those we work with. You will be asked to sign a Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement before you start your role, which outlines your responsibilities to uphold each person's privacy. It is very important that you do not repeat to others any stories or personal information shared with you by the people you are supporting, unless it is to the Volunteer Coordinator or Safeguarding Lead.

Awareness of trauma

Staff and volunteers must not ask any questions about refugees' and asylum seekers' past experiences, particularly their experience of displacement or their journey to the UK. While having an interest in the lives of those we support is a natural instinct, forcing or encouraging them to recount and relive what may be deeply traumatic memories is unacceptable.

Translation

Using translation services is extremely helpful when working with people who are not confident conversing in English. Each person has a right to understand, contribute and consent to the support they receive, and translation services help us make sure that we are communicating effectively and taking the time to understand and respond to each person's individual needs, preferences and goals. Where translation support is needed, we use a professional translation service rather than a volunteer translator. Google Translate can be useful for simple day-to-day discussions, but not for more complex situations. Support Workers have access to a translation service, so if you come across a more complex issue that requires translation, please speak to the Volunteer Coordinator who can help connect the person with a Support Worker who can understand more and offer support.

Contact with supported people outside of our activities

If you have a role working on our behalf, you should only be interacting with the people you support during your role as a volunteer. You should not be arranging social or support contact outside of those times.

It is strictly prohibited to invite anyone who uses our services to your home. Where a person we support initiates a request to visit you, you must decline politely, clarifying the reason for the request if needed. If a person we support visits you without warning, do not invite them in.

Contact with supported people via telephone or the internet

Sometimes you may share your personal phone number or email with those you are working with to help coordinate times that you are working with them.

If you receive a message or text that is concerning, or outside of the scope of your role, please let the Volunteer know as soon as possible as it might be necessary to share these with us so that we can offer appropriate support.

If anyone at Good Company receives any texts, emails, or conversations that raise safeguarding concerns, they must immediately report this in line with our Safeguarding Reporting Procedure.

Cultural sensitivity

We respect diversity, and are inclusive regardless of background, race, religion or gender. In turn, we expect everyone we support to respect our position on tolerance and equality. We work hard to respect the culture of those we support and ensure that we do not impose our own views and opinions on them, whilst also helping them understand the laws and customs of our country.

Decision making

Everyone must be treated in a way that respects their individuality and does not undermine their dignity or their human or civil rights.

EERN operates with the assumption that all individuals have capacity to make informed decisions about their own lives, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary. This includes the right to make decisions that could be considered unwise.

All working on Good Company (Surrey)'s behalf must avoid making decisions for those we support, even if they mean well. If you cannot support decisions made for safety or safeguarding reasons, or have any concerns related to decision-making, including any doubts regarding capacity to make decisions, you must report this immediately to the Safeguarding Leads or speak to the Volunteer Coordinator.

First aid and medical emergencies

Emergency situations must be dealt with by the emergency services. First Aid should be administered only by trained individuals if available.

Lone working

Nobody at Good Company (Surrey) can work alone with anyone under the age of 18, or any adults at risk. Those supporting refugees and asylum seekers must ensure a parent or carer is present at all times.

If a situation occurs where you find yourself alone with someone we support, you must immediately inform your line manager and the supported person's parent or carer to rectify the situation as soon as possible and uphold our safeguarding commitments.

Photography and filming

You must never take photographs or videos of those you support unless it is for specific and agreed-upon purposes relating to your role with us, such as for promotional material.

You must never take photographs or videos of those you support without explicit and informed consent, obtained through our Consent Form.

Physical contact

It is strictly forbidden for anyone working on our behalf to initiate physical contact with a child we support through our activities. Physical contact with adults at risk is also strongly discouraged.

If a child initiates physical contact, you must create distance and be clear to reject the physical expression, without rejecting the child. Children in distress might seek comfort in a way that would be inappropriate or upsetting to reject, but this should be as minimal as possible and never hidden.

Privacy and dignity must always be respected. You may not, for example, assist a child or adult at risk in going to the toilet. If someone you are supporting soils themselves, a parent or carer should be notified immediately. Never attempt to manage situations such as this alone.

Transport

The Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network has a Transport Policy that outlines guidance for when it is permitted to provide transport services. Please see this attached as Appendix I.

There may be occasions where a child or adult at risk requires transport in an emergency situation, or to reduce or mitigate a risk to their safety or wellbeing. In these cases, a parent or carer, and your line manager, should be informed before the lift is provided or as soon as possible thereafter.

It is inappropriate to offer lifts to anyone we support without express permission from EERN staff.

Volunteer expenses

EERN values its volunteers and recognises that volunteers may incur expenses in the course of their role. We are happy to reimburse agreed expenses and will aim to do so swiftly.

Some of the expenses we regularly agree to reimburse include:

- Public transport tickets used to travel to and from volunteer activities
- Mileage when using own vehicle for essential trips transporting those we support, as per our staff and volunteer rate
- Parking fees

EERN will provide you with a copy of our Volunteer Expenses form. Please submit this to earn@goodcompany.org.uk with all receipts.

Appendix I: Transport Policy

Part of the Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network's support for refugees and asylum seekers may involve providing transport to and from appointments. This transport is provided by volunteers in their own vehicles. This policy outlines our obligations to ensure that transport services are provided by trusted people and in a safe manner.

Good Company (Surrey) and the Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network ensure that:

- Transport services are provided only by fit and proper persons and does not pose a threat to the public.
- Vehicles used to convey passengers are safe and fit for the purpose.
- Where transport is provided for children, that an appropriate adult is with them at all times and the volunteer is never alone with the child.
- Where children are in the vehicle, that appropriate and safe child car seats are used.
- The people we support feel confident to report any concerns relating to transport provided.

Any volunteer offering transport to those we support must confirm the following:

- That they hold a full and valid driving licence.
- That their insurance company is aware that the vehicle is being used for this purpose (usually classed as business use).
- That the car is in a roadworthy condition and has a valid MOT and insurance in place.
- That the car has working seatbelts which will be used by all passengers during the journey.
- The volunteer must agree to drive with consideration and within the legally prescribed speed limits.

Transport for children or vulnerable adults:

- Where transport is provided for a child, an appropriate adult must be in the car with them at all times. In most cases, this will be a parent.
- Where transport is provided for a vulnerable adult, the volunteer offering transport must have a full DBS check.
- All volunteers providing transport must be fully vetted and checked as volunteers and have signed to confirm that they will adhere to our code of conduct.

In order to provide transport services to those we support, it will be necessary to share the address and contact details of the client with the volunteer. The volunteer agrees to treat this information as confidential in line with Good Company (Surrey)'s Confidentiality Agreement, adhering to our Code of Conduct at all times.