Introduction to Volunteering Partnership with Kirklees Libraries, Kirklees College and Third Sector Leaders

Troy McIntosh, Project Customer Service Officer from Kirklees Libraries, shares a case study on their work on a local volunteering partnership.

Case Study

As part of our library of sanctuary initiative, we sought to strengthen our commitment to inclusivity. After speaking with individuals and VCS groups supporting migrants, it became clear that many people seeking to volunteer were encountering obstacles. Newly arrived asylum seekers, refugees, and even people who have lived in the UK for a while were having difficulty finding their first opportunity due to additional barriers such as a lack of experience in volunteering and a general lack of understanding of what might be expected of them as volunteers in the UK.

To address this, Third Sector Leaders (TSL) Volunteering collaborated with Kirklees College to create an “Intro to Volunteering” course. This course was designed to help people take positive steps towards volunteering and prepare them for a voluntary role. The course covered various topics such as volunteering expectations, boundaries, safeguarding, how to prepare for interviews and inductions, and provided an insight into the number and choice of voluntary roles available. The course also included a volunteer taster session, which was important as many participants had never had a chance to

volunteer before. This session allowed them to experience a live voluntary role in the community.

Kirklees Libraries launched a volunteer taster session to showcase the diverse and rewarding volunteering roles that we offer in our safe and welcoming spaces. We also invited people who had missed the Intro to Volunteer course due to various reasons. We had a great turnout of 17 participants who were eager to learn more about the benefits of volunteering and how they could make a positive difference in their communities!

During the session, participants not only observed staff and volunteers hard at work but also took part in tasks that a volunteer would carry out throughout the day. They had a go at shelving and learned about all of the other voluntary roles available, such as being a social media volunteer, helping at the Lego and Craft groups, supporting with Storytime, and other general library duties.

The participants found the course and the taster day to be a rewarding experience. They felt well-informed about volunteering and were keen to take the next step. All participants applied for various library roles while at the taster day, and some were given support to apply for other organisations where they had a keen interest. The day was a huge success, and both the Library and College are keen to make this a regular opportunity.

Since running the taster session, volunteer Sudeep was recently recognised by the Mayor of Kirklees for his outstanding dedication to volunteering in the local community. The mayor highlighted Sudeep's remarkable commitment to serving others since his arrival in the area. This has led to Sudeep winning the Mayor's Volunteering Award.

What are the key things that have been learned?

Key Learning:

- Newly arrived migrants face additional barriers to volunteering, including lack of experience and understanding of UK volunteering expectations.
- Offering introductory courses and taster sessions can significantly increase accessibility to volunteering opportunities.
- Highlighting the diverse and rewarding nature of library volunteering attracts enthusiastic participants.
- Collaboration between libraries, colleges, and other groups can be highly successful in promoting inclusivity and volunteer engagement.

What Went Well:

- Collaboration between TSL Volunteering and Kirklees College created a relevant and engaging training program.

- High turnout at the volunteer taster session demonstrated community interest.
- Participants felt informed and empowered to pursue volunteering opportunities.
- All participants applied for roles, with some still volunteering within the service.
- Library, TSL and College are committed to making this a regular program.

Challenges:

- Not everyone interested in the course could attend due to various reasons.
- Further support beyond the program might be needed for some participants.
- Matching participants with suitable or available roles requires careful assessment and guidance.

Future Plans:

- Make the "Intro to Volunteering" course and library taster sessions regular opportunities.
- Ring fence and have local roles and support available for instant on-boarding.
- Offer ongoing support and guidance to participants in securing volunteer roles.
- Partner with additional organisations to expand volunteer opportunities.

- Track the long-term impact of the program on volunteer engagement and community integration.

To learn more about this case study or the Yorkshire and Humber Refugee Integration Forum, please contact Liz Maddocks at admin@migrationyorkshire.org.uk.

Yorkshire & Humber Refugee Integration Forum

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