What are the skills needed for refugee participation

Background

Refugee participation can be called different things for example ‘Experts by Experience’ or ‘User Involvement’. It describes how people who have lived through a particular experience can shape the services, which support them.

Why participate?

Through participation activities, you can develop your skills and better understand how services work. You have a lot of knowledge that you can use to make organisations better serve refugee communities. Your knowledge and experience can help improve their service delivery.

By participation you can increase your confidence, see behind the scenes of refugee services, and speak out on behalf of your communities. You can also practice skills such as communications, listening, public speaking, writing, leadership skills and many more.

You may want to join a cause that you feel passionate about making things better for refugee communities, or even gain new skills. Some organisations may ask you to join because of a particular skill you have or maybe because they want to include refugee voices.

How does participation work?

You may be asked to complete an application process to become a refugee participant, or you may be asked to have certain skills. These requirements are standard to many professional roles and are a way for you to show that you can perform the role. For example, they may ask you to:

- Commit to a role for certain duration and attend times
- Maintain contact with the organisation
- Be open to learning
- Accept people have different cultures and religions
- Share your contact details
- Provide reference contact details. A reference could be a friend, a former colleague, or someone else who knows you
- Share your life experience about being a refugee in the UK, but this not compulsory. You are never obliged to share anything that you are not comfortable with sharing
- Have a certain ability to speak English (to a certain level), but other places may provide you with Interpreters
- Obtain a DBS (police check) certificate

Organisations will help you with these steps. You will have a chance to talk to the team members before applying and they can answer any questions you may have.

After applying to a participation opportunity, you will have an induction meeting to explain the role to you and you may receive training about the role. In some places they provide you with IT equipment and training about how to use it.

Remember, you will be able to claim back any costs related to the activities, such as travel expenses or data costs, but you will need to check if they are covered before spending your own money. You may also be given incentives; these could be financial or non-financial.

What steps to take before participating

If the role is designed to get your views based on your lived experience of being a refugee in the UK, then, joining any participation project should be a straightforward process.

Remember, before you sign up for an opportunity you can ask any questions you have about the available roles. For example, where and when do activities take place, how regularly, do they require you to travel? What are the benefits for yourself and your community? What level of English language is needed and do they provide interpreting? Do they cover costs of childcare

You also need to consider whether you have the time to commit to the role before signing up.

What are the benefits of participation?

Boost your communication skills

- Participation can help improve your English language, which will not only help you grow in the role but also help you communicate in your daily activities and in your interactions with people, who are from diverse cultures.
- You may get training about listening skills and public speaking.
- However, if you are looking for English classes you can find them here Learning English in Yorkshire and the Humber

Become informed about news, guidance, and rules about life in the UK

You can find your local refugee organisations to join conversation networks, subscribe to receive news and updates from organisations, who are publicising topics related to refugee integration and refugee communities.

Learn from others who have experienced forced migration and speak out on behalf of refugee communities

You can check out toolkits and guides from organisations who help refugees safely articulate their concerns widely. Such as The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, CRÈME Project info sheets, and OnRoad Media

Engage with media to share a story, or a fact about refugees

- You can attend free training and find out who works in media and advocacy for refugees, such as IMIX, and Refugee Action

Support your community and local organisations.

- By participating you are encouraging organisation to understand what it’s like to be forced to leave your home, and this can help make their services better for the people who come after you.
- Organisations, including charities rely on the support of community members to be able to do their work.

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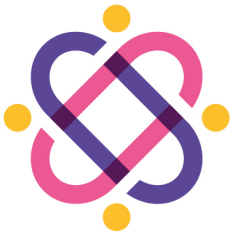

Refugee Integration Yorkshire and Humber

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