Community Sponsorship Scheme
Benefits for Volunteers

Volunteering and Community Sponsorship

Following an evaluation of the Community Sponsorship Scheme (CS) involving interviews with 14 groups, this practice brief sets out some of the key learning identified in the evaluation about the benefits to volunteers of contributing to CS.

Volunteers have contributed many hours of their time but in exchange, they have made many gains that include:

Acquiring new skills

CS volunteers acquired new skills and knowledge as they established their groups, applied to support a family and then offered support to a refugee family.

New competencies reported comprise:

Establishing a voluntary group or a charity

- *Leadership*
- *Fundraising*
- *Teamwork Safeguarding*
  UK benefits system functioning
- *Housing association functioning*
  Teaching ESOL
- *Website management*
- *Using social media*
- *Engagement with media*
- *Communication skills*
- *Mediation*
- *Facilitation*
- *Public speaking*

Training

Volunteers had the opportunity to attend training programmes. Some of these were offered by Reset (https://training-resetuk.org/) and focussed specifically upon refugees. Other training was available from private providers and larger NGOs.

Topics covered:
- *Cultural awareness*
- *Setting boundaries and expectations*
- *Planning for arrivals*
- *The benefits system*
- *Teaching ESOL*
- *Running a charity*

Networking with groups and institutions

The CSS provides an opportunity to connect with other CS groups and with a wide range of institutions including:

- *The Home Office*
- *Local Authorities*
- *Other CS groups at different stages of development*
- *Charities and organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees*

Friendship

Working together with others towards a shared goal has enabled volunteers to:

- *Meet new people and making new friends*
- *Socialise with wider members of the community*
- *Deepen friendships with core individuals*
- *Develop meaningful relationships with refugees*
- *Feel much less isolated*

Stronger and more inclusive communities

Volunteers told us that CS had a positive impact on life in their local community by:

- *Increasing diversity in the community*
- *Encouraging tolerance and inclusion*
- *Building bridges between different religions*
- *Providing an opportunity to educate local people about refugees*
- *Challenging stereotypes about migrants and Muslims more generally*

Individual gains

As well as gaining new knowledge and networks, volunteers reported that participating in CS brought positive impacts such as:

- *A sense of pride in their work*
- *Improved levels of contentment*
- *Greater tolerance of difference*
- *Increased patience*
- *Enriching their lives*
- *Improved listening skills*
- *Enhanced positive thinking and happiness*
- *A strong sense of purpose and usefulness*
- *Improved health*
- *Increased self-confidence and self-esteem*
- *Reduced loneliness*

Employability

Some volunteers accumulated experience and knowledge, which they reported, enhanced their employability. Participation in CS has helped to:

- *Gain new qualifications*
- *Gain new experience*
- *Develop new skills and knowledge*
- *Use their professional skills and knowledge in new ways or in a new sector*
- *Enhance their CV by adding new skills and voluntary work experience*
- *Offer the option of a career change shifting to work in NGOs or refugee support*

Relationships with refugees

CS volunteers reported that they worked very hard to support a refugee family but ultimately the experience was very rewarding. Most bonded with the refugee family quickly after arrival. Gains reported included:

- *Insights into different cultures*
- *Deep and meaningful relationships which some felt were kin-like and would endure*
- *The development of intergenerational relationships*
- *Feeling appreciated and valued*
- *Feeling more optimistic and positive about life in general*
- *Feeling they were part of something bigger than them*

Making an application to CSS

For guidance, advice and support to help you to establish a Community Sponsorship group consult:

http://training-resetuk.org/toolkit/making-an-application

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