 **Suffolk Refugee Support**

**Job Description & Person Specification**

***This role is funded for 14 hours per week by the Nationwide Community Grants Programme via Essex Community Foundation***

**Job Title: Housing and General Advice Worker (part—time)**

Accountable to: Advice Service Manager

Hours: 21 hours per week, split over 3 days per week (preferably on the following days: Monday, Tuesday and Friday)

Salary: £14,280 - £14,815 per annum for 21 hours per week (pro rata

from £23,800 - £24,692 for 35 hours FTE)

Contract: 1 year (subject to a 3-month probationary period)

Pension: Employer/employee scheme. Up to 6% Pension Contribution with matching employee contribution

Location: Partly based at Suffolk Refugee Support offices, 38 St Matthew’s Street, Ipswich, IP1 3EP and partly based at locations around the county

Employer: Suffolk Refugee Support is a registered charity that provides support and advice to asylum seekers and refugees living in Suffolk

Please note that an Enhanced DBS Check is required for this post. The decision to request a DBS disclosure is made in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. The check will be paid for by Suffolk Refugee Support.

**Context & Purpose of the Job**

Suffolk Refugee Support aims to ensure that all asylum seekers and refugees in Suffolk are enabled to live integrated, fulfilled and contributing lives in their new communities. We provide a welcoming environment where clients can access help, advice, support and practical services in order to be healthy and safe and begin to rebuild their lives. We work with external agencies, community and voluntary sector organisations, health providers and others to enable our clients to access a range of support. We are based in Ipswich, but our services operate increasingly out on location with refugees and asylum seekers housed in accommodation across Suffolk.

The Housing & General Advice Worker will be responsible for providing the first point of assistance to clients presenting at our services with housing and other needs. The post-holder will ensure that all those accessing the services receive the appropriate help and assistance, either directly, via volunteers, or by signposting to other agencies. There is a requirement to work both reactively and proactively to ensure our clients secure appropriate housing. The post-holder will be responsible for managing their time and will be required to split their time between housing issues and general advice as needs dictate.

**Main Duties and Responsibilities**

**Housing**

To welcome and respond to asylum seekers and refugees (clients) attending the Advice Service in relation to their housing needs to prevent homelessness; help them find affordable housing options; advise them how to manage their household bills; deal with housing benefit and Universal Credit issues and support them with any other problems they encounter regarding their housing.

When an asylum seeker receives a positive decision on their claim, to facilitate the transition from asylum accommodation to mainstream (local authority, housing association or private landlord) accommodation. This will include advising clients of their options; inducting them onto the Ipswich Borough Council’s Gateway to Home Choice system and teaching them how to bid for properties; managing expectations of this process; exploring private tenancy options and supporting through moving home.

To act as a key point of contact in dealing with housing problems including liaising with landlords, housing associations and the local authority to ensure our clients are dealt with fairly and that they understand their rights and responsibilities

To keep abreast of housing and benefits legislation and how it impacts our clients, including participating in advisory panel consultations and providing real life examples of the issues faced

To actively seek solutions to the lack of housing available to our clients in Ipswich including organising public appeals for private landlords with affordable homes to rent

Working closely with Ipswich Borough Council’s Homelessness Prevention Team to ensure their services are appropriate and accessible for our clients and seeking joint solutions to homelessness amongst refugees

**General Advice Work**

To provide support, advice and information to refugee and asylum seeker clients of all ages within the Advice Service. This will include assisting with a wide range of issues such as immigration, orientation in the UK/local community, benefits, education and employment.

To advocate on behalf of clients with external organisations in a factual and clear way either verbally or through letters or reports

To act as lead advice worker within the Advice Team regarding housing issues

To keep abreast of legislation and rules regarding asylum seekers and refugees and share relevant information with SRS colleagues

To assist clients by directing them to other services provided by SRS and/or external agencies and making appointments, where appropriate

To keep accurate client records on the SRS Client Database including recording positive outcomes in line with the aims of the organisation and funder requirements

To attend and contribute to team meetings, one-off meetings and training sessions

**General**

To promote independence on the part of our clients and actively empower them to help themselves according to their individual abilities

To collect clients’ information, record this on the Client Database and to maintain the filing system in line with data protection (GDPR) regulations

To train and support volunteers assisting clients in the office

To help with the development and administration of written information produced by SRS for our clients’ benefit

**Additional Duties**

To compile reports in reference to our funders outcomes and targets

To attend and contribute to team meetings and training, induction courses, conferences and meetings of Suffolk Refugee Support

**Personal Development**

With the support of the Advice Service Manager, the post-holder must effectively manage their own workload, assessing their priorities in terms of the balance between the reactive workload and the medium and long-term plans and projects. Work-time opportunities for appropriate training will be given to the post-holder.

**Flexibility**

In order to deliver services effectively, a degree of flexibility is needed and the post-holder may be required to perform work not specifically referred to above. Such duties, however, will fall within the scope of the job, at the appropriate skills and responsibility level. This job description will therefore be subject to periodic review with the post-holder to ensure it accurately reflects the duties of the job.

**Equal Opportunities Statement**

As part of its recruitment policy, Suffolk Refugee Support intends to ensure that no prospective or actual employee is discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, gender, nationality, marital status, sexual orientation, class, disability, age, religious belief or political persuasion, or is disadvantaged by any condition or requirement that is not demonstrably justifiable.

**Person Specification**

Job Title: Housing & General Advice Worker

Reports to: Advice Service Manager

Please refer to each of these person specification requirements when completing your application form

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| **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities** | **Essential / Desirable** | **Assessment Method** |
| A thorough knowledge of housing legislation, options and the housing situation in Suffolk | Essential | Interview/Application Form |
| A thorough knowledge of the UK benefits systems | Essential | Interview/Application Form |
| An understanding of the needs and entitlements of asylum seekers and refugees coupled with an understanding of the asylum process/legislation in the UK. | Desirable | Interview/Application Form |
| Proven experience of assisting people to look for and secure work/training and motivating them to improve their personal circumstances through self-empowerment | Desirable | Interview/ Application form  |
| Ability to listen to people with complex problems and to address their problems with compassion, patience and empathy | Essential  | Interview/ Application form  |
| Good communication skills, with the ability to present information clearly both in the written and spoken form to a variety of audiences including people whose first language is not English | Essential  | Interview/ Application Form |
| Experience of prioritising own workload and working unsupervised | Desirable | Interview/ Application Form |
| Ability to remain calm under pressure and to work in a busy public facing environment | Essential  | Interview/ Application Form |
| Ability to use word-processing, spreadsheet and database packages | Essential | Interview/ Application Form |
| Awareness of the level of discrimination faced by refugees and asylum seekers in the UK | Desirable  | Interview/ Application Form |
| A commitment to equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice | Essential  | Interview/ Application Form |
| A full UK driving licence and access to your own transport | Desirable  | Application form  |
| Experience of working within a multicultural team | Desirable  | Interview/ Application Form |
| Ability to speak and read/write a refugee language commonly used by our clients (e.g. Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi/Dari, Ukrainian/Russian) | Desirable  | Interview/ Application Form |