

Volunteer Vacancy
Chairperson
Wandsworth Refugee Network

About us

Wandsworth Refugee Network is a small voluntary organisation, based in south-west London, which visits in prisons to provide emotional and practical support to people being held post-sentence under immigration control. Currently our work is primarily within Wandsworth Prison.

WRN is the simplest of organisations: a network of volunteers, with no paid staff, no office and very low expenses. Funds, provided by local churches, meet such expenses as there are, but also provide a small fund to help those we visit.

Visiting people being detained

Each year, around 30,000 people are detained indefinitely in the UK under immigration control in detention centres, short term holding facilities and prisons either on entry to the country or while they are waiting to be removed or deported from the UK. They can be detained for months or sometimes years without knowing when they will be released.

People in detention can often feel vulnerable, isolated and frightened. Some may have no friends or family in the UK. Access to adequate healthcare is difficult and the effect on people's mental and physical health can be serious. Legal aid has suffered severe cuts and it is hard for detainees to access legal advice.

Our volunteers visit people being detained under immigration control after their sentence has ended in HMP Wandsworth offering vital emotional and practical support, and are for many, the only contact they have with life outside the prison.

About the role

We are looking for a Chairperson who could make a commitment of approx. 2 half-days per week (including visiting time at the prison), who has good management and people skills, an understanding of immigration detention, or willingness to receive training; and who is interested in and has an understanding of the issues faced by asylum seekers and other migrants in the UK.

Responsibilities include chairing bi-monthly meetings, liaising with Wandsworth prison, helping to recruit new volunteers, and arranging volunteer training and supervision.

The role offers a great opportunity for anyone interested in and passionate about issues of migration, detention and asylum and in supporting people at a vulnerable time in their lives to access key support and advice; to meet new people; and to play a key role in the continued development of a long-standing community organisation. *For full details please see the role description and person specification overleaf.*

How to apply

Please see the attached role description, person specification and application form.

Please complete and return the application form by **Wed 30th September 2015** to Denise Mumford:

Email: denise.mumford@zen.co.uk

Post: 4 Victoria Mews, Magdalen Road, London, SW18 3PY

Tel: 0208 946 5343

Chairperson, Wandsworth Refugee Network

Role description and person specification

Role Summary

The role of the Chair is to ensure that the management committee functions well; that the organisation is managed effectively; to act as a key representative of the organisation; to support volunteers in their roles; and to ensure that the organisation achieves its aims of providing support to immigration detainees held in Wandsworth Prison.

In addition to the general responsibilities of a committee member, there are a number of tasks specific to this role:

Ensuring the management committee functions properly

- Planning and chairing committee meetings (held every two months) and AGM.
- Ensuring matters are dealt with effectively and efficiently
- Bringing impartiality and objectivity to meetings and decision making
- Preparing the organisation's Annual Report.
- Planning for recruitment and renewal of management committee members

Supervising the running of the organisation

In partnership with other committee members:

- Recruiting new volunteers, including arranging approval for visiting with the prison.
- Providing inductions to new volunteers and, where possible/necessary, supporting volunteers to access additional training
- Providing ongoing support to volunteers (via phone/email and volunteer meetings)
- Maintaining organisational records.

Representing the organisation

- Acting as the primary contact and maintaining a working relationship with Wandsworth Prison.
- Liaising as required with other relevant organisations: (eg. AVID, BID etc.)
- Speaking at local churches (the organisation's main funders) by invitation
- Supporting the committee with fundraising activities, as necessary.

Qualities and skills required

- *Good organisational/people management skills*
- *Good communication and interpersonal skills*
- *Impartiality and fairness*
- *Ability to ensure decisions are taken and followed up*
- *Understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a management committee*
- *Experience working with and supporting volunteers*
- *Interest in and understanding of the issues facing asylum seekers and other migrants in the UK.*
- *Understanding of immigration detention, or willingness to receive training*
- *Commitment to equal opportunities*

Time commitment

- Approx. 2 half-days a week (including time visiting the prison). Largely home-based, with flexibility on days/hours (could include weekends if this was preferable).