

## Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Due to the level of misinformation and myths there can be confusion as to what the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' mean and they can be frequently and incorrectly get conflated. Asylum seekers refugees are people who are at different stages of a legal process to gain protection.

Who is an asylum seeker?

'An asylum seeker is someone who has lodged an application for protection on the basis of the Refugee Convention or Article 3 of the ECHR.' <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/glossary>

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...' (Definition quoted from the 1951 Refugee Convention)

'Refugee status is awarded to someone the Home Office recognises as a refugee as described in the Refugee Convention. A person given refugee status is normally granted leave to remain in the UK for 5 years, and at the end of that period can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain.' <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/glossary>

In terms of what a refugee and what an asylum seeker are entitled to do and receive is determined by the legal status.

For more information, see our [online](#) directory of national and local support services

## Are refugees and asylum seekers allowed to volunteer?

**Yes** For more information on volunteering for asylum seekers you can read the government publication

[Permission to work and volunteering for asylum seekers \(p13\) Volunteering.](#)

<http://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2015/11/17/helping-refugees-to-volunteer/>

<http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/giving-asylum-seekers-right-volunteer/>

There is more information available online however for the purposes of volunteering, the important point is that both groups have the right to volunteer. However it is worth noting that there is a difference between volunteering and voluntary work. It is important to know

the difference to be able to when offering volunteering opportunities to people from overseas.

Volunteering and voluntary work are two distinct legal terms. which can impact of people to volunteer. Some of the main distinctions are:

	Volunteering	Voluntary Work
Legal Mutual Obligation	No	Yes
Financial Reward	No, however, volunteers should not be out of pocket and can get expenses incurred as a result of volunteering	May involve some payment or honorarium
Unpaid work	No	Yes
Unpaid internships,	No	Yes
Work experience	No	Yes
Work programmes	No	Yes
Link to possible job offer	No	Yes
Training	Limited to that which enables volunteers to volunteer within their role	Can received training relevant to role beyond role remit
Job substitution	No	Possible

Asylum seekers can volunteer, but cannot do voluntary work.

Asylum Seekers can volunteer with charitable organisations, registered charities and bodies that raise funds for either

For helpful information, visit [Sheffield Volunteer Centre](#) website pages:

[Asylum Seeker Volunteering Legislation](#)

[Refugees and Asylum Seekers](#)

[Involving refugees & asylum seeker volunteers](#)

**Please note, this is not a substitute for legal guide and due to the complexities of immigration law we are unable to give legal advice. To access legal advice, you will need to speak to a registered immigration adviser.**