

## Sligo Volunteer Centre



### ORGANIZATION\*

Sligo Volunteer Centre

### COUNTRY AND CITY/IES

Ireland, Sligo

### FIELD OF WORK

Organising and centralising volunteering opportunities for the region of Sligo, promoting inclusion and positive mental health.

### THE ACTION IS ADDRESSED TO (BENEFICIARIES)

In the widest sense - people who are new to our community. However, the majority in this category who need the service are young men aged 25-35 and women who are usually mothers - aged 25 +. They come from a variety of African and Middle Eastern countries usually.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

Essentially getting migrants/refugees/asylum seekers involved in community volunteering

### CONTEXT:

Many people who are new to a community come to our Volunteer Centre to find volunteer opportunities that allow them to meet people and learn about their new community. A lot of the people who go to the Centre were refugees and asylum seekers from the local Reception Centre. Many had a culture of volunteering in their home countries - but many didn't. Many of them had goals around keeping busy, to contribute, to meet people and to improve their English language skills. The Centre engaged a volunteer within the reception centre who acted as a Liaison Person for others who lived there. She channelled people to our service as well as explaining the benefits of getting involved. She also was on hand to support people to assist people navigate forms, geography etc.

The purpose of the initiative was to assist people who wanted to volunteer to do so, with the knock-on effect of them becoming more embedded in their



community. The purpose of a Liaison Person was to streamline the service, to support those who engaged and to have a contact within the community they were serving.

### MAIN GOALS

Getting migrants/refugees/asylum seekers involved in community volunteering

### IMPACTS OF THE ACTIVITY

- Promoting inclusion and positive mental health.
- Getting migrants/refugees/asylum seekers involved in community volunteering
- Finding a purpose through volunteering. Volunteers see an improvement in mental health; they get to know people in their community and feel a sense of belonging. They contribute positively to not for profit groups in the area. Their positive experiences mean that more people in the same situation get involved and reap the rewards also.
- Breaking barriers. Volunteers from different backgrounds can assist in breaking down barriers around inclusion - by their actions they are showing positive leadership and being positive role models, which paves the way for others in new communities.
- Increasing exposure. People become exposed to other cultures in a relaxed and informal way which has benefits for all involved.

### COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

- Diversity Sligo - a group whose mission is to support Sligo based Refugees and Asylum seekers. They support by assisting the Organisation with promoting the volunteer centre to residents of the reception centre.
- Local Charity shops - would act as a placement opportunity for many who seek to volunteer
- Local Tidy towns initiative - have a programme specifically catering for residents of the Reception Centre to get involved.

**SUSTAINABILITY (ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY)****SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEER ACTIONS:**

These volunteers from different backgrounds can assist in breaking down barriers around inclusion - by their actions they are showing positive leadership and being positive role models, which paves the way for others in new communities.

**SUSTAINABLE APPROACH:**

Having a ground up approach. I think it is important to let the communities themselves decide what they wish to get involved in and what they want to get out of it rather than people being told what to do or where to go. To empower people, people need to have a sense of autonomy. This in turn allows them to feel an accomplishment in their achievements.

**ADAPTING TO COVID SITUATION:**

The Organisation will continue to promote volunteer from home initiatives and outdoor volunteering soon when restrictions allow.

**STAFF**

All of our paid staff are involved in this service in some way. Three core staff of the Volunteer Centre are all female, Aged 40-45 and Irish. Our Liaison people in the past have been female aged 45, African; Male Aged 30, African; and female aged 30, African. These Liaison people were volunteers. Staff would all have a community development background.

Volunteer Liaison people would have a varied background. Staff would not receive specific training - other than equality training and informal diversity training.

**COST**

There is no cost attached to the initiative, however, it is best if it is part of some kind of continuum of a trusted service within the community.

**TRANSFERABILITY**

These volunteers from different backgrounds can assist in breaking down barriers around inclusion; by their actions they are showing positive leadership and being positive role models, which paves the way for others in new communities. This model can be used by other groups, centres and community actors.