



"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." – Gandhi

New Routes Integration Volunteering Strategy 2023





This strategy builds on the existing volunteer programme that has been developed over many years. It aims to meet increases in service demand and funder requirements, as well as support the wider strategic aim of New Routes as we move forward towards becoming a medium sized charity.

This strategy has been developed after a brief consultation period which started in early November 2022. Volunteers and service users were encouraged to provide ideas and feedback during a number of informal focus group sessions, as well as via individual conversations.

Paid staff members participated in a staff meeting with a focus on developing the strategic aims of our volunteering programme. Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were discussed around the key themes of: recruitment and retention, training, accreditation of volunteering activities, volunteer roles, resourcing, and the expectations of funders.

1.0 Executive Summary

“New Routes Integration works with recently settled ethnic minority individuals, families and communities - primarily asylum seekers and refugees - in Norwich. Our aim is to promote social inclusion through the provision of skill-building activities to enable disadvantaged minority ethnic individuals to fulfil their potential and become actively involved in society.”

New Routes Integration Strategy and Plan 2019/20-2021/22

As a charity that promotes social cohesion, inclusion, empowerment, and integration, our volunteering activities provide no better vehicle for the furtherance of these aims. Volunteering at New Routes benefits our unpaid workers, our organisation, our wider community, and our participants alike.

2023 will mark a significant increase in the training and recruitment of volunteers with lived experience. A trend that has been set and exemplified by the significant numbers of beneficiaries from our new shop who now volunteer within it. There is also great potential to offer the increasing numbers of asylum seeking residents at our local hotels with the opportunity to participate in unpaid work.

In response to these developments, this year will also mark the introduction of formal accreditation for volunteers. The successful completion of volunteer training, logged work activities, and appropriate continued professional development (CPD) will result in a formal qualification for those who wish to have one. There will also be a broadening of the menu of volunteering roles available.

The offer of accreditation can aid in the recruitment, motivation, and retention of volunteers. Participating U.K citizens may gain a valuable certificate to present to new employers within new sectors. For our new arrivals such accreditation may be the first of their formal qualifications that could be immediately recognised in Great Britain.



New avenues of volunteer recruitment will be pursued; such as the potential to set up and establish working relationships with local schools and colleges who offer their students the Duke of Edinburgh Award Programme. Volunteering placements are an integral feature of this youth development curriculum. We will also further develop relationships with the University of East Anglia (UEA) School Of International Development; with the aim of increasing our pool of younger volunteers, as well as students embarking on short work placements

Established processes and systems for volunteer administration, training, and communication are currently being reviewed. We will also review how effectively we match demand with supply for volunteer services; as well as how we may best meet the requirements, targets, and expected outcomes of various project funders.

Supervision sessions for volunteers, in particular for those who support participants through mentoring, will be developed to meet best professional practice – all while maintaining the flexibility and informality that make us an attractive organisation to work for.

2023 will also mark the development of a service user focus group, which is in itself an interesting and rewarding volunteering opportunity for participants.

2.0 Volunteering Programme Organisational Responsibilities

New Routes has a responsibility to:

- recruit and manage volunteers appropriately - providing adequate training, support, supervision, and opportunities for personal development and/or career enhancement
- be explicit about what we offer and the desired outcomes
- provide a safe working environment with clear boundaries and professional expectations for all
- have transparent and accountable working methods
- effectively manage the range of services and activities we offer to participants - with a focus on individual empowerment and integration
- foster a culture of inclusion, equality and diversity
- ensure that all stakeholders are treated with respect and with a high standard of professional integrity

3.0 Volunteering Roles at New Routes

Our volunteers can chose from a range of interesting and rewarding roles. New Routes offer our communities some of the best unpaid work activities in Norfolk. We provide people with the opportunity to be directly involved with issues that are front page news and the lead bulletins on national television. Volunteer work has a significant impact on some of the most vulnerable people in our country, and some of the most willing and able to benefit from the contribution of unpaid staff.



Voluntary roles currently / or will include:

- Adult Mentoring and Befriending
- Youth Mentoring and Befriending
- ESOL Support
- ESOL Teaching
- University Work Placements
- Activity Delivery or Support – football, woodwork, arts and crafts, allotment e.t.c.
- Shop Support
- Special Events Support
- Homework Club
- Participation in Service User Focus Group

The New Year may present New Routes with the opportunity to broaden our range of roles. This could include engagement at the hotels, or perhaps direct involvement with the issuing of phone and SIM cards at busy periods before and after ESOL classes. There would also seem to be growing demand for an odd jobs person who could work between sites.

The development of a focus group of service users could fall under the remit of the Volunteer Manager. All involved stand to benefit, with ideas for service improvement, and feedback about current provision forwarded to our CEO, colleagues, and Board of Trustees.

4.0 Operational Procedures

The following is a summary of current operational procedures and processes for our volunteering programme. These were developed by our former volunteer coordinator and managers; and more recently by our current colleagues and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

4.1 Recruitment, Selection, and Retention

Currently there is an ongoing recruitment drive for volunteers. Generic volunteer training courses are delivered three times a year (see 4.3 Training). See 8.0 Appendices for a diagram of the recruitment process. The suitability of potential volunteers is assessed through observation during training and/or group discussion before a final appointment is made.

Most volunteers seem to have heard about opportunities to contribute to our services through word of mouth. There has been limited success to date via our engagement and promotional efforts with external agencies offering volunteer recruitment services (such as Voluntary Norfolk). Recently New Routes has re-engaged with Future Radio, and we have been offered a regular slot to promote services and volunteering opportunities. Press coverage could also be an avenue pursued, should there be any need to increase numbers of applicants.

More attention will be paid to matching the demand for with the supply of volunteers. Records suggest that many previous volunteers have not been recently *active* or have remained *dormant* since completing training. This reflects the challenges involved with



recruiting and retaining volunteers within a fluid service environment, coupled with volunteers own changes of life circumstances. The Kovid pandemic has also had a significant impact on volunteer retention.

There has been an increase in the numbers of beneficiaries to our services, as well as those who have recently arrived in Norwich and who wish to volunteer for New Routes. This trend can be part credited to the success of our recently established shop in engaging with new arrivals. There has also been an increase in the numbers of asylum seekers residing in the new hotels who also wish to contribute. Due in part to our ongoing engagement work.

There is potential to set up and establish working relationships with local schools and colleges who offer their students the Duke of Edinburgh Award Programme (D of E). Volunteering placements are an integral feature of this youth development curriculum. We are currently working with City Norwich School (CNS) with a view to piloting this idea with a city centre school that already has a long established commitment to D of E at Gold Level.

The New Routes mentoring and befriending programme currently has a surplus of trained adult mentors and a shortfall in youth mentors. This imbalance is largely circumstantial and will be addressed through focused promotional efforts across a younger age group.

Levels of volunteer retention will be improved through matching trained volunteers to unpaid work opportunities within a two month time scale. We will also increase the menu of volunteering opportunities on offer, and we will also provide interested volunteers with the opportunity to accredit their training and activities (see *5.0 Accreditation and CPD*).

4.2 Administration and Records

Administrative and record keeping systems are currently under review as there appears to be some duplication of effort in key areas. A comprehensive database system is currently used to store volunteer details and log key information and events. These include records of contact details, DBS numbers, volunteer training undertaken, current volunteer availability, preferred volunteering activities, references received, and volunteer agreements signed.

There appears to be some crossover from existing databases with our *Lamplight* system. Lamplight logs most activities with participants, which includes engagement with volunteers. With this in mind we may be able to streamline administration, monitoring, and record keeping as we move forward. This is currently being reviewed.

4.3 Training

In line with recruitment needs and targets our volunteer training courses are delivered three times per year. Training comprises of a half day attendance at our bespoke New Communities Awareness (NCA) training. This is a mandatory course for all volunteers regardless of their future role.

The NCA course comprises of awareness raising across key issues around immigration, and with a particular focus on the needs and aspirations of refugees. Delivery also includes a basic



briefing on Home Office procedures for those seeking asylum, U.K residency, visas, and/or a U.K. permit to work. NCA training may be enhanced with the addition of guest speakers who have had lived experience, as well as those who have already been volunteering.

Once DBS and reference checked our NCA trained volunteers may then proceed to work within basic roles such as shop support. Volunteers who wish to become Mentors and Befrienders complete another day long training course that is specific to their role (as fully detailed in the 2022 *New Routes Mentoring and Befriending Strategy* document). Volunteers who wish to support classes in English as a Second Language (ESOL) also complete a short bespoke training course.

2023 will start with the recruitment of a new cohort of volunteers who all have lived experience. We will continue applying the same administrative processes and safeguarding procedures for this group; however, we will develop and deliver a more bespoke and appropriate version of the NCA training for this and similar future cohorts.

All training programmes are monitored and evaluated using a brief feedback form which is anonymous and submitted to trainers at the end of each course.

4.4 Safeguarding

It is important that we continue to stress to volunteers that safeguarding procedures and processes are for their protection as well as the vulnerable people they may be supporting.

Currently all volunteers are required to complete an online safeguarding awareness package and are provided with a link to this training. It may be best practice to include more safeguarding training as part of the generic NCA training course for all volunteers. Safeguarding training does already feature as a significant constituent of mentoring and befriending training.

All volunteers will continue to be made aware of reporting procedures for safeguarding issues. These begin with informing the project coordinators, the Volunteer Coordinator or our CEO. Appropriate action is then taken with the relevant authorities.

Training will include lone working procedures and issues around personal safety, as well as a synopsis of the rules and expectations around data protection and the sharing of information.

All volunteers are required to complete and submit a Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS). This is a criminal records check that discloses reprimands, cautions, warnings and convictions unspent according to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. All volunteers complete their own DBS check using an online platform provided and are supported throughout this process. Proof of identification is checked by the Volunteer Coordinator and DBS check results are scrutinised and individual DBS numbers recorded. A history of offending may not preclude an applicant from volunteering, this will be dependent on the nature of the offence.



Currently all volunteers complete a Basic DBS check unless they will be working directly with children and young people. In which case an Enhanced DBS check is required. We will review the current arrangements for volunteers mentoring adults (who currently only complete a basic DBS check). The cost of disclosure services are currently a significant and prohibitive factor when considering numbers of volunteer places for individual projects and services. Consequently in 2023 volunteers will be asked to pay for their own basic DBS check unless they are receiving benefits or are not able to work. More expensive Enhanced DBS checks will continue to be paid for by New Routes. Customary volunteer expenses will still be covered.

4.5 Matching

Traditionally project coordinators have been actively involved in the selection and matching of volunteers to their specific projects or services. This has been in collaboration with the Volunteer Manager. Some volunteers opt for multiple choices of roles. This can be accommodated according to demand for services and the skill set of individual volunteers.

4.6 Monitoring

Volunteer stages of recruitment and training are monitored on our database as detailed in 4.2. Lamplight is also used to monitor the progress of mentoring and befriending relationships where appropriate.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are submitted to our CEO from service leads on a quarterly basis. The activities of volunteers are one of the key measurable outcomes of individual services. These KPIs are then shared with trustees and funders when stipulated or appropriate.

The feedback from a New Routes focus group (see *Appendices 6.0*) comprising of selected service users could also be used for monitoring purposes.

4.7 Supervision

Currently volunteers are offered supervision via *Whatsap* messaging on an “as and when” required basis. This system is currently offered on a more regular basis to mentors. Mentoring volunteers have more in-depth roles and may require support and advice around key issues that emerge as the relationship develops.

This system is under review as a more formalised system with set dates may be more appropriate. Supervision sessions will be run in exactly the same way as those conducted for paid staff in the social care sector. Supervision should have a set agenda (while allowing for flexibility). OFSTED recognises that there is no *best* supervision model for those working within social care, but this governing body does recommend that supervision should:

- help develop professional or working practice for both parties
- be emotionally supportive
- allow for an exploration of the quality and impact of services delivered



- provide the opportunity to be reflective and to promote best practice
- help develop personal development

With time constraints taken into consideration volunteers will also be offered face-to-face supervision where appropriate. *Watsap* meetings may be more effective if conducted using video link as opposed to text.

4.8 Communications and Promotion

Volunteers are invited to attend a quarterly held meeting for all those conducting unpaid work for New Routes; however attendance has traditionally been poor. The format and regularity of these meetings are currently under review. Attendance may be improved with the addition of guest speakers around key issues. A relaunch of volunteer meetings may begin with a social event in the first instance.

Volunteers receive a Newsletter which is currently distributed across all unpaid workers on a periodic basis. This will be used as a method to advertise additional CPD opportunities, and will include recent success stories, as well as celebrations of volunteer's achievements.

Regular and committed volunteers will be asked if they wish their photographs, and a brief profile of them and their role/s, to be displayed in a prominent wall display at the shop and/or main office. This will aid all staff to be familiar with regular volunteers and will celebrate their contribution as an integral part of our team.

5.0 Accreditation and CPD

Organisations such as the Open College Network (OCN) were developed to recognise informal learning achieved by adults. In the past the OCN provided smaller training or educational providers with the opportunity to develop their own nationally accredited programmes of learning and development. The National Open College Network (NOCN) now provides a vast array of products that allow organisations to deliver training and/or log learning and development towards recognised qualifications at different levels.

New Routes could register as an approved centre for the delivery of NOCN accredited learning. Offering formal accreditation for the completion of our volunteer training courses, as well as a prescribed number of logged volunteering hours, would have little impact on how we deliver our programmes. There are cost implications for registering an organisation as an NOCN provider as well as for registering individual learners.

A successful pilot project developing NOCN accreditation (or similar) within our volunteering programme could lead to further opportunities. We could also then provide ESOL or short course learners with formal accreditation, and establish New Routes as the lead agency for training and development, for new arrivals and those who support them, across the Norwich Integration Partnership and beyond.

Many organisations, such as Refugee Action, The British Red Cross, and NCC Adult Education e.t.c provide free training courses for those entering the health and social care sectors. New



Routes will provide our volunteers with a menu of opportunities which will be regularly updated. Other *in-house* training opportunities will also be promoted.

6.0 Further Development Opportunities

Our shop is located in close proximity to the NILE Language School. There could be an opportunity to set up an ongoing scheme where trainee teachers volunteer to deliver some of our English language classes upon passing their ESOL or CELTA qualifications. Newly qualified language teachers trained by NILE are encouraged by the school to build up their experience via voluntary work. Three recently qualified ESOL teachers have already expressed an interest in volunteering for us.

The Volunteer Manager could assume responsibility for the recruitment and ongoing supervision of students conducting work placements at New Routes.

The gathering interest in volunteering among the residents at the hotels could be matched by extending the offer of unpaid work beyond just contributing at New Routes. With our volunteer programme systems in place, coupled with our multi-agency and cross-sector contacts, we are well positioned to lead the promotion of volunteering in general. Multiple Norwich based community projects require volunteers, and they are well placed to offer asylum seekers the opportunities to participate. There may also be an opportunity to work in partnership with the Princes Trust youth development programmes or similar schemes.

Such a lead initiative could be achieved in collaboration with other members of the Norwich Integration Partnership, Mangoma, Norfolk County Council (NCC) The People from Abroad Team, NSFT/MIND Wellbeing Service, and other interested parties. With our New Routes Volunteer Manager assuming responsibility for leading and chairing a steering group comprising of appropriate practitioners from contributing agencies.

Such an approach, if not already replicated in other areas, could be used as a national model of good practice. Encouraging and providing volunteering opportunities to asylum seekers has political and social merit, combats feelings of low worth among hotel residents, and provides a solid foundation for both participant's language skill acquisition as well as future endeavours towards integration.

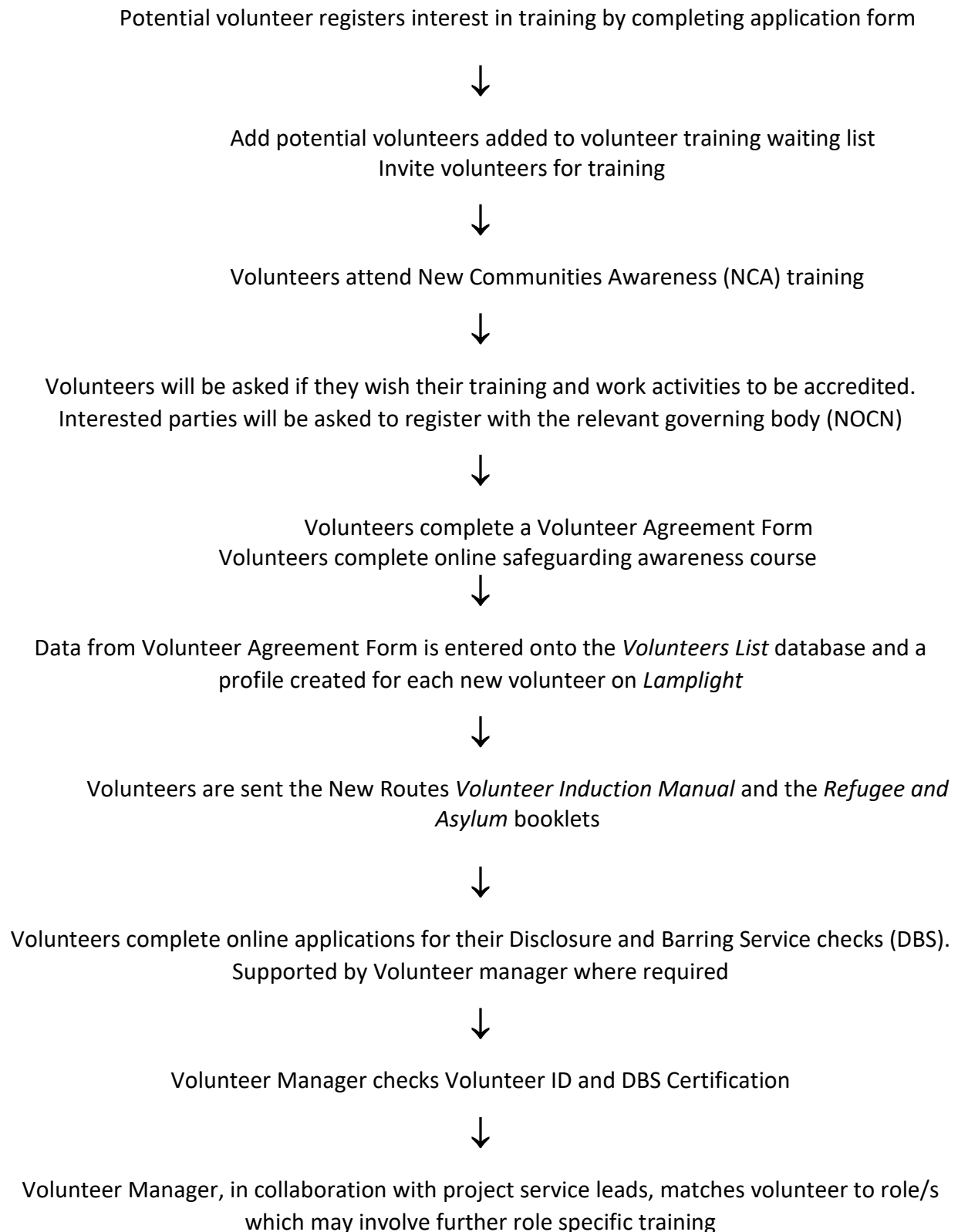
7.0 Conclusion

Our volunteering strategy presents an opportunity to build on existing volunteering programmes, to develop new roles, to foster new partnerships, to include beneficiaries in decision making, and to offer more to our participants and volunteers alike. We also have an opportunity to meet the increase in demand for our services with the support (in part) of a larger pool of volunteers with varied professional skill sets and life experiences. Through engagement with volunteers, or through volunteering themselves, our participants will: make new contacts, become more familiar with U.K society, improve English language skills, and feel welcomed by their host community. Thus contributing towards the aim of integration for many of the new arrivals we support.



8.0 Appendices

Volunteer Recruitment Journey





Volunteering Best Practise Checklist

ISSUE	CHECKLIST
Volunteering Programme Aims	The Volunteers are made aware of our clear objective to support the integration of our participants into U.K society.
	There are role descriptions and clear criteria outlining the various volunteering roles.
Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers	The suitability of potential volunteers is assessed through observation during training and/or group discussion before a final appointment is made.
	There is a clearly documented process for screening volunteers, which includes CRB checks and the taking up of references (where appropriate).
Safeguarding of Participants and Volunteers	The programme provides insurance cover in terms of personal protection and/or liability for all individuals involved in the provision of volunteering services.
	Where appropriate, staff carry out risk assessments of their participants as well as the activities engaged in by volunteers and participants.
	There are appropriate policies and procedures in place to safeguard both participants and volunteers.
Matching Volunteers with Roles	The matching of volunteers with appropriate roles takes into account the circumstances, needs and wishes of the volunteer while making best use of the experience and skills they have.
	Volunteers are matched with roles where there is an appropriate demand for their services.
Volunteer Preparation and Training	Initial training and preparation for volunteers should include as a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on the background and purpose of the project • Input relating to the client group • Input on the nature of the role/s including responsibilities, skills used, and professional boundaries • Information on the operation of the programme, including policies/procedures, and support available.
Support and Supervision	Volunteers are offered regular support and supervision sessions where their ongoing development and support needs are discussed.
	Participants are given the opportunity to provide regular feedback to the Project Coordinators and/or the Volunteer Manager regarding any ideas, issues or concerns that they have.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Regular monitoring and evaluation should be consistent and thorough to ensure that the programme remains impactful.