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VOLUNTEER ROLES AT HMSC

Haringey Migrant Support Centre (HMSC) is a charity set up in 2012, staffed by volunteers and a small number of paid workers, to run a weekly service offering advice and support to migrants in Haringey and its neighbouring boroughs.

The beneficiaries are migrants, often with insecure immigration status who have been affected by the 'hostile environment' agenda. They include migrants who have overstayed or are undocumented, individuals with significant health problems, refugees and asylum seekers, those with strong family ties to the UK, those with limited leave to remain but no recourse to public funds, etc. Around two thirds of the people we support are women, most of whom have children. HMSC assists visitors (clients) in many different ways on issues ranging from immigration to housing, welfare or health, for example: applying for legal aid in immigration cases, referring to solicitors, advising on support available from local authorities, finding emergency accommodation, securing or improving existing accommodation, alleviating immediate hardship (with food bank vouchers or individual grants), etc.

During the Covid-19 crisis, HMSC has been working with a limited capacity. We have now reorganized our services and we will be providing a weekly Monday triage service offering initial advice and signposting services on immigration, housing and welfare issues, followed by advice appointments with immigration advisers (from HMSC, Islington Law Centre and Coram Children's Legal Centre) and housing/welfare advisers.

All the work will be done remotely. Staff, volunteers and advisers will continue to work from home until further notice and advice will be given by email or during telephone appointments.

The week will be organised as follows:

- A **New Enquiries line** on Thursdays, where visitors will be booked for a "triage" assessment for the following Monday. This will be managed by members of staff.
- A **Triage session** (initial assessment) on Mondays, run by volunteers and supervised by members of staff, where the situation of our visitors will be assessed. Signposting, referrals and less complex casework will be provided as required or an in-depth advice appointment will be booked.
- In-depth **advice appointments** on Tuesdays with immigration, housing or welfare advisers.
- **Housing and welfare advocates** will be working on Tuesdays on housing, welfare and destitution issues.
- A group of **Legal support volunteers** will be working during the week, supervised by our in-house immigration adviser and barrister. These volunteers will be making Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) applications, referrals to solicitors, subject access requests, etc. A member of this team will specialise in visitors' finances, in particular to assess eligibility for legal aid.
- A **Catch-up line** on Thursdays, where our existing visitors will be able to get an update. The catch-up line will be managed by a volunteer (with support from staff) – this volunteer may be required to do some casework as well

Catch-up line Volunteer

The catch-up line is a phone number dedicated to liaising with our existing visitors who want to have an update on their case. This role is suited to people who would like to have direct contact with our visitors over the phone, and to provide advocacy and assistance in a practical way. Full supervision provided.

When? Every Thursday from 12pm to 4.30 pm – From home

Tasks

- From 12pm to 2pm: Monitoring the catch-up line, taking messages, finding information in our database and in emails about the visitor's situation, liaising with advisers and caseworkers and responding to enquiries.
- From 2pm to 4.30pm: undertaking casework related to the calls received or other tasks, as required. For instance: making telephone calls, writing letters, filling forms or signposting to other services.
- Maintaining clear records of actions performed and results in our case management system.

Commitment

- Need to be available to volunteer **every week**, on the day and times mentioned in the role description. We understand that there might be circumstances where a volunteer can't attend (e.g. holidays, illness), please try to inform us in advance so that we can organise cover.
- Need a minimum commitment of **6 months** (full training takes 4 weeks and experience is gradually built up 'on the job' and through peer support).
- Need to attend initial training and any additional training provided by HMSC.

Requirements

- Personal qualities
 - ✓ Empathy and understanding of the complex issues faced by migrants.
 - ✓ Willingness to listen to the concerns of visitors to the centre.
 - ✓ Patient, calm manner when dealing with vulnerable visitors.
 - ✓ Good communication skills: ability to write clear letters and notes, and to deal with a range of people and agencies over the phone.
- IT and computer skills
 - ✓ All work will be done remotely. **Good computer skills and knowledge of Office 365 are essential.** You will be working online, with cloud-based files, shared email addresses, online chats, remote video calls, etc. Some training can be provided but you should be comfortable using these kinds of systems.
 - ✓ Furthermore, we use a new case management system / database called Lamplight. Again, full training will be provided but you should be willing and comfortable to learn and work with new systems.

Benefits

- Valuable experience at the frontline of a grassroots organization with hands-on casework experience, in a small friendly team.
- Better understanding of immigration and refugee issues, rights and entitlements of migrants, as well as ways to deliver practical support to vulnerable migrants facing the 'hostile environment'. Additional training will be provided when possible.
- Professional reference after 4 months.
- Reimbursement of travel and lunch expenses (if/when we return to the office).
Reimbursement of other expenses related to working from home to be agreed individually.