

GUIDE



**FOR VOLUNTEERS
IN HOUSING SUPPORT**

The Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project Erasmus+ “Training for Housing Support Workers” in short “TrainHouse” united organisations working with homeless people in the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Spain and the United Kingdom. The project aimed to develop training materials to be used by professional staff, peer support workers and volunteers in supporting homeless people on their way to independent housing. Between 2016-2018, the six partner organisations exchanged good practices on supporting homeless people into housing.

For the purposes of the guide, the term ‘housing’ is defined loosely: in some countries, accommodation services (like temporary hostels) offer studio apartments, often with private bathroom and kitchen(ette) facilities, while in others the focus was more on independent housing, whether shared by several people, used by one single person or even a family with children. In all scenarios, the homeless people received additional support to help maintain their tenancies by professional staff, peers and volunteers.

To see how housing support is defined by the authors, click [here](#)

INTRODUCTION OF THE ORGANISATIONS

Arrels Foundation, Spain

For 30 years, Arrels Foundation has been providing support to the people who sleep on the streets of Barcelona and it also works on raising awareness and transforming that reality. To make it possible, throughout all these years it has launched different projects and services thanks to the implication of a great team of volunteers and professionals.

Over the last few years, the foundation has promoted the participation of people who have lived on the street, and it is now working on the possibility of introducing a peer role in the Individual Support teams. These are the teams in charge of providing a long-term, intensive and longitudinal case monitoring for people who have slept rough for many years and now live in a permanent housing unit in accordance with the Housing First model.

For more information about the organisation click [here](#)



Arrels



Menhely Alapítvány (Shelter Foundation), Hungary

Menhely



Founded 30 years ago, Menhely Alapítvány provides wide range of social support and services to homeless individuals and families in Budapest and fosters cooperation among various units of society. In our teams professionals, volunteers and in some units also peer support workers do their various job. Above the services we operate our street paper called Fedél Nélkül ('Without Roof') along with art competitions and community social work.

All our services have a wide range of tasks that require the help of volunteers. They vary from very basic services such as distribution of food at weekends to qualitative ones such as photographing events or providing housing advice to homeless persons and, add to the quality of our social work. Some of our Experts by Experience also volunteer in the public sensitizing programs.

For more information about the organisation click [here](#)

Platforma pro Sociální Bydlení (The Czech Platform for Social Housing), Czech Republic

Platforma

**Platforma
pro sociální
bydlení**

Platform for Social Housing is an umbrella organisation that unites 79 members - service providers, experts in the field of social housing and people in housing need, advocating for a Social Housing Bill that would end homelessness in the Czech Republic. One of the members of the Platform, IQ Roma servis has specific experience and training in housing stability support services based on Housing first principles.

From the very origin Platform for Social Housing has been keen on involving experts by experience to have their say in formulating the policy priorities of the organisation and consulting the strategic documents. People in housing need have been active in Social Housing Bill consultations, local housing policy priorities in several municipalities or at public hearings and press conferences organised by the Platform. IQ Roma servis employs peer consultants in their effort to rehouse and stabilise homeless families in the pilot Housing First programme in the Czech Republic.

For more information about the organisation click [here](#)

BMSZKI, Hungary

BMSZKI is the biggest homeless service provider in Budapest, Hungary, with a wide range of services, from outreach to day centres, medical services, shelters and temporary accommodation for men, women, couples as well as families with children. In addition to these, housing support programs have been implemented for people who are engaged to cooperate with our support team after moving to independent housing. BMSZKI is launching a housing-first light pilot in the fall of 2018, involving 25 rough sleepers.



For more information about the organisation click [here](#)

BMSZKI

Vailla vakinaista asuntoa ry, (No Fixed Abode NGO), Finland

No Fixed Abode is an NGO founded in 1986 by homeless people themselves. Organisation is not committed to any political parties' or religious communities' agenda, but aims to influence Finnish housing policies together with other stakeholders. The aim of the organisation is to get rid of shelters and make it possible for everyone to live in her or his own apartment.



The organisation has a long history of participation and peer support work done by the homeless people. The first 10 years organisation was solely run on a voluntary basis. First hired person was a former homeless, who was in charge of running a woodwork workshop where carpentry skills were transferred from a master to apprentices. Participation of people who have experience in homelessness forms organisation's guiding principle, which permeates every level of its actions ranging from peer work to administration.

Today No Fixed Abode has around 40 employees of whom 25 percent have experienced homelessness themselves. Organisation runs two housing units (Housing first) which have all together 100 apartments. The support provided to the residents of the units is tailored according to the individual needs of every resident. No Fixed Abode has a night center, a peer support and volunteering center, an outreach team working at night time, housing counselling and floating support, support for scattered housing, specialisation in homeless immigrants' issues, and a summer villa run by the peers.

For more information about the organisation click [here](#)

Vva ry





Established in 1969 by a small group of rough sleepers in London, St Mungo's is a Homelessness charity working with people across the South of England. St Mungo's provides support and services to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming

homeless through outreach, hostels, supported housing and Housing First models as well as access to recovery, education, training and employment.

St Mungo's employs 1200 staff to support 2,700 clients across 350 services.

For more information about the organisation click [here](#)

	Traditional services	Supported Housing	Housing First	Rapid Rehousing	Volunteers	Peer Support
Arrels (ES)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
BMSZKI (HU)	✓	✓				
Menhely (HU)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Platforma (CZ)			✓	✓		✓
St Mungo's (UK)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Vva ry (FI)	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

This Guide for Volunteers contains a summary of the common lessons learnt in the project. We hope that other services supporting homeless people into independent living can use this brochure to get useful tips and ideas on how to provide help more efficiently, or more creatively.

For the Guide Professional Staff, click [here](#)

For the one for Peer Support Workers, click [here](#)



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CHAPTER

Guide

WHY DO WE NEED VOLUNTEERS?

The importance of volunteers in the supported housing sector

Volunteers are an important resource in supported housing. They provide much needed support for service users, for the organisation as a whole and for raising awareness of the cause in the wider community.

There is an increasing reliance on volunteers to support projects in the delivery of services aimed at ending homelessness.

Volunteers allow organisations to amplify services which without the volunteers would not be able to run.

13 volunteers giving 3 hours per week is equivalent to a full time member of staff. This time can be spent engaging with service users and completing everyday tasks.

(See [Chapter 2](#) for more detail)



The volunteer role is very different to a professional role and is not to be confused with that of a paid member of staff. Volunteers provide additional support and diversity of life experience and skills which can complement the service objectives.

While paid members of staff are focused on case management, the volunteers are focused on social engagement and integration within the local area. This is crucial as isolation can often be worse than it was when the service user was on the street and can lead to increased mental health issues and/or abandonment of tenancy.

"I usually drink coffee with the service users. It's a pleasure to take the time to listen to them and to create a link that allows an exchange full of trust in a cafe or playing table football, walking alongside the sea, or taking a look at the fish in a pet shop..."

Marie, Amels volunteer

Click [here](#) for whole interview

The recovery process has already begun with the acquisition of housing and severing ties to old friends, yet a new social network has not necessarily been created. Therefore, the volunteer is an important, trusted person who brings humane contact, quality time and variation to everyday life and through a trusting volunteer relationship, people who have been homeless can be empowered to start building a new social network, spending positive quality time with people who understand their situation.

Organisations can benefit from a group of experienced volunteers as they are a potential source of future employees.



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WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?

Clearly defined roles are key

Before you recruit any volunteers for your service, it is really important that you have a clear idea of what you want/need the volunteers to do. Creating a role description will help with this as it gives an opportunity to think about the specifics of the role that you're creating.

Role descriptions should set out clearly defined tasks and responsibilities for volunteers as well as time commitments and skill/experience requirements.

Click [here](#) for example role description

The location of the opportunity is also important to include. This gives volunteers the opportunity to fill out an appropriate application form (if applicable). It also gives them the information that they need to have a successful interview. It is important to ensure that volunteers are suitable for the role they are applying for to avoid misunderstandings or problems (See [Chapter 6](#)).



Volunteering should be a mutually beneficial arrangement. It is important to make sure that role descriptions appeal to volunteers and highlight some of the benefits that they will get from their voluntary experience. Examples of this can include highlighting if you will pay their travel/lunch expenses and an outline of any training/development opportunities that they will be able to access. This is also useful for volunteer retention (See [Chapter 5](#)).

Great interview questions

- Why do you want to volunteer with us?
- Why are you interested in the target service user group?
- Do you have any previous experience working or volunteering with the service user group? What training or knowledge do you need?
- What are your expectations of the role?
- What skills can you bring to the organisation?

Click [here](#) for interview template

Having specific activities on role descriptions can help to manage expectations. Volunteers may lose motivation to continue volunteering with an organisation if they have a poorly defined role description. If the tasks and responsibilities don't match up to those on the description, this can lead to feelings of disappointment. Volunteers may also be poorly matched to the tasks which could lead to feelings of inadequacy and volunteers who are unable to do the task at hand.

Suggested roles and tasks

- Promoting leisure, well-being and social activities, e.g. workshops such as cooking, art, music and yoga
- Acting as a bridge between staff and service users and reinforcing support plans
- Food delivery
- Accompanying service users to appointments, job interviews, local services
- Providing emotional support and social interaction. Quality free time with the service user
- Promoting independent living such as helping with the shopping, budgeting, cooking, housekeeping

"The volunteers carry out a double service: attending to the people that come here and also providing logistical support. We make up the beds, we heat up cups of soup, we make coffee, and we put on clothes washes, but above all we provide a listening service, one-to-one, we show an interest in the person, ask them questions and support them. A lot of times they'll arrive, they'll have had a good day and they'll tell you all sorts of things, and then on other days you can see on their faces that they've come to rest, to go to bed early, and get ready to face the day tomorrow."

Paula, volunteer at Arrels' Flat Zero

Click [here](#) for whole interview

Cases when we do not offer voluntary support

- ▶ Service user is aggressive or puts him/herself and/or others at risk
- ▶ In the case of an existing conflict between a social worker and a service user
- ▶ If the job requires special knowledge or qualifications and the volunteer doesn't have these skills

CHAPTER

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Issues to be taken into consideration

Each country has a different legal requirement regarding volunteers. Don't forget to consult the current legislation in your country.

There are three types of national regulatory environments in the EU:

- ▶ No national law regulating the distinct legal status of volunteers, relevant rules applying are included either in non-written customs and practices, or they are vested in the self-regulation of the volunteer organizations (Scandinavia, England)
- ▶ Regulation included in various laws affecting volunteerism included in the laws regulating different forms of CSOs, e.g. Latvia; law on public benefit status, e.g. Poland; or other laws, e.g. Code of Obligations in Switzerland
- ▶ Separate comprehensive law on volunteering as an efficient tool of promotion of volunteering, e.g. Hungary, Macedonia etc.

Legal issues to consider when managing volunteers:

- ▶ Definition of a volunteer; what types of volunteerism are subject to regulation
- ▶ Definition of a host organisation and what types of organisations qualify as hosts
- ▶ The apportionment of rights and responsibilities between the volunteer and host organisation



- Provision of injury, health, and other risk insurance
- Liability provisions
- Working hours (duration and when)
- Tax relief or expenses related to the volunteering activity, e.g. travel costs, accommodation for volunteers outside of the location of the activity
- Conditions for international volunteering: volunteering of nationals abroad and foreigners inside the country
- Data protection and confidentiality policy
- Regulations guaranteeing equal opportunities for age, disability, ethnicity etc Equalities Act.*
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults.
- Criminal records checks (if applicable)
- Ensure records are accurately maintained in accordance with national legislation.

For the full text of Legal considerations regarding volunteering click [here](#)

Organisations can use volunteer agreements to outline the expectations and responsibilities of both parties.

Always sign agreements and give a copy to the volunteer to avoid misunderstandings.

Samples for written agreements:

A template used by Arrels can be seen [here](#)

For more templates click [here](#) or [here](#)

CHAPTER 4

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VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Why is training volunteers important?

Providing a well-structured and comprehensive training plan for volunteers is beneficial to service users, staff members, the wider community and for the personal and professional development of the volunteer.

It is important to consider the different professional backgrounds of volunteers and that they might not have worked in the homelessness sector. While paid staff are likely to have completed specific training and qualifications in their field of expertise, volunteers will benefit from targeted training to understand the issues of homelessness.

Well trained volunteers can be hugely beneficial to the organisation and people they work with. They can better support service users, members of the public, volunteers and staff and are better informed to educate the wider community about homelessness. Investing in volunteers means investing in the quality and breadth of work provided.

Therefore, it is fundamental that, through training, volunteers understand the ethos, approach and structures in which we work and are able to reflect those critical values with service users. The consistency of provision by all workers, whether they are volunteers or not, establishes an entity of strength and empowerment from which all service users can benefit.

As staff members, we can draw on our own experiences to guide those people who do not work in the sector in understanding our aims and objectives, our structures, policies and procedures and the complexity of our service users' support needs.

The aim of training volunteers is:

- ▶ To equip volunteers with basic understanding of the organisation's priorities.
- ▶ To provide volunteers with the skills to do their role
- ▶ To retain volunteers and develop their skills

RECOMMENDED TRAINING CONTENT

Induction Training

A mandatory training session for all new volunteers containing essential information that a volunteer needs to know when joining your organisation.

This could be done on a one to one basis or it could be delivered in groups regularly throughout the year, in line with recruitment processes.

Content could include:

- ▶ The aim of the organisation, its history, context and ethos.
- ▶ Practical information e.g. support for volunteers, any contracts or agreements, expectations of the volunteer and what the volunteer can expect from the organisation, expenses (if applicable), project specific information.
- ▶ Legal requirements that all volunteers should know about (See [Chapter 3](#)).
- ▶ Any other information or policies that the organisation wishes to prioritise. For example, you may wish to include policies in the induction such as professional boundaries, safeguarding vulnerable adults or equality and diversity awareness.

Development Training

Your organisation may have the capacity to invest in your volunteers and deliver a programme of development training.

- ▶ Diversity and Inclusion: This should cover definitions of equal opportunities, protected characteristics, legislation, language and unconscious bias.
- ▶ Professional boundaries: The training should cover the importance of personal boundaries and ways to maintain and establish good boundaries between volunteers and service users.
- ▶ Safeguarding vulnerable adults from abuse: Training would cover recognising signs of abuse and understanding the volunteer's role in safeguarding service users.
- ▶ Drugs and Alcohol: The aim of this course is to provide volunteers with a clear understanding of alcohol and drug awareness and how to apply this understanding whilst volunteering and supporting service users with substance use needs.

- Volunteering in the Homelessness Sector: This can cover topics such as services available, service user groups, causes of homelessness, the private rented sector and an overview of local authorities.
- Customer Service and Communication: This course covers the importance of delivering good customer service and communicating effectively. The course covers an overall view of the different types of customer service and how to deliver them.
- Mental Health: Understand the support needs of those suffering from poor mental health, how service users are affected and what support is available.
- Developing Resilience: Covers the definitions of resilience, techniques that build resilience and how this can support volunteers during their time in the organisation.
- Improving Career Prospects through Volunteering: Aimed at volunteers wanting to gain employment within the sector.
- Health and Safety
- Conflict Management
- Housing Legislation
- Welfare Benefits
- Effective Communication
- IT Skills
- Literacy
- Employability Skills
- Interviewing and assessing service users
- Signposting service users to other support in the local community

"The training was thematic, there was a guy, who worked in the HR field, he helped co-write CVs, and he held a three hour long course at his workplace and I write the clients' CVs according to what I learned there."

Kinga, Menhely volunteer

For whole interview, click [here](#)

Designing a training session

If you are unable to source training from elsewhere and the volunteers need a training session to learn information that is important to their role, your organisation can design its own training session. Key points to remember:

- Define your aims and objectives. What exactly do you want the volunteer to learn / achieve? How will this benefit the service users? How many volunteers require this training?

- What is the organisation's capacity for delivering training? Who can deliver it? What time is available for the session? Where will it take place? Is the training room accessible to volunteers with disabilities?
- Will the volunteers have the willingness and availability to attend training?
- Do you have any resources that can be used within the training session?
- Session planning

Click [here](#) for example training session plan.

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HOW TO RETAIN VOLUNTEERS

Keeping volunteers motivated in the organisation

It's essential that the individual who approaches an organisation is interested in getting engaged and involved in the tasks being developed. The individual cannot have interests that clash with the organisation's mission. It would be difficult for an individual who doesn't recognise these principles to feel at ease and integrated in the organisation's housing support projects and services.

The main motivation then is to "feel part of the organization"; However motivation is nearly always influenced by many internal factors as well, therefore the organisation must assess and consider why the person wants to become a volunteer – to meet people, to learn, to get to know about homeless people, etc. This can be determined through the recruitment process (See [Chapter 2](#)).

MAIN SOURCES OF MOTIVATION

Volunteering can be highly beneficial to all those involved. To get the most out of the experience, it is important that volunteers remain motivated throughout. Organisations have a key role to play in keeping people motivated, and understanding their initial interest in volunteering can help.

There are two common reasons why people become a volunteer: personal interests and social awareness.

“To meet people” this answer is not explicitly expressed at first, but it’s deduced during the interview.

“To fill my time” this answer is provided when the following situations occur: early retirement; retirement, being unemployed or being on long-term sick leave.

“A way to learn” this answer is provided by the majority of people studying social studies.

“I’ve always been interested in the issue of homeless people”

“I wanted to have time and become a volunteer to get involved in something”

“I read about the homeless people on Facebook and twitter”

“When I go to work or university, I see more and more people on the street. This can’t happen”

“I’ve tried to approach some homeless people, but I don’t know how to do it”

“I’m interested in the organisation”

SUPERVISION

Volunteering can have many benefits and should be held in high regard. The effort and time that people are offering should be respected and they should expect to be well supported. Supervision can offer guidance, and prevent issues escalating.

If possible, it is useful to recruit / assign a volunteer coordinator for the volunteers throughout their time with the organisation to help with supervision. Tasks of this role could include initial interviews, supervision, and informal chats. Dependent on the role and time commitment of the volunteer, supervision can be more or less intense.

During the induction volunteers should be made aware of their named contact / supervisor for their placement. This can help people to feel more comfortable and at ease, and will help to create a well-informed team.

Keeping people motivated is crucial, with ongoing support during their placement. As volunteers become part of a team where professionals and volunteers distribute the tasks daily the support will be team-based and not exclusively individual.

Becoming part of the team will provide opportunities for the volunteer to take on additional responsibilities, such as setting up and taking part in meetings, offering suggestions and giving feedback on processes. This will enable volunteers to gain tangible experience in the workplace and will also help to demonstrate how important they are to the organisation.

Supervision also ensures that any problems that the organisation or volunteer may have can be addressed at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation. This is not always possible however and on occasions a volunteer will leave the organisation (See **Chapter 7**).

Suggested types of supervision:

- **Individual Supervision** is led by a paid staff member and is focused on the individual volunteer. It is a space in which the volunteer can share their worries, feelings, questions, give feedback on their tasks, their work and also organisational policies and procedures. The volunteer can also use this time to set goals.
- **Group Supervision** is a forum in which volunteers and staff can share their feelings and experiences. They can get help with building confidence around decision making.
- **Group Discussion.** A space where staff and volunteers can discuss case management and management of services. It is very important to ensure that the volunteer feels that they are playing an active role in the organisation and that their opinion is important.

EVALUATING VOLUNTEER PERFORMANCE



Many organisations do not evaluate volunteer performance. As they are giving their free time, there is a risk that all contributions will be accepted, regardless of quality. Sometimes it feels strange or unfair to evaluate them. But volunteers are part of our organisations, they are participating and delivering services. Just like paid staff, volunteers are also expecting to work for an organisation with well-designed and managed programs and dedicated volunteers. A clear and systematic evaluation process sends a message that the organisation takes performance and values seriously.

Evaluating the performance of any staff member is important and holds value to both the organisation and the staff member. A good evaluation process can contribute to the development of people's skills and can give feedback not only on the working hours performed but also on the impact of their work. The majority of volunteers will appreciate the opportunity to learn from their experience;

others may decide to donate their time to another organisation. A professionalised volunteer system retains and trains good volunteers and has the best outcomes for service users.

Be aware that starting a new process (like evaluating volunteers) within the organisation always needs management of change. It pays to involve all the stakeholders of your organisation in the design phase and get their buy-in.

If you have decided to design the evaluation of the activity of volunteers, you have to think about the processes and tools you use. It is very important to design a system which is not only a policy on paper, but a living thing adjusted to your organisation's specialities, your volunteers and staff. There are several methods to choose from, choose whatever feels best for your organisation. It is often a good idea to start with the one easiest to deliver.

"We have monthly team meetings where we discuss our doubts and talk about our experiences; it's essential that we can take part as a team and share different situations that we have found ourselves in."

Marie, Arrels volunteer

Click [here](#) for whole interview

The evaluation system should be:

- Open and transparent
- Easy to carry out
- Should include expectations, and goal setting
- Leave space for self-assessment and 360-degree feedback
- Should have a timeline, regularity
- Should be documented in some way

Evaluation systems can use different methods and tools:

- **Collecting quantitative data:** For example working hours, people served, task carried out, etc.
- **Evaluation forms:** these can be used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. You can use scales (1 to 5), checkboxes, degrees, open questions, and comment sections. There are several volunteer and/or employee evaluation forms and tools on the internet. Electronic forms can also be used.
- **Informal or formal conversations:** These conversations are scheduled and allow you to have a more personal feedback with the volunteers.
- **Project review meetings:** These meetings are held at the end of a term (end of project, mission, shift, some period related to work) and can include a wide range of topics, from a simple thank you to an impact assessment. Meetings can be organised at the end of a shift, important period or milestones.
- **Probationary period:** This period (30-90 days usually) is a great chance to have any easy start with volunteers. During this period, the volunteer will be receiving a lot of instruction, training and feedback. The end of the period also creates a good time for both parties to reflect

GIVING FEEDBACK

Effective feedback should empower people with the information they need in order to have the impact they want. Giving effective feedback is one of the biggest challenges of non-profit (and mission led organisations) leaders and managers. While giving feedback is on the one hand focused on the expectation of the organisation, it is also important to focus on what the volunteer can get out of it, as volunteers offer their free time but they also get something from our organisations. Good feedback should be mutually beneficial, and volunteers should have the opportunity to give feedback to their manager. It is a good tool to highlight the volunteer's impact in the organisation; stating something like "because of your work we were able to achieve this and that" improves their commitment and satisfaction, and also their sense of responsibility.

"I've been well instructed, there was enough information and I knew what I was expected to do and where to do it. I could do more given the chance."

"The staff always gives feedback. I have a feeling of being important."

Quotes from Vva ry volunteers

Other suggested ways to retain volunteers:

- Saying thank you
- Personalised attention. Ensuring volunteers are supported
- Newsletters
- Career pathway
- Social events
- Certificates and awards
- Feedback from service users

CHAPTER 6

Guide

CRISIS SITUATIONS

Challenges faced by organisations

In the previous chapters we have read about the values and benefits of voluntary work, but we need to talk about the difficulties as well.

Volunteers can multiply the efficiency of an organisation's work, but in the field of social work there may be events and situations when it's not advisable to use volunteer assistance or, in case of existing voluntary work, consideration should be given to interrupting it.

Many of the crisis situations detailed below can be avoided by choosing the right volunteers (setting exact recruitment criteria), thorough preparation, providing appropriate training, ongoing mentoring and supervision. Of course, there may always be situations we cannot prepare for, even with outmost caution.

The most common problems that may occur in a volunteer-service user relationship:

1. EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

The volunteer becomes emotionally involved and feels responsible for 'fixing' a service user's situation. The service user's unresolved situation or problem makes them feel stressed, especially if they cannot help in 'solving' it. They often feel that the professional helpers don't do their best for the service user, so they try to take care of the situation themselves.

Case Study

Ádám (a 24-year-old male service user) was behind with his rent, he had already been asked to move out several times, he was expected to leave the apartment within a week. His social worker had talked to him about his possibilities several times, asking him to submit application for a temporary shelter, but Ádám was not particularly cooperative, he did not seem to care much about where he would stay in the future. Éva, (a 38 year-old female volunteer) – whose role was providing legal aid for service users – was, however, extremely stressed about the situation. She called the social worker several times a day, expressed concern for the client, saying she had not been able to sleep for days, as she was worried about the service user's unsolved housing situation. The social worker explained that, if Ádám did not appear at the pre-arranged meetings, he could not help, but the volunteer did not accept this, she thought the social worker was supposed to arrange the application for temporary shelter instead of the service user. On the day before the move, Éva even offered to pay the outstanding debt instead of the service user, but the owner of the flat already had a new tenant candidate, and he didn't want to make use of this option. The service user disappeared on the day of leaving the apartment, the social worker and the volunteer later found out that he had gone abroad to a friend. (BMSZKI, Hungary)

Conclusion and suggested solution

We have to realise if we are more stressed about the service user's situation than they are. The volunteer would have needed individual or group supervision to help her settle her own feelings towards the service user and recognise that social work doesn't mean that helpers take responsibility for the life and the decisions of the service user.

2. OVER-HELPING

The volunteer does tasks that the service user should be doing themselves. Over-helping may keep the service user in a long-term helpless “childish state”, as they are not in need of mobilising his/her own resources.

Case Study

Gábor (a 30 year-old man) helped Zoltán (a 23 year-old service user) to find work. His tasks included writing and updating the client’s CV, browsing job advertisements, and finding potential employers. One time he helped Zoltán to apply for a cleaner position, and as he wanted to make sure he succeeded (the job seemed to be very good in all respect), he offered to accompany him to the job interview. The service user got the job, which was a great achievement as he had been unemployed for such a long time. After the interview, Gábor started a chat with the employer and asked her about the most urgent tasks that the service user should complete before he starts working. Then he gave his own phone number and offered her to call him for any questions. The employer took the opportunity - and since it was easier to communicate with the volunteer than with the service user - she started to call Gábor with all questions and requests, but he didn’t mind that, as he felt this had been a part of his role. In addition, he obtained the necessary work-related documents for Zoltán, requested a date for medical examination, accompanied him to buy work clothes, etc. The service user was grateful for the care and was comfortable with the volunteer had been taking care of everything. But finally, when he had changed his job a few months later, he needed help again because he had no idea what to do. (BMSZKI, Hungary)

Conclusion and suggested solution

Besides providing help, the volunteer should have taken care of the service user’s independence, as one of the main goals of social work is to “enable” service users. The social worker must ensure that the volunteer does not serve the service user, but shows and teaches those skills which help them to perform any task independently in the future.

3. NON-PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE

The volunteer makes decisions about the service user's care, often with little knowledge of the full situation and without guidance from the organisation. This puts the person's recovery at risk and can slow down their journey.

Case Study

Áron (a 28-year-old male service user with refugee status) wanted to get married in his hosting country but didn't have the necessary documentation. He mentioned his problem to József, his volunteer (a 26 year-old man, who helped him in language learning). József suggested that he should contact his country's consulate and they will issue the necessary document. The service user took the volunteer's advice, obtained the paper through the consulate and then submitted it to the authorities. A few weeks later he received notification from the Immigration Office that they had initiated the withdrawal of his refugee status as he had contacted his country of origin. The volunteer had been unaware of the rule that a refugee should not have any contact with their country of origin, even through the consulate, because it would automatically result in his status being lost. The explanation for this is that if someone as a refugee contacts their country of origin, it means that they have no fear, so they are not eligible for refugee status.

Finally Áron could retain his refugee status, but this took months of official administration. (BMSZKI, Hungary)

Conclusion and suggested solution

The volunteer did not receive proper information about the rules and regulations regarding the target group (refugees) when they joined the organisation. The social worker should have informed him of the above, even if he thought the volunteer's role would not make it necessary. If we are looking for a volunteer to work with a specific target group, we must always provide the basic information about the particularities of the target group.

4. CROSSING THE BOUNDARIES

The volunteer doesn't keep the framework of volunteering, they cannot say no to the service user, even if they receive a request which is out of their duties (e.g. financial support, loan, availability out of the agreed time, etc.). Usually this happens because refusal of the service user's request creates negative feelings in the volunteer that they cannot handle properly.

Case Study

Zsuzsa (a 34-year old volunteer) taught the children of a service user, Eszter, at their home. Eszter was unemployed, and mostly lived off occasional jobs and social benefits. On one occasion, Eszter asked the volunteer to help her fill out an application form because she didn't really know what to do with it and where to submit it. The volunteer filled out the application instead of the service user and explained the tasks. Afterwards, almost every time when Zsuzsa arrived, Eszter asked for something to be done (eg. making official phone calls, writing cover letters for job applications, doing correspondence with the children's school, etc). Meanwhile she was regularly talking about her private life, her childhood, her current affairs. These occasions became more and more burdensome for the volunteer, but she felt uncomfortable to refuse the service user's request (since usually they were not very complicated), or not to listen to her when she was talking about her life. But after a while, she could hardly deal with the children, because instead of that she was talking to the mother and dealing with her issues during her entire stay. After a long hesitation, she finally decided to stop volunteering with the family. (BMSZKI, Hungary)

Conclusion and suggested solution

At the very beginning the volunteer should have refused the service user's requests and clarified that her role is tutoring the children. In all other cases, she should have asked the service user to turn to her social worker. If this failed to change the situation, than she should have contacted the social worker and asked him to talk with the service user.

5. BREACH OF PROFESSIONAL CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers must keep the rules of professional confidentiality. During voluntary work the volunteer may receive sensitive information about the service user. Leaking it to a third party is not only unethical, but it can have a destructive impact on the helping process.

Case Study

Edit the volunteer was responsible for organising leisure activities for a four-member family. When at the beach with the family one day, she noticed that the mother's (Gabi) arms and upper body were bruised.

Edit was shocked so she didn't dare ask Gabi how she had been injured. Although she hadn't yet experienced any other sign, she suspected domestic violence. Since the landlord of the family was a good friend of hers, she thought she would share her suspicion and asked if he had noticed any sign of abuse. The landlord panicked and his first idea was terminating the lease with the family because he didn't tolerate violence in his property. He had indicated his intention to the social worker of the family who talked to the mother and finally found out that Gabi had been suffering from a rare skin disorder that had caused bruise-looking spots on her body. Her husband never hurt her. (BMSZKI, Hungary)

Conclusion and suggested solution

The volunteer should have shared her suspicions with the social worker first and let her take care of the situation. In no case should a third person have been involved. The unjustified suspicion of abuse is a serious psychological burden for anyone and the breach of professional confidentiality almost caused the loss of the family's housing.

6. RETENTION OF ESSENTIAL INFORMATION TO THE HELPER

It can also be dangerous for a volunteer to withhold information from a social worker.

It's important to clarify with volunteers that the social worker is bound by the rules of confidentiality, so they can be trusted with sensitive information. A professional helper can interpret, decode, and give relevant response to the information received.

Case Study

Dora (a 46 year-old volunteer) held an occupational group therapy (sewing club) for homeless women on a weekly basis. Usually the sessions had a very pleasant, informal atmosphere. Beside the practical information about sewing, the ladies had a lot of other topics to talk about, which sometimes included private subjects. One of the service users (47 year-old lady Vanda) had a particularly good relationship with the volunteer, sometimes staying after the group session to have continue chatting. On one of these occasions, Vanda unexpectedly began to talk about her partner, whom she lived with in a homeless shelter. She said he had regularly abused her and several times he had tried to strangle her. The service user asked the volunteer not to tell anyone, because if her partner found out that she was talking about it, he would kill her, and she had already been threatened several times. When Dora asked why she didn't talk to the social workers, she said they wouldn't be able to do anything; even if they were to be separated, his partner would find her anywhere, which had happened before. The volunteer was overwhelmed by the information, but as the service user repeatedly stressed not to say anything to anyone, she kept the secret. On one occasion, when Vanda did not appear in the session, it turned out that her partner had beaten her, she had suffered serious injuries and needed permanent hospital care. The volunteer had a breakdown, she blamed herself and needed psychological treatment to get over it. (BMSZKI, Hungary)

Conclusion and suggested solution

Although the volunteer is bound by the rules of confidentiality, there are cases that overwrite this, for example if the health, physical integrity or life of the service user is at risk. The volunteer should have immediately informed the social worker, who would have found a way to deal with the situation, thus preventing further abuse without exposing the volunteer. A regular group supervision or oversight would also have helped the volunteer decide what to do in this situation.

7. VOLUNTARY WORK THAT ENDANGERS HEALTH

It is a fundamental principle that the organisation must provide safe and risk-free conditions of voluntary work in all possible ways (offering vaccines, protective drink/clothing, etc.). However, it is necessary to prepare for unexpected situations that may arise in voluntary work, for example infectious diseases, aggressive acts against volunteers, etc. It should be considered in each case whether the volunteer can be left alone, and what to do in an emergency.

Case Study

A 19-year old volunteer named Lizy arrived for a six month social work internship. During her stay she was accommodated in a temporary shelter with a large number of service users. The volunteer had a separate room but she was placed near a group of male residents and staff rooms. She was regularly subjected to night-time harassment (knocking on her door, inviting her for a chat, inappropriate language). Although the receptionist and social workers were constantly present at the reception of the shelter, she felt embarrassed to ask them for help, and thought she was able to handle the situation, as she was also dealing with homeless people during her daily work. One time, however, when a drunk service user aggressively wanted to get into her room, the volunteer had enough, and the next day she indicated to her mentor that she would like to finish her practice sooner. The mentor had asked the volunteer about the reasons, and it turned out that the main problem was not the job itself, but the conditions of the accommodation. (BMSZKI, Hungary)

Conclusion and suggested solution

It may be particularly dangerous to keep a volunteer in an environment where the boundaries are not controlled and can be easily confused because of the shared living space. The volunteer should have immediately reported the harassment to her mentor who would have handled the problem by providing alternative accommodation. The social worker who worked in the shelter could also have prevented the problem by informing the tenants about the arrival of the volunteer, the reason why she stays there and what tasks she would perform.

For more crisis situation examples click [here](#).

7

CHAPTER

Guide

ENDINGS

When a volunteer and the organisation go their separate ways

Volunteers are sometimes asked to leave an organisation or may decide to leave.

Why do volunteers leave a host organisation?

- Boredom; too much routine
- Natural changes in one's life (changing circumstances, new job, family changes etc.)
- Discontent; personality differences
- Lack of clearly defined tasks
- Lack of interest in the work
- Inadequate supervision/training
- Disregarding policies and laws
- Work overload or unrealistic deadlines
- Poor communication within the work team (staff and volunteers)
- Emotional stress and personal difficulties
- Unreliable and poor performance
- Lack of appreciation on part of organisation/supervisor

- Staff and organisational changes
- Staff resistance to utilising volunteers
- Sometimes the volunteer's skills or personality doesn't match the client or client group he/she works with
- Philosophical, core value differences
- Negligence
- Gross misconduct (such as inappropriate relationships)
- Negative attitude

ADDRESSING ISSUES WITH VOLUNTEERS

Because we work in a tolerant sector, where we provide help and care to people with multiple problems, managers sometimes avoid addressing important issues with volunteers. Volunteers are not service users however. To protect the values or service standards of the organisation we must confront volunteers when needed... Avoiding confrontation won't help in the long run.

Constructive and assertive ways of confrontation helps both parties. Not only by serving the organisation's needs but also by helping the volunteer to understand systems, and develop their skills.

Some tips to Constructive Confrontation:

- Focus on performance and behaviour, not personality. Avoid accusatory tones.
- Be specific. Have specific examples of unacceptable behaviours.
- Don't say: "You always do it that way."
- Keep conversations private and professional. Do not start them until you are rational and calm.
- Make the intervention timely.
- Get agreement on the problem. Allow the volunteer to explain from his/her perspective.
- Determine a shared commitment to find a solution to the problem and agree on a plan.
- Arrange for a follow-up meeting.

PROCEDURE OF RELEASING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering doesn't always work out. Although ending the placement might be the only option, it is important to consider alternatives first.

If the volunteer, due to age or disability, is no longer able to carry out the work and no other position is appropriate, retire him/her with style and appreciation for past services, etc. Releasing someone is never easy, to release a volunteer is sometimes even harder. Some tips and procedures might help, but most leaders have to be prepared for hard times.



Alternatives to releasing a volunteer

- Re-assign to a new volunteer position within the organisation
- Train/coach or re-train, depending on whether the volunteer received adequate preparation to handle the position in the first place
- Provide a more motivating environment for the volunteer if he/she has lost interest in the work
- Give information about any central referral source in the community or online where the volunteer might find a position better suited to him/her

Some organisations have standard rules and procedures on terminating a contract. In some countries there are also legal requirements.

Some tips for the procedure:

- Procedures that address standards of volunteer conduct and grounds for dismissal should be covered during orientation and training with the volunteer. It is often the same policy that salaried staff have in their personnel policies to cover probation, suspension, and termination.
- Try to explore alternatives before starting a releasing process.
- The volunteer should be notified by his/her supervisor that there is some serious concern about his/her behaviour/work.
- You may need to suspend the volunteer while an investigation is underway.
- You would very rarely dismiss a volunteer on the spot, unless there is obvious danger to clients.
- Investigate to determine whether the volunteer has broken the rules or if there is adequate evidence that he/she should be dismissed from the position. During this phase, it is important to determine what, if any, role the manager had in the situation.
- Take into account the personal situation of the volunteer and any possible negative consequences their release may have.
- The dismissal process should commence quickly.
- Conduct a Release Meeting:
 - Meet in private. Never release someone through a letter.
 - Take along someone you trust as a supporter and impartial observer.
 - Be quick and direct in announcing your decision. There should be no further discussion at this point.
 - Explore the option of resigning with the volunteer and the benefits this has for their future placements elsewhere.

- Respect the volunteer and his/her perspective.
- Notify all others in the system who need to know that the volunteer will no longer be carrying out that role.
- Keep written records of: Deficiencies in performance, attempts to correct the behaviour (counselling, coaching, warnings, evaluation forms given to volunteer), any signed documentation from those who can verify the behaviour.



CHAPTER 8

Guide

MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

Monitoring and evaluating your volunteer program

Mission-based organisations usually want to serve and make the world a better place. They are under-resourced and monitoring and evaluation seems like an unaffordable luxury or administrative burden. But monitoring and evaluation can be a good tool to create great performance and achieve social change.

How can monitoring your programme help?

- Assess and demonstrate your effectiveness in achieving your objectives and/or impacts.
- Improve internal learning and decision making about project design.
- Empower and motivate volunteers and supporters.
- Ensure accountability.
- Influence government policy.
- Share learning with other communities and the wider movement.
- Contribute to the evidence base about effectiveness and limits of community action.

There are three main types of volunteer program evaluation:

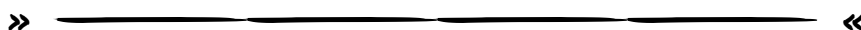
1. Process-based: focuses on the program design and efficiencies.
2. Goals-based: focuses on the degree to which the program met its predefined goals.
3. Outcomes-based: focuses on answering if the program met (or to what degree) the previously designed outcomes and impacts. Outcome-based evaluation can focus on client or community level also.

It is useful to agree on the kind of information you are collecting. The information should be focused and feasible, as well as timely, usable, valid and reliable. When conducting monitoring and evaluation you have to be aware of ethical issues and data protection requirements.

It is also crucial to decide which programs or projects you need to monitor. Involving a wide range of stakeholders can have great added value.

When you design your evaluation, you have to decide the key issues and questions you want to research, and clarify the aims and objectives of your work.

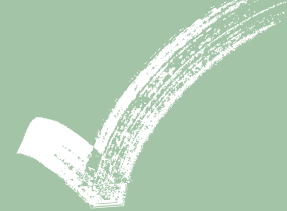
Collecting information can happen in many forms, but during the evaluation planning you should decide what kind of information you collect and how you will collect it. After analysing the data you might want to publicise results in different ways.



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IT'S A PLEASURE TO TAKE THE TIME TO LISTEN - INTERVIEW WITH MARIE DECOOL, VOLUNTEER WITH THE SUPPORT TEAM



How long have you been a volunteer with Arrels?

I have been doing volunteer work with Arrels for the last two and a half years.

What are your tasks as a volunteer with a support team?

Service users who live in housing provided by Arrels sign a contract and by doing that they agree to a weekly visit to their apartment. One of my tasks is to make these visits and I also go with them to the different medical services and help with administrative procedures.

"How do you like your coffee? We like it with you!"

I saw this message recently in a bar, and I believe it is a slogan that the Arrels volunteers could use. Indeed, I usually drink coffee with the service users. It's a pleasure to take the time to listen to them and to create a link that allows an exchange full of trust in a cafe or playing table football, walking alongside the sea, or taking a look at the fish in a pet shop...

I believe that we are also "social code translators", I'll try to explain... I often find that the people I accompany have lost their trust in society, its codes and rhythms. More than once, in a medical examination, I have found myself repeating words like a doctor would, like "take your jacket off, lay down, raise your sleeve...". Usually, the person I accompany is easily stressed in front of a white coat or a counter, but as I am a person they trust, they quickly relax and follow my indications.

How would you say this differs to the role of the professional?

In my opinion not being a professional is what adds value to my role in Arrels, since I am seen as an equal, a society representative, even sometimes a friend to the client, and the relationship established is based on equality and trust rather than authority.

What is the most challenging aspect of being a volunteer in supported housing?

The most challenging aspect, in my point of view, is creating this link of trust that I talked about previously and maintaining it. Creating a team with the professionals and the volunteers can sometimes also be a challenge .



What training and/or support have you received?

Before starting my collaboration with Arrels I had an interview with the head of the Volunteers department, but it was mainly a selection interview.

Afterwards, I met up with the head of the Support Team programme and a social worker, they both explained the program and the way it works and we also had a conversation about my role as a volunteer in the team.

Not a long time after my incorporation in Arrels, I had the chance, along with other new volunteers, to attend a day of presentations about the different services Arrels offers.

We have monthly team meetings where we discuss our doubts and talk about our experiences; it's essential that we can take part as a team and share different situations that we have found ourselves in.

Twice a year we also meet with all of the volunteers and the Support Team professionals, we discuss and then work on a case study together.

I believe that in Arrels, the formation is mainly based on experience and reflection from situations we have found, which for me is very opportune. Personally, I think that I should have more formation regarding mental health and its treatment, along with how to react to and understand specific reactions that the service user may have. Despite the fact that I am a trained nurse I also have doubts about alcohol and drug addiction, it would be interesting to have a better understanding of these subjects.

Looking into the future do you think the role of volunteers should change?

I believe that in Arrels the role of volunteers is so important since without them we would not be able to run the projects that we have or those that will be carried out in the future. The volunteer work should be perceived as a society support to help with the difficulties and weaknesses that this same society creates even if most of its functions should be done by public administrations.

Any highlights from your time as a volunteer?

For me the main highlight would be the link created between the client and the volunteer that allows you to go further with the relationship and really help the person. Also forming part of a team and using my life experience to make the most out of it.



PROJECT SUPPORT VOLUNTEER



Project/Service:	(Please include project name)
Location:	Borough + nearest tube station
Support and supervision from:	(must include named supervisor)
Commitment:	X hours/week for a minimum of 6 months. Please be specific e.g. Mon-Fri from 9-5/opportunity to volunteer at weekends/evenings

Where will I be volunteering?

Description of project/service, including; client group, support needs, team numbers, complex needs.

What will I be doing?

As a Project Support volunteer you will be assisting clients, staff and the wider project with a range of tasks in the project. The role is based on the needs of the project on a day to day and an ongoing basis. The role covers a range of areas which will include support in administrative duties, client facing support and help in the general running of the project. Some of the key areas may include:

Supporting administrative and reception tasks; these can be manning the reception area and handling client and visitor queries and carrying out administrative tasks, such as recording information.

Supporting in a client-facing capacity; this can be helping to run and lead on activities and initiatives in the project; accompanying clients to the library, job centre and to local community activities; helping clients in their search for private rented accommodation; supporting clients in a range of practical ways under the guidance of keyworkers.

Supporting staff in the project; this can be carrying out health and safety checks; providing help in bagging the belongings as residents move out of the accommodation and any other general support.

Volunteers must meet the following criteria:

- Understanding of the causes of homelessness and its impact.

- Ability to work with people who may have offending behaviour, substance use and/or mental health, with sensitivity and respect. We particularly welcome applicants with experience of using and moving on from support services.
- Willingness to attend training to develop you in your volunteer role.

What support will I receive?

- Induction training to prepare you to volunteer and access to additional training.
- Regular support from your volunteer supervisor.
- There is a dedicated Volunteer Services team to support your volunteering.
- Out of pocket travel expenses will be reimbursed.

I would like to help: Complete the online application form which is available on our website. If you need support with filling out the online application please get in touch. Contact details:

Email: volunteerservices@mungos.org

Telephone: 0203 856 6160

FLAT ZERO HELPED TO OPEN MY EYES - INTERVIEW WITH A VOLUNTEER



In January 2017 we started a new project called Flat Zero. Flat Zero is a low-threshold shelter for entrenched rough sleepers who haven't adapted to other resources or services in the city. In the shelter, people can safely spend the night with their belongings and their pets as well. Since its opening, 52 people (41 men, 11 women), three dogs, and one cat have stayed the night in Flat Zero. Additionally, 37 volunteers and two professionals helped run the shelter throughout 2017.

Flat Zero is able to open its doors every day thanks to a team of concierges and some 25 volunteers. One of these volunteers is Paula Huguet, who we interviewed here.



Today was your fifteenth night in Flat Zero. What tasks do you do?

The volunteers carry out a double service: attending to the people that come here and also providing logistical support. We make up the beds, we heat up cups of soup, we make coffee, and we put on clothes washes, but above all we provide a listening service, one-to-one, we show an interest in the person, ask them questions and support them. A lot of times they'll arrive, they'll have had a good day and they'll tell you all sorts of things, and then on other days you can see on their faces that they've come to rest, to go to bed early, and get ready to face the day tomorrow.

Flat Zero is designed to act like an extension of the street and, therefore, the rules in there are more flexible. We're talking about a low-threshold resource. What does that mean?

We always say that it's a space without rules because there is no rule beyond cohabiting with the other users of the space. Here they are able to do whatever they would do in the street, only without the fear of being attacked or having to suffer on account of the weather. It's a useful solution because here they have access to all the basic resources: they can heat up food, have a shower, sleep in a safe place, have a conversation with someone, and then get up and go. That said, this little society that supposedly doesn't have any rules in fact does have rules: the rules that are put in place by the people who use the services there. For example, past a certain time they will start asking each other to be quiet so that everyone can get some rest.

What's the atmosphere like?

Living on the street for a long period ends up affecting people on a relational level because you are very alone, you're scared, and you're exposed to lots of risks and dangers. Here they have company



and are able to socialize. I now know the people who come here and their stories and I always ask after the people who haven't come. They also worry about people they know who have been hospitalised and they ask about how they are doing. In Flat Zero people make links.

What have you learned from your experience in Flat Zero?

It's helped to open up my eyes. I always go around with an open mind; I'm always learning and I'm always surprised by the incredible stories behind each person. Every morning I leave physically very tired but emotionally I have a lot of energy. I also learn not to judge because in the great majority of cases you just don't know about people's circumstances. Each person is their own world and can show you things if you pay attention. Flat Zero is a well of experience that the users transmit to you one by one.

One of the most emotional moments that I've experienced is when somebody moves on and starts to live in a flat or a room. In March we were lucky enough to share the last night a couple spent together in Flat Zero. They were so filled with joy at the opportunity to start to rebuild their lives; they were very happy and it was a great night. When you stop seeing somebody it can be for a good reason or a terrible one. Luckily, there have been more good than bad.

Did anything surprise you?

I've been most surprised when hearing somebody's story and seeing that they had an absolutely normal past – or what we understand as 'normal' – and that they are now living in the street. There are people who are weighed down with a ton of bags because they have to carry around all their belongings. One night, a man showed me the photos he had in his wallet. He was in them, but it was a completely different version of him and he was with a young girl: 3 or 4 years old. I was surprised to realise he had a daughter – you see people and they are single men and you don't consider that maybe before they were living in a different situation.

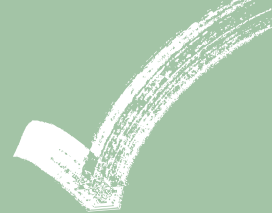
When you talk with the people around you, do you come across people who aren't aware of this reality?

It's a reality that stays hidden but one that generates a lot of interest at the same time. People ask me a lot of questions, above all about why people end up on the street. That's something I never ask; I prefer to talk about the goals and successes they've lived through since finding themselves in this situation. But, of course, they all have a story – it's almost never the case that someone is born on the street, grows up on the street, and dies on the street. The tragedy is that the last two stages do often end up being true.

Unfortunately I'm sure that there will be those who still think that if people have ended up in this flat it's because they've gone looking for this life, or that they deserve it. For me that's looking at the information really coldly, because you don't know these people; you can't know if they have an illness, an addiction, or any number of other problems. I don't think that anyone ends up on the street because they want to be there. It's simply a different thing for your situation to get worse and worse until in the end you accept it and lose hope in getting better, changing or developing. I think that people are on the streets because they don't have any other place to be. Living on the streets is not easy.



THERE WERE NO RIGID BOUNDARIES



Kinga Albert is a Key Volunteer at Menhely Foundation. The interview was made at 18/01/2018 in Budapest.

What do you think this program, 'On the Road', is about?

When I am talking about On the Road, I have to mention another project of the Foundation called Quick Access, which has been always at the background. This is where I started volunteering. This program aims to help people living on the streets or shelters as they are the most vulnerable. Our declared goal is labour market reintegration, but it involved a sequence of training to develop their abilities and skills. Twelve homeless people participated, and there were us, the volunteers and of course the social workers, and we met them on a regular basis. Basically we spent the whole Friday afternoon, from twelve to six PM together. We also had food together, this informal atmosphere helped us to get ready for the training. This was different and new, even for the social workers of the Foundation as well, because this is not their usual situation of meeting their clients. Usually it's like a frontal office routine when you sit at one side of the table and the client on the other, and it is a formal, official contact. Here there were no rigid boundaries, we called each other by the first name, and spent the whole afternoon in a very intimate and familiar atmosphere. There were almost as many volunteers as homeless people and we spontaneously formed pairs, the same people met beyond the meetings like in a mentorship. The Friday meetings were always thematic, for example revolving around about financial skills, judiciary know-how, etc. but we always started out by professional experts who told stories and we tried to adopt their knowledge in a playful way. Like when the representatives of Morgan Stanley came, they started to talk about the services that certain banks provide, and I started to feel this tension that these information are dimensionally different from the ones they actually needed. So there were some incompatibilities, but we noted all what we learned on a flipchart. Marianna (the project managing social worker) encouraged everyone to write their comments on it, there were actually co-working groups, and the members had to stand up and present the outcomes of their group work. It was spectacular how members became more and more confident, and developed their abilities to stand up and talk in front of the group.

Have you participated as a personal mentor all along, and if yes, what exactly could you help with?

I had no fix partner for the whole project, but sometimes I met clients outside Friday afternoon, and we usually just sat down, looking for jobs, or tried to navigate through computers. There were some special demands like someone wanted to learn how to use Ms Office Excel.

Sometimes we reached the limits of the institutional framework, like we had to have some training meetings because the project managers were very insistent about the boundaries and rules, and what the frames and terms of working together were, and we had to sustain these limits. Like we could not share our personal cell numbers with the participants, and we avoided meeting them outside the day centre, because only this institutional frame is secure. And of course when you

spend this much time with clients, you build up a friendship and for me it was very hard to keep these professional boundaries. I did not hesitate to give my personal number, for example, which led to interesting consequences. For example several clients wanted to learn English. I am an English teacher, which is great, because some of them planned to work in catering services, so we started our lessons. There were 5-6 of them, Saturday seemed good for everyone, and we could not go to the day centre for some reason, but with the help of Kati, (another volunteer) we found a public place at Aurora street, where we could have the lessons for free. We met like 5 or 6 times, but only 4 people came at a time and it had no continuity. There was a couple around the age of 50, they looked perfectly balanced, the lady's son lived in England, maybe he didn't even know about his mom's bad situation, but they kept visiting him abroad, and they were talking about moving to England to live together. So for them it would have been a good opportunity to learn to speak English, at least on a basic level. They came many times, and at the end it was only the three of us, and it worked, and I don't know how it ended really.

The other, more unfortunate example, is about a young man, who lived on the streets persistently, in a botanical garden. We became friends, like everyone, but at one point he started to cross the boundaries. He usually sent messages asking us to call him back. He also wanted to go to the English lessons, maybe he came twice... Sometimes he called me at night to ask if he could come the next day, and I never said categorically no. I never agreed to do it, but I didn't categorically reject him, either.

Did you have any lectures or some kind of introduction to the operation of the organization when you started it? And in what form?

This is very interesting, looking back, after four years of volunteering for the organization, and follow the development of the volunteering supervision system.

Can I ask you why did you choose the homeless care instead of going to a hospital to cheer up kids?

It's hard to explain. I'm very sensitive about homelessness since I was a young adult. I used to live in Romania, there are many homeless people in Kolozsvár, where I used to go to university. I never saw one in the little town I grew up, so it shocked me. In the meantime I started studying Sociology so I could explain that the right to have a home was a basic right, and the lack of it violates human dignity. I can rationalize it now, but it really touched me that time. But in Kolozsvár I felt helpless, I was studying the fields of humanities, and there was no sparkling civil community, and I didn't find the place to make myself useful, and I felt really bad about it. And then I came to Budapest, and the problem seemed even more shocking, but the homeless care system was getting visible. One of my friends used to volunteer for Menhely before, so it seemed simply clear, that I wanted to go there too. The very first activity I participated in was the distribution of Santa's packages and it was a terrific feeling that I was invited and I could do it. Later I started to participate in food distribution, that's where I get to know Marianna, who told me about the Quick Access program, and that she wanted to rely on volunteers and it seemed like it was totally in a pilot phase, and we joined and everyone was new. I simultaneously also carried on with the food distribution for awhile, but I had to give that up as my situation changed,

How was the training/introduction to Quick Access? Did they give a lecture or training in small groups, or did you have a personal mentor?

A year earlier there was already a similar project with volunteers. The training was thematic, there was a guy, who worked in the HR field, he helped co-write CVs, and he held a three hour long course at his workplace and I still write the clients' CVs according to what I learned there. And there was a visit to the night shelter visit - the only thing we had been told was that we were going to go and see the shelter. I'd never been to such a place before. I went with a friend, who was also interested and we were late, and Marianna looked at us very strictly. It was absolutely appalling. I felt totally ashamed because of being late, and of course it was totally right that we couldn't go in, and that was it...

...so the training had already started...

Yes, she said, that it was a male night shelter, what were we doing there as a couple, and I started to explain, that I mentioned before that I would bring a friend.. And she said that the problem wasn't with my friend, but with me. And then I understood, that she is already in a role play. And she kept being in her role, we got our little package and she made one of us sit in the "sober chair" and played the whole game. Of course just the beginning was this role playing part, later she guided us through the place, we saw the whole building, it was awe-inspiring, and then we set in the social workers room to clear the air. Marianna gave us a three view-point system to interpret our impressions, the first was the rules and frames, the second the material environment and intimacy, the third were the social connections. We vented it out together, how horrible it was, and it's very interesting, I did the whole thing like two or three times and it always took us three four hours to talk it out after. That's the time when we, lay people can question the professionals about the whole thing, the care system.

What do you think about the care system?

For me it was a fantastic feeling to hand out sausage with mustard in a basement during food distribution, for absolutely selfish reasons, to relieve myself from incapability. But if you take a look at big shelters and the workers who work there, e.g. Balázs, who despite his genuine attitude has to be an authoritarian person, to be able to confront the people, lock them out, make them fill a sheet, ask them about their income, how much they drink, smoke, why do they not talk to their families (to absolutely not do anything with this information). Because there is no treatment there, people just go to sleep, and this is disappointing to see, that this is nothing but a shallow intervention.

Have you seen any other shelters?

Yes, because I work at the Red Cross now, not as a social worker, but I've visited many services all over the country. This is just a quick fix, because it won't help people to get out from homelessness. It was Marianna herself, who was the first one to tell me about this the Housing First approach and model, and for me, this is the only acceptable alternative.

Have you seen any service like this?

No, I haven't. I know that there are a couple of organizations who do it e.g. Habitat or the Utcárol



Lakásba Egyesület (From Street to Housing Association). Actually to give someone a flat should be the first step, not the end goal. I guess they can do it in the United States, that they create an interdisciplinary team, with a psychologist, a lawyer, a doctor and a social worker, this is unimaginable here. Again, at the Quick Access, the truly important things happened when we were together. Those were very useful and great occasions.

But later you kept meeting your client as a mentor, right?

Yes, we wrote the CVs together, and that was great. But what's missing from the On the Road project is that it doesn't work as a closed group, new people keep joining, and there are more and more people in it. We do it like this here: Marianna calls me to come in on Saturday, to meet someone, and help them, and then I come, we do it, and I possibly never see him again. Sometimes there are some people, who return but if I can't make it for the next time, someone else takes them. Sometimes I meet them several times, and that's pretty efficient. It's not like the Quick Access, which wasn't efficient enough, but at least that group was closed, we met the same people regularly, and the main profile was more like us to be together on training, learn from each other, which was great. I spent all my Fridays there, and it was just too much to deal with someone personally, even if it happened sometimes.

Does the On the Road project offer housing support?

No, not just that, the job seeking too. It's about finding either rental or employment for them. But it's more complicated. When it comes to job searching, we start it with writing CVs.

So you meet homeless people once or twice, and you talk with them for one and a half hour?

The time duration isn't fixed. I usually spend 1,5 hours with a person per occasion. There is a man, for example, I have met him like 3-4 times, he wants to work on an assembly line, now he is cleaning, or does an odd job here and there. He doesn't know how to use a computer, doesn't have a CV, doesn't have an e-mail address, and when I ask him about his job searching routines he says that he usually browses newspapers, but never finds anything nice, or the information spreads from person to person, which is not reliable. And I am stunned, because for me it's evident to search in job search portals. It's crushing when you start showing him that there is this portal the profession.hu, for me it's so basic. And I can tell that he has no clue about those websites, and why are we scrolling, why he has to give his personal data so many times... I know his birthday by heart, oh. And of course we start the process by creating an e-mail address for him. I tell him that we are going to be more successful if we also search for a job on the internet and for that he needs an e-mail address. And we create one, but during the week, without my help, he is not even able to login to his account. So the big question is, should I keep developing his computer skills during that 1,5 hours, so he'll be able to use his email alone, but then, there is no searching for jobs during that time. But he doesn't have the tools to do that on his own. Like I taught my mom how to use the computer, and the next day, she could practice it on her own computer, but this guy will only use it two weeks later and there's a chance that he forgets everything by then. The most important factor is to find a job for them, so you won't teach him the secrets of Firefox, you want him to leave with a reassuring feeling that he sent out at least one application, and stepped forward. So with that man, we created him an e-mail address, wrote a CV and this is always great. Marianna helped

us a lot, she has good guesses, when the client doesn't remember, where/when he used to work. E.g. there is a guy, who used to work at a rubber factory. And you have no clue what people do in a rubber factory, so you start asking him about what happened there - and I really enjoy this part- when they start to tell you stories, what happened and when, but very fitfully, they leave out things or years. And you keep asking until they start telling stories, they show you on Google, how the machine they worked with looked like and the whole thing starts up. These people want to tell stories about what they did and they say thing like - it feels really bad to hear- 'that it's so good to talk to you', and "you are so understanding, you don't shout". So right after we created the e-mail address, we go to profession.hu, and of course, there are hundreds and hundreds of job ads in Budapest. For this man with primary education, there are several options as an assembly line worker. And when I asked him about his preferences, like would he prefer a job in a factory, or to work on a production line, or be a baker, or cleaning staff, he is stunned facing the repertoire. And then you scroll down, waiting for him to read through the options, ask him, if he wants to apply to any... you're a little uncertain, you don't want to push him, and it's a little bit hard to manage, when you think that something would be good for him, but he doesn't really want that...

Marianna told me that you were trying to organize the other volunteers' tasks as well. Can you see the career path here at Menhely that you have run? Are there opportunities for volunteers to step forward?

It's obvious that Marianna and Viki want to develop, standardize and stabilize this volunteer system. Marianna was always trying to delegate us, older volunteers more and more tasks, and she asked me to communicate with the others.

So are there any volunteers whose jobs are organized by you?

These are temporary services, when the new season started they asked me to help them to operate the trainings. I searched for materials, for practices. We organized the awareness raising program at the shelter, we talked about our experiences with the new ones, what problems could arise and the frames of the whole thing. Obviously those who apply to volunteer do not have prejudices against homeless people, but we talked about the structural and personal reasons of homelessness. I had an interesting initiative about this: there is a blog about homelessness (Homeless of Budapest), it's a page where they share their stories of homeless people, illustrated by a photo. And I chose 15 stories that show that each people have their own narratives about the reason of their situation. And it is clear that their stories are all unique, and they are not a mass of worthless poor people. Some of them are highly educated, some have become homeless because of domestic violence, some are orphans etc. We read their stories and analyse them.

...so you are organizing the training and fill it up with content...

..yes..

...is there any thematic part of the training that you do by yourself?

We all do it together, but Marianna is consciously trying to stay at the background. Of course she is the one who answers the professional questions ,but during the past two years we did it ourselves.



She didn't come to the awareness raising training on purpose, I did it with Regina. Two years ago a bigger volunteer group was formed, we made a close community, we talked on a daily basis, shared our experiences, and information e.g. about finding rentals. We made a closed Facebook group, and used an online surface to share information, but the former wasn't so active cause it's hard to coordinate to meet everyone and some people left as well.

How many volunteers do you have in On the Road?

There are 4-5 stable members, who've been doing it since a very long time.

There are two more things...you can say pass to both of them, and I will turn this tape recorder off. What do you personally think about what's happening in Hungary since the past few years in the civil community? Should I switch off?

No, no it's okay... Of course, it's outrageous, disappointing, I wake up, and go to bed with this... But it's hard for me because I live here since 4-5 years. Before, I lived in Transylvania, I studied the field of humanities, I didn't actually get involved with the civil community deeper than my healthy curiosity let me do it. I studied literature, but I couldn't overlook the connection of literature and society, I only minded how contemporary prose responded to the issue of poverty, or to social problems. I continuously looked for poverty in Hungarian prose, but at one point I realized that this is not what I need, it's not enough, I don't want to lock myself in a scientific ivory tower. I want to deal with people, and I found everything else to be useless acts. So that's why I applied to university, to study community and civil studies, where I studied community development and organization, and it became my new profession.

So what happened in the past few years? And what can we do about it? I don't know how to be happy here as a social worker. It won't be my qualification, but sometimes the question arises in me how someone can work and be this vulnerable. I mean the low salaries, and the lack of standing up for their interests, like a strong trade union. The early childhood center's workers are able to step up, but the social workers aren't. The different institutions are being hostile and angry at each other, there is no cooperation. It's totally disappointing to do the government's job and in an atmosphere where they keep questioning the importance of your work. If we live in a work based society, where solidarity isn't a basic value, it's hard to do anything about it.

Maybe the last question: how do you see your future? Where to go? Would you stay and keep doing it? Or if you'd leave what would you take with yourself?

I will certainly continue doing it, for me it's convenient to do it on Saturday mornings. I do the trainings too, I help Marianna to set up the report, I get the information from the volunteers, I sum it up and send it to her. If the On the Road continues, I want to participate in it, I don't want to leave.

How do you have this much energy? Do you sacrifice all your Saturdays for this?

Not all of them, but I did my last couple yes. But it was because I could meet a client regularly. We applied for about 20 jobs every week, and it felt really good, when he came back week by week and told me how many phone calls he had. It's a new experience for him to send document to outer space with a click, and he might think that "hmm this girl is sending my personal data out, but I



have to trust her". He hasn't found a job yet, but we get back to it right after Christmas. It's lucky to have a client I can meet regularly, it's unprecedented to work like this, it usually doesn't happen thing just fail at some point. There was a man, who I met several times, and he did find a job, but he left it because he had drinking problems. I am really bad at detecting these kind of problems, and I was surprised when they told me that he would come again, so I went, and waited, and I called him, and I could tell that he was drunk. That's when I understood what kind of difficulties he had. There are stories like this, failures. There was once a tiny, gypsy old man, who was also searching for a job. He told me many stories about his life, his ex-wife, and his every second sentence was "I am a bull". He had serious arterial obstructions, and diabetes, and he lifted heavy bags. He didn't confess about his health state at his workplace, when he felt dizzy, he stumbled away not to be noticed by others, because he was afraid of getting fired. And he kept saying "I am a bull", and something like "this is Valentine's day, so I bought a heart shaped pillow for my significant other" and I just sat there... and never saw him again.



CASES FROM THE PRACTICE OF ARRELS

How volunteers perceive the association's service users

One of the most important characteristics of anybody who wants to work as a volunteer in the social sector has to do with the way in which they perceive the people who use the service they are helping to provide. That is to say, the volunteer must have an open mind and completely accept the service user that they meet.

Case 1

One of the service users, who also contributes to the functioning of the association in one of its centres, is offered soap, deodorant etc. by one of the volunteers who is in charge of the cleaning supplies cupboard. The volunteer has not advised the service user's assigned social educator. The service user complains to the educator as she is worried that when they find things missing from the cupboard, she will be accused of robbery. Also, she buys her own products – the ones that she prefers... this makes the service user unsettled.

Case 2

A volunteer who knows that a service user sleeps on the street asks the service user to get drugs for a friend who has cancer. The service user refuses, but one night, the volunteer insists and hands over some money. The service user, when seeing the money, becomes scared and upset by the situation, and takes the money to his allocated social educator because he doesn't want any problems and doesn't understand what exactly is going on. The social educator confronts the volunteer with the facts. There has been a break in confidence with the volunteer.

"To believe that as a volunteer I am aware of the whole situation is a mistake."

The service user has lots of information about him or herself and their surroundings that the volunteer does not.

Case 3

A service user leaves a flat after an argument with a flatmate. It is not the first time that he has reacted to a problem with his flatmate like this. The social educator finds him and attempts to mediate the situation, eventually arriving at a conclusion. But a volunteer who has known the service user for a long time becomes desperate at the idea that the service user will spend the night on the street as it is expected to rain. The volunteer rings various social educators to try and get them to find the service user, without considering that the allocated social educator had already spoken with the service user. The volunteer has caused a mess for the flatmates and their social educators.

"I need to accompany rather than direct."

As a volunteer I will never be able to know all the details of a service user's life, and as such, my personal opinions and advice are unlikely to be correct. This is why working in a team, together with the service user and a professional, is important.

The service user has his or her own channels and the association has the resources to manage the situation.

Case 4

An open centre service user decides not to accept some options that a social educator proposes for somewhere to sleep for a few nights, as part of a longer-term plan that is being worked on with the service user. The volunteer decides that the most important thing is that the service user doesn't sleep on the street, without being aware of the possibilities that the educator had suggested and the fact that they had been rejected. So the volunteer decides to pay for a night in a hostel for the service user, without knowing that, for just one night's lodging, he has provoked a rift between the service user and the social educator.

A volunteer considers that there are service users who are able to do work, which would be a good solution for some people that he knows. As such, he proposes to some of the service users that he generally talks with that they paint his flat, without sharing the proposal with relevant social educators. Only one of the service users accepts to go and paint the flat, without being certain of when he would be paid, of the hours of work involved, etc. The volunteer is disappointed with the other service users as, he believes, his proposal is what they need and he cannot understand why they did not accept. He is even more disappointed later on as the service user who accepted didn't respond in the way that he had hoped. This has created a circuit of disappointments, misunderstandings, rifts between service users and with the volunteer. The social educators try to mediate but without much success.

A case from the practice of No Fixed Abode

Stealing donated clothing

The organisation gets many items of donated clothing from the public, which are given free to homeless persons. Donations arrive weekly but not all items are usable. Volunteers help paid staff with sorting out clothing, organising free-of-charge flea markets and distributing clothing in low-threshold centres and housing units.

Two young women started volunteering for the organisation. Their task was to help in receiving, sorting out and distributing clothes. They committed to volunteering three times a week, sorting out clothes at the organisation's storage facilities.

A paid staff member instructed the women in their tasks, told them about organisation work in general and the handling and distribution of donated clothing. Later, the staff member realised that the volunteers left the storage room carrying large bags. However, the staff member did not question the contents of the bags at first.

The same person noticed the women always carried large bags to the storage. When the staff member finally went to greet the volunteers one day, she caught them filling up their bags with donated clothing.

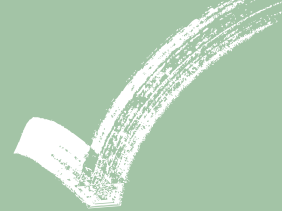
The staff member asked what the women were doing and whether they had been told they could take clothing for personal use, and told them about a possible misunderstanding concerning taking items for personal use. During the conversation it became apparent that two other members of staff had told the volunteers that it is permitted to take home clothing from the storage room. Despite the conversation the same volunteers were caught again for taking pieces of clothing for themselves and were duly asked to stop being volunteers.

Conclusion and solution

We discovered that a contract needs to be made with the volunteers covering, for example, the handling of donations. The focus of volunteer instruction is in the needs of the clients and often illegal activities are not discussed, so the risk of volunteers taking items meant for clients becomes higher. Trust given to volunteers is high and it is important to clarify what activities are not permitted.

Another discovery was that it was not clear to all members of paid staff how to deal with donated items. The organisation should in the future assure that information on all practices is available to all staff members. Similarly, an instructor should be assigned to all volunteers so that is clear who to consult when questions arise.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT TEMPLATE



In representation of Arrels Fundació



PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN VOLUNTEER AND ARRELS FUNDACIÓ

Ferran Busquets Forés, with DNI number *, director of Arrels Fundació, Riereta, 24, bajos – 08001 Barcelona, Registrada con el 1174 en el Registre de Fundacions y con el E 02907 en el Registre d'Entitats i Establiments de Serveis Socials, ambos, de la Generalitat de Catalunya, CIF G 61611364

The volunteer

Full name:

ID number:

With this document and in agreement with the Art. 9.1 of the Law 6/1996 of the 15th of January of Volunteering, the following commitments are established:

The volunteer offers to carry out, within the framework of and in favor of the NGO Arrels Fundació that accepts it, a free and altruistic volunteer service of civic and/or social services, without any form of financial remuneration, in favor of third persons and to improve their lives, without this action harming the principle or private obligations of the volunteer.

This service will be carried out in the period understood as from the signature of this document until the last day of the current year, being extended automatically under the same terms until the ending of the commitment by one of the parts. At the end of the document the details of the agreed volunteer services are outlined.

The volunteers have the right to:

- Receive, both initially and ongoing, information, training, guidance, supervision and, if applicable, the necessary material to carry out their assigned tasks. To be treated without discrimination, respecting their liberty, dignity, intimacy and beliefs.
- Participate actively in the organization and collaborate in the elaboration, design, execution and evaluation of the programmes, in agreement with their status and application rules.
- To be insured against the risk of accidents and illness derived directly from carrying out their volunteer tasks, with the characteristics and modalities insured established.
- To be reimbursed for any costs incurred while carrying out their activity.
- To have an accrediting ID.

- To carry out their activity under the correct health and safety conditions in accordance with the nature of and characteristics of the activity.
- To obtain the respect and recognition of their social value of their contribution.

The volunteers take on the commitments of

- Fulfill the commitments agreed with the organizations of which they form part, respecting their objectives and rules.
- Treat with utmost confidentiality all information and knowledge in relation to personal information of service users, staff and other volunteers which the volunteer has access to during his/her relation with Arrels Fundació. The volunteer agrees to not disclose nor make public this information.
- Refuse any material remuneration they may receive from a service user or another person in relation to their activity.
- Respect the rights of the service user.
- Act in a diligent and supportive way.
- Participate in the specific training sessions organized to guarantee activities are carried out correctly, as well as the ongoing training sessions put on to maintain the quality of services.
- Follow the right instructions that are given out in the development of an assigned task.
- Use correctly the accreditation and logo of Arrels.
- Respect and look after the material resources that Arrels provides.
- Assume the legal responsibility with regards to image rights concerning any photos they make with the personal cameras during activities carried out with Arrels.
- Allow the diffusion of their personal telephone and email to the rest of the organization.

The commitment of the volunteer can be finalized:

- By the finalization of the agreed period.
- By a clear failure to fulfill obligations by either of the two parts.
- By impossibility to fulfill the activity offered.
- By the organization ceasing to exist.
- By the will of either of the two parts.

Relation to current services

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Representative signature

.....
Volunteer signature

Barcelona,



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