

Application pack

Legal administration volunteer



Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Consonant. In this pack you will find the following information:

- **Role description**
- **List of essential skills**
- **Application form**
- **Equality & diversity monitoring form**

Please read these notes and other written material relating to this volunteer placement before submitting your application. We also advise that you visit our website (www.consonant.org.uk) to find out more about us and get a sense of our work.

About Consonant

We have worked for over 30 years to help migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers overcome the barriers that prevent them from fully participating in British society. In this time, we have helped tens of thousands of people secure protection in the UK, regularise their immigration status, learn English, and find work.

In 2016 two charities, Migrants Resource Centre and Asylum Aid, merged and adopted the name Consonant. People who are consonant, work well together. They are compatible, and they complement each other. Our name reflects our vision of Britain as a place where everyone can belong, no matter what their starting point in life.

At Consonant, our roots are in the migrant communities that we serve. Our services are delivered by a wide range of skilled and dedicated volunteers who come from all over the world. And most of our staff are themselves migrants or the children of migrants. Many started as service users or volunteers before joining the staff, and therefore understand the challenges our clients face. We are proud to see ourselves as a migrant-led organisation. But we also see ourselves as an integral part of the British communities in which we live. While our first mandate is to support migrants to integrate into British society, we know that integration must be a two-way process. And for this reason, we reach out to use our skills and time to support all members of the community in need, whether they are migrants or not. And we work closely with organisations representing other members of the community to address shared challenges.

Our vision

Our vision is of a British society that is inclusive and free of prejudice; that celebrates the diversity of its population; and that supports the rights of all people to enjoy freedom from persecution, danger and oppression.

Our mission

Our mission is to enable people of diverse origins to make the UK their home; and to enrich British society by building community through mutual respect and partnerships.

What we do

Consonant will support migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to settle, integrate, and build new lives in the UK. We will help migrants and their families to truly prosper by enabling them to:

- Overcome the barriers that hold them back
- Develop the skills they need to build positive new lives, and
- Transform their communities and society to work for all who live here

Consonant's offices are in Tottenham, next to Tottenham Hale underground and rail station and convenient for various public transport links.

Our commitment to volunteers – a summary

Consonant agrees to:

1. To provide adequate information, training and assistance for the volunteer to be able to succeed in their volunteer role.
2. To ensure satisfactory support to the volunteer and to provide feedback on performance.
3. To respect the skills, dignity and individual needs of the volunteer, and to do our best to use their existing skills and help them to develop new ones.
4. To be receptive to any comment from the volunteer regarding ways in which we might better accomplish our goals.
5. To treat the volunteer as an equal partner in the organisation, working together to achieve the organisation's goals.

Making your application

You should carefully read the requirements set out in the volunteer's role description. When you complete the application form, at **Section 4** 'Further Information', you are asked to write about yourself in more detail. You should use the headings in the 'List of essential skills' to explain how you meet each of the essential criteria listed. This is your opportunity to 'sell

yourself' and to tell us how your background, knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences make you a good candidate for the volunteer role that you are applying for.

Consonant welcomes applications from refugees / people who have been through the process of applying for asylum.

To cut down on waste, we provide an e-application form below. This is a PDF which you can type your answers. If you require any assistance please do not hesitate to get in touch.

The recruitment process

Once we receive your application it will be reviewed by the supervisor for the role. If we feel that you have been able to answer all of the essential criteria well, you will be invited to attend an interview for the position.

Interviews

As there may be several candidates being interviewed for the same placement, it is important that you are prepared to tell us in detail about the qualities that make you a good candidate for the volunteer role applied for. It is always a good idea to have some examples of things you have achieved previously, as well as life experiences, to demonstrate what makes your experience relevant for the role. We will ask you to talk about some of the things that you have put in your written application and there will be a set of standard questions that we ask everybody being interviewed. This is to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and are judged only on their applications and what has been said during the interview.

It is likely that you will be interviewed by two members of staff. One of these will be the volunteer's supervisor. It is also likely that you will be asked to take a short written test before your interview, to demonstrate a good standard of written English, which is essential for all volunteer positions.

If you are offered a volunteer placement we will...

▪ Take up references

Before you can start we shall need to get references from two people that can tell us what makes you a good fit for the role before you start. If you have previous (or current) work / volunteering experience, we would ask that one of these be a referee. If you are studying or have studied recently, a course tutor or other staff member that knows you would also be a good choice to provide a reference. If you have not studied, volunteered or worked in the recent past you can get advice from Consonant's Operations Manager as to who may be suitable to provide you with a reference.

- **Ask you to sign our Volunteer Agreement & Confidentiality Agreement**

You cannot start your volunteering until you have read and signed our Volunteer Agreement. This agreement sets out our expectations from you during your placement, and what you can expect Consonant to provide to you with.

And because we deal with lots of confidential information and have a duty to protect everyone's personal data, you will also be required to agree with and sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

- **Safeguard you... and our clients**

Because we take the issue of safeguarding seriously, if your role involves direct contact with our clients, we will ask you to take an enhanced DBS check (Disclosure and Barring Service – formerly known as a CRB check). Although you can begin your placement before we receive the results from this check, you cannot be confirmed in the role until we have received back details and no concerns have been identified. For information about the **Disclosure and Barring Service**, visit

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about>

Good luck!

Consonant

Role Description



This placement creates an ideal opportunity for gaining experience within the legal team of a leading NGO whilst also developing your existing skills and attributes.

Legal Aid funding has been cut year after year by the government, so our legal administration team is fundamental to ensuring our solicitors remain able to focus on billable tasks – making sure their work is financially viable and that we keep supporting as many clients as possible. Volunteers will be aiding this process by helping with our casework management system, varied administrative tasks, and maintaining our files to stringent LAA audit standards. With time and experience volunteers can progress onto drafting letters, conducting legal research, and taking notes behind counsel in court.

The only way to really understand how a legal office works is to understand its administrative system, and we offer the chance to get obtain this foundation. In our experience the best caseworkers and solicitors are those who have worked in support roles and know what to expect and the best way to receive it. We can offer you that grounding by working with us to help our solicitors focus on their legal work.

A proactive and professional approach to this work is essential, as is a high level of written English and the ability to deal with telephone calls and clients in a calm and sensitive manner. **There is a usual minimum commitment of at least six months for one or two days per week.** Volunteering hours and days can be arranged by mutual agreement and we aim to be flexible in accommodating your existing commitments. The usual hours of attendance are anticipated between 9.30am and 5.30pm, with one hour for lunch. Volunteers are expected to be supportive our mission, of our work and of our client's needs.

We work in an environment that promotes Equality and Diversity to which both employees and volunteers are expected to be committed. Due to the nature of our work, volunteers will be expected to sign an undertaking of client confidentiality – no information relating to any files or clients may be disclosed to third parties without the express consent of both the client and of Consonant.

Role description - Legal administration volunteer

This may include (under supervision):

- Maintenance and filing of client files for caseworker eg. ensuring all letters, attendance notes and other documents are on file and maintained in good order, including preparation of fresh files
- Using and updating matters on our electronic case management system
- Photocopying or scanning post, forms, documents or trial bundles
- Liaising with interpreters, experts, the Home Office or other external agencies
- Processing invoices from counsel, interpreters, experts; and entering disbursements
- Occasional clerking to lodge legal bundles
- Assisting with legal and other research
- Occasional audio or copy typing
- Other casework-related tasks as necessary

There may also be an element of general reception or administration support. This may include:

- Assisting clients in-person and over the phone
- Taking clients details and passing messages on to caseworkers
- Providing general information about other immigration or asylum support services
- Signposting clients to other agencies, where Consonant cannot assist
- Assisting with incoming and outgoing mail
- Photocopying, filing and assisting with other routine admin tasks

Essential Skills

- Ability to work without close supervision and recognizing when to seek support
- Office experience and willingness to undertake administrative tasks
- A high standard of customer service skills and a professional manner when dealing with people both in person, and over the phone
- Good communication skills and written English; Ability to communicate clearly with clients, interpreters, other professionals and organisations
- A non-judgmental approach
- Ability to deal with clients in a professional and courteous manner; the ability to manage stressful or highly pressurised situations appropriately
- Commitment to the aims of Consonant and to the needs of Consonant's clients - many of whom are extremely vulnerable, suffering trauma or who may be children or young people
- Understanding of the importance of maintaining client confidentiality and data security; and willingness to sign a confidentiality agreement
- Proactive approach towards ensuring our Equality & Diversity Policy is continually applied in all areas of your volunteering work

Desirable Skills:

- Personal experience of claiming asylum in the UK
- A good awareness and understanding of the issues facing migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.

Please return completed application form to lorenza.arnaboldi@migrants.org.uk



Volunteer Application Form

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with us. To help us assess your application, please complete this form as fully as possible. This is an e-form, which means you do not need to print it. You can enter text by clicking on the relevant boxes. Make sure you save your work! Get in touch if you need help.

Please return completed application form to: lorenza.arnaboldi@consonant.org.uk

1. Personal details

Please complete all sections, including a daytime contact number if you may be contacted during the working hours.

Full Name	
Address	
Contact	Phone number: Email:

2. Education and training

Please list any education and/or training (including short courses) which you have undertaken and which you think is relevant to your application. Continue on a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

If you attach an up-to-date copy of your CV to this application, there is no need to complete sections 2 and 3.

Course	From	To	Result

3. Relevant work and life experience

This would include your current and previous employment, school placements, voluntary work and life experiences. Continue on a separate sheet of paper if necessary.

Employment dates	Employment details and nature of business	Position held	Full/part time

4. Availability

Please tick all times in which you would be available to volunteer with us. Please note, we expect a minimum commitment of 1 full day (or 2 half days) per week, for a minimum of 6 months.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning	Morning
Afternoon / evening				
Full day				

Comments on availability:

5. Further information

Use this section of the application form to explain why you want the role, and to make your case for being offered an interview. Refer to the skills and experience required by the person specification for the role and provide evidence that you have these skills, preferable by giving specific examples. Please continue on another sheet if necessary.

6. YOUR COMFORT AND SAFETY

Do you have any particular access requirements to enable you to undertake this role? If yes please give details.

Are there any health issues that you think we should be aware of? If yes please give details.

7. REFERENCES

Please give below the name and addresses of the two referees who will be able to provide references relating to your suitability for the post. One should be your present or most recent employer if you have one. Your referees will not be approached before we interview you.

FIRST REFEREE

Name

Position Held/relationship to you

Address

Postcode

Tel:

Email:

SECOND REFEREE

Name

Position Held/relationship to you

Address

Postcode

Tel:

Email:

Declaration

In accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), I give my consent for the information contained in this form, including any defined as 'sensitive personal data', to be processed in accordance with Consonant's recruitment and employment policies. I understand that if I am selected, this application form will form part of my personal file and that if I am not selected it will be stored securely and confidentially for up to a year and then destroyed.

I confirm the information I have supplied above is, to the best of my knowledge, true and accurate.

SignatureDate

Consonant Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form

Consonant is committed to equal opportunities in its policy of employment, volunteering and service delivery. Please assist us by filling in this form, which will be used solely for monitoring purposes.

All information on this form will be treated as confidential and will be processed in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This form will be detached from the application form and no information entered here will be used for the purposes of selection.

Placement applied for _____

Where did you find out about this job? _____

Please tick as appropriate

1. Gender

Male Female Prefer not to say

2. Age

Under 25 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+ Prefer not to say

3. What is your sexual orientation?

Bisexual Gay Man Gay Woman/
 Other Prefer not to say Lesbian Heterosexual/
Straight

4. Ethnic Origin White

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
 Irish
 Gypsy or Irish Traveller
 Any other white background

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

African
 Caribbean
 Any other Black / African / Caribbean background

Asian/Asian British

Indian
 Pakistani
 Bangladeshi
 Chinese
 Any other Asian background

Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

White & Black Caribbean
 White & Black African
 White & Asian
 Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background

Other ethnic group

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

5. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as defined by the Equality Act?

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long term means 12 months or more.

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

If yes, please specify the nature of your disability

6. What is your religion/belief?

- No religion
- Hindu
- Sikh
- Buddhist
- Jewish
- Agnostic
- Christian
- Muslim
- Other
- Prefer not to say

7. Do you have caring responsibilities for a child or adult relative?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

8. Are you a migrant to the UK?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

9. Do you have personal experience of being a refugee and applying for asylum in the UK?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

10. If you answered 'Yes' to Questions 8 or 9, what is / was your nationality?

- Prefer not to say

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

Please return completed application form to lorenza.arnaboldi@consonant.org.uk