

# **BID Volunteer Caseworker**

## **Volunteer Information Pack**

The purpose of this document is to provide potential volunteers with information about volunteering for BID. If you are shortlisted for interview, you will have the opportunity to find out more and will be encouraged to ask any questions you may have. BID could not achieve its objectives without its volunteers and very much values the contributions that volunteers make to the organisation.

Please see our website, [www.biduk.org](http://www.biduk.org), for more information about our work.

### **About immigration detention and BID's work**

Anyone subject to immigration control in the UK can be detained under Immigration Act (1971) powers. There are over 4000 detention places in 8 immigration removal centres (IRCs) and about 400 individuals are held under immigration powers post criminal sentence in prisons.

The power to detain an individual is devolved from the Secretary of State to the Home Department to individual immigration officers; their decision to detain is not sanctioned by a court and detention itself is not subject to a time limit in the UK. This means that people can be, and are often detained for years. There is no automatic legal aid by which an individual can challenge their detention and there is no automatic bail hearing.

Anyone who has been in the country for seven days has the right to apply for bail but without automatic legal representation, many individuals will have to represent themselves, or receive support from BID.

BID does not believe that people should be deprived of their liberty for the purposes of immigration control or for administrative convenience. Its aim is to challenge immigration detention in the UK through the provision of legal advice, information and representation to immigration detainees alongside research, policy, advocacy and strategic litigation.

### **How we work**

- Preparing and presenting bail applications on behalf of immigration detainees. Advocacy in court is carried out by barristers providing their services to BID and its clients pro bono.
- Advising detainees of their rights and how to prepare their own applications for release, using BID's self-help book, How to Get out of Detention. There are copies of this book on our website and in IRC libraries. We also send them out on request. We also hold regular workshops and legal advice sessions in IRCs and prisons, providing support for immigration detainees in how to prepare their own applications for release.
- Carrying out research, gathering evidence from our casework to raise awareness of detention and its impact with parliamentarians, civil servants and through the media. Please see our website for examples of this work.
- Referring cases for unlawful detention actions, and providing information to the higher courts as a third party intervener in actions concerning immigration detention

## **Volunteer assistant caseworkers**

Most potential volunteers are recruited as assistant caseworkers, for which we have prepared a role description (also available on our website).

We prioritise applicants with the most relevant qualifications and experience who can offer the most time commitment. Usually this will be up to four days per week for six months.

We do not take on volunteers for less than two days per week, nor for less than six months. This is to enable volunteers to learn as much as possible, including to benefit from the training in asylum, immigration and human rights law that they will receive which will enable them to take OISC Level 1 exams. We also prioritise applicants who speak languages spoken most commonly by those in detention.

We have a rolling programme of recruitment as volunteers join and leave throughout the year. We also sometimes take on students for student placements as part of their undergraduate studies.

## **Communications and Fundraising Volunteers**

We are always interested in people with communications and fundraising skills and time and would love to hear from you. We cannot always take additional volunteers on due to a lack of space in the office.

## **Research and Policy**

We recruit volunteers to assist with particular research projects or different aspects of our policy work, or sometimes to assist with strategic litigation. These openings will always be advertised on our website but if you are interested in research possibilities, you can always send in an application which will be held pending a vacancy.

## **Induction**

Volunteers are inducted on arrival into basic office procedures and are provided with a general introduction to immigration detention and to BID's work.

## **Supervision**

A member of staff (accredited at Level 3 OISC) will supervise volunteers in the office on a daily basis. Volunteers should feel able to ask for support when faced with difficulties in their work.

If you work on casework at BID, you are supervised in accordance with the Office of the Immigration Service's (OISC) Code of Standards. This means that in responding to calls and preparing bail applications, you must be supervised by someone registered with the OISC to give immigration advice at Level 2 or 3, or a solicitor with a practising certificate. There is a copy of the OISC standards in the BID office.

BID's Legal Managers supervise all advice and information given to detainees as well as the preparation of bail applications by volunteers.

Additionally, BID is registered with the Charities Commission and is a charitable company limited by guarantee registered with Companies House.

## **Support and advice**

The staff supervisor on the day in question should be approached if a volunteer has any concerns or needs support. However, if the volunteer feels unable to speak to the supervisor, or has serious concerns, they should speak to BID's Assistant Director, Pierre Makhoulouf, who is responsible for all BID's legal work.

## **Training**

The majority of training for volunteers is internal due to limited resources. Casework assistant volunteers will be given casework training at the beginning of the placement. There are sometimes limited opportunities for training outside the office, or group training within the office.

## **Confidentiality**

Our client group is considered vulnerable and we have a duty of confidentiality to those people who contact us for assistance. Our clients have the right to expect us to respect their confidentiality at all times. This extends to when work is undertaken by volunteers in allied refugee and asylum charities.

The confidentiality of BID's clients must continue to be respected after you finish volunteering for BID and if the person is released from detention.

BID requires volunteers to adhere to its confidentiality policy, which will be provided to you, should you be accepted for a volunteer placement and should be signed and returned before starting as a volunteer at BID.

## **References**

Closely related to the need to respect the confidentiality of detainees and former detainees is our need for references for prospective volunteers.

Volunteers are requested to give the names of two people who could act as referees.

Your referee does not need to be from previous employment. He/she might know you from voluntary work, education or your other interests. The important thing is that the person acting as your referee knows you sufficiently well to confirm whether or not he/she considers that you would respect our requirement for confidentiality and work in a responsible manner.

## **Holidays**

Volunteers are asked to give as much notice as possible before going on leave so that cover can be arranged where necessary. If you are ill, you should notify your supervisor as soon as possible.

People undertaking full-time placements are asked, where possible, not to take more than two weeks off consecutively during a placement because of the difficulty of arranging cover.

## **Type of Work Undertaken**

Volunteers are expected to undertake any tasks in connection with the work of BID. If volunteers are unwilling or unable to carry out a task, they should speak to the person supervising their work immediately.

Having started in one area of BID's work, you may become involved in other areas of BID's work if interested. BID hopes to be able to use any particular areas of expertise or interest that volunteers have.

## **Expenses**

BID will pay out-of-pocket travel expenses from home to the office and for travel undertaken in the course of volunteering such as training and meetings up to a maximum of £10 per day. We need the receipts for your travel in order to reimburse you. We ask that volunteers buy the cheapest tickets possible for their travel.

If you are undertaking a full-time placement (4 or 5 days per week) it may be cheaper to buy a weekly travel card. If this is the case for you, please speak to us about how to arrange being reimbursed.

If your travel costs from your home to the BID office are more than £10 per day, we need to check whether or not we will be able to reimburse you before taking you on as a volunteer.

To claim your expenses, there are expenses forms in the office. Complete the form and attach your ticket(s) to the forms and pass them to the Finance & Office Manager, Kamal Yasin.

BID does not pay lunch expenses.

## **Work Placements**

Whether or not we can take on someone as part of a work placement scheme will depend on the requirements of the work placement, as well as our vacancies and the suitability of the volunteer. Please send the Director any details you have of your work placement requirements.

## **Pro Bono Advocates**

Barristers with experience of immigration law and representation support our work by presenting bail applications on behalf of detainees in cases prepared by BID. This support is very important to us.

We only instruct advocates who have some experience of immigration law/representation and/or are second-sixth pupils supervised by a barrister experienced in immigration law.

The main reasons for this is that our cases are often very complex, and we do not have the resources to train up advocates who have little or no experience of representation in the First Tier Tribunal, or in immigration law.

If you are registered with the immigration section of FRU and have some experience of immigration law and representation, it would be good to discuss the possibility of pro bono advocacy with you. Please contact the Director about this, see contact details below.

## **Equal Opportunities**

BID seeks to ensure that no prospective or existing employee or volunteer receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, race, social background, gender, sexual orientation, colour, disability, nationality, ethnic origin, marital status or religion.

BID is committed to taking positive action to fight discrimination in all areas of its work including in taking instructions and providing advice, assistance and representation, in instructing counsel and other third parties, and in providing services.

As an anti-racist organisation, BID is committed to taking positive steps as an employer to create increased opportunities for groups traditionally disadvantaged by reason of race, colour, ethnic or national origin.

Our full equal opportunities policy is in the office manual.

### **Varying/Ending your Volunteer Commitment**

Volunteers are expected to attend the office on the days to which they commit so that we have an effective rota.

If you need to change the day on which you volunteer or the hours to which you can commit, please tell us as soon as possible.

We would appreciate as much notice as possible when you wish to stop volunteering so that we can arrange for new volunteers to start.

### **Location of office**

Our address is 1b Finsbury Park Road, London N4 2LA. Nearest tube station is Finsbury Park (approximately 5 mins walk).

### **Changes to your personal details**

If, while volunteering at BID you change name, address/phone number/email address etc please tell us so that we can amend your records.

### **Volunteer Contact email**

If you would like to apply for a volunteer placement, please complete your application form and mail it to BID's Director, Celia Clarke on: [celia@biduk.org](mailto:celia@biduk.org).

Alternatively, if you have any queries about volunteering, you can either email or call Celia on her direct line, 0207 456 9751.