



Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary

Volunteer Speakers Policy

Signed Off 13th March 2025

Review Date: 13th March 2028

1. Definitions

- 1.1 For the purposes of this policy only, the term “volunteer speakers” refers to anybody who:
- has personal experience of seeking asylum (henceforth ‘seeking sanctuary’) in the UK, and;
 - has agreed to contribute to training sessions and other events organised by Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary by speaking publicly about their experience of seeking asylum and becoming a refugee, whether that agreement be verbal or in writing, and;
 - has agreed not to receive compensation of any kind in exchange for their contribution to the event(s), other than in the form of reimbursement of travel and other reasonable expenses incurred as a result of volunteering, in line with Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary’s Volunteering Policy.

2. Aims

- 2.1 Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its volunteers, trustees and staff.
- 2.2 Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary is equally committed to increasing opportunities for people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary to share their experience with our member organisations and with the general public where it is the express desire of the individual with lived experience to do so, and only when doing so does not pose an obvious risk to the physical and/or emotional safety of the volunteer speaker.

3. Process

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of the Membership Engagement Lead and/or of the Volunteer Coordinator to recruit volunteer speakers and keep them informed of upcoming speaking engagements.
- 3.2 The Membership Engagement Lead and/or the Volunteer Coordinator will meet each potential new volunteer speaker in person prior to organising their first speaking engagement, to assess the potential new volunteer speaker’s suitability for the role and ensure that both parties understand the expectations associated with the role (see below).
- 3.3 The Membership Engagement Lead and/or the Volunteer Coordinator will liaise with the volunteer speakers prior to finalising the date, time and venue of any event, in order to ensure

that the arrangements suit at least one volunteer speaker.

- 3.4 The Membership Engagement Lead and/or the Volunteer Coordinator will inform the volunteer speaker of the type and estimated size of the audience and of the duration of their speaking slot prior to the volunteer speaker confirming their acceptance of the speaking engagement.
- 3.5 The Membership Engagement Lead and/or the Volunteer Coordinator will invite volunteer speakers to “share their experience”, not to “share their story”, in order to promote the view that people seeking sanctuary are experts by experience whose expertise goes beyond their personal story.
- 3.6 The Membership Engagement Lead and/or the Volunteer Coordinator will offer the volunteer speaker the chance to co-design and/or co-deliver the event, should the volunteer speaker wish to do so.
- 3.7 The Membership Engagement Lead and/or the Volunteer Coordinator will offer all volunteer speakers support in preparing for the speaking engagement, such as speech practice, editing and emotional support.
- 3.8 The Membership Engagement Lead and/or the Volunteer Coordinator will contact the volunteer speaker no later than 48 hours after the end of the speaking engagement to check that the volunteer speaker is feeling emotionally safe and to gather any suggestions from the volunteer speaker about how the session and/or the process could be improved upon.
- 3.9 Should any volunteer speaker report feeling physically and/or emotionally unsafe as a result of taking part in a speaking engagement organised by Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary, the Membership Engagement Lead and/or the Volunteer Coordinator will signpost the volunteer speaker to appropriate sources of support, in line with Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary’s Safeguarding policy. **A good first point of contact would be Safespace, an emotional support service open 7 days a week and run by Healthy Minds Calderdale, which can be accessed on 01422 345154 (calls), 07388 990227 (texts) or safespace@healthymindscalderdale.co.uk.**

4. Expectations

- 4.1 The person(s) facilitating the event will take all reasonable precautions to ensure the physical and emotional safety of the volunteer speaker, including but not limited to only revealing personal details with the volunteer speaker’s consent.
- 4.2 The person(s) facilitating the event will ask the volunteer speaker how they would like to be introduced prior to the event, and will never introduce the volunteer speaker as “an asylum seeker” or as “a refugee” unless the volunteer speaker has specifically requested to be introduced as such.
- 4.3 The person(s) facilitating the event will provide trigger warnings prior to sharing any content which they believe could prove upsetting to the volunteer speaker.
- 4.4 The volunteer speaker will only share as much of their personal experience and information as they are comfortable doing and will take all reasonable precautions to maintain their own emotional wellbeing, such as withdrawing from the event for a period of time if necessary.
- 4.5 The Membership Engagement Lead and/or the Volunteer Coordinator will ensure prompt reimbursement of any expenses incurred by the volunteer speaker as a result of volunteering, in line with Calderdale Valley of Sanctuary’s Volunteering Policy.

With thanks to the European Network on Statelessness for sharing their External Community Speaker Policy.