Prospective Volunteer Info Pack

You’d like to volunteer at La Linière camp, Dunkirk? Brilliant! Read on to find out more...

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Introduction to the La Linière camp:

La Linière refugee camp is located in Grande-Synthe, Dunkirk, in northern France. It was the first official refugee camp in France, and was established by the Mayor of Grande-Synthe in association with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in March 2016 in response to the number of small, squalid camps which had appeared in the region.

The camp provides housing in the form of small wooden ‘shelters’, sanitary facilities in the form of numerous shower and toilet blocks, fresh water, a laundry, community kitchens, and electricity points. In this regard, it stands in stark contrast to the majority of the large Calais camp. The current population of the La Linière camp is around 800 people, the majority of whom are Kurdish from Iraq and Iran (correct as of late September 2016) who have suffered greatly under consecutive regimes, and now Daesh. The main languages spoken on the camp are (in order of numbers of speakers) Sorani Kurdish, Farsi, and Pashto. The volunteers mostly speak a mixture of English and French.

The above services were previously managed a French organisation, Utopia56, who have now left the camp as they felt ethically unable to enforce new regulations governing who is and is not able to enter the camp (single men may no longer enter). A governmental company called AFEJI have now stepped into the role of managing the camp, but have no picked up all aspects of work that Utopia56 undertook. Alongside the departure of MSF over the summer, we are at a time of great change in the camp and in huge need of volunteers.

In addition to these services, a number of projects and charities work on the camp and, as the Mayor recently said, it is these projects who maintain the humanitarian and indeed human side of the camp. These organisations provide language teaching, childcare, women’s facilities, the distribution of food and other items, and more. International organisations such as the Red Cross, Gynécologues Sans Frontières, and Médecins du Monde provide medical and psychosocial care, and a few French organisations such as Salam and Secours Catholique provide occasional intervention on the camp.

The projects we are asking you to get involved with are:

1. **Kesha Niya** kitchens, tea tent, bakery, free shops, and wood cutting
2. **The Dunkirk Adult Learning Centre**
3. **The Refugee Women’s Centre**
4. **The Refugee Children’s Centre**

Read on to find out how you can help each of these projects.
KESHA NIYA

“Kesha Niya Kitchen is a community kitchen run by volunteers and refugees in the refugee Camp de la Liniere in Grande Synthe, Northern France. Since the 7th of March 2016 we have been preparing and serving 1000 meals a day, including breakfast, lunch, dinner and also an additional 2 AM meal during the month of Ramadan (June and July 2016).

Our kitchen includes a bakery equipped with two tandoori ovens for making naan bread and our menus are created by our refugee chef team The Kurdish Brothers from the refugee community in the camp.

We are a non-paid volunteer collective and our kitchen project is supported by L’Auberge des Migrants, Volkküche München, Utopia 56, Rastplatz, IHA, No One Is Illegal, Dublin Punks and Verein für eine Schönera Willkommenskultur.”

Volunteers with Kesha Niya can expect to be involved in a wide range of essential, practical activities which keep the camp going – everything from chopping fruit in the kitchens, chopping wood to keep to stoves going over winter, serving (sweet) tea, and generally ensuring the camp is providing the essential services necessary for the dignified lives of its inhabitants. They are all lovely, welcoming people and are desperate for volunteers who can come for any length of time and help them out as Autumn and Winter set in! Their excellent ethos is focussed on working with and empowering the refugee community – as demonstrated by their bakery, entirely refugee run!

Volunteers do not need any prior experience, just enthusiasm and the ability to work hard and empathise with the camp’s residents.

They would also in particular love an electrician, dentist, workshop and bike workshop (skills obviously essential) and people willing to run their Welcome Centre.

Kesha Niya volunteers can sleep on camp in the Kesha Niya tent.

If you are interested please contact

volunteer@keshaniya.org

https://www.facebook.com/keshaniya

https://www.facebook.com/keshaniya
DUNKIRK ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

The Adult Learning Centre aims to provide learning in a way that promotes understanding and unity. Language teaching is in small groups sitting in circles on the floor. We have a small library with books in Sorani, Farsi, French and English. We are working closely with the Women’s Centre to encourage women to learn French and English. It really is a brilliant place to teach!

English and French Teachers

We need volunteers to teach English and French from basic to advanced level. Expect to spend as much time on outreach as teaching because our priority is to be inclusive of refugees who find it less easy to study.

A TEFL qualification with some experience or some teaching/training experience is required, along with the ability to be adaptable and responsive in a refugee camp environment. Good communication skills, compassion and resilience are essential.

Outreach and Development Workers

Outreach work is essential to help the less confident and more vulnerable people to engage with learning. Outreach workers make sure everyone in the camp knows about the learning centre and brings refugees along to join in. Outreach workers help with teaching.

Experience of Community Development and Outreach work is required. Good facilitation and communication skills are necessary along with the ability to be well organised and cope in a challenging environment.

Is this for me?

Here are some things that will help both you and Dunkirk Adult Learning Centre decide if volunteering here would suit you:

- Have a look at our Facebook group – Dunkirk Adult Learning Centre
- Chat with a returning volunteer (lucy.halton@wadh.ox.ac.uk, emma.davies@wadh.ox.ac.uk)
- Have a telephone interview with Dunkirk Adult Learning, provide Dunkirk Adult Learning with safeguarding assurances and provide a professional reference to Dunkirk Adult Learning

It’s fair to say that the conditions are poor (self-funding is needed) but the students are friendly and motivated. It is possible to live quite cheaply for a few months in Dunkirk. We need people to commit for a minimum of one month. If you have a work ethic that is professional and compassionate and you can commit a month or more then please get in touch for further information and a chat.

CONTACT: Sarah Wilson Mobile and Whatsapp +447950 106559 OR +441768 870817 Catherine Mezin +33 (0) 611463720 dunkirkadultlearning@gmail.com
Find us on Facebook at ‘Dunkirk Adult Learning Centre’
THE WOMEN’S CENTRE

“The Refugee Women's Centre in camp de la Linière, Dunkirk is a safe space for the women of the camp to come with their children for support, relaxation and to create relationships with the other women in the camp as well as the volunteers. We have a kitchen for the women to cook in, a free shop for the distribution of women’s and children’s hygiene products and a clothes and shoes distribution.

We rely on volunteers and donations to ensure that the space remains open and the women and children of the camp are supported.

We are always in need of volunteers, particularly long-term. Please contact us at refugeewomenscentre@gmail.com if interested.”

Much more detailed information about volunteering at the Women’s Centre can be found here

The Women’s Centre is truly a brilliant place to volunteer in the camp, it fosters a safe and welcoming environment for the women and their children, providing them with comfort and dignity. It is also a place where you will have the ability to do different things all day every day, from distribution in the free shop, to activities with women and children.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tWqIQQvJMoHozShr_0nx3eKtiRLhyPXadWtn2FXRj1g/edit
THE CHILDREN’S CENTRE

Dunkirk Children’s Centre is run entirely by volunteers so whether you aim to stay for just a few days or as a long-term volunteer for a few months, your support at the centre is invaluable.

About Dunkirk Children’s Centre

Dunkirk Children’s Centre is a safe, inviting and fun place for the children living on the refugee camp in Dunkirk to play. It provides valuable play based learning experiences, exciting and stimulating activities and a space for creative expression. The centre, which has been set up and is run by a qualified teacher and childcare practitioners, is currently the only indoor play space for children on the camp. Open six days a week, it offers a soft play room for babies and parents, a nursery class and creative activities for older children in the afternoons.

Our Vision, Values and Aims

Many of the children at La Linière camp have experienced traumatic events in their lives, from the terrors of war and the loss of loved ones to dangerous journeys and brutality at the hands of those who should have been there to protect them. They continue to live in an environment that is uncertain and ever-changing.

The effects of trauma, stressful experiences and lack of appropriate stimulating experiences in the formative years can create gaps in a child’s development, causing lifelong negative impacts. Many of the children on the camp have been out of the education system for a long time and some young children may never have accessed early years’ provision at all. Most children end up living on the camp for many months, making up a substantial part of their early life. For some children, the time spent on the refugee camp is all that they know and will make up their earliest memories.

We believe these memories should be happy memories.

Whether you are a long- or short-term volunteer, the children will capture your hearts as soon as you meet them. They will make you laugh, smile and sometimes cry. The nature of this role can be emotionally and physically challenging so you will need to be patient, resilient and resourceful.

The centre is entirely run by volunteers, and is looking for people with some childcare experience, positivity, enthusiasm and compassion! They need both long and short term volunteers, and accept volunteers of all nationalities but require a reasonable level of spoken English. Long-term volunteers require a DBS certificate. It is preferred if short term volunteers can provide a particular activity or workshop with the children, with the support of long-term volunteers. This could involve anything jewellery-making to gardening!

To get in touch and for lots more information please email dunkirkchildrenscentre@gmail.com
LIVING DURING YOUR STAY

Found something which interests you? We hope so! Now for the practicalities of your visit:

REGISTRATION:

As mentioned above, the camp is currently undergoing a great deal of change, but for now volunteers on the camp are still required to register with Utopia56 via their website http://www.utopia56.com/en/user/register - you will be required to pay a one-off joining fee of €10 which entitles you to a year’s membership. By signing up with Utopia, you are insured while volunteering on the camp.

ACCOMMODATION

While filling in the above registration, you will be asked if you require accommodation. If you would like to, you can stay at the accommodation proposed here which is situated at Puythouk – a local hostel and campsite which has been offered to volunteers at the camp by the Mayor. It is currently offered free to volunteers, and is about a 20 minute walk from the camp itself. It is a good, budget option and there is a great sense of camaraderie between the volunteers who stay there. There are dormitory-style bedrooms, bathrooms, and basic cooking facilities. You can sign up for this accommodation while registering with Utopia56.

Other volunteer option include:

Gravelines House – the volunteer house in Gravelines is managed by Sarah Wilson, who also manages the Adult Learning Centre. It is a good sized house, with 6 beds (and also mattresses), a kitchen, living room, bathroom with hot running water, WiFi and the use of photocopiers (ideal for those in the Adult Learning Centre). It is located in a village near to the town of Gravelines; it’s a pretty town with all facilities and a beautiful beach. For those with their own car it is a 20 minute drive, otherwise there is a bus which takes about 40 minutes which drops you off at the supermarket near to the camp.

Kesha Niya – Kesha Niya volunteers have the option of sleeping in their large tent which is situated on the camp itself. Again, they have a strong sense of community and it is very conveniently located.

FOOD

Volunteers are able to eat the food distributed onsite should they wish, and so breakfast and lunch and least are available free of charge (as well as lots of very sweet tea all day every day!). There are a few sandwich shops which have been set up on the camp by refugees, charging about €2 for a tasty lunch, or the supermarket is about a 15 minute walk (or take the shuttle), and also has cafés and restaurants. It is possibly to live very cheaply while volunteering.
Finally, getting to the camp can be the final hurdle to get over.

**Own car** – if you have your own car that you’d like to bring with you, you can choose between the ferry and the Shuttle. Ferries go to both Calais and Dunkirk, and crossings later at night are often much better value. Generally the ferry costs about £50-60 per car. The Shuttle is slightly more expensive, at around £90-100, but is far quicker.

**Carshare** – if you don’t have your own car (or do and would like to help someone out!), carsharing is one of the best and cheapest ways to get over.

You can find offers of carshares via the website blablacar - [https://www.blablacar.co.uk/](https://www.blablacar.co.uk/) - there are usually a number of drivers travelling between London and either Calais or Dunkirk, if you are willing to be a little flexible with your dates. On average this costs around £15 each way. You may find that drivers often wait until about a week before to advertise their ride, so don’t be put off if at first you can’t find anything.

There is also a brilliant facebook group set up for volunteers at both camps to help each other out – see ‘Liftshare’ here [https://www.facebook.com/groups/152779071748953/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/groups/152779071748953/?fref=ts).

**Ferry foot passenger** – Being a foot passenger on the ferries can be one option, though many services have cut back on the numbers of foot passengers they take. At the time of writing, foot passengers can only travel to Calais, not Dunkirk. National newspapers (currently the Mirror) often offer great value foot passenger tickets for about £1 each, so keep an eye out!

**Eurolines coach** – the Eurolines coach goes from London Victoria to Calais Cité Europe. It is good value at between £10 and £20 each way, and a reliable option with services running once a day all week. The journey is longer than a car, at about 5 hours. [http://www.eurolines.co.uk/en](http://www.eurolines.co.uk/en)

**Eurostar** – the Eurostar leaves from London St Pancras International station and stops at Calais Fréthun. It is a more expensive option, with tickets costing between £30 and £90 depending on when you choose to travel and how far in advance you book, but is by far the quickest route (around 1 hour). [http://www.eurostar.com/uk-en](http://www.eurostar.com/uk-en)

Once you arrive by car/coach/train, you may then have to use local buses, trains or taxis to reach your ultimate destination. Taxis are expensive, so where possible use public transport or see if another volunteer is available to take you to your final destination!
Working on the camp can be extremely difficult, it is intense, high pressure and emotionally exhausting but it is also some of the most rewarding work you will ever do. Whichever of these brilliant organisations you select, you will have the privilege of working alongside other interesting and passionate volunteers, and more importantly providing a service to and getting to know the camp’s residents who are warm, welcoming and brilliant people. Your mind will be opened and you will learn more than you thought possible!

Don’t expect an easy, structured, clean volunteering experience, but if you go and use your own personal skills and capabilities you can make a big difference to the work of a project and to a lot of individual lives. It is hard work but it is brilliant and the sense of common humanity, good humour, and endless hope between those who live and work on the camp is unforgettable.

If you have any questions, or want some first-hand testimony about the camp, don’t hesitate to contact oxfordfordunkirk@gmail.com.

We hope you make the most out of your time at La Linière, and would like to thank you for interest in the future of the camp and its residents

Oxford for Dunkirk.