

Personal money – use of

Details

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Background

A number of visitors seek advice and clarification about whether or not to give personal financial support to their client. This is discussed during training but MAG (the Money Allocation Group) and the Executive Committee believe an agreed policy would be helpful.

Introduction

- It is only through being a member of SWVG that each visitor is enabled to have contact with a client. Working through the Group offers a guarantee of certain standards of support and protection to both asylum seekers and visitors.
- Our funders require that we have clear, fair criteria for the allocation of resources.
- The agencies and individuals who refer clients to us expect us to use SWVG, not personal funds, to help asylum seekers. If they thought some visitors were giving personal funds to clients they may hesitate to make referrals.

Protecting Visitors from feeling pressurised into giving personal money.

- It is very understandable that some visitors wish to give additional funds to a person they have come to like, and wish strongly to support in every way they can. However, if an individual visitor were to give their client personal financial support, this would change the nature of their relationship, and establish a relationship different from that expected by SWVG.
- The individual contribution of each visitor to SWVG's work is their time, commitment and understanding support to each asylum seeker with whom they work. Any financial support to a client is from SWVG as a whole.
- As financial decisions are made by the SWVG as a whole, individual visitors can explain the process to the client, and thus not feel personally pressurised (by the client or by perceived Group ethos) to use their own money. Visitors find this invaluable in ensuring the relationship is on a realistic and fair basis.

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group *Working with asylum seekers and refugees*

Patrons: Miriam Margolyes OBE, John Pilkington, Dr Shirley Firth **Registered charity:** 1103093

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- Some visitors are better able to give financial support; others would be disadvantaged, and possibly feel under pressure to give money they cannot afford. Some visitors could come to be seen as a “soft touch” and sought out by individual clients. (There are very good informal communications systems between some of our clients).
- **It is important** to be fair and to be seen to be fair.
- It is SWVG policy that vulnerability and need, and lack of other supports are the main criteria for allocation of our money. The aim is to ensure the fairest possible allocation of money.
- This policy is implemented by a small group of SWVG members – the Money Allocation Group. At its monthly meetings the group has detailed information about the needs of each client, provided by the visitor, with the asylum seeker’s agreement. Decisions are difficult, and choices have to be made as funds are limited. If individual visitors give personal financial support this undermines our collective decision making process. It also unfairly advantages some asylum seekers over others.
- If you are in a position to and would like to give financial support, please consider giving to the Group as a whole. Several visitors already do this with gift aid and/standing order.
- Many visitors give occasional small presents or treats (e.g. for a birthday), and this seems perfectly acceptable.

ADS 01.12.06

Reviewed by Executive Cttee.: 10.5.11



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