

Get Involved!

Please join our growing network of language and culture volunteers. Complete our volunteer application form and return it to Philada Rogers, 37 Icen Way, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1ET or by email philada@icen.co.uk

How many people have volunteered? In the past 6 months, around 50 volunteers have been involved with our project.

What sort of activities? Some have contributed each week to language classes, others have taken part in single events at evenings or weekends. See below for opportunities.

Who volunteers? Our volunteers are local residents (retired, employed, not employed, business people, school students), overseas students who are studying in the area for a year and migrant workers who have come to live and work in the area. *For instance, a manager in a large local company has offered his skills in Punjabi, Hindi and the business culture of India on an ad hoc basis.*

Why volunteer?

People tell us they want to stay in touch with their native culture or mother-tongue language. *For example, a young Chilean volunteer told us "I love the chance to just speak Spanish without thinking. When I speak English, even though people are helpful, I have to always think – it's hard. Being an assistant in a language class means I can talk Spanish and tell people about my culture."*

Others want to remain active in retirement. *One volunteer wishes to maintain international contacts and recently gave an informal briefing to a director of a local tourism company about their target market in Holland. The company told us: "He was very helpful and gave me lots of general and cultural knowledge of the country. We covered the basic language too."*

Migrant workers have found volunteering a useful way of integrating into the local community. *For example, a young Spanish graduate, who found a first job working in the catering industry, wishes to improve his social status by volunteering. He volunteered as a language assistant in a course at the Sailing Academy. With support and encouragement from Dorset Adult Education Service, he is now interested in training to become a teacher.*

Volunteering can improve local community awareness about different cultures. *Insights into everyday living and social customs have been provided by a local muslim resident, who settled in the area 30 years ago from Syria. Her personal perspectives added interest to a cultural briefing session.*

The clear message is that our network benefits volunteers and the people they assist.

There are many opportunities!

1. support companies and organisations

For example, only a week after signing up, one volunteer agreed to spend half a day with a local tourism company, who requested help preparing for a market visit to Holland. Our volunteer has spent many years working and living abroad and has now retired to Weymouth. He was able to provide background information about Holland and help the company employee feel more confident about speaking a few words of Dutch during her forthcoming business trip.

2. Sign up as language assistants and work with tutors in classes run by Dorset Adult Education Service, local secondary or primary schools.

Five volunteers joined forces with Dorset Adult Education Services tutors of French and Spanish to become real, live, talking, walking resources for 2 months.

3. join a special interest group, or help us to set up new ones. We have groups in German, French, Spanish and Chinese at present. As part of our work to help Dorset prepare for the 2012 Olympic sailing events, we want to set up 40 language groups of volunteers to cover the wide range of languages spoken by competing teams.

4. become a volunteer at Weymouth & Portland National Sailing Academy – to help at international sailing events

Two students from Budmouth Technology College have joined the Academy to volunteer at events, where they can develop their sailing skills and offer skills in foreign languages.

5. Tell us what they would like to do! We have received offers of help to:

- produce promotional materials
- work on local languages projects in tourism and the Olympic theme

We provide information and advice about training and work opportunities – such as public service interpreting. We are currently trying to set up a training course for tour guides with foreign language skills, who could receive foreign visitors.

Insert link to case studies and evaluation

We stay in touch with volunteers with an email newsletter every two months.