

My time as a volunteer with VCF

My interest in people and working with members of the community was what first attracted me to volunteer with VCF. I must admit I knew little about the Foundation other than the tragic death of the young girl but I wanted to know more. I came to learn of the public enquiry that led to changes in legislation and the implementation of it nationwide. Having come into contact with the foundation post Baby P I was inundated with reports about the failings of social services and the country was in up roar, safeguarding was firmly on the agenda thanks to the media frenzy surrounding the case. It was only when I was told about the involvement of the Foundation in the case that I'd discovered how crucial their role had been in bringing the case to justice.

I expected my role as a volunteer to differ somewhat from that of the three staff members but I was treated as a member of the team and sat in their meetings and even ran a workshop with them. They ran a workshop for a group of Somali women in Southall and I was surprised at how much ground they covered in a short space of time. They managed to gain trust from members of the group and the women's discussions ventured as far as FGM (a very common practice in this community). VCF demonstrated their ability to infiltrate communities and their work ethic to always work from grass roots, I think that was the moment this Foundation showed me what it could do and I was there to witness them speak to a group of women who didn't speak much English and overcome that barrier and discuss sensitive and often taboo issues.

The Foundation also sent me out on safeguarding children course so I could gain knowledge on the system and the procedures to follow etc. The course was enlightening and although most of it was basic as it was level 1, it was good as I grasped some idea of the structure and it gave me an opportunity to ask questions about things I was unsure about.

The team is very well organized and it has made me start to think about ways I can manage my time better. They provided me with a list of aims and objectives so I would have something to work towards, it wasn't a check list, just something to motivate me to do the best I can. We also have a group meeting every week where we discuss our action plan and tick off things we've done.

My time with the Foundation has bought home the urgent need to have organizations like this in place that push for change in the laws to protect children so we don't ever have another Victoria in the headlines. If I could walk away with one thing from this experience it would be with hard work, dedication and determination things can be done and people will listen if you believe in what you do.