



RFS - the Swedish Association of Voluntary Community Workers

About RFS

RFS, the Swedish Association of Voluntary Community Workers, is a Swedish NGO, Non-governmental organisation, with 80 local associations. It has around 6, 500 members who undertake voluntary tasks that are subject to statutory regulation and assigned by public authorities. These voluntary tasks include acting as:

- Lay probation officers (appointed by the Probation Service)
- Contact persons, contact families (appointed by the social services)
- Guardians and trustees (appointed by the Chief Guardian and district courts)
- Guardians for unaccompanied child refugees (appointed by the Chief Guardian)
- Special needs trustees (appointed by the social services and district courts)
- Volunteer companions (appointed by the Patients' Advisory Committee)
- Visitors to prisons and remand centres.

RFS is led by the association's board and has a central office with a staff of seven, who provide

support to the local associations. The local associations enable their members to develop in their volunteer roles by arranging exchanges of experience and thematic evenings, for instance. Membership of a local association also provides accident and crisis insurance cover while tasks are being performed. Guardians and trustees can also take out professional indemnity insurance and third party liability insurance.

RFS disseminates knowledge about its members' tasks and what they do, acts as a central lobby group and cooperates with other organisations. The aim of the association is to ensure that every individual given the support of a voluntary community worker will receive high quality, legally secure assistance. For this reason it is important for the authorities that appoint these volunteers to provide them with training, support and encouragement.

The work of RFS is funded by government grants and project funding.

Vision Rooms – for a better future in freedom

Supporting a fellow human being

All of the voluntary tasks subject to statutory regulation involve supporting vulnerable fellow human beings, treating them with sympathy and understanding and remaining aware of the importance of professional boundaries. They also require knowledge of community resources and how they can be accessed.

The tasks are voluntary ones for which a modest fee is paid. RFS stresses the value of the fact that they are voluntary, not undertaken for gain but prompted by the desire to support a fellow human being.

The aim of the various tasks can differ but on the whole a volunteer is expected to:

- Provide human support
- Assist individuals with their personal concerns
- Help individuals to extend their networks
- Support individuals in their contacts with the authorities

RFS has the responsibility for coordinating Vision Rooms, a partnership between the Prison and Probation Service and a number of NGOs. Vision Rooms have been set aside in remand centres, prisons and probation offices so that inmates and clients can acquire up-to-date community information from authorities, organisations and associations. This information is provided through brochures and folders as well as in the form of discussions, meetings, lectures and study circles. The idea of the Vision Rooms is to give inmates in prisons or those on probation the possibility to seize hold of their own destiny and work on their future.

Contact

For more information, contact RFS at:
Riksförbundet frivilliga samhällsarbetare
Frejgatan 75
113 26 Stockholm
Telephone: +46 8-556 068 30
E-mail: info@rfs.se
Website: www.rfs.se