

How to run a Voucher Exchange Scheme

1. Establish a group of willing people to buy vouchers on a regular basis. As the vouchers come in different forms and denominations it is helpful to have people who shop at different supermarket
2. Set up a screening with the asylum seekers who are using the service.
 - Check their identity card or other identity documents
 - Make sure you have an address or telephone number to contact themOr work through an established group supporting asylum seekers.
3. Have a regular time and place for buying vouchers somewhere that is as accessible as possible to asylum seekers.
4. Balancing supply and demand can be difficult. We have found that asylum seekers needing to exchange vouchers exceeds those willing to buy them. I suggest that to begin with offer to exchange 1 set of vouchers per month and only take on as many people as you can pass on the vouchers. You may want to think about prioritising those with children, with disabilities or suffering ill health.
5. Set up a system for selling the vouchers. You will need some “seed” money to buy the vouchers and some funding for holding vouchers.
6. You will need a contact person/point for selling on the vouchers. For example a church group could use the church hall after the Sunday service or the parish office.
7. You will need to set up banking and cash handling procedures. People may want give you cheques for the vouchers they buy and the asylum seekers need cash. To start you might work through an existing account with a church or community group.
8. Safety and security are important when handling cash. If you are transporting cash have two people and don't always go at the same time by the same route. Have a locked cash tin.
9. Unfortunately not everyone is totally honest so have some sort of contract or agreement with the asylum seeker. Vouchers that come as gift cards do not show if the card has been used so you will have to take it on trust. Make it is clear that any shortfall will have to be repaid and that you will not exchange vouchers again for anyone who has misled you.
10. When you pass on the vouchers that come as gift cards keep a note of who they came from so that you can deal with any problems. You can do this by noting the serial number of the card when you take them.
11. Encourage everyone you know friends, family, and work colleagues to participate. After all it costs nothing to those who take the vouchers, it shows solidarity and it can make a huge difference to someone's quality of life.

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