

# International protection and volunteer reference letters

Volunteer Ireland asked the International Protection Office how volunteer reference letters affect applications for international protection. This is the information that they gave us.

Since 2015, an application for international protection goes through what is called the single procedure. There are three different types of protection that can be granted from this procedure:

- Refugee status
- Subsidiary protection
- Permission to remain

**Reference letters about volunteer experience will have no relevance in determining if you are eligible for the first two: refugee status and subsidiary protection.** These types of protection depend only on your past situation: why you decided to leave your country and why you fear going back there.

If you are rejected for the first two types of protection, you can still be considered for the third, permission to remain in Ireland.

**Reference letters about volunteer experience might be useful for you if you have been rejected under refugee status and subsidiary protection and are looking for permission to remain in Ireland.** You can apply to the Minister for Justice who will consider things like:

- your family and personal circumstances.
- how you behaved before you came to Ireland and how you behave now that you are here.
- any security issues for the public good, like criminal histories or recent poor behaviour.
- humanitarian considerations.

It is important to say that **people hoping to remain in Ireland do not NEED a letter of volunteer experience.** The process is much more detailed and considers a lot more factors than just this one. However, it is considered a helpful element in your application if you can prove you have spent time being a positive part of your community.

There are so many reasons to volunteer beyond getting a reference letter, like

- meeting new people in your community
- making friends with other people new to Ireland
- practicing English conversation
- learning new skills that you can use in a future job
- doing hobbies that you can't do in your current accommodation, like working with animals or gardening
- learning about the culture in your community
- making your new home a better place

For more information about the International Protection process, please visit:

- The IPO office website: <http://www.ipa.gov.ie/>
- Citizens Information: <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/>

For more information about volunteering, please visit:

- Volunteer Ireland: <https://www.volunteer.ie/>
- Your local Volunteer Centre: <https://www.volunteer.ie/your-local-volunteer-centre/>

