



Distribution Manual - UK

General principles

- 1) Perceptions of fairness, and being seen to have a system that both works and cannot be cheated, are crucially important. We might not see it, but if people feel that there is unfairness we can leave behind tensions that cause problems for everyone. If the refugees feel that they constantly need to find ways to cheat the system just to get the same as everyone else this means they are under constant pressure. However if we are seen to have a system that is consistent and fair and cannot be cheated, everyone will be calmer and happier.
- 2) Except in emergencies, or where numbers are very small, group distributions are likely to be more efficient and therefore more sustainable than distributing to individuals on an ad hoc basis. They are also more likely to be perceived as fair. If we do one distribution at the same time and place every week, refugees will get used to it and volunteers will be able to plan their time more effectively. Volunteers running around to meet each individual is unsustainable and will limit the number of people who can be helped overall.
- 3) Where possible it is preferable to give people a choice. This increases agency, and satisfaction (imagine someone else choosing your clothes for you) and also decreases waste. However, this must always be balanced against efficiency so that people are not kept waiting and overall we are effective.
- 4) It might feel easier to visit the hotel to distribute but it's better for the refugees and for us to find an offsite location. The refugees are in the hotel 24/7 and it's so much better for their mental health to have a safe space outside of the hotel to visit. Also, the hotels are essentially run by the Home Office and it's better for us not to be under their control. Look for local churches, community centres, mosques etc to partner with.
- 5) Its important to smile. We are not just giving people things - we are aiming to make them feel welcome.

Types of Distribution

Distributions generally fall into three broad categories:

1. To individuals

For smaller hotels or individuals/families it may be appropriate to deliver select items directly to individuals or small groups. However this should be avoided where possible. Volunteers running

around to meet individual needs is likely to be unsustainable and will limit the number of people who can be helped overall.

Where distributions to individuals are necessary, keep a shared list of everything that is given out to avoid duplication and unfairness. The best way to do this is via a shared google sheet. Please make sure you use people's **real legal names**, **not** just the names they tell you. Ideally ask to see everyone's ID or Home Office papers. Sometimes volunteers feel awkward about this at first however our repeated experience is that if you go the extra mile and work hard to make your distributions professional and fair, they will see this as a sign of respect and thank you for it. Unfortunately there are too many times that a refugee's life is not fair.

Always use the C4C distribution method for mobile phones (details available from purchasing@care4calais.org)

2. Group distributions

Wherever possible, group distributions are likely to be more efficient and therefore more sustainable, and are also more likely to be perceived as fair. The ideal practice would be for people to know that volunteers will be at X location at Y time each week and individual asylum seekers with requests should be directed to go there to meet the volunteers. The more established a pattern, the less likely you are to miss people. Think of ways to publicize your distributions.

Group distributions can take two forms:

A. 'Shop' distributions

This is where donations are laid out in a room or area and asylum seekers can and choose items. This is generally more suitable if numbers of people are low and where there is more time available / less urgency to get things out to people.

The main benefit of this type of distribution is **choice**. This increases agency, and satisfaction (imagine someone else choosing your clothes for you) and also decreases waste. If volunteers make up packs for people, unless we are using new and generic items, the chances of someone getting what they want are slim.

However these advantages need to be balanced against time and efficiency. Think about how many people you need to see and how much time you have. If you have 200 refugees and two hours to distribute they simply can't take 15 minutes each. Work out how much time you can allocate to each person and gently, politely but firmly make them stick to it. The benefits of agency and choice need to be balanced against the indignity and frustration of having to wait for hours in a line if the distribution is too slow.

The other issue to consider is the extent to which you are likely to run out of the 'best' stock and have less good stock left for people who come last. A good way to manage this is to not put everything out at the beginning and limit the choice that each person has. So, depending on time, you might decide to give each person a choice out of say ten items, or to only put one box out at a time. This also has the advantage that by limiting choice you will reduce the amount of time each person takes to choose, and so increase efficiency. A note of caution would be to ensure that you do not suddenly pull out at the end some items of higher quality that were not available earlier as this could cause resentment.

B. Bigger distributions

This is where items have to be handed out to people more quickly from a fixed location. This is more appropriate if you have a high number of people to serve, if there is less time available or if there is more urgency to get things out quickly due to urgent need. If items are all generic this is usually fairly easy and fast.

If items are not generic it is still possible to give people some level of choice, it is just that the balance between choice and efficiency is different. So each person may only get a choice between three items and may only be allocated two minutes to make their decision. This is possible if the distribution is well planned.

The two most important factors to make any mass distribution go well are being aware of the **timing** and controlling the **space**.

Timing

No one likes to queue or wait in a line; and if the line does not keep moving forward then people can become agitated and argumentative. You want people to choose items and move away as quickly as possible but of course they want to stay and chat and choose items. Being sensitive to this while effectively managing it is a skill.

This means that each volunteer has a key role in making the distribution run well. You may do well to assign these roles at the start according to a volunteer's personality and skills. The people who are giving out the goods have a key role to play, and assigning this role to the correct people is key to making the distribution run well. You need people who are personable and assertive and who can think quickly. Brief them to be friendly, smiling and upbeat. Positive energy is a great help!

You also need people who are personable and effective to manage the line. One person needs to ensure that refugees move towards the people giving out quickly enough, and someone else needs to help the refugees to leave quickly once they have their item. If there isn't a clear exit route and people don't move away, then a crowd may form which is not a good dynamic. However if you don't guide them away they may not naturally move on.

Space

You should always be in control of the space surrounding your distribution area. This includes making sure you always have clear lines of sight around the whole distribution. The more you can see the harder it is for people to push in and the less likely you are to have problems. Conversely when groups start to gather things become more confusing and crowd mentality can take over. Brief the volunteers to encourage people to move away from the area of the distribution and to keep lines of sight as clear as possible. Similarly, there may be a need to kindly but assertively discourage any crowds from gathering nearby.

Always be aware of your potential emergency exit routes and try to ensure these remain clear.

Risk Assessment for Distribution

Please consider the following factors when planning a distribution. If you have concerns please feel free to contact a more experienced Care4Calais person for advice in advance. If a distribution is expected to be

high risk for any reason please contact Clare on 07968 399159 to discuss ways to mitigate this.

1. Consider the value of items we are giving. Higher value or more desirable items create more risk because they are more likely to lead to tension. High value items are things like shoes or coats, or new clothes. Most second hand clothes, toiletries, food etc are lower value and therefore create less risk.
2. What is the level of need and expectation? If there have been regular distributions at the site, so that people have most of what they need already and are accustomed to the process, it is more likely to be calm. If not there may be more tension which will lead to risk.
3. Consider the number of volunteers available, and their experience of different distributions. More experienced volunteers means less risk. If you are unsure maybe you need to recruit more help (or ask us to help you).
4. Where will the distribution take place? If there is a sense of community or stronger relationships the site may feel more settled, if there are tensions with hotel staff, then less so. If it is in a local/church space you may need to consider whether a litter pick is needed afterward to keep the community happy. Please make plans to make sure everything is tidy afterwards. If you are in a car park be aware of safety issues such as how close you are to a main road, could a child run out or a car turn in too quickly? If you will have a line of people, where will it extend to if it gets long - you don't want it to go onto a road which could be dangerous.

Deciding what and how to distribute

Things to be considered

- What stock do we have available?
- Previous distributions done at that site – what have people had/not had?
- How many people are there at the site? Do you have enough items so as not to create tensions?

It's key that we don't do anything that could create perceptions of unfairness or leave tension behind when we have gone, but we are often working with limited resources.

If you are going to a big site and don't have enough of one item to give one to everyone, consider making it a choice - but make sure that the choice is of things of equal value. So if you don't have enough coats for everyone, maybe you have enough to give everyone a choice between a pair of shoes and a coat? Or a choice between a coat and a pack of joggers and hoodie together? Whatever you do, don't start a distribution unless you have enough to give everyone something of similar value. If people learn that your distributions run out of items before the end, that will create a big incentive for people to push to the front of the queue, and your distributions will become tense and unstable.

For similar reasons it is important to think about how many people there will be at the site and how much time you have to get to all of them. The more people you have the faster and more efficient your distribution needs to be, as if it is too slow as it could result in people waiting too long for their turn and becoming agitated. This can cause tensions and problems for everyone. In this case it may be better to think of ways to distribute quickly and efficiently, maybe taking only one to (max) three items each time you visit.

Emergency procedures

Sometimes for a variety of reasons (which may be out of our control) a situation can become tense. As with any such case when dealing with a crowd of people, it is important to be prepared for such eventualities. If something does go wrong, firstly, do not panic. Brief your team that if something happens the first move should be for the Distribution Lead to check it out and deal with it and for everyone else to hold their positions. If there becomes chaos amongst the volunteers, it will be reflected in the distribution and may make it difficult to continue.

If there is a serious incident and it is necessary to stop the distribution, brief your team that you will all move away to a safe distance. Let the team know that it is important that in such a case they all immediately come to you. If people scatter there is no way to ensure that everyone is safe and together. If everyone is their volunteer lanyards it should be easy for the team to get together and remain together and to make sure everyone is safe and accounted for.

If there is a disturbance or someone tries to steal goods do not intercede, just move away and keep the volunteers together and get everyone to safety.

Getting help from the Asylum Seekers

The asylum seekers themselves may wish to help with our operations, either as translators or facilitators, which can be a great collaboration as long as there are appropriate safeguards in place.

Practices that must be in place

It is particularly important that asylum seekers are not able to make decisions over who gets what aid. This could lead to them being put under pressure by others for giving preferential treatment to some or for not giving it to people such as their friends. This is not fair: when the day ends the volunteers can go home, but the asylum seekers will stay. They already have a lot of stress and worry in their lives already and do not need additional pressure.

Asylum seekers may support volunteers but are not there to do our job.

Think about the impact of receiving charity on people's dignity

No one likes being in this position. How can we make it easier for them? For example if an asylum seeker offers to help you carry a box or make you a cup of tea say yes! They don't want to always be on the receiving end of help.

Leaving a site

- Please tidy up - don't leave litter
- Any volunteers leaving before the others must make sure the Distribution Lead knows their intentions.
- The Distribution Lead is the last to leave the site and must ensure that all other volunteers have left.