

# Suffolk Refugee Support Newsletter

Spring 2017



[www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk](http://www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk)

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@suffolk\_refugee

## Suffolk Refugee Support secures future services with funding success

After lots of work developing and submitting funding applications, and explaining the benefit of the work we do, we are delighted to report that much of the funding for our key services has been secured for the next three years.

We have been awarded a grant from **The Big Lottery – Reaching Communities Fund**, as they recognised the value of the support we provide and continued need for it in Suffolk. This new funding will specifically fund our work with refugee women, young refugees, those seeking to build skills and gain employment, and our work to promote better mental and physical health amongst our clients.



Under the project management of Jodi and then Abbie, we have completed our first year of providing support services to Syrian refugees under the **Government's Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Programme** via Suffolk County Council. This scheme aims to resettle up to 230 individuals predominantly from Syria over the next four years. We have been awarded the contract to continue to fulfil this vital role.

We would also like to thank the following funders who have shown faith in us as an organisation and committed funding towards our work over the next year or more; **The Safer Suffolk Fund**—Police & Crime Commissioner (via Suffolk Community Foundation); **Building Better Opportunities**—a partnership in Suffolk funded by the European Social Fund and Big Lottery; **BBC Children in Need**—to support children from refugee families and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC); **Raising the Bar** (via Suffolk Community Foundation); **Ipswich Borough Council**; **Public Health Suffolk**; **LEP Community Challenge Fund** (via Suffolk Community Foundation); **RJB Grantmaking Fund & The Frank Jackson Foundation** (both via Suffolk Community Foundation); **Scarfe Charitable Trust**; **St. Edmund's Fund**; **Ganzoni Charitable Trust**; **UNITE**; **Mrs L.D. Rope Charitable Settlement**. We are indebted to Suffolk Community Foundation for the support they have given us to secure several of the above grants.

Finally, an enormous 'thank you' to all the individuals, churches and community groups who have generously made personal donations towards our work. This funding is invaluable as it gives us the flexibility to meet urgent need wherever we find it, and where individual needs don't always fit the criteria of larger funders e.g. food to help a family in need for a week, or school uniform for a new school. We really couldn't plan and manage without these regular donations.

We are very excited about starting a new 3-year programme of work and would like to thank everyone who is supporting us to bring vital services to those who need them most.

Rebecca Crerar, Charity Manager

## Update on refugee schemes

There have been various refugee schemes in the news recently, so we thought we'd give a brief update, particularly on the local situation:

**Dispersal**—We've had a number of enquiries from friends and supporters in the Woodbridge area following reports that Woodbridge and Felixstowe were being considered as possible locations for temporary housing under the government's dispersal scheme, under which roughly 90 asylum seekers are currently housed in Ipswich. The towns have been identified because of their transport links to specialist support services in Ipswich, such as ourselves. However, any progress is dependent upon the accommodation provider, G4S, finding affordable private sector accommodation and early suggestions are that this is proving particularly difficult in Woodbridge.

**Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement and Vulnerable Children Resettlement Schemes**—Suffolk has agreed to take up to 230 refugees from these two programmes by 2020. They will be people at severe risk of harm or death or with serious medical conditions. Plans are in place to bring 23,000 refugees to the UK via these schemes. So far 11 families comprising 53 individuals have arrived in Suffolk.

**Dubs Amendment**—Last month the UK government announced that it was winding down a scheme to bring some of the many thousands of unaccompanied child refugees in Europe to the UK, commonly known as the Dubs Amendment. When the amendment was passed many people thought the government was committing to helping 3000 children. So far only 200 have been brought to the UK, and just 150 more are due to be transferred.

**National Transfer Scheme**—The Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) National Transfer Scheme was set up last July to more evenly distribute unaccompanied minors across the UK and ease pressure on local authorities with particularly high numbers. Under this scheme the number of UASCs in Suffolk is set to increase to 106. At Suffolk Refugee Support we are gearing up to do more work with young refugees, in particular to help them better understand the asylum process, to increase their academic skills and develop a greater sense of belonging.

## SRS making a real difference in the lives of refugees

### Good News Stories

#### Mohammed Ismail's story.

A father-of-two who fled war-torn Iraq in 2002 has said he will never forget the kindness shown to him by SRS.

Mohammed Ismail spent 15 days travelling in the back of a lorry to escape his home province of Diyala when it was under

the rule of Saddam Hussein. Both his father and brother were killed during the conflict.

Since arriving in Ipswich 11 years ago, Mr Ismail, 34, has seen his life turn around thanks to SRS.

He said: "To be honest they have helped me more than anything else in the world. I don't know how to describe it.

"If I didn't have this place I wouldn't have my kids now, they would be in care. It's not just me they have helped, it's hundreds of people."

Mr Ismail has two daughters, three-year-old Esme, and Analeah, two. SRS has paid for Mr Ismail to take English classes at Suffolk New College, supported him through a relationship breakdown, helped him into housing and is continuing to assist him with his asylum case. This year Mr Ismail is expected to find out if he is granted the right to remain in the UK after 14 years of waiting in limbo. If this is successful, Ms Crerar said she hoped to find Mr Ismail a job in farming or mechanics. "I will never forget this place for all my life," Mr Ismail said.

[This story originally appeared as part of an article in the East Anglian Daily Times 18/1/2017]





# EVENTS

## Giles Duley photography exhibition

We are delighted to announce that we are organising an exhibition of images by the acclaimed documentary photographer, Giles Duley, at the University of Suffolk from 24 April-21 May. Giles has made his name documenting the humanitarian consequences of conflict, despite becoming a triple amputee after stepping on an IED in Afghanistan in 2011. We hope this exhibition will really bring home the experience of being a refugee—the trauma, hardship and hope.



Fund-raising event for  
**Amnesty International &**  
  
**Suffolk Refugee Support**

  
**Theatre Royal Writers**  
present

**AN EVENING OF PLAYS  
AND POETRY**  
Thought-provoking plays and poems  
relating to the refugee issue

A representative of Suffolk Refugee Support  
will speak about its work

**Saturday 18 March at 7.30 p.m.**  
St John's Church, St John's Street  
Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1SN

Tickets £8 on the door or from  
01284 725380 [amnestyburystedst1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:amnestyburystedst1@yahoo.co.uk)

Refreshments available in the interval  
(not included in the ticket price)

## Bury St Edmunds theatre fundraiser

An evening of thought-provoking plays and poetry exploring contemporary refugee issues will be held at St John's Church, Bury St Edmunds on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March, with all proceeds going to support the work of Amnesty International and Suffolk Refugee Support.

The Theatre Royal Writers Group have created a series of short plays, poems and monologues approaching the complex issues of displacement and asylum. There will also be a welcome from Councillor Julia Wakelam, Mayor of St Edmundsbury, and we will give a short talk and take part in a Q&A session.

## *There but for fortune -* Art Exhibition

We're thrilled that local artist Susie Mendelsson has chosen to donate the proceeds of her latest solo exhibition, **There but for fortune**, to Suffolk Refugee Support. Susie, who lives in Woodbridge, was born in London to Jewish parents who both fled Germany—her father was a Kindertransport refugee. Her exhibition of paintings and models of the human figure, the theme of which is the idea that bad things only happen to 'others', never to 'us', takes place at the Frame Workshop & Gallery, Ipswich, from 3-27 May.



## Live music and art event

On **Friday 28 April** there will be an exciting live music and art event at The Avenue Theatre, Gippeswyk Avenue, Ipswich, to raise funds for SRS. It will feature a showing of the short video 'Malka', telling the story of a refugee mother and child, an exhibition of paintings, live speed art, music and dance. Huge thanks to Stefan Freedman and his colleagues for their generosity in arranging this. Stefan feels a personal connection with the refugee experience as his grandmother fled anti-Jewish pogroms in Minsk to find safety in England.

## Friends of Refugees Suffolk (FORS)

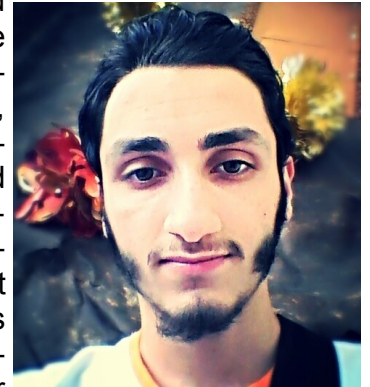
We are grateful to the wonderful support of Friends of Refugees Suffolk, a local fundraising & action group, for holding a fundraising supper to raise funds for SRS on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March. Two Syrian refugees, now resettled in Ipswich, are making the pastry desserts, and enjoying being involved and catering again!

A big thanks to our volunteer Libby Ruffle for holding a coffee morning in Waldringfield in February, and raising £254 for our services for refugees.

## Syrian Resettlement Update

It has been a busy few weeks for the Syrian Resettlement Scheme, with two new families arriving in early February and our earliest arrivals reaching one year in the UK. Alongside the normal inductions, volunteers arranged a wonderful 'Foods from around the UK' session to enable people to taste the more traditional foods from their new home; from Eccles Cakes and Scones, to Cornish Pasties, Colchester Crab and Oysters! The event was great fun and a lovely way to reciprocate the usual spread of delicious Syrian food. We have also had talks from the police and community dental team and an information session on internet security – with a pancake day celebration tossed in just for fun!

The families have a variety of complex needs and so as a team we aim to provide them with support but also encourage independence as the project progresses into its second year. As such, we are currently supporting the families who have been here the longest to review their housing options, to seek employment and continue to build their lives here in Ipswich. We are lucky enough to have not one, but two new members of staff who will be sharing the role of Bilingual Assistant and accompanying service users to appointments and meetings and helping with the orientation of new arrivals. We are very pleased to welcome Dr Rasha Al-Shalabi, who has been working at Ipswich Academy supporting Arabic speaking students, and our very own Hamam Mahrat (pictured), who arrived through the project in September 2016 and has since been very supportive, volunteering his time with Suffolk Refugee Support – we are sure that he and Rasha will make wonderful additions to our team!



## Cycling Syrians Project

While bikes might not be seen as a necessity for refugees, our Cycling Syrians Project has been helping newly-arrived Syrian families in Ipswich to get around, orientate themselves in their new surroundings, and to keep fit!



Thanks to the boundless enthusiasm of our volunteer Lucy, we have been providing bicycles to Syrian families and organising cycle road safety sessions. All the bikes have been donated thanks to the Christchurch Park neighbourhood group, the staff at Ipswich School, Cycle Ipswich and the Bike Doctor, and La Tour Cycle Café. The bikes have been checked and serviced by Joni at La Tour Café and Dave at the Green Bike Project. British Cycling has donated buffs

and high-visibility bibs and Suffolk County Council's Road Safety Officer, John Showell, has been providing fantastic road sense lessons to keep our riders safe. Huge thanks to all for showing such generosity and making this possible!

So far we have provided 16 adult bikes and 12 children's bikes and scooters. As more families arrive, we hope to be able to provide them with bikes too. If anyone has an adult bike that they'd like to donate to the project, please do get in touch. Don't worry if the bike needs a little bit of TLC as the brilliant Green Bike Project at Holywell's Park is providing repairs at a discounted charge. We'd also love to hear from you if you have any kids' bikes, especially scooters, that are already in good working order. And if anyone would like to volunteer to help with the project - especially someone who can carry out basic bike maintenance and repairs themselves and is able to transport the donated bikes - we'd be delighted to hear from you. See our website for more details: [www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk/what-you-can-do/volunteer](http://www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk/what-you-can-do/volunteer)



## International Women's Day report

Wednesday 8th March was International Women's Day, an event celebrated by women around the world. The theme for 2017 was 'Be Bold for Change'.

Here in Suffolk, together with Karibu African Women's Network, we hosted a special party to celebrate our diversity in song, dance and food, but also to appreciate what brings us together. We were treated to dances by women in national costume from Kurdistan, Albania and South Africa, and listened to songs from Sri Lanka and the UK. Even the children joined in some UK nursery rhymes led by our Charity Manager Rebecca! In all, 22 nationalities were represented and the women shared some of their achievements and hopes for the future: "I am proud that I can raise my voice for my rights"; "I feel more safe in society"; "Despite of everything bad we [had], I complete my studying and I would like to go to university and help other people"; "I can get the education I like"; "My children will be educated, they can choose their life"; "I can stand against violence". Cllr Shelly Darwin (pictured) of Ipswich Borough Council joined us to give an inspirational talk about why she decided to become a Councillor and how she carries out her role. One final comment summed up the event; "I come to the women's group, it's a nice day for celebrating women".



## Staffing update

As a result of the funding we have recently secured (see page 1), we will very shortly be recruiting to a few much-needed posts, including a Support Worker/Youth Coordinator. We will advertise the posts through our website and Facebook/Twitter accounts as and when they come up, so keep in touch to find out more!

## Refugee Week 19th - 25 June 2017

It's that time of year when our thoughts start to turn towards Refugee Week!

This annual festival to celebrate the contribution of refugees and promote understanding of why people seek sanctuary runs from 19-25 June this year with the theme of 'Different pasts, shared future'. Among the events happening in Ipswich to mark the week will be a film screening at the Ipswich Film Theatre and a lecture at the University of Suffolk marking the 80th anniversary of the arrival of Basque refugee children in Suffolk. Stay tuned through our website and Facebook pages as more events and happenings are confirmed.



We hope you've enjoyed our latest newsletter—we'd love to hear from you with your feedback or if you'd like to find out further information. If you received this newsletter indirectly, and would like to join our mailing list, please email our administrator: [mwalker@suffolkrefugee.org.uk](mailto:mwalker@suffolkrefugee.org.uk)

Thank you again for all your support, donations and volunteering - we really couldn't manage without you!