

Suffolk Refugee Support Newsletter

Autumn 2017



www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk

38 St Matthew's Street, IPSWICH, Suffolk IP1 3EP



@suffolk_refugee

Great news for newly arrived Syrian families!

We are thrilled to have welcomed the first babies to be born to resettled Syrian families in Suffolk. Little Taim (pictured right with siblings) was the first to arrive, a year to the day after his family reached the UK! You can read more about this wonderful [‘symbol of hope’ here](#).



Picture by: EADT/Sarah Lucy Brown

At the end of September, 77 Syrians were rebuilding their lives in Ipswich with our support. Many of the children are thriving in school, and increasingly the adults are finding work—the latest including a trainee pharmacist and a carer. We're also proud that two Syrian refugees are proving to be valuable members of the SRS staff team. We continue to provide a range of English classes and information sessions and have built a relationship with a fantastic local childcare agency. We are also looking for more befrienders for the resettlement scheme—see our volunteering opportunities on page 3.

Read about SRS successes in our Annual Report 2016-17

Suffolk Refugee Support
Annual Report
2016-2017



Charity Manager's Report



Welcome to our Annual Report 2016-17!

I hope you enjoy reading about the progress and real life successes we are celebrating this year. The refugees and asylum seekers we help are at the core of all we do and it gives us enormous pride and hope for the future to see them learning English, getting jobs, having families and learning to smile once again.

This year we have been busier and bigger than ever before with so many different projects and needs to meet. We are deeply grateful to our grant funders without whom our work wouldn't happen and also to the many individuals, churches and social groups who have so generously supported us through regular giving, fundraising, donations of goods and through giving their time.

Our staff and volunteers continue to work hard to ensure that the 2000+ population of refugees and asylum seekers in Suffolk have the best chance to flourish in our beautiful county and that they are able to look forward to lives free from repression, killings and persecution.

One client recently told me, "I will never forget the help you have given me, all my life." Others speak English now when before they looked blankly and fearfully at us. A woman with a small baby thanked us for supporting her travel costs for her solicitor's appointments. Her asylum claim has now been accepted and she can look to a happier future.

Sadly, the world is not a more stable place than it was a year ago when I wrote the 2015-16 report. The cost of wars and conflicts cannot be counted in numbers alone. The human cost is personal and painful, person by person. SRS strives to heal at least some of that pain and will continue to do so with each individual we see.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your continued and generous support.

Rebecca Crear
Charity Manager

Our 2016-17 Annual Report is out now, showing continued high demand for our services and a full round-up of our work. Over the last year:

- 1) We gave 6821 advice sessions to 551 clients from 37 countries
- 2) 92% of our ESOL students showed improvement in their language skills, with 40 people passing exams
- 3) We gave out £15000 in destitution and financial assistance to clients in urgent need where no other support was available (see page 3)
- 4) We helped our clients to complete 584 job applications
- 5) We estimate the total hours donated by our wonderful volunteers over the year to be around 14,000!

You can read the [full report here](#)

All are welcome to our AGM 2017 (12th October): stories, music & food!

It's our 18th Annual General Meeting at 7pm on Thursday 12th October at Museum St Methodist Church and all are welcome. As well as the usual business, we will have a display of success stories (see page 2) from refugees in Suffolk, some wonderful live cello music, and tasty buffet food provided by Syrian Falafel. You can find all relevant [documents here](#), including the agenda and attendance reply slip.

If you are able to attend, **please RSVP to mwalker@suffolkrefugee.org.uk**



AGM 2017



We have the great pleasure of inviting you to our 18th Annual General Meeting.

To be held on
Thursday 12th October at 7.00pm

Location
Museum Street Methodist Church
17 Black Horse Lane
Ipswich, IP1 2EF
Suffolk

SRS making a real difference in the lives of refugees

As well as highlighting the many hardships and problems faced by the refugees we help, it's important that we also celebrate their resilience and desire to succeed. So we have decided to put together a selection of the success stories that have made us proudest, showing what can be achieved with our support and that of the community. **They will be on display at our AGM (see previous page)**, where some of the clients in question will also be speaking. Here are a few examples:

X from East Africa arrived in Suffolk in 2011 on his own. He was suffering from PTSD, was always sad and never talked; Suffolk Refugee Support referred him for counselling and also paired X with a volunteer who helped him to regain confidence and hope. Since then X has recovered very well and was reunited with his family in 2013. SRS helped X to prepare for his IELTS exam and paid for him to complete it. With a good grade this enabled X to access a Social Work degree course at the University of Suffolk in 2014. For 3 years X worked extremely hard (in a second language) to complete his social work qualification as well as working as a part-time cleaner. He passed his Social Work degree successfully this year with a first in his dissertation and an overall BA (Hons) 2:1 degree. X has since been successful in applying for a job in Adult Social Care Services.



S came to the UK in March 2016 through the Syrian Resettlement Programme. As a young person fleeing Syria her studies and plans for a career in pharmacy had been put on hold. Since arriving in the UK, S has studied hard in her English classes and passed both E2 and E3 exams with flying colours. She volunteered in a local café to get experience and to make friends in the community, and has been involved in community art projects. Recently S had her first ever job interview. She was offered the post and now works 20 hours a week in a pharmacy as a trainee. As part of her job she will complete a Pharmacy GPhC accredited Level 2 dispensing course. S says: "I met more people and feel more social. I have learnt more English and about pharmacy which is what I want to do. I have more skills and I learn more and more, every day I learn something new. Now I am more confident to help customers."



M came to the UK in 2016 with his mother and two siblings and has been granted 5 years' humanitarian protection. He now works part-time for Suffolk Refugee Support. This is M's story in his own words:

"When I first arrived in the UK I didn't know what to expect, I just knew that I want to work. I was worried I would feel like a loser, that I wouldn't be able to do anything. Because this is what life was like in Lebanon and Syria, no study or job opportunities, life was on hold for 3 years. I wanted to get my life going again, and when I first arrived in the UK I had that feeling which told me this is the time for achieving my ambition. I started English classes and I started volunteering with Suffolk Refugee Support and that was my first step on the right track. I like to help people, the idea of this project giving people from all walks of life, giving opportunities and helping them reach their goals. I was hoping one day to work for SRS, I'm so happy I got it. I passed my Level 1 English and I am now studying GCSE English at college. My dream as a career is to be a special police officer; that is my dream job and I am so focused on achieving this. I'm really looking forward to it."

Can you help us support refugees here in Suffolk

Can you volunteer, or offer a work placement to a refugee?



Do you have a few hours a week to spare? Or could your business offer work placements to refugees?

We're looking for volunteers to help on our ESOL for Employment course, to help individuals with exams, written English and pronunciation, and also to help teach English, maths, science and ESOL at our Homework Group for young refugees (see below). We're also looking for more befrienders to help newly-arrived Syrian families to settle into their new lives.

Finally, we're keen to find work placements, long and short-term, to give our clients valuable experience and help them to progress their careers. Customer-facing roles, or those in admin or food establishments would be particularly useful. Visit the [volunteer page](#) of our website for full details. Thank you!

Could you provide a volunteering opportunity for a young refugee?



A learning and listening space for young refugees and asylum seekers

WEDNESDAYS
4-6pm

At: Volunteering Maths
The Old Crown Court, Civic Drive, Ipswich IP1 2DX

Are you a refugee or asylum seeker between 11 and 18 years old?

Would you like to have help with your English, Maths, Science or Computers?

Would you like to have help with your homework?

Yes? Complete the registration form, or give us a call or email us for more info.

CONTACT
Cathy Gonzalez, Youth Coordinator
01473 666666
cgonzalez@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

With an increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs) in Suffolk, mainly through the National Transfer Scheme, at SRS we are providing more focused work with young refugees. We have appointed a Youth Coordinator and are working closely with other agencies to ensure joined-up services for this highly vulnerable group. Having set up ESOL classes for young people over the summer, we have just started a 'Homework Group' to help with Maths, Science, English and IT (see poster left). Along with Eastern Fostering Services, we have also set up a support group for foster carers of UASCs, and we make advice referrals to the Refugee Council's Children's Advisor, who provides a drop in service at SRS. We are currently looking for one-day-a-week volunteering opportunities suitable for under-18 refugees and asylum seekers. If you might be able to help with this, please contact Cathy: cgonzalez@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

SRS Client Support Fund

A vital part of our work is distributing financial support to those who are destitute or cannot pay for items they need to progress in their lives. Last year we gave £15,000 in individual support where no other funding was available. This money is used by people to buy food, support for school children (e.g. uniforms, trips), help to move house after a positive asylum decision, and for travel costs to solicitor and Home Office appointments (asylum seekers are often required to attend Home Office appointments in Croydon, Solihull or Liverpool and some receive no funding for travel).



Our Client Support Fund relies on donations from individuals, community groups, churches and our supporters putting on fundraising events. We are very thankful for the support so far this year. If you would like to donate to the SRS Client Support Fund, you may do so [here through MyDonate](#), or via cheque. If you would like to organise an event to fundraise for SRS, please do get in touch with Karen who will be pleased to give you organisational support: klawson@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

EVENTS

Local groups and communities across Suffolk continue to show their compassion for refugees and support for our work through fundraising and awareness-raising events.

We are very grateful to the **Rendham Mummers** for choosing us as their charity this year. From collections at the end of each performance of “Oh, we do like to be beside the seaside” on their summer tour of the Rendham, Sweffling and Sibton White Horse pubs, they raised an incredible £755.50 for our work!

The Rendham Mummers told us: “*We are a group of men, mainly from the village of Rendham, who have put on fifteen plays and raised several thousand pounds for national and local charities since coming together in 2010. The plays, performed for Summer and Winter Solstices, are based on the medieval mumming traditions and the scripts remain faithful to the origins of this unique form of street theatre, which seeks to entertain in a light hearted way! This includes the tradition of blackening/face-painting, reflecting the belief that the actors would be cursed by the devil if they were to be recognized, although sadly this is sometimes misunderstood.*” The Mummers chose Suffolk Refugee Support as a local charity doing important work where the money could have a real impact, and have promoted the work of SRS at each performance.



Huge thanks to all the performers and those who gave so generously. For more details of the group see [Rendham Mummers Facebook page](#).

We were pleased to be asked to contribute to the fifth annual ‘Art of Peace’ exhibition at Haverhill Arts Centre this year, which had a focus on refugees. Running throughout September, the exhibition featured images from the Magnum Photos cooperative alongside SRS materials. We also provided refugee book suggestions for a complementary display on the issue of refugees at Haverhill Library. Many thanks to ‘Havepeace’ and Haverhill Amnesty group for organising this.

We were delighted to have the walls of the beautiful Shottisham Church in Suffolk adorned recently with some of our refugee stories for their summer fete. The display, along with catering at the event by Syrian Falafel, helped to raise awareness of refugee experiences and our work. Many thanks to Stuart and Trish from the village for their support.

Focus on other Refugee Support in Suffolk: Introducing ‘Next Stop Symi’

At SRS, we know Suffolk is full of kind-hearted, compassionate people who want to help refugees all over the world, and we love linking up with other Suffolk organisations who are helping refugees overseas. This month, we want to introduce you to **Next Stop Symi**, a small charity based in the Suffolk village of Hoxne, dedicated to making a difference on the ground for refugees stranded on the Greek Islands. Through direct links with people on Symi and Kos, who advise on what the refugees most urgently need, the group collect specific items and fundraise for a van to drive down and deliver the items directly to the refugees. They are currently focusing on the most vulnerable—children and young mothers—and plan another van run in early October to take wheelchairs and walking aids, educational materials and toys, baby kits and warm clothes.



We are very grateful to Next Stop Symi for their wonderful work in helping refugees and look forward to exploring ways of working with them in future. To find out more, take a look at their [Facebook page](#).

UNHCR Global Trends Report

The UNHCR's Global Trends Report for 2016, released recently, shows that displacement levels worldwide are still at a record high. The report's key findings include:

- At the end of 2016, 65.6 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced from their homes (an increase of 300,000 on the previous year)
- 10.3 million people were newly displaced by conflict or persecution in 2016 (the equivalent of 20 people being forced to flee their homes every minute)
- 22.5 million people were refugees at the end of 2016
- 51% of refugees are children
- 84% of the world's refugees are hosted by developing regions
- 2 million new asylum claims were made in 2016 – Germany was the largest recipient with 722,400 applications (the UK received 30,603 claims)



Welcome to our new staff + trustee & job vacancies!

We're delighted to welcome Susannah Kennedy (pictured right) to SRS as our new Syrian Resettlement Coordinator. Susannah has a wealth of experience working with very vulnerable refugees in Australia and has already made a real impact bringing great positive energy and compassion to a challenging role. We're also really pleased to welcome on board Zeid Mahrat—who arrived in Ipswich as part of a Syrian family under the resettlement scheme—as our Trainee Support Worker. Zeid has worked hard for this opportunity and is proving a valuable member of the team. Last but by no means least, congratulations to Fran, our new International Women's Group Coordinator, who will do a great job combining this with her existing role as our ESOL for Work Tutor. We do have vacancies for Trustees at the moment—we're particularly looking for anyone with experience of legal matters, HR and IT or property expertise. [Full details here.](#)



Job vacancy! We are recruiting a part-time Advice Worker to join our team—[full details here](#)

Christmas is on the way! SRS Christmas Cards on sale now— all profits to SRS' work!

We're pleased to announce that our 2017 Christmas Cards are available now! Each year we are touched by the festive designs of the refugees we help, which show what Christmas, and spending the holiday season in a safe and peaceful place, means to them. Given the increase in young refugees in Suffolk (see page 3), it is appropriate this year that our card has been designed by Anh, a 15-year-old child refugee from Vietnam.

The cards are priced at £3 for a pack of ten, with all proceeds going to the work of Suffolk Refugee Support. You can pick them up from our office, at events, or by post. Please see our website for [full details](#) of how to order and postage costs.



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

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