

Suffolk Refugee Support Annual Report 2018-2019



20 Years of Supporting Refugees 1999-2019



In 1999, Suffolk Refugee Support was set up to provide assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Suffolk. Over the years, people fleeing situations of conflict and human rights abuse around the world have come to our door for support. Often we have been the first friendly face and listening ear they have found. Twenty years later, SRS has gone on to support thousands of people. We have grown with the demand for our services and today run a wide range of projects supporting people to rebuild their lives in safety.



I want to thank you and your amazing team for such a great birthday party for SRS. It was such a happy occasion... and it was very special to have so many of the people you have helped over the years there and for the rest of us to see for ourselves just what can be achieved with kindness and the right guidance.

(Roz Eminson, High Sheriff of Suffolk)

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Charity Manager's Report



Although strictly speaking we celebrated just after the end of this reporting period, we cannot help but talk about the fabulous 20 year anniversary that we are extremely proud to reach this year (2019)!

In June 2019, many of you joined us at La Tour Cafe on Ipswich's beautiful waterfront to celebrate 20 years since Suffolk Refugee Support (Forum) came into existence in response to growing numbers of asylum seekers, many from Kosovo, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, being housed in Ipswich as an "overflow" from London. In the early days there were two paid members of staff – we now have 22 (mostly part-time)!

Our celebration looked back at 20 years of supporting individuals from all over the world to establish new lives, free from indiscriminate bombing, illegal imprisonment, torture and death at the hands of ruthless governments and merciless factional groups in the countries they once loved.

We contacted refugees we helped at the start and throughout the past 20 years – the Kosovan gentleman who wrote poetry to recover from surviving a firing squad in prison; the Afghan couple whose brother was shot dead in front of them by the Taliban; the Sudanese family who escaped the Janjaweed soldiers who burnt their village to the ground and shot their family members and neighbours; the Eritrean woman who suffered unspeakable abuse in prison; and the most recent arrivals – the Syrians whose country has been devastated by brutal conflict....and many, many more.

I am so proud that Suffolk Refugee Support has extended the hand of friendship to so many people over the past 20 years. Our staff, volunteers and trustees have gone the extra mile in making life bearable again for those we see. As well as the advice, ESOL, employment and family support, it's the bicycle for the Ugandan man to get to work (donated by a trustee); the vegetables from the volunteer's garden for struggling families; the quiet chat with an anxious mother, and even the occasional hug when there is no one else in the world to give that hug that have made the human difference.

If you visit our office on St Matthew's Street in Ipswich, you will pass businesses set up and run by refugees – the dry cleaners, launderette, supermarket and bakery (lovely fresh bread!), the cafes, barbers and mobile phone shop. You are likely to be driven in a taxi; have your pizza delivered; your car washed and repaired and eat food prepared by refugees who we have helped. You may also be treated by a refugee GP; learn in school or college from a refugee teacher or sit next to a refugee on your degree course.

The fruits of our labours are showing through in Ipswich and more widely. We strive hard and will continue to do so with the generous support of our funders and donors to whom we are most grateful, to make Suffolk a welcoming home to refugees.

Rebecca Crerar, Charity Manager

20 Years of Supporting Refugees in Suffolk

Ehsan and his family were forced to flee Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. He and his wife arrived at Felixstowe as asylum seekers in October 1999, just after Suffolk Refugee Support had been established. SRS secured funding for Ehsan to take an IELTS course needed to practice medicine. He began working as a doctor in 2003 and today is a GP partner and trainer in Ipswich, a Medical Advisor for NHS England, and a GP lecturer with the UEA. Ehsan's daughter has recently completed her first year of medical school at Imperial College London.



Advice Service

- 6006 individual advice sessions given in 2018-19
- 583 adult refugees and asylum seekers supported
- 541 children supported (from 230 families)
- 157 clients who came to us for support for the first time
- 35 different countries of origin for people we supported (with Iraq, Iran and Syria the top 3)

Our drop-in Advice Service has been at the core of our work for 20 years.

Last year we reported our busiest 12 months to date, but this year we exceeded those numbers of clients receiving support.

Many of the refugees arriving over the last few years under the resettlement programmes are now supported by our Advice Service, while our work with families and children continues to increase, focusing on ensuring refugee children are healthy, safe and have the best chance to succeed in education.



“You’ve helped me more than a sister would with everything in my life. I’ll never forget you”
[A client to one of our staff]

Case study

X was the victim of modern day slavery in the Middle East and is still suffering from the long term effects on her mental health. Her story is shocking, but we have supported her to adjust to life in the UK and access services.

By learning new skills and being involved in different community activities, her confidence and wellbeing has grown. She hopes she can reach the point where she is able to talk about her experiences to help others.

20 Years of Supporting Refugees in Suffolk

Izaak comes from the Darfur region of western Sudan. In 2004 his village was burned to the ground and his farm destroyed by the ‘Janjaweed’ militia. He was separated from his wife and children and detained. Izaak escaped Sudan and arrived at the port of Felixstowe in late 2004, not knowing if his wife and children were still alive.

Suffolk Refugee Support helped Izaak, through the Red Cross tracing service, to find his family, and they were reunited in 2007. Today, Izaak is a British citizen and lives in Ipswich with his family. He still pops into our drop-in Advice Service sometimes for a coffee.



Refugee Resettlement Work

We are proud to continue providing specialist support to vulnerable families arriving in Suffolk under the UK's refugee resettlement programmes. Over the period of this report our resettlement team have welcomed a further 36 people from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and as of September 2019 a total of 120 people have been resettled with our support .

We continue to see those we support move into employment and volunteering, and succeed in their studies. One client with emergency response experience in his home country has started volunteering with Suffolk Fire Service, while this autumn will see the first resettled refugees taking up university places.

Recognising the deep-seated trauma caused by experiences of conflict and displacement, we ran a mental health pilot scheme with the Refugee Council, offering confidential wellbeing sessions from our offices. We also ran client feedback sessions, which we have used to shape our services, leading to a Men's Shed project (pictured right) run by ActivLives, an IT course with the WEA and a project with Volunteering Matters around volunteer placements.



“We have been treated with so much respect and we feel welcomed every time we come to reception”

Case study

A & G and their three children are from the Homs region of Syria. Before the Civil War they had 10 hectares of land where they grew fruit and vegetables. In 2012 A was shot in the arm by a sniper and shortly afterwards their home was destroyed by shelling. Selected by the UNHCR for resettlement, the family arrived in Ipswich in December 2016. They are grateful to Suffolk Refugee Support for showing them “how to do almost everything”. The two younger children are doing well in school – both excelling at maths – and the eldest is working. Having helped at a community garden in Ipswich, they now have their own allotment, which they have planted with beans, spinach, onions, basil and mint.

Suffolk Inspiring Leader Award

Our manager, Rebecca, has led Suffolk Refugee Support for more than 12 years. As demand for our services has increased, she has overseen our expansion, successfully negotiated a challenging funding landscape and inspired all who have worked with her while never losing her passion for helping people and treating each individual with dignity. So in our 20th anniversary year, we were thrilled when Rebecca (pictured right, with Tim Holder of Suffolk Community Foundation) was firstly shortlisted and then announced as joint winner of the Inspiring Leader Award at the recent [Suffolk High Sheriff's Awards](#). We are very proud of Rebecca, and honoured to find ourselves in the company of other such inspirational leaders!



Employment & Training Work

We continue to place a strong emphasis across our services on employment, volunteering and training to empower refugees to integrate, rebuild their lives and fulfil their potential. Clients we worked with secured a variety of positions including carer, administrator, supply teacher, personal shopper and baker. We also supported self-employment start-ups (such as Maria, right) and helped secure volunteer placements at the Suffolk Law Centre, Archant news group, BBC Radio Suffolk and Home-Start among others. We organised training courses in subjects such as sewing skills, IT, first aid, cookery and driving theory.



1197 employment advice contacts delivered in 2018-19

126 refugees and asylum seekers supported to improve confidence and employability skills

56 individuals attended bespoke work related courses

20 clients secured paid employment with our help

100% of clients interviewed felt more confident to apply for work

"I feel I have started a new chapter. I enjoy the job as a carer. I feel I have something to say, not isolated. I'm proud to say I'm working, rather than talk about my problems."

"I have improved my life since I joined SRS. It has a fantastic, friendly and helpful environment. I participated in a 5 week training about CV making and employment, which helped me a lot and made it easier to job search."

We were delighted when Jodi, our Employment & Training Advice Worker, received a certificate from the High Sheriff of Suffolk (pictured, right) in recognition of her dedicated employment work with refugees in Suffolk.



Case study

H arrived in the UK with a degree in law. She would like to return to this profession, but needed to improve her English level, qualifications and experience. We supported H to volunteer with the Suffolk Law Centre at ISCRE and to register as a community befriender to utilise her language skills to help new arrivals in the UK integrate. H attended our ESOL for Work class to increase her confidence and develop her employability and interview skills. She has now secured full time employment while she works towards pursuing a career in law with our support.

Improving Physical & Mental Health

There has been a continued emphasis on health in all our activities this year, whether helping clients to understand UK healthcare systems, teaching refugees to speak English to access health services, or sharing healthcare knowledge and information not readily accessible otherwise. Subjects covered both in the Advice Service and via group work have included smoking cessation, cervical screening, Vitamin D and anaemia, consumption of sugar (especially in drinks), and healthy diets.

"In my country, no-one explained that having a lot of sugar could damage teeth and have negative long term health effects on the body. Now I have decided to stop taking 3 teaspoons of sugar in my cup of tea."

"Joining the gym has been a very positive experience for me. The management have been very welcoming and I feel happy to exercise in my hijab. I feel stronger in mind and body."

"Although I sometimes became upset in the SRS office because of my son's cancer, I would feel much better having somewhere to go where I could express my emotions. I now feel much happier and empowered to move forward."

Case study

T is an asylum seeker who was diagnosed with cancer while temporarily separated from her partner. T was isolated and very scared about undergoing treatment. SRS paid for an interpreter to attend key appointments with her so that she could have a clear understanding of what medical procedures were needed, and also contributed to the cost of taxis whilst she underwent exhausting treatment. T is now in remission, feeling much more positive and grateful for the support that SRS gave at such a difficult point in her life.

Hidden Harms Work

This year we employed a part-time Community Engagement Officer – Hidden Harms. She has worked with more than 80 clients to raise their awareness of and safeguard against harmful practices such as online exploitation, hate crime, domestic abuse and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Some of this work was carried out with the local Police Community Support Officer to encourage clients to report crimes and to engender trust in the police in the UK.

- 15** victims of domestic abuse supported
- 9** victims of trafficking/modern slavery supported
- 9** women victims of violence supported



"Fleeing from domestic violence I didn't know where to go and when I came to Suffolk Refugee Support, the support I was given made me feel safe and welcomed. I was given help with everything to overcome my fear and with all my paperwork from the Home Office. I would like to say thank you and I don't know what I would have done. I am happy that I am able to work and to start my life again"

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

We have continued to offer six ESOL classes from Pre-Entry to Entry 3 levels, with a high level of returning learners as well as many new learners.

We have seen much positive interaction between students from different backgrounds, along with friendships that cross cultural boundaries and continue outside the classroom. We also undertook extensive research into how students felt they were progressing, which will be used to shape future learning.

In addition, ESOL lessons are embedded in our International Women's Group and we also provided one-to-one and small group support covering subjects such as English Grammar, Life in the UK test preparation, Graphic Design, Mathematics and Driving Theory.

Three young refugees passed GCSEs and A levels after weekly support from a volunteer who is an ex-teacher.



80 students attended ESOL courses at SRS this year

100% of students passed speaking and listening exams

92% of students passed reading and writing exams

89% of students made significant progress over the year

“The help I got with ESOL classes and one to one English helped me so much. I feel like a different person now.”

Suffolk Learners Awards

We are very proud that our ESOL student and volunteer, Seraphine, won both the Inspirational and overall Outstanding Learner of the Year awards at the [2019 Suffolk Adult Learners Awards](#). Our ESOL Tutor, Michaela, paid this tribute to her achievements:

‘Seraphine did not go to school in her home country of Rwanda. She is a remarkable lady with a remarkable story. She is also a fantastic student. She progressed through the ESOL courses and passed her driving theory test and Life In the UK test. She has also started to plan a book about her life, to dedicate to her children. For someone who received little education in her war-torn country, passing multiple, high-level tests and exams and deciding to write a book about her life, in one academic year is truly remarkable. Not only is Seraphine utterly determined to be the very best she can be, she is always supportive and kind to those around her. She is a wonderful communicator and can make people from any background both understand her and laugh with her. She is strong, caring, charming and humble.’



Youth Work

As the number of young refugees in Suffolk continues to increase, whether children of resettled or asylum-seeking families, or arriving as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs), we continue our work to meet the needs of this vulnerable group.

Many of the young people we see have missed schooling due to fleeing their homes or being in refugee camps, and are motivated and keen to catch up. Our Homework Group, run by SRS staff and volunteers, has supported 49 young people aged 11-19 over the last year.



We also run a weekly English Conversation Group where topics such as careers, education, crime, gangs, internet safety, Brexit, UK culture, health and sports are discussed. In addition we have organised a number of educational trips, including to libraries, museums and universities, as well as outdoor activities.

Case study

Z is an 18-year-old unaccompanied refugee from Sudan who started attending our Homework and Conversation groups in 2018. Since then, he has rarely missed a session! He is incredibly eager to learn English, and grasps any opportunity to improve his skills. From having very little English at the start, he studied ESOL and Maths at Suffolk New College and progressed to currently study five GCSEs at Northgate High School. He would like to study architecture at university and recently attended a 2-day UEA 'experience'. SRS put his name forward for a scholarship with Adventures Offshore in the summer of 2018, and through this he was able to participate in a week long residential sailing trip. He reported that he enjoyed this experience, learned to sail and made new friends. After discussions with Z, he decided he would like to volunteer at a local charity shop. We helped him apply to St. Elizabeth Hospice, and wrote a reference for him. He now volunteers there, and feels this is helping him to meet new people and increase his confidence in the English language and being in a working environment.

20 Years of Supporting Refugees in Suffolk

F is a survivor of the Rwandan genocide. This is his story in his own words.

Before the genocide in Rwanda I lived a beautiful and happy childhood. This changed completely one evening when a neighbour met me and whispered: "You must disappear now. They came to kill the Tutsis and all your family is dead and your house destroyed." At the age of ten I started to wander, without knowing where I am or what I am doing. I claimed asylum in 2011 and had to wait two and a half painful years to get refugee status. During this time the support from Suffolk Refugee Support and my church was amazing. I was not able to sleep for many years and I was helped by the counselling I received in this country, in Ipswich. It is the British people I live with today who gave me a reason to believe and trust humans again. I met wonderful people in my church, in the community and at the University of Suffolk, where I completed my degree in social work a year ago. All these people have rebuilt my personality. They have made me the new person I am today. Knowing where I come from, I can show kindness to humanity and support those in need. That is what makes me feel happy and complete.

Women & Family Support Work

We aim to support women attending any of our services, making them aware of their rights and enabling them to experience opportunities they might not have had before. Often the women are mothers keen to learn more about life in the UK so they might better support their children. We encourage women to take a more active role in society by volunteering, working and attending groups, and stress the importance for them to have a voice and not just be passive observers. For many women there is an emotional relief in being able to share their feelings and experiences in a confidential setting with people who are non-judgemental without fear of community repercussions or family pressures.



“I now know how to help my child at home so I can support her learning at school.”

X is an asylum seeker from Iraq who arrived in Ipswich with her son, speaking very little English and heavily pregnant. At first it appeared that she was struggling to cope but gradually she grew to trust the staff at SRS and as she became more open, her ability to deal with the challenges of her new life grew. She has worked with professionals to help her son who has been given a diagnosis of ADHD and developmental delay.

T had been in the country for 14 months. She was illiterate and staff were concerned that she lacked the confidence to go anywhere on her own. She attended a short ESOL course for women only with practical aspects that she seemed to enjoy. Her mood visibly brightened and she had the confidence to visit the drop-in Advice Service with her youngest son. She also agreed to attend some counselling sessions.

Volunteering

Our skilled volunteers underpin and add value to virtually all our services and projects, and have played a major role in our success as an organisation over the last 20 years. We currently have 85 active volunteers with a wide range of ages, backgrounds and experience. For instance, volunteers at our Homework and Conversation groups for young people include an A-Level student, a retired headteacher and a professional cellist. We are particularly keen to involve those with a refugee background in volunteering, recognising they offer language and other skills, plus an understanding of refugee experiences. We are pleased that 15 clients volunteered in a variety of roles across our services over the last year. Our board of up to 12 trustees also volunteer their time to provide strategic management of SRS. In total, we calculate that our volunteers gave 4,875 hours of their time to support refugees over the past year.

Destitution & Financial Assistance

The continued low level of government subsistence payments to asylum seekers, coupled with the lack of local provision of services like immigration legal aid, leave many of our clients struggling to afford basic items or travel to vital appointments. Over the past year we paid out £16,500 in individual support to give our clients dignity and fairness. Nearly half of this was spent on travel, for instance to solicitors' appointments or to get important documents, while much of the rest was put towards items like school uniforms or household essentials. Thank you to all the churches, groups and individuals whose generous donations or fundraising efforts on our behalf enabled us to do this.

International Women's Group (IWG)

Our weekly International Women's Group combines the practical English learning needed for the women and their families to integrate and build successful lives in Ipswich with learning about life in the UK from workshops and talks with local community partners around key issues relating to health, wellbeing and safety for the women and their children, education and training opportunities.

Over the past year 49 women of 12 nationalities, including Afghani, Albanian, Bangladeshi, Kosovan and Kurdish, attended the group. A crèche run by client volunteers allows women with young children to attend. A recent highlight for the women's group was their fantastic singing performance at our 20th anniversary celebration event.



“Volunteering at the Women's Group makes me feel really good. I get to do activities that help me relax, I help other people learn English and I also learn things too. People come and teach us about many different things. Where I am from I did not know how to protect myself. I know about rights now that protect people. I am still hurt by my past but I feel more confident now. I feel like a different person.”

Friends Group

Our weekly Friends Group provides a space for refugees and asylum seekers to meet, make supportive friendships, reduce social isolation and improve their English. The group has had a number of new asylum seekers join in the last year. It is an invaluable place for them to meet, discuss the immigration process and their experiences in Ipswich and give each other advice.

The Wellington Children's Centre continues to work in partnership with us to run fortnightly child development play sessions at the group.

“The Children's Worker showed us how to use the Hungry Caterpillar to teach counting and talk about healthy eating, I have done it with my children. They now tell me the story. They like to pick one or two different books a week and quickly pick up the story. Sometimes word for word.”

20 Years of Supporting Refugees in Suffolk

V is a Tamil from the north of Sri Lanka. Her father was a writer who worked with the 'Tamil Tigers' and V was first displaced when she was a child. When the Civil War in Sri Lanka restarted in 2008, V, her husband and children were forced to flee to the coast where they dug bunkers in the beach to avoid shelling. At the end of the conflict, V's family were held in a camp for six months and interrogated. Today, V lives in Ipswich with her family. She has worked with Suffolk Refugee Support as a Trainee Advice Worker, and her eldest daughter recited some of her poems at our recent 20th anniversary event.

[You can read V's story in full in our 20th anniversary [Refugee Stories booklet](#)]

Sports Activities Group

Over the past year, 30 young men have attended regular football sessions at our Sports Activities Group; six of these ended last season registered with a football club in Ipswich, with four of the young people having made their senior debut. The group have also held sessions on the dangers of smoking and promoting healthy eating.

"I get the chance to play with friends and have made new ones since I have been coming to the group"

Talks Team

Our staff and volunteers continue to give talks and presentations on refugee issues to schools, churches and community groups across Suffolk, from Waldringfield to Tostock.

We were pleased to speak at the Harwich Kindertransport 80th anniversary event in December 2018 and to again take part in the Holocaust Memorial Day event at the University of Suffolk, where we also gave a talk on our 20 years of work with refugees as part of their Open Lecture series.



21 talks and presentations given
10 towns and villages visited
2000+ people reached

Thanks to Rebecca and Zeina, our visitors from Suffolk Refugee Support. Our Woodpeckers and Dragonflies (classes) learnt such a lot from you today and really enjoyed meeting you both. (Teacher at Whitton Primary School)

Immigration Legal Aid

Our clients continue to face significant challenges accessing legal aid immigration advice. The outreach service provided at our office by Solomon Solicitors of Luton has been less frequent, although we liaise by telephone and email to meet the needs of our clients. We have also worked closely with our nearest legal aid immigration solicitor, Fisher Jones Greenwood in Colchester, and welcome the service provided by the Suffolk Law Centre in Ipswich, to whom we are grateful for support.

We have seen some successful outcomes for our clients, including two who have been accepted as the victims of modern day slavery, a young victim of forced marriage who was granted refugee status, and a young man from Mosul, Iraq, who was granted Humanitarian Protection after more than a decade in the UK.

959 advice sessions on immigration issues

265 clients assisted with immigration queries

244 contacts with immigration solicitors on behalf of clients

£261 spent in a typical month helping clients access solicitors elsewhere

Media Work



We continued to have a strong presence in the local media over the last year, appearing 25 times in total on radio/TV and in print, on subjects ranging from the PhotoEast Festival to staying safe online and Syrian families reunited in Ipswich.

In particular we tried to give greater voice to refugees and asylum seekers themselves, with print profiles and interviews, audio stories and music selections, and by taking part in the Tuesday Takeover on BBC Radio Suffolk, where clients planned and presented a two-hour show.

Community Events



Over the past 20 years the refugees we have worked with have played a full part in the life of our town, from GPs to Borough Councillors and business owners. We try to further this integration wherever possible by being involved in community events and festivals.

We would like to thank all the schools, businesses, organisations and community groups who have done so much to make our clients feel welcomed and valued in their new communities over the past year.

The International Situation

70.8 million people displaced from their homes globally
(this has doubled in the last 20 years)

25.9 million refugees (outside their own country)

13.6 million people newly displaced in 2018

1.7 million new asylum claims globally in 2018

29,380 asylum claims in the UK in 2018

50% of all refugees are children

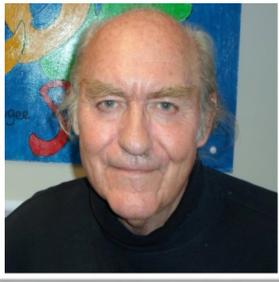
16% of all refugees hosted by developed countries

2262 people died crossing the Mediterranean in 2018

[Sources – [UNHCR](#), [UK Home Office](#), IOM]



Chair's Report



2018-19 has proved to be another very busy year for Suffolk Refugee Support. We have continued all of our long term activities: the three-day-a-week Advice Service at our office, which also includes specialist advice in areas like employment, family issues and risk of harms. At the office we also provide a variety of ESOL classes, while at other venues we organise the International Women's Group, Friend's Group, Sports Activities group and work with young refugees.

This year was the middle year of our three year contract with Suffolk County Council to provide specialist casework to resettled refugees from Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East as part of a five year government programme to bring 20,000 vulnerable refugees to the UK. Our resettlement team has been very busy meeting the refugees at the airport and providing intensive support for each family for their initial 12 months in Suffolk, including ESOL provision, health and education links and all the myriad things to learn when moving to a new country.

One issue we did not fully anticipate has been the difficulty of procuring privately rented accommodation within the funding limits decreed by the government. This is also hampering [families moving on from the initial housing to rent properties themselves](#) with all the problems of deposits, guarantors and housing benefits not covering rents. In fact our clients are subject to the same housing crisis affecting all British residents on limited incomes where demand for accommodation exceeds supply.

As a result, in the months since the period of this Annual Report, fewer resettlement refugees have arrived than initially planned. This is making it difficult for Suffolk to meet its target of resettling up to 230 refugees by March 2020, and since the SRS contract funding was linked to planned numbers of refugees arriving, as was the size of our Resettlement team, it presents us with a financial problem which we are discussing with the county council.

We have had one success in accommodation, however, with the extension of our premises by leasing the next door building, along with our partners at Ipswich Community Media, from Ipswich Borough Council. This has meant that all staff now have their own desk and access to computers and we have more space to meet and support clients.

So we remain very busy with a steady increase in the refugee community in Suffolk. Despite this need, and a 20-year track record, our funding situation is precarious. As well as the problems described above regarding the resettlement programme, we have recently heard that the National Lottery, who have funded us with a series of three year grants since 2008, have decided that their 2017-20 grant (ending Feb. 2020) will be the last. We knew this day had to come since we have been funded by them for longer than most other projects, but it leaves a big gap as they are our leading funder and the three years of guaranteed funding always gave us longer term security.

Anyway, our thanks to them, all of our other funders and donors, and all those involved in SRS's work - our staff, our many volunteers, our Trustees. We all came together for an evening in June to celebrate our first 20 years and, unless there is miraculous change across the world in the next few decades, our work as a charity will still be needed in 2039, so I expect the youngsters among you to be at a similar event then.

Ian Stewart, Chair

Treasurer's Report



Last year (the year under review)

The 2018/19 year was financially sound, with costs broadly in line with budget. The number of arrivals under the Suffolk County Council contract, for provision of services under the government's Refugee Resettlement Programmes, was close to the targets we had all been hoping for and our income was therefore satisfactory. We are grateful to our numerous private supporters who donate on a regular basis towards our work.

We received grants from the following, to all of whom we also express our thanks:

National Lottery – Reaching Communities Fund; Building Better Opportunities (ESF & National Lottery); BBC Children in Need; New Anglia LEP Community Challenge Fund via Suffolk Community Foundation; Suffolk Police & Crime Commissioner's Hidden Harms Fund via Suffolk Community Foundation; Mrs L.D. Rope Charitable Settlements; Ipswich Borough Council - Community Cash grants; Suffolk Public Health – GAROD Fund; AB Charitable Trust; Lovel Foundation; Limbourne Trust; Harwich Haven Authority via Suffolk Community Foundation; Maurken Fund via Suffolk Community Foundation; Stay Safe Online Fund via Suffolk Community Foundation; 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust; Ganzoni Fund; Eastern Legal Fund; Hate Crime Fund via Suffolk County Council & Suffolk Community Foundation

This year

Numbers arriving under the Resettlement Programmes are expected to be rather lower and we are working out how best to meet the aspirations of our clients and the requirements of SCC within the reduced amount. We have put aside some reserves against future uncertainties in the programme. I am pleased to report that we are adequately funded to deliver the remainder of our other planned activities.

Next year

We recently learned that, after twelve years of magnificent support, the National Lottery would not be able to renew our funding from March 2020. We were reassured to know that it was not through any inadequacy in our application. We are of course making plans for a re-shaped SRS and are looking with renewed intensity for new donors and grant funders. I should be delighted to talk to anyone or any organisation which is interested in learning about how they might be able to provide financial help towards our work, and to show them how their contribution would benefit the community.

We are confident that our financial position is sound as we enter a rather more difficult period and are determined to continue to provide a good range of services to our clients. The trustees monitor the position closely and regularly, to ensure that we can always meet our obligations and secure the long-term stability of the charity.

Once again, I record our thanks to our volunteers for their invisible financial contribution, and to Ed Day, for managing our accounting systems and reporting.

Nick Feldman, Treasurer and Vice Chairman

HR Sub Committee Report

The HR Sub Committee monitors SRS's policies on equality, diversity and protected characteristics in terms of employment, volunteering and Trustees and is satisfied that SRS is an equal opportunities employer.

We also continue to progress towards more fully reflecting the people we work with and for, and find it great that several people who were once refugees or asylum seekers have gained their first steps into the world of work in the UK with us.

Timeline for Suffolk Refugee Support 1999-2019

1999

The number of **asylum seekers** entering UK reaches **71,000**, more than doubling since 1997, fuelled by situations such as displacement of 900,000 Kosovans

UK government passes **Immigration and Asylum Act 1999**, leading to creation of National Asylum Support Service (NASS)

Asylum seekers enter Suffolk directly, particularly through **port of Felixstowe**

June 99 first meeting is held, organised by Cynthia Capey of Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource and attended by concerned individuals and numerous voluntary and statutory groups, to **address concerns** about asylum seekers arriving without support

Sept 99 the **Ipswich and District Refugee Support Network** is constituted. First meeting of steering group sets up mission statement etc.

Nov 99 consultation meeting held, at which the group is renamed Suffolk Refugee Support Forum

2000

National Asylum Support Service (**NASS**) is created with responsibility to support and accommodate asylum seekers, involving system of emergency and dispersal accommodation. **Emergency accommodation opens in Ipswich.**

Jan 00 inaugural meeting of Suffolk Refugee Support Forum (SRSF); Hamil Clarke elected as Chair and Cynthia Capey as Vice-Chair; among original trustees, Alan Blackshaw (Secretary) and Beteja Grajqevci are both still trustees today.

Suffolk Refugee Support Forum secures **funding** (early funders included Lloyds TSB and Comic Relief) and premises (where we remain today), appoints coordinator and part-time admin worker and opens 3-day-a-week **drop-in advice service**

UK **asylum application** numbers peak at **84,000** in **2002**, with Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Somalia and Sri Lanka among the main refugee-producing countries

Many asylum seekers pass through **Ipswich** as part of the NASS emergency and dispersal accommodation system, most housed at Wilbury House on Norwich Rd

Refugee communities start to become **established** in Ipswich, with the Kurdish community the largest

SRSF continues to **provide** advice and support, ESOL, space for counselling and legal advice surgeries, and to work with myriad statutory and voluntary agencies

Emergency accommodation system in the East of England ends, but Ipswich continues to be **dispersal area** for asylum seekers

SRSF appoints **Volunteer Coordinator** (Rebecca Crerar, today Charity Manager for past 13 years) and Ian Stewart as **Chair** (a position he still holds today). The charity nears closure through lack of funds; **Big Lottery** take over as main funder in **2008**.

International Women's Group project is set up with the Refugee Council

By **2007**, SRSF is supporting 650 clients from more than 30 countries, and advice session have risen to 5000 per year (from 1700 in 2001/2)

By **2009**, SRS has more than 900 clients on our database from 45 countries

2010

Closure of Refugee Council office leaves Suffolk Refugee Support (Forum was dropped from the name in **2012**) as the only refugee support charity in area

Client **demographics change**, with more women and families. Suffolk becomes immigration '**legal aid desert**'.

The '**refugee crisis**' begins, fuelled by the escalating conflict in Syria, with increasing numbers of people attempting to reach safety in Europe. Despite this, UK asylum claims remain relatively low (in **2018** the UK receives 1.7% of total asylum applications worldwide).

SRS' work grows through our provision of **specialist casework** for the UK government's refugee resettlement schemes, and the growing numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Suffolk.

2019

Today we give 6000-7000 advice contacts per year, supporting over 1000 people, with increase in employment, education and training, health, youth and family work.

Staff Team (as of September 2019)

Charity Manager
Operations Manager
Advice Service Manager
Funding & Projects Manager
Resettlement Programme Manager
Employment & Training Advice Worker
Women & Family Advice Worker
Youth Coordinator/Advice Worker
Sports Activities Coordinator
Trainee Advice Worker
Trainee Advice Worker
Resettlement Advice Worker
Resettlement Advice Worker
Resettlement Housing Advice Worker
International Women's Group Coordinator/ESOL for Work Tutor
International Women's Group Crèche Leader
Community Engagement Worker—Hidden Harms
ESOL Tutor
Projects Support & Evaluations Officer
Volunteer Recruitment Officer
Communications Officer
Office Systems Coordinator

Rebecca Crerar
Ellie Roberts
Liz Wood
Karen Lawson
Susannah Kennedy
Jodi Peck
Fatima Khan
Cathy Gonzalez
Kyler Jackson
Yvonne Chishaya
Faizaa Ali
Rasha Al-Shalabi
Yacine Khat-Selfe
Lisa Clarke
Fran Ciotaki
Shkurte Bejtullahu
Michelle Francis
Michaela Freeman
Catherine Costello
Jemima Oyelahan
Martin Simmonds
Marianne Walker

Board of Trustees (as of September 2019)

Chairman
Vice Chairman/Treasurer
Secretary
Trustee
Trustee
Trustee (co-opted)
Trustee (co-opted)
Trustee
Trustee
Trustee
Trustee
Honorary Trustee
Honorary Trustee

Ian Stewart
Nick Feldman
Lucy Kerry
Danielle Waller
Gerry Toplis
Greg Dodds
Dr Keith Faull
Marian Lanyon
Maggie Barradell
Dr Pauline Lane
Alan Blackshaw
Beteja Grajqevci Dovao

We would like to thank all who have contributed to the work of Suffolk Refugee Support over the year 2018-2019, through donating to fund our services, volunteering your time or raising your voice for refugee issues. We hope you have enjoyed reading about how your support has helped make a real and lasting difference to the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in Suffolk.

As SRS enters a period of change, we are looking for more people and organisations to help fund a number of key services for those most in need. Please contact us to find out how your donation of money or time could help refugees to thrive in their new communities, as so many have with our support over the last 20 years, or you can donate directly to us via [Virgin Money Giving](#).

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