

# Suffolk Refugee Support Newsletter

Summer 2017



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

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



## Refugee Week: 19-25 June

We're looking forward to a programme of events to celebrate Refugee Week, with the theme this year of 'Different pasts, shared future'. Please join us for any of these events, we would love to see you!

*Different pasts, shared future*

**Monday 19 June at 6pm, University of Suffolk** Did you know that 80 years ago 100 Basque refugee children fleeing the Spanish Civil War arrived in Ipswich? To mark the anniversary, there is an Open Lecture, 'Our unfortunate little guests' by Dr Ed Packard at the University of Suffolk. We will be there with information on our work and snacks will be provided by Syrian Falafel. Places are free of charge and you can book them [here](#).

### OPEN LECTURE SERIES



**Venue**  
University of Suffolk  
Waterfront Auditorium

**Date**  
19 June 2017  
6.00pm: Reception, featuring Exhibition  
6.45pm: Lecture

'Our unfortunate little guests':  
The Basque Refugee Children in Suffolk, 1937-39  
An Open Lecture by Dr Edward Packard

University of Suffolk  
To book your place please email  
[openlectures@uos.ac.uk](mailto:openlectures@uos.ac.uk)





### FIRE AT SEA

(12A)  
Introduced by  
Suffolk Refugee Support

**Tuesday 20th June**  
**7.30pm**

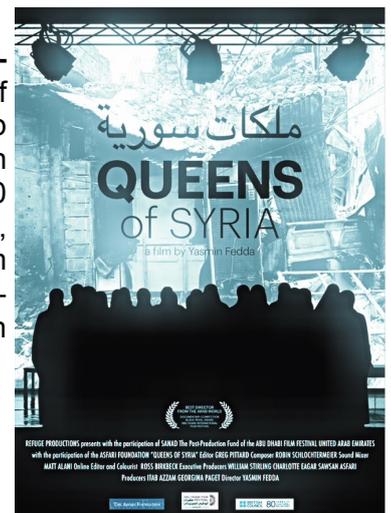




The Guardian  
★★★★★  
The Times  
★★★★★  
The FT  
★★★★★  
The Telegraph  
★★★★  
**Ipswich Film Theatre**  
[www.iftt.co.uk](http://www.iftt.co.uk)  
The Corn Exchange,  
King Street IP1 1DH

**Tuesday 20 June 7.30pm, Ipswich Film Theatre** will screen the award-winning film *Fire at Sea*, with an introduction by SRS. We will also be on hand after the film to discuss our work. The film has been called a 'masterly and moving look at the refugee crisis' and won the Golden Bear award for best film at the Berlin International Film Festival. More details, a trailer and how to book tickets [here](#).

**Thursday 22 June 7.30pm, Brandeston Village Hall** Screening of the film 'Queens of Syria', organised by the community group Friends of Refugees Suffolk (see profile on page 3). *Queens of Syria* tells the story of 50 Syrian women, all forced into exile in Jordan, who came together to create and perform their own version of Trojan Women, the Ancient Greek tragedy about the plight of women in war.



**Thursday 22nd June, 7.30pm, Co-op Education Centre, Ipswich:** Suffolk Refugee Support will be giving a public talk at the Ipswich Faith and Community Forum. More details [here](#)

During Refugee Week, SRS will also be taking part in the National Conversation on Immigration at the University of Suffolk and a workshop with the East Anglia Migration Research Network in Norwich.

Look out too for interviews and features with refugees and Suffolk Refugee Support staff appearing in the local press and radio during Refugee Week. We'll let you know more via our website, Twitter and Facebook pages.

## Current asylum issues

Receiving a positive decision on an asylum claim should be a time of great relief for our clients, the point at which they can finally begin to plan for the future. But unfortunately it can bring with it a whole new set of problems.

Some asylum seekers are given a package of support consisting of housing and financial aid. If they are granted refugee status, meaning they can work or access public funds, they will be notified in writing by the Home Office and given 28 days to leave their property. This is known as the 'move on' period. In addition to finding somewhere to live they also need to make the transition either into work or claiming benefits. Families will be referred to Ipswich Borough Council and given temporary housing. However for single people, without major health needs, it is much more difficult as they are expected to find their own accommodation. This is very challenging in the current rental market in Ipswich where large deposits, agency fees and references are asked for.

There are often delays in clients receiving their immigration documents from the Home Office and being allocated National Insurance Numbers so that they can apply for jobs or access public funds. The delays in allocating benefits lead to very real hardship. At this point without support people become very vulnerable and in one particular case, a mother died and her child starved to death in [Westminster, London in 2012](#). Very rarely are extensions of asylum support given when there are delays in dispatching immigration documents.

We therefore welcome the recent [Refugees Welcome? report](#) by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Refugees, which found that there was a 'cliff edge' of support for newly-recognised refugees that could lead to homelessness and destitution, and recommended that the 'move on' period be extended to 50 days. It is sad that at what should be a happy time people find themselves in such challenging, chaotic situations and so we support this sensible recommendation wholeheartedly.

## International Women's Group update

This month the IWG has been learning about the British electoral system. Using the Government's mock election package for schools the group ran its own election with 'manifestos' (prepared by our amazing volunteers) - those focusing on education proved to be the most popular, closely followed by healthcare. Ballot papers were issued, hustings held and there was a full turn out at the polling station where votes were cast in secret, counted by the Returning Officer and victory declared for the Progress Party. Useful lessons were learned about voter eligibility, registration, the confidentiality of the vote and the danger of inadvertently spoiling ballot papers - 'just one cross in the box' being the catchphrase of the day! Those eligible and wanting help to register were given support to do so after the session.

A more relaxed week followed with a visit to Christchurch Mansion where, after a brief history lesson, the group enjoyed time following a trail through the house, with the contrast of 'upstairs/downstairs' provoking a lot of discussion. The Victorian toys and the amazing kitchens were also a popular highlight and some in the group will be bringing their friends and family to enjoy the museum at the weekend or in the holidays.

### **On 17th May we held a Women's Health Event in partnership with Barnardos and Karibu.**

More than 50 women took part in an interactive quiz touching on numerous women's health issues including checking for breast cancer, healthy eating, diabetes, domestic violence and women's rights. The second half of the event was a session on FGM and we ended with food and a market place hosting many organisations who work on health, including One Life Suffolk who provided BMI and blood pressure checks.



Many thanks to all those who attended and to the partner agencies who came along and promoted their services to our client group.

## Syrian Resettlement Update

We continue to support the Syrian families arriving under the resettlement scheme, often with complex needs and vulnerabilities, to rebuild their lives here in Ipswich and become more independent. There are currently 12 families within the scheme and we are eagerly awaiting the next three due to arrive this month. Everyone is doing well and we are really pleased with how some of the newer families have picked up English! We had a really successful trip to London (pictured right) where the families visited lots of the main attractions like the Tate, Westminster, walked along the Southbank and, of course, did some shopping on the famous “Arab Street” (Edgware Road). We also had a lovely day at The Suffolk Show thanks to a kind member of the community who sourced us some tickets! The children really enjoyed seeing all the animals and watching the stunt horse riders do their thing!



### Syrian Falafel

Humam and Abdul, two young Syrians who arrived in Ipswich last year, are determined to bring a taste of home to their new community. They have set up their own Syrian Falafel business, selling delicious falafel and hummus and made their debut appearance at Woodbridge Farmers’ Market on 27 May. They will be there every fortnight and are also available for events catering!

## Introducing ‘Friends of Refugees Suffolk’ (FORS)

We would like to introduce ‘Friends Of Refugees Suffolk’ (FORS), a community organisation (separate to SRS), made up of a group of volunteers seeking to help refugees across Europe. The group began in July 2016, when they spent the summer fundraising, buying two caravans, equipping and decorating them for refugees in the ‘Jungle’ in Calais. Volunteers from FORS, friends and their children got involved with this fun project. Generous donations of food, blankets, torches etc. meant they were jam packed with aid. FORS, with another group from Essex, drove the caravans to Calais in September and saw first-hand the desperate conditions in the camp. When the ‘Jungle’ was dismantled the group turned their attention to raising money for walking boots, sleeping bags and more mobile phones for refugees now living out in the open, both in woodland and on the streets of Paris. FORS’ latest efforts have gone into the purchase of a van for Solidarité which will dispense tea and biscuits throughout the night in Parisienne quarters known to have large numbers of refugee rough sleepers.



Suffolk Refugee Support are very grateful for the support we have received from Friends Of Refugees Suffolk. FORS held a fundraising dinner event recently in aid of SRS and two Syrian clients really enjoyed helping with the baking and presentation of delicious Syrian sweet pastries.

For more information about FORS, the items they are collecting for distribution to refugees in Europe, and their events, including a film showing during Refugee Week in Brandeston and a charity swish sale, please take a look at their [Facebook page](#).

***If you are part of an organisation in Suffolk that supports refugees, we would love to hear from you—please do get in touch!***

## Event Reviews and Thanks

### Legacy of War Exhibition



We're delighted to report that the Legacy of War exhibition of photos by Giles Duley at the University of Suffolk was a great success, drawing positive responses from all who saw it. Among the comments left in our book were the following:

**"Brought tears to my eyes. Very moving—excellent photos"**

**"I learnt a lot from the stories shown. Sad to think they are not stories, but recordings of real events"**

**"Powerful, sensitively shot images, incredible. Makes me realise how much we take for granted"**

**"Made me question the legacy I will leave behind"**

Huge thanks to all who helped to set up and take down the exhibition, to the University for hosting it, and to all who attended the launch reception—it was lovely to see such a good mix of people, and friends and supporters old and new.



Enormous thanks to Stefan, Lois, the Red Rose Chain theatre company and all involved in the 'Malka' live music and art event for raising an incredible £1057 for Suffolk Refugee Support.

Our great thanks also to Susie Mendelsson, whose 'There but for fortune' exhibition of her original artwork at the Frame Workshop & Gallery elicited powerful reactions and raised a wonderful £333 for our work.

### Cello Aid Concert 21st May 2017

We'd like to thank all those involved in putting on a wonderful sunny afternoon of cello music in Darsham Church to raise funds for SRS. Pieces were performed by local soloists, a cello quintet and cello orchestra. A piece written especially for the event by Michael Summers, called Rendezvous, was especially moving. Huge thanks go to Mandy Summers & Pippa Banham for organising the event, Darsham Church for allowing them to use the building, and all those who performed. An amazing £522 was raised for our work.

Photo (below): performers taking well deserved applause at the end. Photo (right): Mandy Summers, concert organiser, in the centre with performers Kathryn Joyson (L) and Natasha Holmes (R) who also both volunteer to support refugees through Suffolk Refugee Support.



### Why fundraising events are so important

Individual donations and monies raised at events are incredibly useful to us because they are unrestricted funds. This means we can use them quickly wherever we see most need. For example, a client with severe health issues including mobility and breathing problems had an Immigration Tribunal hearing in London. No consideration had been made for his problems accessing the court or even getting there, but without his presence he would not get a fair hearing. SRS realised this and so we paid his train fare and the cost of a hotel for the night before so that he could appear before the judge and ensure fair representation and access to justice.

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

Our day-to-day work on the Drop-In Advice Service throws up many challenges and demanding situations. Our Support Workers and volunteers are often faced with distressed clients in difficult circumstances. It's important that we listen in order to understand the whole picture, and, where possible, support and empower each person to make good decisions. We thought we'd share a few examples of the trials and rewards of this everyday work:

E was in a dilemma about whether to return to his home country as he was under threat of deportation following a prison sentence. He seemed unsure of what he really wanted but was desperate to see his mother who lives in Iraqi Kurdistan. A number of staff spent a great deal of time with him whilst he went through a painful decision-making process. We then liaised with the Home Office to see if he could be supported to return on a voluntary basis. This proved to be a bureaucratic nightmare but eventually he was assisted to go back. Although it is hard to know whether this was definitely the right thing for him to do, his relationship with his mother was of great importance to him and continued separation could have led to greater depression.

A and her family had moved to Ipswich in 2015. She was very isolated as her property was on the outskirts of town and she had little English. She joined our International Women's Group and attended ESOL classes. Although she made slow progress in learning English, her confidence grew and she became a popular member of the groups she attended. We also helped fund a college course for her eldest son. After they were given refugee status, they had to decide where they wanted to live and SRS staff helped the family to come to a decision. For the first time since being in the UK they had to decide what they wanted and what the needs were of each member of the family. Our role in such situations is to try to empower the client to make rational choices based on the best information and not to tell them what to do.

## Job vacancy and welcome to our new staff

We've been welcoming some exciting new additions to the team here at SRS over the last few months, but we're also preparing to bid a fond farewell to a couple of staff members who will be missed by clients and colleagues alike. Firstly, a warm welcome to Cath Minchin (pictured, top right), our new Operations Manager, Cathy Gonzalez, our new Support Worker & Youth Coordinator, Charlotte Maguire, our new FGM Project Officer, and Fran Ciotaki, our ESOL for Work Tutor.

We're also delighted to have on board Rasha Al-Shalabi (pictured, bottom right) and Humam Mahrat, our joint Bilingual Syrian Programme Assistants. They will be working all too briefly alongside Abbie, our Syrian Resettlement Programme Coordinator, who sadly is leaving for pastures new (law studies). Abbie has done a wonderful job welcoming Syrian families on the resettlement scheme and will be greatly missed, not least for her Arabic skills! **We are currently recruiting to this position—deadline 19th June, see [here](#) for full details.**

Finally, we will be very sad to say goodbye in July to Meg, who has done such a fantastic job as International Women's Group Coordinator.



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)