



# Suffolk Refugee Support Newsletter

## Summer 2018



[www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk](http://www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk)  
38 St Matthew's Street, IPSWICH, Suffolk IP1 3EP  
Registered Charity Number: 1078794



### Refugee Week Report



A big thank you to everyone who helped us recently to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Refugee Week and the contribution made by refugees to our communities. We gave a lecture at the university on the history of refugees in Suffolk, hosted an enjoyable evening with supporters at the Tapestry photo exhibition at La Tour Cycle Café, spoke to Rushmere Hall Primary School about refugee issues, attended Northgate High School's Community Day and a sold-out screening of Human Flow at Ipswich Film Theatre, and partnered on the show Human Cargo at The Cut in Halesworth. We also featured twice on BBC Radio Suffolk as part of their Suffolk Day coverage and in two special [ITV Anglia reports](#) on our resettlement programme. Thanks to everyone who took part and made the week such a success, in particular the refugees who so willingly gave their time, shared their stories and made such delicious food!



Thank you so much for last night's lecture, it was really interesting and I learnt a lot about refugees in Suffolk. Thank you also to Abdul for the awesome falafels!

Thank you so much for the invite, it was a really interesting exhibition. Great to catch up with some of the SRS staff. We are pleased to support such an important charity. (Suffolk Constabulary)

What an excellent choice of film - in parts delightful, in parts harrowing.

Supported by:



## Refugee Resettlement Update

With a new family arriving recently, we're delighted that the number of refugees we have welcomed to Ipswich under the UK government's resettlement schemes has now passed 100! We're proud that Suffolk has reached this milestone and played its part in helping the most vulnerable families in Syria and the Middle East to rebuild their lives in safety, but we also know there is still a lot of work to be done continuing to support those already here and in making sure that Suffolk meets its commitment to take up to 230 refugees by 2020. In particular, we are very keen to find private rented 'move-on' properties for families who have been in the UK for two years or more - please see our appeal below.

Our office has been a busy place lately! First, we hosted a visit from the UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency), who came to see how we coordinate our resettlement programme, and its successes and challenges, for their [Great British Welcome](#) series (to tie in with an exhibition on Ipswich Waterfront as part of the PhotoEast Festival 2018). Look out for the finished article on their website soon.

We also welcomed ITV Anglia News for a day of filming for two Refugee Week reports on our resettlement work and the help we receive from the local community. It was great to see some of the inspiring refugees we support talking about their experiences on camera, and for our superb resettlement team to have their moment in the spotlight! You can watch both reports [here](#).

We would like to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers, befrienders, community members, schools and church groups who helped with both pieces and have been so vital in helping people to resettle successfully. Thanks also to Realise Futures, Nature Den Nursery and Whitehouse Primary School for their support.

An enormous thank you to Hamam, who will be leaving us soon for full-time employment elsewhere. Congratulations on the new job Hamam - you've been an inspiration to work with! And a very warm SRS welcome to our resettlement team to both Ionela and Yacine (see page 5 for more details).



TWITTER.COM

UNHCR United Kingdom on Twitter

"It was great to meet the @suffolk\_refugee team yesterday!"



## Landlords—Can You Help?

**Are you a private landlord looking for tenants who:**

- Are stable, fully referenced and vetted?
- Take immense pride in their home and its appearance?
- Receive support to manage their tenancies and financial affairs?
- Have no history of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or poorly-managed tenancies?

If so, we would love to hear from you! This is a real opportunity to support families who have been through great hardship and for whom a [safe family home](#) means everything, while looking after your property and getting a reliable return from it. If you, or someone you know, is interested, you can find further information on how you can make a difference [here](#), or contact Susannah, our Refugee Resettlement Programme Coordinator: [skennedy@suffolkrefugee.org.uk](mailto:skennedy@suffolkrefugee.org.uk)

## Fundraising for refugees in Suffolk

Many people said it was our best assembly for a while. Rebecca and Hamam inspired the children and they have been creating some very emotive work in response. It has been a pleasure to raise funds for such a worthy cause, and the children's awareness and empathy towards refugees and their situation has increased exponentially (teacher at Rushmere Hall Primary School)

We're grateful to people across Suffolk for their generosity and compassion towards refugees, whether volunteering, providing community support or raising funds for our work. We operate in a precarious funding environment, so this assistance is vital for us to meet the most acute needs of the people we support.

So a huge thank you to the staff at Rushmere Hall Primary School who undertook the 'Refugee Ration Challenge' to raise money for ourselves and a charity working in Syria. We ran an assembly at the school during

Refugee Week to talk to pupils about the experiences of being a refugee. The challenge involved the teachers eating the same rations as a Syrian refugee in a camp in Jordan for one week. The school raised further funds by having a dress-down day and holding a RefuTea party. The response has been amazing, and you can still make a donation [here](#) (until 22 July).

We are also very grateful to the Year 6 students at All Saints Primary School in Lawshall who organised a cake sale to raise funds for ourselves and the Alzheimer's Society. The cakes must have been pretty good because they raised an impressive total of £120!



**Would you like to organise a fundraising event for us** and make a real difference in the lives of vulnerable refugees, while raising awareness of the issues they face? You could help fund a vital service such as a support group, provide a food parcel for someone with nothing or transport to a critically important interview. We can help you through each stage or provide fundraising materials - please contact Karen for more details: [klawson@suffolkrefugee.org.uk](mailto:klawson@suffolkrefugee.org.uk)

## SRS helping refugees and asylum seekers access university

[Article 26](#) is a bursary project of the Helena Kennedy Foundation that gives asylum seekers and refugees the chance to apply for financial support to access Higher Education. It takes its name from Article 26 of the Human Rights Act - the Right to Education. The UEA in Norwich are among the universities to sign up, offering two bursaries a year. Through our Employment and Training Advice Work we have supported two people to apply for university places and the bursary. One has been offered a conditional place, but we're delighted to say that Linda has already been successful and starts university this autumn!

Linda is an asylum seeker from Uganda who previously completed a Law Diploma and had been waiting to further her law studies. She did not know she could apply for university until Suffolk Refugee Support made her aware of the Article 26 bursary. She has been volunteering for ISCRE with admin duties and note-taking with the Suffolk Law Advice Centre. This is what going to university means to her:

**"I'm so excited, September seems so far away, normally I dread September because it is nearly winter but now I am looking forward to it arriving. I grew up in a country where the community does not respect the rule of law, however having experienced the law in the UK and its benefits I feel enthusiastic to return to study in this field. I am passionate about Human Rights and Child Rights. When I complete this degree, if given an opportunity in the future, I would like to join one of the United Nations initiatives that promote Human Rights, by educating communities that are still entangled in old cultural beliefs. I would like to educate and empower individuals to realise true freedom of rights and how this can be implemented and accomplished in society."**

**CAN YOU HELP?** We continue to look for work placements (short or long term) for our clients in a variety of settings. At the moment we are looking for work experience in graphic design, childcare settings, office-based roles, marble grinding/construction, building and catering. If you think you can help please contact our Employment and Training Advice Worker, Jodi Peck - [jpeck@suffolkrefugee.org.uk](mailto:jpeck@suffolkrefugee.org.uk)

## SRS in the media

"There's lots to be proud of in this county but, having spoken to you, this is one of the things I am most proud of, the fact we're able to help people like Bassel."



This was the response from James Hazell of BBC Radio Suffolk to an interview with us as part of their Suffolk Day coverage. Bassel talked movingly about his experiences in Syria, and you can listen to the full, powerful piece [here](#) (1:28:50 in, available until 21 July).

Also on Suffolk Day, we gave a potted history of refugees in the county to BBC Suffolk, from the Huguenots to more recent arrivals, and talked about how refugees have been welcomed here over the centuries. You can listen again [here](#) (1:13:15 and 2:49:00 in, also available until 21 July).

As mentioned in our resettlement update, ITV Anglia ran two special reports during Refugee Week on our resettlement work and the members of the community who have done so much to support it, with a poignant interview with one family. You can watch the reports [here](#) now!

## Global Trends Report

The UNHCR released its annual [Global Trends report](#) last month, and the figures it reveals are shocking. A record 68.5 million people are now forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide, more than the entire population of the UK, largely as a result of new crises in the DRC and Myanmar, and the ongoing conflict in Syria. Its other key findings include:

- An estimated 16.2 million people were newly displaced in 2017, an average of 31 people every minute
- 4.4 million of these were new refugees and asylum seekers (the others being internally displaced)
- 85% of refugees are hosted by developing regions, with the least developed countries providing asylum to a growing proportion
- Turkey hosted the largest number of refugees, with 3.5 million, followed by Pakistan, Uganda, Lebanon and Iran
- 1 in 6 people in Lebanon is a refugee
- 52% of all refugees are children, up from 41% in 2009
- Resettlement quotas, mostly to western countries, declined by 54% from the previous year
- There were 1.7 million new asylum claims globally in 2017 (the UK received 26,350, or 1.5%)



## Big Garden Party - 21st July

It's that time of year when we enjoy a day out in the sun with an international home-cooked food stall at the Big Garden Party in Ipswich run by our friends at ActivLives.

The 10th anniversary party takes place on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July from 11-3 at the People's Community Garden, Maidenhall Allotments. It's a lovely day with live music and free children's activities, and we'll be there with Syrian Falafel! Some of the refugees we support, particularly those who had a close connection with the land back home, have found great benefit in working in the community garden and allotments, and have been made to feel very welcome.



## Staff and office update

We'd like to wish a very warm welcome to the SRS team to Ionela Bobaru, Yacine Khiat-Selfe (pictured right) and Michelle Francis. Ionela has joined us as Advice Worker, working across both our drop-in advice service and resettlement team, Yacine is our new Refugee Resettlement Advice Worker, and Michelle is our Community Engagement Worker - Hidden Harms, a post focusing on issues such as FGM, forced marriage, honour based violence, online dangers, hate crime and workplace exploitation.



**Office furniture needed!** We have outgrown our cosy hot-desking office (home since 1999!) and will soon be expanding a little, but we'd like to avoid spending vital funds on furniture. In particular we need 6 x rectangle desks (ideally 1200mm x 800), 8 x high back adjustable office chairs and 2 x four-door lockable filing cabinets. Please contact Marianne if you can help: [mwalker@suffolkrefugee.org.uk](mailto:mwalker@suffolkrefugee.org.uk)

## Introducing the SRS team...

We thought you might like to get to know some of the SRS team a little better, so each newsletter we'll introduce a different member of staff or volunteer. This time it's Rasha, the rock of our resettlement team!

Hi, I'm Rasha Al Shalabi, a Resettlement Advice Worker at Suffolk Refugee Support (SRS). I started working with SRS in April 2017 as a bilingual support worker, helping refugees resettled via the government's resettlement programmes. I came to the UK in 2010 to continue my studies when the war erupted in Syria. My family had to escape the country, like many of the families resettled in the UK. I am lucky enough to be able to see some of them in Sweden, although I have other close family I cannot see. I was awarded a PhD degree in American Literature in 2017 from the University of Essex. My main study was focused on novels written on Caribbean immigration and asylum seeking in the US in the twentieth century. While I was waiting to do my final PhD exam, I started volunteering for Community 360 in Colchester utilising my Arabic and English skills. My main role was to teach English to Arabic speakers and help with the general wellbeing of resettlement clients and connecting them with services provided in Colchester. I started working in Ipswich as a teaching assistant and was helping children from refugee families until I secured a job with SRS. Among the challenges I face at work are having to reconcile two cultures and bridge the differences between refugees and the surrounding community. I enjoy the company of SRS staff and I'm glad that I work in a welcoming and friendly place.



## Testimony of a work experience student at SRS

To end the newsletter, we thought it would be nice to share a few words from our fab work experience student from Kesgrave High School:

"Whilst at Suffolk Refugee Support I have learnt and understood a lot more about asylum seekers and refugees. Through the charity I have met some lovely people who have helped me and showed me some of the amazing things the charity does. Some of the stories I heard were truly moving and showed me how grateful I am that I live a privileged life. Within my placement I helped in English classes - the classes had a very friendly atmosphere and were very welcoming to me. I have enjoyed my placement here."

We hope you've enjoyed our newsletter - we'd love to hear from you with feedback or if you'd like to find out more information. If you've received this newsletter indirectly and would like to join our mailing list, you can do so here: [suffolkrefugee.org.uk/join-our-mailing-list/](https://suffolkrefugee.org.uk/join-our-mailing-list/) or if you'd like to unsubscribe you can email us: [office@suffolkrefugee.org.uk](mailto:office@suffolkrefugee.org.uk)

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