

# Suffolk Refugee Support Annual Report 2017-2018



## Charity Manager's Report



I heard a comment recently from a Syrian teenager who had arrived in Ipswich under the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme (which we are proud to be part of). He said "When the bombs go off, they told us to open our mouths." This was to prevent children's eardrums from bursting with the almighty noise of the bombs hitting their homes.

It is comments like this which drive home to me what incredible trauma and devastation SRS's clients have often come from. It is so easy to use the words "war", "conflict" and even "persecution" without fully understanding the real impact of these horrendous events on human beings.

SRS's staff and volunteers work hard to make life bearable again for those that have made it to sleepy Suffolk – a world away from those bombs and that devastation but in its own way a new and different challenge, and potential trauma. Struggling to understand the complex and ever changing bureaucracy of benefits, work, bills, housing, schools, health services and much more whilst attempting to know the difference between English words such as "work" and "walk", or "sheep" and "ship" is a challenge. Dealing with damp houses, TV licences, children's sugar consumption, council tax bills and applying for jobs, is not easy at the best of times. Add having witnessed a family member be killed or go missing; a journey at the hands of ruthless individuals with others also desperate to survive and get the best for their families at whatever cost; and ill health from years of living in unstable and dangerous circumstances, and life as a refugee just got even harder.

To greet such individuals with warmth, understanding and somewhere to feel appreciated and supported is our aim at SRS. Our commitment to achieving this in practical terms will hopefully be apparent when you read this Annual Report for 2017-18. It has been another fantastic year for Suffolk Refugee Support, tinged with sadness at the state of a world where more people than ever are forced to flee. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to making life liveable again for so many.

My thanks to you all

Rebecca Crerar

Charity Manager

***"It was a privilege to attend your AGM last night. Your passion to make a difference really shone through. It is humbling to hear people's stories, incredible challenges and how they have overcome them with the support of the staff and volunteers in your organisation. The expression 'life changing' is often used. Last night, I heard powerful accounts of seeing that in action."***

Safer Neighbourhood Team, Suffolk Constabulary

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# Advice Service



Our drop-in Advice Service, which operates three days a week from our office in Ipswich, has been at the core of our work for nearly 20 years, and last year continued to be extremely busy. Our Advice Service delivered 6329 individual contacts to 564 refugees and asylum seekers (from 37 countries), 149 of whom were new to us this year. Including family members, we estimate that we helped more than 1100 people from March 2017 to February 2018.

These numbers reflect the continued growth of refugee populations in Suffolk, the increasing complexity of needs and the reduction in other support services. In addition, the casework for vulnerable refugee families arriving under the resettlement programme is transferred to our drop-in advice service after 12 months, adding to the demand.

Over the year we saw a decrease in advice sessions on issues such as benefits and utilities, and a significant increase around adult education, assisting with job applications and self employment, reflecting our increased emphasis on employment and training outcomes.

We take pride in our Advice Service continuing to be a warm and welcoming space, despite the diverse and difficult nature of the issues people come to us with. Our Advice Workers and committed team of volunteers apply experience and empathy as they respond to the immediate needs of asylum seekers and the longer term rebuilding of refugees' lives. We are increasingly involved in multi-agency working and seen as experts in understanding the particular needs of our client group through our relationship of trust with them.

***"I had a terrible life... I had no hopes but SRS staff always supported and encouraged me to be strong with all the issues that happened to me, therefore I can't thank you enough. "***

***"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 Home Office paperwork. 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."***

## Case Study

C had to wait for a long time for a decision on her asylum claim. Eventually she received a refusal and had to appeal her case. This put a lot of pressure on her and she started to feel quite anxious. We talked to her about what might help and agreed to pay for gym membership. We also helped her gather evidence that she needed and encouraged her to remain optimistic. Eventually she received a positive decision—shortly after, C visited our office and said she had been watching an article on the TV news about mental health issues disproportionately affecting people from BME communities. She said it made her think that SRS did a lot to help clients' sense of wellbeing and just having a safe space for people to visit where they are not judged prevented a greater negative experience.

# Refugee Resettlement Work

Suffolk continues to play a full role in the UK's refugee resettlement schemes, as we support families uprooted by conflict to rebuild their lives here. During the period of this report our resettlement team have welcomed a further 6 families (24 individuals), and as of September 2018 we are pleased to say that a total of 100 people have been resettled in Suffolk, the majority of them Syrian.



We have seen the first babies born to resettled families and we have helped all the families to gain full Refugee Status (replacing the Humanitarian Protection initially granted), allowing them to apply for travel documents in order to visit family members in other countries, many of whom they haven't seen in years.



One of our biggest challenges is finding private rented 'move on' accommodation for families who have difficulty providing a guarantor. We are speaking to landlords and bringing together families and partner organisations for housing information sessions to address this issue.

We contributed to a Home Office evaluation of the resettlement programme and to the development of an app to help families access info on life in the UK. We were delighted to welcome the UNHCR (the UN's Refugee Agency) to our office recently to talk about resettlement in Suffolk for an article on their website, and to be featured in two ITV Anglia Refugee Week resettlement reports.

A special thank you to all the volunteers and community members who have done so much to help refugee families feel welcomed. The work of our volunteer befrienders is invaluable, but we recognise that it can come with an emotional impact so have arranged monthly support sessions for volunteers to share experiences.

***"Suffolk Refugee Support have supported us materially and raised our morale; they have provided us with the services we need from the bottom of their hearts."***

## Case Study

Many of the people we support face the uncertainty and distress of being separated from extended family. Our resettlement team has worked hard over the past year on family link applications in an effort to bring people back together. Earlier this year we heard the fantastic news that two related Syrian families were to be reunited. This is what it meant to one of them:

***"January 2018 is a month that I will never forget. I literally heard one of the best news in my entire life after the unbelievable happened. I was reunited with my best mate and his family who miraculously came from Lebanon to Ipswich under the resettlement scheme. By joking we still say to each other: 'Are we really together again?'. Mum says: 'It's God who brought them here only because of my prayers...!'. I believe that it's one of the life rewards for your hard work—work hard and definitely something joyful will happen. Their arrival to Ipswich has literally meant the world to me!"***

## Employment Work

Helping refugees fulfil their employment potential is one of our key priorities. Better work prospects can lead to greater independence, confidence, integration and financial security, while for asylum seekers not allowed to work, volunteering can give a sense of purpose and reduce the feeling that their lives are in limbo.

This year we delivered more than 1500 employment support contacts, including 1000 related to job applications, nearly twice as many as last year. We supported 119 clients with job-seeking and a further 20 with self employment advice.

Of 36 clients interviewed, 30 reported more confidence to apply for a job by themselves, while 23 clients secured paid work this year with our support, with jobs including cleaner, delivery driver, care worker, trainee pharmacist and social worker. Twenty reported that life had improved through finding a job, while 16 more secured volunteer placements with our help.



*"I'm so happy because I now have a job! And I have so many ideas of how to work with children. It's going to be great!"*

*"Volunteering I have made lots of friends. I have practised my English. Volunteering has helped me understand people and the way to pronounce things, I don't feel so shy now."*

## Education and Training

We gave advice on training options to 76 clients this year, 40 of whom reported increased opportunities as a result. After consultation with our clients (in partnership with Realise Futures) we set up a Food Hygiene course—all seven participants passed, one finding work in a restaurant and two setting up food-related businesses—and an Enterprise Sewing Course that eight people attended to develop new skills. We ran a driving theory group for those needing a driving license for the job roles they are interested in, and 11 clients attended a 5-week ESOL for work course. More recently we supported two people to apply successfully for student bursaries and university places.

### Case Study

C is an asylum seeker who had been waiting to further her law studies. SRS made her aware of student bursaries and helped her to apply (successfully) for a place at UEA, where she begins her studies this autumn. This is what going to university means to her:

*"I'm so excited, 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."*

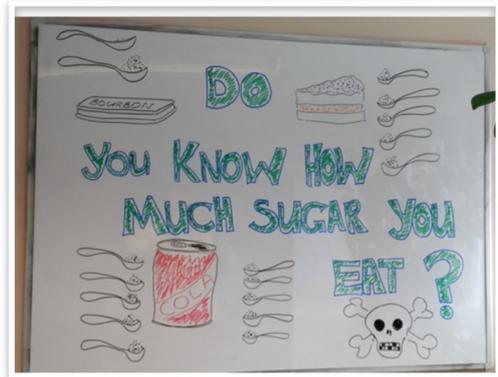
# Improving Physical & Mental Health

Experience has taught us that refugees and asylum seekers face a range of barriers to leading healthy, productive lives in the UK. Mental health issues as a result of past trauma or immigration status, low moods due to isolation and loneliness, long term injury or illness untreated outside the UK, lack of English language, limited knowledge of diet and exercise options and greater access to unhealthy foods all present challenges. It is vital therefore that we enable and encourage our clientele to make positive, healthy lifestyle choices.

We supported 148 people over the last year with health-related advice. As a result of our advice, 25 clients reported improved physical health, 26 reported improved mental health, and 35 reported that they understand more about looking after their health. The activities we have facilitated include playing football, attending gym sessions, swimming groups and cycling safety proficiency courses, and taking part in a volunteer garden project. We also continue to refer people to and receive advice from the professionals in the MVA (Marginalised & Vulnerable Adult Health Outreach Service) team, liaising with them to make plans tailored to the needs of each individual.

*"I wanted to extend my gratitude to you for booking an interpreter for my patient when she came for her appointment yesterday. It was incredibly helpful as our language line interpreting telephone service did not have any Syrian-Arabic interpreters available. The support you have given the family in attending the hospital visits has been vital to them and their continuing ability to access care and I would like to formally thank you for that."*

Consultant Paediatrician, Ipswich Hospital



*"I was referred for counselling whilst waiting to hear about my immigration case. I have now won my case and feel much happier. I don't know what I would have done without SRS to help and support me."*

*"After listening to what other families do in the UK, we decided as a family to go swimming together. This opportunity would have never happened back home. We enjoy the exercise and having fun together."*

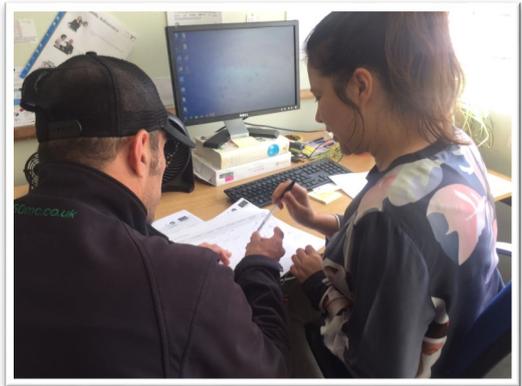
*"I have learnt a lot about what you can do to live a healthy life in the UK. It is different from Syria. I take people to the dentist and encourage them to brush their teeth. I am also aware of the importance of reducing sugar in my diet. This self-help attitude is new to me and I find it interesting."*

## Case Study

Two women from the refugee resettlement programme approached SRS about gym membership. They felt they wanted to be more active and to do an activity together, but had not exercised in a formal setting since school. We suggested that they visit a number of local gyms and decide for themselves which they wanted to join. This empowered them to make their own decision. They chose a gym and have been attending regularly. Both women report feeling much stronger and fitter. The manager of the gym approached the women after they had been going for a few weeks and said how pleased she was to see them and how great it was to have their first two ladies wearing hijabs in the gym. It has been an overwhelmingly positive experience all round.

## English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

For the majority of the people we see, improving their English language skills is key to better job prospects, making new friends and developing a sense of belonging. We therefore continue to offer six ESOL courses each week from Pre-Entry to Entry 3 levels. Over the past year we have had more than 80 students attend our classes, with the Pre-Entry classes particularly well-attended. We have had the pleasure of watching many students progress through the four levels.



Of our students, 75% made significant progress this year, with 25% making satisfactory progress. The improvements in reading and writing skills of both the Pre-Entry and Entry 1 classes have been particularly impressive. Of 59 exams taken, 47 were passed. Our classes also demonstrate progress in our students' abilities to socialise with new people.

***"I understand how the NHS works now. ESOL classes have given me confidence to go to appointments on my own."***

Classes are often lively with positive interaction between differing language speakers and those from a variety of cultural backgrounds. We had a designated session on FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) for our lower level female students and have also discussed healthy food, exercise and diversity at length in our classes, as well as advertising further educational opportunities.

### Case Study

AA started in our Pre Entry class this year. She was what one might call a 'complete beginner'. She had virtually no understanding of verbal or written English at all. Over the past few weeks, she has demonstrated quite amazing progress in all four language skills. She had no experience of the Latin alphabet, yet has now grasped most of the common sounds made by the letters and can read new, short words very well. She recalls longer words written within the context of sentences she has learnt and answers many questions given to her correctly. This shows that her listening skills are brilliant. Her only difficulty is with brand new vocabulary but her retention of this, too, is remarkable. I have seen many students progress very well in my classes before but have never met anyone whose improvement has been quite so rapid. It is a pleasure to work with her and I imagine she will go on to achieve great things. I feel honoured to be a part of her journey. *SRS ESOL Tutor*

## Destitution & Financial Assistance

In February this year, Home Office subsistence payments to destitute asylum seekers increased by just 80p to £37.75 per week, having been frozen for several years. This leaves many of our asylum-seeking clients struggling to cover the basics and unable to pay travel costs to English classes or vital solicitors' appointments without our help. Over the last year, we have paid out almost £11,500 in individual support to prevent hardship or disadvantage. We have seen a particular increase in need for help with school uniform costs, which can be an expensive outlay.

We are extremely grateful to Friends of Refugees Suffolk (FORS), to all involved in the 'Malka' refugee film project, St Felix Church, Felixstowe, and the many other churches, community groups and individuals who have made such generous donations or undertaken fundraising efforts on our behalf to enable us to do this.

## Youth Work

With increasing numbers of young refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Suffolk, last year saw us begin focused work with this group. We appointed a Youth Coordinator who has been working closely with existing services such as fostering agencies, accommodation and education providers, and social services.

We identified a need for summer ESOL classes and ran these in 2017 with 20 young asylum seekers attending. We have also established one-to-one learning sessions with a number of young refugees and a volunteer tutor, leading to some outstanding GCSE and A-Level successes both last year and this.

Last September saw us begin a weekly 'Homework Club', helping an average of 15 students from 10 nationalities with maths, English, geography, science, IT, psychology and Spanish. We have 11 volunteers registered for these sessions and have received 100% positive feedback from the young people involved.

We have also been able to provide advice both to young people and foster carers, and have hosted a drop-in service for the Refugee Council's Children's Advisor, who has supported young people with age disputes, issues with social services and delayed asylum claims.



***"I had a big problem when I was age-assessed over 18 as I lost all my support. I was very upset and angry. SRS found me a solicitor to contest the decision and I was reinstated as a minor. I now feel much happier and know where to come for support. Before I felt myself getting angrier and angrier, now I am much calmer."***

### Case Study

We first came into contact with A, who is 15, when we were contacted by a school nurse who was concerned about her—A was struggling at school, suffering with low moods and feeling stressed. A first came to our Homework Club looking very nervous and unsure as to whether she would stay. We encouraged her to come in and one of the volunteers discussed with her what work she was doing at school, and what she would like help with. For the first few weeks, A brought in homework which was far above the level she was comfortable with—it was evident that she was struggling considerably and needed help with the basics in subjects such as Maths and English before she could progress to the level that her peers were studying in Year 11 at school.

The volunteers working with A started teaching her the basic things she needed to know, like numbers, fractions and basic sentence structure. Since that point, the change in A and her willingness to learn has been very noticeable. She is always one of the first students to arrive at the group, and is positive and engaged for the whole two hours. Her mother also informed us that A loves coming to Homework Club, and she is very grateful for the help that we have provided. A has now applied for a childcare course at a local college, and is hoping to start there soon.

## Family Support Work

As more refugee and asylum-seeking families come to Suffolk, either through Home Office dispersal accommodation or the refugee resettlement programme, we continue to increase our focus on women and family support work. 80% of women interviewed reported feeling more aware of their choices and confident to make decisions as a result of our help.

This has included giving advice on bringing up children in the UK to 134 refugee parents (with a total of 189 children) and working very intensively with 25 vulnerable families (with 46 children), building trust and rapport with each family and giving support based on individual needs. The relationships we build with clients create trust with helping to find school or nursery places for their children. Often the parents are then free to attend SRS ESOL classes, creating a win-win situation. This makes a huge difference to parents who then learn more English and can access services themselves with confidence.

We have worked with the Wellington Children's Centre to enable families to attend groups and gain confidence and independence, and have helped children and families to gain support from Home Start volunteers.

We have also supported victims of childhood FGM, domestic or sexual violence, and victims of rape during war or conflict, referring them for counselling where appropriate.



*"We are very happy that things are working well and that our child's hours have been increased in school. We hope this will continue so she is not behind in her education. Thank you to every health professional, especially Suffolk Refugee Support—my child wouldn't have got to where she is without your help and support."*

*"Thank you for helping me with childcare, I am very happy as I can learn English without stress and Suffolk Refugee Support has supported me with free ESOL. I have now been able to pass my exams and will continue my studies without the worry of finding childcare."*

### Case Study

SRS' Women and Family Advice Worker helped and supported a single mum with three children who was pregnant. They are an asylum-seeking family with very limited English and no recourse to public funds. We helped to find schooling for the children and Arabic translations of pregnancy information, assisted with paperwork and communicated with an immigration solicitor on her behalf. Now, all three children are in school and the mother has started attending our English classes, with all health support in place. She is very happy with the support given on pregnancy and uses our services on a regular basis. She has learnt English and increased her confidence from before. All the basic essential items have been provided to the mother for when the baby arrives.

Mum said ***"Thank you for the support with pregnancy and giving me the confidence as I am having a C-section for the first time in a different country. I am happy that I can come to Suffolk Refugee Support, as I don't know anybody else in the UK who can help me"***.

## International Women's Group (IWG)

Our International Women's Group continues to offer a safe and welcoming space, with a volunteer-led crèche, for women from different backgrounds to learn and socialise. Over the year, around 50 women from a dozen countries took part in the group, with an average of 26 attending weekly.

Each session involves ESOL lessons as well as a group activity or external speaker, including in the past year Wellbeing Suffolk, VoiceAbility, Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service, Suffolk Cancer Awareness, a dental health session, child safety, crime prevention, a school guide for parents, knit and chat group, and exercise and dance therapy classes.



*"I am happy to volunteer at the crèche at the women's group because I meet people from different countries"*

We have monthly visits from Suffolk Police to talk about community and personal safety, have held two FGM awareness sessions, resulting in members of the group discussing their own experiences, and several excursions to the Community Gardens to share cooking skills and learn about local produce.

A number of the women attending the group have secured employment, entered training or passed English exams with our support, including two women who completed a Level 1 award in childcare, and two women who secured crèche leader positions with the IWG. Sixteen women took part in a feature with the East Anglian Daily Times marking 100 years since partial women's suffrage, and around 12 took part in a photography project with Photo East. We are very grateful to all the volunteers who support the IWG, and estimate their donated hours over the year to be around 900!

## Friends Group

With new asylum-seeking families arriving in Ipswich, our weekly Friends Group continues to be a place for people to socialise and reduce isolation. Twelve families have attended the group over the past year, with a total of 16 children. We have worked in partnership with the Wellington Children's Centre to run the group, which has improved English skills, children's health practices, parenting skills and understanding of the importance of play. Two volunteers at the group are also from a refugee background.

*"There were a couple of ladies who spoke my home language with whom I shared my problems. The group helped to relieve some of my stress."*

### Case Study

The biggest change in a child's behaviour was with X, who is three years old. He would never stop and concentrate on one thing for more than a couple of minutes. He did not use verbal communication with others, but he did speak at home. At the end of September we started to see a change. He began to show interest in what the Children's Worker was doing. She asked his mother what he liked playing with, and she said trains. The next week, the Children's Worker brought in trains and he played with them for most of the session. This was the first time we had seen this level of concentration. From then onwards, we saw progress each week.

## 'Safer Suffolk' Work

Our funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (via Suffolk Community Foundation) continued this year for work to support the victims of crime, prevent and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and address hate crime and religious extremism.

We have supported 13 clients as they have taken a case through the criminal justice system, worked with eight victims of modern day slavery and trafficking, all but one of whom had been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, supported seven victims of rape during war/conflict or within refugee camps and one victim of forced marriage.

We explained issues around domestic and sexual abuse to 100 clients, advised around 80 on driving issues and spoke to 100 clients regarding UK laws and rules.



All of our groups have had visits from Police Community Support Officers, we have held awareness raising sessions around drug and alcohol misuse, our resettlement support group have held discussions about radicalization and extremism, and all our staff have completed Prevent training.

### Case study

A client was defrauded of a significant amount of money after purchasing what turned out to be a "ringed" car. We supported the client as the case progressed towards a court date by liaising with police, the courts and other agencies on the client's behalf, making sure that an interpreter was available at court and that he could travel to the court (and be reimbursed for that travel). Due to the client's determination to see that the fraudster received justice, the police were able to take the case to court and the perpetrator was found guilty and received a prison sentence.

## FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) Project

Over the past year, our FGM prevention programme has delivered sessions to 80 refugee women and men and has also trained more than 200 professionals from areas such as health and education in spotting the signs of girls at risk. We have embedded FGM awareness across our different areas of work and begun to tackle it alongside other harmful cultural practices. As a result, 63 women reported feeling more aware of and better equipped to report fears of FGM, honour crime and domestic abuse.

Recognising that asylum seekers and refugees have a higher likelihood of being victims of certain harmful practices, earlier this year we created a new post of Community Engagement Worker – Hidden Harms. This role will engage with the community, professionals and our clients to raise awareness, change attitudes and provide support around FGM, forced marriage, honour-based violence, online dangers, hate crime and workplace exploitation.

## Volunteering

For almost 20 years, Suffolk Refugee Support has relied on the generosity, skills and experience of volunteers in order to deliver all our services. We currently have a total of around 85 volunteers who are actively engaged in nearly 20 different projects and areas of work, including our drop-in Advice Service, International Women's Group, youth Homework Club and befriending for resettled refugee families, as well as English classes and one-to-one tuition.



Volunteering for SRS appeals to a wide demographic and we have a good age range and gender split. In recent months, we have had several volunteers aged between 16 – 18. We also encourage previous or current clients and others with a refugee background to become volunteers and over the last year we have had 18 volunteers from refugee countries. Our board of up to 12 trustees also volunteer their time and expertise to ensure the smooth running of SRS.

An example of the difference made to people's lives by these donated skills is one of our long-standing volunteers who gives one-to-one tuition to school students who, studying in their second language, can benefit from a little extra help. This summer, two of those students passed all their GCSEs and are progressing to take their A-Levels, while another student achieved high grades in her A-Levels allowing her to go on to study Biomedical Science at St George's, University of London this autumn.

## Talks Team

Over the past year we have delivered more than 25 talks and presentations to local schools, churches, community groups, professionals and students, with an estimated reach of more than 1300 people.

Although much of our work is centred in Ipswich, we know there is great goodwill and interest in refugee issues across the county, so we have spoken to groups from Bury St Edmunds, Darsham, Felixstowe, Saxmundham, Woodbridge, Brandeston, Yoxford and Peasenhall, among others. We were pleased to contribute to the Holocaust Memorial Day event at the University of Suffolk this year with a talk on the power of words, comparing the language used to describe Jewish refugees with that used about refugees today, and to be part of the Ipswich Arts Association Town Lectures series with a talk on the history of refugees in Suffolk.



***"Thank you for sending Rebecca along to run our assembly. It was amazing and so many of the children and staff said after that it was the best assembly we had had for a while. She and Hamam inspired a lot of children and I know they have been creating some very emotive work in response...The children's awareness and empathy towards refugees and their situation has increased exponentially."***

## Immigration Legal Aid

It has been another challenging year for us regarding immigration legal advice. With Suffolk still a 'legal aid desert', unfortunately the outreach service we rely upon from Solomon Solicitors of Luton (who saw 30 of our clients this year) was suspended from November 2017 to July 2018. Luckily, Fisher Jones Greenwood Solicitors from Colchester were able to see some people but there has often been a long delay. Firms are under financial pressure and legal aid work is poorly paid and onerous in terms of paperwork. On a positive note, we were pleased to see the Suffolk Law Centre open as a potential source of free immigration legal advice for our clients.

A considerable amount of staff time is spent chasing missing documents and paperwork issues with the Home Office. Fortunately we have been assisted with many of these cases by the office of Sandy Martin MP.

It has been good to see some of our clients finally receive some form of leave to remain including two whose children are now able to attend university. One young woman, the victim of forced marriage, was finally given refugee status following a wait of 18 months. She is now planning to go to university next year.

*"I was worried about my immigration case and SRS found me a solicitor. I won my case. It makes a massive difference to the quality of my life."*

## Sports Group

Our weekly football and health sessions have had an average of 22 attendees, an increasing number of whom are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (with 33 under -18s registered in total). The sessions can provide an outlet for pent up frustration and a chance to make friends and develop a sense of belonging.

Teams have had success in two tournaments giving the young men a sense of pride and achievement. Six players have joined a local league team and are doing well, integrating with local players and learning British customs, while one player had try-outs for a professional club.

Feedback from 22 attendees was that 20 found it helped them feel better and improved their mood.

*"I have been coming to the group for one year now. I always look forward to playing football."*

## The International Situation

The UNHCR Global Trends report reveals that a record 68.5 million people are now forcibly displaced worldwide, with the increase largely due to new crises in the DRC and Myanmar and the ongoing conflict in Syria. Meanwhile, fewer people are crossing the Mediterranean to Europe, but the proportion losing their lives trying to reach safety has risen sharply as they are forced into more dangerous routes.



- 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
- 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%)

## Media Work

As the only specialist refugee support organisation in the region, an important part of our work is to communicate refugee issues, stories, challenges and achievements to the wider public, to give voice to our clients and influence the sometimes heated debate around refugees and asylum seekers.

We continue to do this through traditional media channels, with 25 appearances over the past year in local newspapers, radio and TV, discussing subjects including refugee resettlement, the experience of refugee women in Suffolk and the language used to talk about refugees. We also continue to expand our social media presence and reach, engaging with individuals and organisations on different areas of our work and the refugee experience. We were particularly pleased recently to work with the UK office of the UNHCR (the UN's refugee agency) on a feature about the resettlement programme in Suffolk.

We also produced four quarterly e-newsletters to keep our supporters and interested parties up-to-date with the latest news, events, appeals and opportunities to help refugees.

### New baby 'symbol of hope' for Syrian refugee family resettled in Ipswich

PUBLISHED: 16:56 31 August 2017 | UPDATED: 16:56 31 August 2017 | Gemma Mitchell



TWITTER.COM

UNHCR United Kingdom on Twitter

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

## Community Events

Each year we organise and attend numerous events and happenings to raise awareness of our work and the experiences of refugees, and sometimes just to bring a little cheer to the lives of our clients. It seems a long time ago now, but early in the year covered by this report, we organised an exhibition of images titled Legacy of War by the award-winning photographer Giles Duley at the University of Suffolk. We also organised a full programme of events for Refugee Week, including lectures and film screenings, and have had a presence at many community events and festivals.

More recently we were delighted to take part in the PhotoEast Festival with the photographer Gillian Allard and a group of our clients, resulting in a spectacular exhibition at La Tour Cycle Café. Our thanks to the café for all their support, and also to Farlingaye High School and FIND (Families in Need) for donating Christmas hampers and Ipswich High School for the very generous use of their minibus to deliver the hampers to local refugee families.



# Chair's Report



The year 2017-18 has been another successful and busy year for Suffolk Refugee Support.

I reported last year that we had been fortunate enough to secure two lots of three year funding for the period 2017-20. One was from the Big Lottery who continue as our largest funder and the second was winning a three year contract from Suffolk County Council to continue our work with resettled refugees, up to 230 of whom are coming to Suffolk over 5 years as part of the central government programme aiming to resettle 20,000 refugees to the UK. Since it was originally set up this programme has been altered to include some refugees from other parts of the Middle East and North Africa so we now refer to it as the resettlement programme rather than the Syrian programme, although the majority of refugees to come to Suffolk so far have been Syrian.

As a result of increased work and better funding we now have 21 staff (nearly all part time so equivalent to 12 full time posts) and our annual budget is approaching half a million pounds. This sounds great but we also need to take a prudent approach for when funding changes (e.g. when our three year resettlement contract ends in spring 2020) and we have been doing that by building our reserves to the recommended figure of six months worth of turnover.

The downside of increased staff and workload has been overcrowding of our cramped premises at 38 St Matthews Street. In the last Annual Report I mentioned our interest in a vacant commercial premises next door, which I am happy to report we have now leased from Ipswich Borough Council. Work to adapt the premises to our needs and those of Ipswich Community Media (ICM), a local charity who will share the premises with us, is almost complete and (at the time of writing) we hope that staff will be able to use the new space within weeks. Builders have also been able to make a door to provide a direct link between number 38 and the new premises.

Our staff increase includes the resettlement team with some Arabic-speaking staff, including Syrian refugees. Now that we have many resettled families who have been here more than 12 months this has also increased the work for our drop-in advice team, since our resettlement contract only covers 12 months work with each family from date of arrival. However, it has proved over optimistic that families or individuals can acquire all the skills needed, e.g. good English, to function on their own without help after 12 months so we continue to assist them via the drop-in team. We have also recruited a team of volunteers who work with resettlement families to help their integration into life in Suffolk.

So there is no let up in the increasing demands on SRS both from the existing refugee community and new arrivals. Our thanks to all those who continue to support our work: our staff led by Rebecca Crerar who is our longest staff member – 13 years, 11 of which she has been SRS manager; our numerous volunteers, our Trustees and all of our funders and donors. All of you are essential to our work of welcoming refugees to Suffolk and assisting them to become full and valued members of our community.

**Ian Stewart**  
**Chair**

## Treasurer's Report



Our core activities in the year under review were adequately funded through the Big Lottery grant, in the first year of its current cycle, and by other grant makers and donors. The current year also looks to be satisfactory but there is a lot of work still to do if we are to provide the current level of services in 2019/20. The team are working hard to fill the gaps, but we may have to dip into the reserves – that is the reason we hold them.

The Suffolk County Council contract, for provision of services under the government's Refugee Resettlement Programme, was renewed for a further three years but with a change in the funding basis. Instead of a flat fee for the year, which would cover the fixed costs we are bound to incur whatever the level of arrivals, SCC required us to quote on a per capita basis, assuming there would be 40 or so arrivals. In fact there were a lot fewer. So far from the contract contributing its share towards SRS's overheads, we actually had to subsidise it. The numbers are looking better this year, so we hope to make up the shortfall – though, of course, with increased numbers the staff are having to meet additional challenges.

Overall, we made a small transfer to the reserves for the year as a whole but we plan that we might have to dip into them quite substantially next year.

Once again, I record our thanks to our volunteers for their invisible financial contribution. We could not deliver our services without them, and certainly could not afford to pay for the work they do. Last year we estimated that we would have had to spend well over £70,000 in the year in salaries and on-costs if we had had to buy their work. It is no less this year.

We received grants in 2017-2018 from the following, to all of whom we express our thanks. We are also very grateful to Suffolk Community Foundation for once again facilitating our access to several of these grants and funding streams.

*Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund*

*Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme via Suffolk County Council*

*Big Lottery / European Social Fund: Building Better Opportunities Fund*

*Henry Smith Charity via Suffolk Community Foundation*

*BBC Children in Need*

*Safer Suffolk Fund (Police Crime Commissioner's Fund) via Suffolk Community Foundation*

*New Anglia LEP Community Challenge Fund via Suffolk Community Foundation*

*Public Health Suffolk (GAROD Fund)*

*Mrs L.D. Rope's Second & Third Charitable Settlements*

*Ipswich Borough Council Voluntary Cash Grants*

*New Beginnings via Cambridgeshire Community Foundation*

*Raising the Bar Fund via Suffolk Community Foundation*

*East of England Cooperative Society*

*Eastern Legal Support Trust*

*Ganzoni Charitable Trust*

*St Edmunds Fund*

*RJB Grantmaking Fund via Suffolk Community Foundation*

*Frank Jackson Foundation Fund via Suffolk Community Foundation*

*Netscout Systems Inc*

*Maurken Fund via Suffolk Community Foundation*

*Anonymous Grant via Suffolk Community Foundation*

We are grateful too to Ed Day, for managing our accounting systems and reporting.

**Nick Feldman—Vice Chair and Treasurer**

## Staff Team (as of September 2018)

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

Rebecca Crerar  
Cath Minchin  
Liz Wood  
Karen Lawson  
Susannah Kennedy  
Jodi Peck  
Fatima Khan  
Cathy Gonzalez  
Zeid Mahrat  
Ionela Bobaru  
Rasha Al-Shalabi  
Yacine Khiat-Selfe  
Fran Ciotaki  
Shkurte Bejtullahu  
Michelle Francis  
Clem Turner  
Michaela Freeman  
Catherine Costello  
Marianne Walker  
Ellie Roberts  
Martin Simmonds

## Board of Trustees (as of September 2018)

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

Ian Stewart  
Nick Feldman  
Kate O'Driscoll  
Alan Blackshaw  
Danielle Waller  
Lucy Kerry  
Marian Lanyon  
Dr Pauline Lane  
Gerry Toplis  
Maggie Barradell  
Beteja Grajqevci Dovao



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