

Suffolk Refugee Support Annual Report 2019-2020



Suffolk continues to offer a place of safety and warm welcome to people forced from their homes around the world, and at Suffolk Refugee Support we continue to offer specialist services to help individuals and families look to the future with hope. The need for our support has never been higher, reflecting an increasingly unstable world in which a record 80 million people are forcibly displaced, and this report demonstrates the scope and impact of our work over the past year. We have adapted our services throughout the Covid-19 crisis to make sure vulnerable people are supported, and while the pandemic has compounded many of the complex challenges faced by refugees, it has also shone a light on the [unsung contributions](#) of many who have found safety here over the years.

Charity of the Year Award

We're very proud that in our 20th anniversary year we were named Charity of the Year at the Suffolk BME Business Awards 2019. This award is testament to all the hard work and dedication of our team of staff and volunteers to improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in Suffolk, and we were delighted to accept it on behalf of all the refugees whose resilience and kindness has inspired us over the last two decades.

Supported by:



Charity Manager's Report



As I reported last year, we were immensely proud in June 2019 to celebrate 20 years of Suffolk Refugee Support with a party on Ipswich Waterfront. It was lovely to see so many faces old and new including Cynthia Capey, key to setting up SRS two decades ago, former Mayor of Ipswich and early SRS Chair Hamil Clarke, and many former clients from around the world, including Sudan, Afghanistan, Kosovo and Syria. It was heartwarming to see so many ex-clients who are now doing well in the UK no longer in need of our support and in fact coming to support us!

Things didn't slow down as we also found out that our National Lottery funding was ending, so it was full steam ahead to try to cover our costs with grants from elsewhere—a very worrying time for many staff who risked redundancy. We are pleased that we managed to cover almost all the costs and saw only small reductions in our staffing for 2020-21, although of course this was still painful for those who were affected.

In March 2019, I was really proud to receive an Inspiring Leader award from the High Sheriff of Suffolk, and later in October to also receive an honorary fellowship from the University of Suffolk—both of which I accepted with acknowledgement of the great team who make it all possible at SRS. Our celebrations continued in June when our ESOL student Seraphine Twibanire from Rwanda was awarded Suffolk's 'Inspirational Learner of the Year' and then chosen by the panel in the final award of the evening as the 'Outstanding Learning of the Year'. We were also delighted to be named Suffolk BME Charity of the Year 2019 with a ceremony at the University of Suffolk in October.

I must also mention that, having used the same rather cramped space since 1999, we had the pleasure of extending our offices in St Matthew's Street to incorporate no. 34, involving extensive building and refurbishment of the former chemists. We are very grateful to everyone who helped make this possible, especially to Richard MacRae of EDRM who gave his time and expertise as an architect for free—a remarkable and very generous gesture. We are excited to be sharing the new space with Ipswich Community Media who deliver ESOL classes from the downstairs premises whilst we use the upstairs space for client advice and administrative work.

We continue to welcome refugees and asylum seekers from around the world to our services and are saddened that there are still many unsafe trouble spots in the world where normal life is untenable. It was hard for some of our Kurdish clients when violence broke out in Northern Syria this year trapping many people in dangerous areas. Some had relatives caught up in the problems. It brings it home to us when people we are close to in Suffolk have direct links with these awful events and we feel their pain with them.

The recent pandemic has made life very strained for many asylum seekers and refugees who we would normally see in our office. The effects of the lockdown have been harsh—isolation, money worries and missing education being detrimental to our clients in particular and with nowhere to come for a warm welcome and relief from their worries. Many have continued to work as key workers throughout and have helped to keep the county functioning. Again, the resilience of refugees and asylum seekers is brought home by comments that compared to what they have previously experienced—false imprisonment, war, torture, repression and family loss—lockdown is relatively easy! For others, however, the isolation has been very painful and the effects will be felt for a long time to come.

Our determination to help people to regain independence after experiencing horrific circumstances is ever present. We are incredibly grateful to so many people—individuals and organisations with whom we share this desire. I especially thank Suffolk Community Foundation and the High Sheriff (s) of Suffolk for their vital support.

I look forward to seeing the positive difference we make continue into the future. A sincere and heartfelt thank you to everyone who makes this possible.

Rebecca Crerar

Charity Manager

Advice Service

- 5693 individual advice sessions given in 2019-20
- 602 adult refugees and asylum seekers supported
- 1500+ people supported directly or indirectly by our services
- 174 people who came to us for support for the first time
- 42 different countries of origin for people we supported

As we marked 20 years of supporting refugees in Suffolk, in 2019-20 we again saw a year-on-year increase in the number of people supported by our drop-in advice service, plus an increase in clients coming to us for help for the first time.

Our experienced advice workers and volunteers continue to take a holistic approach, looking at both the immediate practical issues and underlying factors affecting those we support, whether related to health, isolation, trauma or uncertain immigration status, and referring people to our specialist employment advice, support groups, English language and one-to-one support services, or to external counselling, health support or immigration legal advice.



SRS Advice Service staff marking the 25th anniversary of the National Lottery in 2019

“We will forever be grateful to you for the support, both moral and practical, you’ve accorded us when we needed it the most.” [message from a client upon hearing her daughter had been accepted for a full scholarship to study Law at LSE]

“Don’t worry about me. I am not on my own. I have found a wonderful place and they are making me strong and helping me to move forward in my life.” [message from a woman we support to her mother]

Case study

F was referred to us by Social Services. She was heavily pregnant and needed advice regarding her immigration situation. We put her in touch with an immigration solicitor and F was able to see that she needed to claim asylum. SRS supported her with this process. There were issues with F being housed locally in order to maintain contact with her son while he was in foster care. Despite the financial burden, SRS met the housing costs so F could remain in Ipswich and bond with her child, as we recognised the importance of this in trying to build a successful relationship. We have also supported F in liaising with Social Services and encouraged her to make good life choices.

Improving Physical & Mental Health

The impact of Covid-19 has emphasised the importance of the work we embed throughout our services to promote healthy lifestyles, improve health awareness and access to services, and reduce health inequalities.

The topics covered through our Advice Service and group work over the year include healthy eating, diabetes, Vitamin D, physical exercise, dental health, good hygiene, cervical screening, women's health and mental health issues, smoking and drug awareness.

We have worked with organisations including Healthwatch Suffolk, One Life, Suffolk Mind, Wellbeing Suffolk, Suffolk Marginalised and Vulnerable Adult Team, ActivLives, Suffolk Community Dental Services and Turning Point. We have facilitated access for our clients to sports and fitness activities, gym membership, swimming, and the wellbeing benefits of accessing the countryside, including a trip to Flatford Mill in conjunction with Dedham Vale AONB (see front page photo).

148 clients received health support through our services

71 clients reported better mental health at our Advice Service

The parents of **68** children were helped to apply for free iCards for the summer holidays

26 women at our International Women's Group participated in regular fitness exercise

"I had not been feeling well and at the Health Event I decided to have my blood pressure checked. Although I was already on medication for this, the reading was very high. The One Life worker stressed I needed to see my GP quickly. My doctor immediately doubled my medication and I have worn a 24 hour monitor. My hypertension is now under control and with the support of SRS I have started to make lifestyle changes."

"Keep up the good work you and your team are doing. It is great to hear how you have been able to adapt to the situation and still provide the service with innovative ideas."

[Public Health Suffolk on our services during lockdown]

Destitution & Financial Assistance

Our clients are highly susceptible to falling between the cracks of other services and finding themselves destitute and unable to afford basic items or essential travel—asylum support rates frozen for another year, delays in universal credit payments, the strict 28 day move-on period when receiving refugee status, lack of access to local immigration legal aid advice, and no recourse to public funds all create situations where we have to step in to prevent hardship. Last year we gave out over £14,000 in individual support, including for emergency provisions and accommodation, essential school items or travel to vital appointments or English classes. We are only able to do so through the generous giving of individual donors, fundraisers, churches and community groups. Thank you all.

Employment & Training Work

We are proud that some of the people we have supported into employment, from hospital cleaners to care workers, have seen their roles valued more highly during coronavirus. However, we know that significant barriers to secure and fulfilling employment remain for our clients, and enabling refugees to realise their employment and education potential remains one of our key priorities. Over the past year we have supported refugees and asylum seekers with job applications, interview preparation, CV-writing, and accessing self-employment advice, volunteer placements and training courses. Our clients have secured paid employment as journalists, care workers and restaurant staff, and volunteer/work placements including accountancy, and library and classroom assistant. We have organised and delivered (in partnership with the WEA) courses including health & safety, IT and interpreting, worked with the University of Suffolk on course and entry requirements, helped clients secure degree courses including Bioscience, Computer Science and Radiology, given tailored 1-to-1 support on a range of subjects, referred five clients to the MENTA self-employment project and five people to the Volunteering Matters EU-Voice volunteering project.

1241 employment or adult training advice contacts given

128 clients given job-seeking or self employment support

48 clients attended bespoke work related courses

21 clients secured paid employment with our support

14 volunteering placements gained with our support

“SRS were so helpful. You helped me understand which way I wanted to go in life and you helped me go forward. I’m excited about doing the course and I want to get a job.”

Case study

B started volunteering at the Sue Ryder charity as a maintenance volunteer. His department lead told us how impressed the organisation were: “B is always reliable and gets all tasks done that we give him. He always asks good questions and wants to learn and understand things better. If he doesn’t know the word in English for something then he is so keen to learn it. We think he’s brilliant, very skilled and we are so pleased with him”. B himself feels very happy in his volunteer placement and never misses a week attending it. He shows pictures of things he has built or fixed in his role and says: “I am happy people there say I am their friend”.

Case study

L wanted to work as a mental health nurse. We supported him with 1-to-1 maths support and accessing academic assessments so he could obtain English and Maths qualifications before doing a mental health course. L was an asylum seeker when we started working with him and has recently been granted leave to remain. We supported L with job search skills and helped him understand application requirements, and he is now working as a Care Assistant. He will continue to study alongside his work as he is now aiming to complete an in-work NVQ. L is so pleased to be working and feels his life is finally getting back on track.

Intensive casework

We support refugees at all stages of their journey to overcome past trauma and fulfil their potential. Here we look at two people we have worked with intensively in different ways.

T.K. first visited our office in late October. She had been in an abusive relationship and was very distressed, had no confidence and said she could hardly speak English. She had lost all self-esteem and felt shame due to her husband's actions. We worked with her and by Christmas she'd become more trusting and willing to engage with different activities. She was also able to converse more fluently in English. In the New Year, she attended an ESOL class and our International Women's Group. She met new people and her confidence began to grow. She also attended a session about self-employment and started discussing the idea of importing embroidered handicrafts from the refugee camp she had spent time in.



Just as T.K.'s mental state started to improve, lockdown happened and she found herself isolated in a hostel room on her own. This was her lowest point and our advice workers contacted her regularly to try and raise her mood. In addition, she was terrified of the thought of catching Covid-19 and refused to go out. We encouraged her to engage with a counsellor via the telephone and were able to help, through donated funds, to buy a computer for her. Gradually she began to develop IT skills and use the computer as a way of contacting the outside world. SRS also paid for some embroidery thread and she started producing her own needlework (see above).

T.K. now attends our online Skills Exchange sessions and engages with other clients. She has joined our online yoga class and admitted she used to enjoy the gym but had not exercised since she was married. She began to interact with other women in the group. As lockdown eased the group met in the park and T.K. was keen to voice her feelings about life and her wish to help other women in a similar predicament to her own. T.K. said of the support she received from us:

"I praise Suffolk Refugee Support that they are an amazing support for me, they give me a hand of assistance in terms of psychological support everyday, and assure me that I am not alone, that I can spend time positively and not drown in more depression. They support me to rebuild my self confidence again to return to my dream to be an effective and helpful woman. Really SRS support me a lot and I can't forget how they are an amazing team."

Maria is a skilled, self-taught seamstress who was keen to set up her own lingerie business. Through our employment advice service Maria had regular support to make the initial steps in developing her business idea, until she was ready to launch at the end of 2019. We have continued to offer her support, including advice on marketing, resource sourcing, pricing plans and setting up market research groups. We put her in touch with other self-employed clothing businesses to help her make connections and learn best practice from other professionals, and helped her access grants to get the business off the ground, including funding for marketing materials including her website (www.mariacallisto.com) and for skills development to ensure she felt equipped as a professional in her field (via attending a pattern cutting course at the London College of Fashion). We also connected her with TERN, a refugee entrepreneurial network—as well as linking her with a professional mentor, they have given Maria space to trade including the online Anqa Collective (www.angacollective.org) and through pop up shops in London. Maria now donates a percentage of her sales to Suffolk Refugee Support.



English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Our clients recognise the vital importance of English language skills in enabling them to rebuild and succeed in their lives in the UK. The benefits are enormous, ranging from reduced isolation, better wellbeing and a sense of purpose, to better job prospects or access to training. It benefits UK society through improved social cohesion, reduced interpreting costs for public services and parents who are more able to support their children's education. We see people whose proficiency ranges from complete beginner to those who need support to access university, so we continued to offer six weekly ESOL classes from Pre-Entry to Entry Level 3. Lesson content in the past year included knowing job requirements, describing medical symptoms and understanding health advice, and discussion topics included domestic violence, racial discrimination, gender identification and the environment. In the first week of March 2020 we also delivered a lesson regarding coronavirus.



67 clients attended ESOL classes regularly at SRS this year

73% of students made very good progress

46 SRS students passed exams

18 Entry Level 1 students learned to describe medical symptoms

“Now I am single, I depend on myself to solve my problems. I face many difficulties. For this I need to learn English.”

“This class helps me to start again my life. SRS they give me hope.”

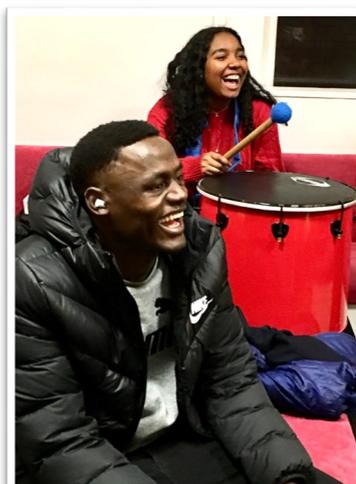
“Learning English means that I am able to use it in the pharmacy, surgery and to talk to my neighbours.”

Case study

M began studying with us at the beginning of November. When she was assessed, she produced very little English and did not demonstrate that she understood a lot. She was placed in the New To English (Pre-Entry) group. She was very quiet and shy at first but soon realised that she could help a different student in the group, who spoke her language. M understood everything we covered in that lesson very easily. I felt she should be at Entry Level 2 and invited her to come. At first she refused, saying she liked the lower level class and wanted to stay there. She was told that was fine but that she was welcome to try the higher level if she wished. She came to the higher class the following week and stayed in it. From this point on, she has gone from strength to strength. She really enjoys helping other students and is a very keen learner. Her ability to comprehend and express her English has improved significantly. She smiles a lot now in class, and often laughs. She often praises other students and her teacher, and has expressed many times verbally and in her writing how SRS has given her hope for her future and a new chance in life.

Youth Work

Many of the young people we work with are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, far from home, separated from family and friends, and often new to the UK. We give specialist support to these and other young refugees through our advice service and group work. Fifty young people attended our Homework Club this year, and 36 13-19-year-olds from nine different countries attended our Conversation Group, where topics included education, health, gangs, sleep, relationships, radicalisation, and first aid. One young person has been offered a scholarship at a private school for his A levels, while a student in our science tuition group won a school prize for chemistry and others have been offered university places. We have worked with the Refugee Council and British Red Cross, and arranged activities through Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk Police, the Green Light Trust and Ipswich School among others. We are fortunate to have a committed team of volunteers to support the young people, who bring great teaching skills and experience.



Case study

A first came to our office in September 2019 as a 15-year-old. He had travelled alone from Afghanistan and informed us he had lost all his family there and had tried all possible ways to be reunited with his brother, the only living family member left. His brother is married in the UK with three children of his own, and welcomed A with open arms. Our Youth Coordinator helped A register with a local GP and dentist, made a referral to an immigration solicitor, and arranged for him to see the Children's Advisor at Refugee Council who explained the asylum system to him. We also applied for a secondary school space, arranged for A to have ESOL classes and 1-to-1 tuition with a volunteer, and helped with his school uniform and a bicycle to get there. He is a keen student with great enthusiasm for learning. His ultimate ambition is to be a doctor in order to help others, the way he saw them helping people in Afghanistan. His teacher said recently: "It's such a pleasure to work with A, and he is progressing so fast that he's keeping me on my toes". A attends our Conversation Group and Homework Club, where he has support with homework and his English, and an opportunity to meet and socialise with other young people going through similar situations. Our Youth Coordinator helped A apply for a one-year GCSE course at Northgate High School sixth form, attended the interview with him, and he has been offered a place from September 2020. We hope he will achieve the GCSE grades necessary to progress to study A levels and be one step closer to achieving his dream of being a doctor.

Sports Activities Group

Our Sports Group aims to help isolated young people make friends, improve their physical and mental health and integrate into UK society. This year 58 young people aged 13-23 have attended. Alongside weekly football sessions, there has been a focus on crime awareness and prevention and good health practices, working with Turning Point and the Terrence Higgins Trust to deliver talks on health and wellbeing, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual health and healthy relationships.

One young man returned to the group after reporting a period of feeling sad, taking drugs and stopping going to college. He decided to start re-attending the group after receiving a text message from us. He has since told the Sports Activities Coordinator that it was coming back to the sports group that really turned things around for him—he was in the fresh air, exercising and it enabled him to reconnect with his friends.

Women & Family Support Work

We aim to provide women with a safe space to seek help and advice, and the means to improve their skills and have new life experiences, from learning English to studying at university. This year, we supported women in ever more complex circumstances, often due to other services being overstretched, meaning the marginalised and vulnerable can easily fall through the cracks. We try to advise women in challenging situations on their options and give them the opportunity to take stock. Women in this position are more likely to be exploited and end up in precarious situations where they, and any children they have, are at risk. We have assisted a number of heavily pregnant women at risk of destitution and supported them to access services. We are able to work successfully in these sensitive areas because we have built a reputation of trust with communities over many years and established a reputation with local agencies for having expertise in working with vulnerable women.

In 2019/20 we supported:

238 women through our drop-in advice service

60 parents with parenting issues

46 women from **13** countries through our International Women's Group

13 victims of domestic violence

7 women victims of modern slavery

2 women with daughters at risk of FGM if removed from the UK

International Women's Group

Our International Women's Group provides an opportunity to make friendships, share experiences and meet people from different cultures. Being part of a supportive group can bring improvements in mental health and act as a springboard to attend other SRS activities. The IWG aims to widen women's horizons, with 22 women reporting a greater sense of freedom to choose their own lifestyle.

Some group activities are led by the women themselves, such as the talk they requested from Suffolk Police regarding drugs and gang crime, and sometimes our IWG coordinator will encourage the women to take part in new activities, such as a singing project with the Music in our Bones group that culminated in a group of women [performing](#) in front of over 200 people at our 20th anniversary celebrations.

"The teacher and advisors at Suffolk Refugee Support give us confidence. We feel home here. Most women I speak to don't have confidence but here gives us confidence to talk to other people"

Case study

D was referred to SRS by another voluntary agency. She had come to the UK and been badly treated as a domestic servant, resulting in her struggling with mental health and, in desperation, taking poor advice. D was destitute and SRS paid for her accommodation while determining what her options were. We assisted her to make a referral to the National Referral Mechanism as a victim of Modern Slavery, secured immigration advice, and supported her to return to her home country under the voluntary returns system. D is now much calmer and happy to return home to be reunited with her son.

Refugee Resettlement work

We continue to provide specialist support to vulnerable refugee families who are selected for resettlement by the UNHCR (the UN's refugee agency) and accepted under the UK's resettlement programmes. We provide intensive casework from the point of arrival, helping to orientate people to their new surroundings and assisting with language learning, employment, housing and volunteering. Over the last year, we welcomed a further 12 people, including a young Syrian family who had experienced challenging circumstances and are slowly settling in with our support, bringing the total to around 135 vulnerable refugees successfully resettled in Suffolk since 2016. We are delighted that two resettled refugees we supported have begun university courses in the UK—we know how hard they worked to be able to resume their studies at last. Elsewhere on the programme, we hosted women's health walks in Christchurch Park, five clients took part in the EU-Voice project (with Volunteering Matters), through which they volunteered in cultural institutions across Suffolk, and a number of resettled refugees completed a modified driving theory course (delivered by the WEA). With record numbers of people displaced globally, refugee resettlement is one of the few secure, legal routes for the most vulnerable to begin rebuilding their lives in safety, so we are sad to report that only [4.5% of global resettlement need](#) was met last year, but proud that Suffolk continues to play its part in this life-saving measure protecting those most at risk.

Volunteering

Our volunteers bring a wealth of experience, skill and empathy to the work of supporting others. Over the last year we had around 80 active volunteers working across our services. We particularly encourage client volunteers, so were thrilled when Rifaii, a refugee from Syria who came to Suffolk under the resettlement programme three years ago, was named [Volunteer of the Year](#) at the High Sheriff's Awards. Rif has done so much to support other refugee families arriving in Suffolk, as well as giving valuable help in our office, finding work and studying hard. A special mention also to our Board of Trustees, who volunteer their time and expertise, and all our volunteers who have shown such incredible dedication and flexibility during the coronavirus lockdown.



Honorary Fellowship for SRS manager

Our 20th anniversary year was a year of awards for SRS—as well as winning Suffolk BME Charity of the Year and our volunteer, Seraphine, winning Outstanding Learner of the Year, our manager, Rebecca, was awarded an [Honorary Fellowship](#) by the University of Suffolk in recognition of her near 20 years of work supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Suffolk. Well done Becks - countless lives have been improved through your dedication and compassion.



Immigration Legal Aid

With Suffolk still a 'legal aid desert' for immigration advice, our clients face significant challenges accessing vital guidance. We continue to actively establish good working relationships with legal providers and to support clients financially to visit solicitors outside our local area. We remain grateful to Solomon Solicitors for their outreach service, and to Fisher Jones Greenwood and Suffolk Law Centre for their support.

Case study

L, his wife and child were moved to Ipswich by the Home Office to live in asylum support accommodation. He was very keen to attend ESOL classes and to be independent. However, when the immigration solicitor saw him at Suffolk Refugee Support and asked him to recount his experiences of why he had to flee his home country he became very emotional. The interpreter who attended was concerned and suggested that he needed counselling support. We were able to help with this, and L was given refugee status and is now working. He has inspired all who meet him with his determination to study and support his family.

982 advice sessions given on immigration issues

215 clients sought support on immigration issues

34 clients received positive decisions on asylum claims

Friends Group

Over the last year, our Friends Group provided a space for asylum seekers to make supportive friendships, reduce social isolation, improve their English and share experiences, for example, of the asylum process, using tools such as word searches to improve vocabulary and maps to improve knowledge of the UK. It helped those attending to access our other services, and has led to lasting friendships and support outside the group. We have worked in partnership with the Wellington Children's Centre to run child development play sessions at the group, in addition to sessions on women's health, accessing health services, diabetes and diet, school readiness and online safety. We also ran a very successful workshop with the Aldeburgh Art group, attended by 9 adults and 15 children.

"I love to bring questions to the group about life in the UK. I love to meet the others and hear their ideas. The session on women's health was very important."

Hidden Harms work

In the last year, our Community Engagement Officer—Hidden Harms delivered sessions across our services on hate crime, domestic violence and online safety. We partnered with students from the University of Suffolk to design an [interactive game](#) in different languages to raise awareness of hidden harms (pictured right), took part in a [film](#) for the Suffolk Hate Crime Conference and created a 'safety net' of stories for a domestic violence event.



Talks and community work

We continue to give talks and presentations to schools, community groups, churches, public events and partner agencies. This year we spoke at the University of Suffolk about our 20 years of refugee support as part of their Open Lecture series, and were pleased to take part for the first time in the Dora Love Prize induction day at the University of Essex, giving workshops to students from 15 schools as part of an annual Holocaust awareness project. We were also honoured to have speak at our AGM Dr Zeina Alsharkas (pictured below left), the first Syrian woman to [swim the English Channel](#) solo to symbolise her hope that one day all refugees can choose their own direction in life.



20 talks and presentations given

1500+ people reached

Media work

This year we have focused on giving voice to our [clients' experiences](#) and stories on radio, in print and online, including [profiles](#) of people we have supported over the past 20 years, as well as raising awareness of refugee issues locally and making the connection between world events and the people living and working in our communities. We are grateful to BBC Suffolk, Archant and others for providing the platform to reveal powerful and urgent stories that might otherwise go untold.



The international context for our work

79.5 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, a record figure and increase of 8.7 million on last year

1% of the world's entire population is displaced

26 million of those are refugees (i.e. displaced outside their own country)

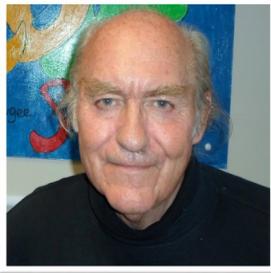
100 million people have been newly displaced over the last decade (with only a minority able to return home)

85% of refugees are hosted by developing countries

2 million new asylum claims were registered globally in 2019 (with 35,000 in the UK, just 1.75% of the total)



Chair's Report



The year was dominated by two external events affecting the charity. First, the National Lottery, who had been our largest funder since 2008, informed us that their funding would cease at the end of February 2020. They explained that this was not because of any problems with SRS or our work but because their funding was always time limited. We had been aware of that and towards the end of every three year period (we are doubly fortunate that the funding had been granted on this long term basis since 2008) there had always been anxiety about its renewal.

So we immediately had to consider how we would cope with this cut in income. We decided to intensify our fundraising efforts, both in grant applications and direct fundraising, and at the same time look at what economies we could make without affecting our key services. Since most of our costs are payments to staff we had to look at possible savings in staff hours (most of our staff are part time). A target figure for fundraising, and another for cuts in costs was calculated to make a balanced budget for 2020-21, with provision from spare funds including reserves (we had been able to build up reserves over the years near to the level recommended by the Charity Commission) if there was a deficit. A great vote of thanks to our manager, Rebecca Crerar, for all her work in making these calculations to show what we needed to do to keep SRS going.

All we now had to do was carry out the plan. In fundraising the key person was our fundraiser Karen Lawson, who worked really hard, putting in extra hours, contacting additional funding prospects and making many applications. A lot more money was also brought in by direct fundraising and we are grateful to all who contributed to that. I am happy to report that the fundraising target was met. The other part of the plan was to save on costs, largely by reductions in staff hours. This is always a very difficult and sensitive task, involving interviewing staff, both about the cuts and changes in work areas and responsibilities, while ensuring we conformed to legislation on staff rights and our responsibilities as a good employer. Again the overall responsibility for this fell to Rebecca, ably assisted by her management team, so many thanks to them. I should also thank all staff for their understanding that we were making cuts with sometimes drastic effects on them because of the reduction in our income. We did manage to make the savings necessary to keep SRS going without dropping key services to our clients.

So we are in a reasonable situation in this current financial year 2020-2021 but are now fundraising for 2021-2022 and subsequent years. We are lucky that some funders have given us grants for more than one year but the majority of funding is on an annual basis. We will have to continue to fundraise at a high level to maintain services and sadly the world situation means that refugee numbers are likely to increase. Other charities also face the double whammy of increased need arising from Covid-19 and potential donors being affected by the accompanying economic shock (not to mention the medical shock, which I have experienced personally).

I did mention two external shocks affecting SRS. The second immediate one has been the virus, which forced us to carry out our own shutdown, with all staff working from home and keeping in touch with clients by phone, and using Zoom and other tools for staff contacts, team and inter-agency working. This has worked well so far. Thank you to all staff for coping with this new reality.

Amongst all this uncertainty, the Trustees and staff have undertaken a strategic review of SRS's aims and services with facilitation funded by the Lloyds Foundation Trust. The Strategic Plan 2020-23 that we have agreed is set out on page 15 and will be the basis for our work over the next three years. I would also like to record my sincere thanks to Nick Feldman (Vice Chair and Treasurer) and Lucy Kerry (Secretary) who have stepped down as Trustees in the last year. My general thanks to all staff, volunteers, trustees, funders, donors and partner agencies for all the work they have put in in this very challenging year, and to our clients for their understanding and patience at this difficult time.

Ian Stewart, July 2020

Treasurer's Report



In the year reported on here, 2019/20, SRS was able to continue providing a broad range of services with the grants and donations we received. Costs have been in line with budget and we are grateful to the numerous private supporters who donate on a regular basis to support our work.

We also express our thanks to the numerous bodies who have provided grants for our work in 2019/20: The National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund; BBC Children in Need; Building Better Opportunities Fund; Health Inequalities Fund Public Health Suffolk; The AB Charitable Trust; Ipswich Borough Council; Mrs LD Rope's Charitable Settlement; Lloyds Bank Foundation; The Limbourne Trust; The Lovel Foundation; The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust; The Ogilvie Trust.

Grants via Suffolk Community Foundation: Ipswich & East Suffolk CCG Transformation Fund; Suffolk Police & Crime Commissioner's Fund; Frank Jackson Fund; Fonnereau Rd Health Fund; Tampon Tax; Port Community Fund; New Anglia LEP Community Challenge Fund; Royal Hospital School; Hopkins Charitable Fund; Suffolk Giving Fund.

We were told early in the financial year by the National Lottery that, following 12 consecutive years of funding, their funding would not continue after March 2020. We were reassured to know that this was not through any inadequacy in our application. As a consequence, we worked hard during 2019/20 to plan and reshape our services ready for the 2020/21 financial year.

We also redoubled our fundraising efforts, including a Crowdfunder appeal to fill a gap in the funding of our advice service. We are very grateful to the nearly 200 individuals who donated so generously to secure this valuable service.

As the 2019/20 financial year came to an end, we had a relatively small fall in our funding for 2020/21. This has given us a budget for 2020/21 which we are confident will enable SRS to continue providing extensive, high quality services for refugees and asylum seekers in Suffolk.

We have continued to deliver the Vulnerable Persons/Children's Resettlement Programme on behalf of Suffolk County Council. We were able to agree a revised budget with the County Council to reflect the continued support people require after their first year in this country, and also the rather unpredictable numbers of people arriving through the year under the scheme. We are grateful to Suffolk County Council for their support in delivering this important service.

Looking forward to 2020/21

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be a major feature of our work in 2020/21. We are grateful to our funders for their support as we reconfigure our services to continue providing support, advice and help during the pandemic. We are especially grateful to the Suffolk Coronavirus Community Fund (set up by Suffolk Community Foundation) for funding unexpected capital expenses for staff and clients.

We are confident that our final position for 2020/21 is sound despite the uncertainty the pandemic poses. The Trustees continue to monitor the position closely and regularly to ensure that SRS can always meet its 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. I would also like to thank Nick Feldman for his work as Treasurer since 2016 as well as for his many contributions to the work of SRS and to the lives of its clients.

Gerry Toplis, Treasurer

SRS Strategic Plan 2020-2023

A Strategic Plan for Suffolk Refugee Support: 2020 – 2023

SRS's Purpose (Mission)

Suffolk Refugee Support exists to ensure that all asylum seekers and refugees in Suffolk are enabled to live integrated, fulfilled and contributing lives in their new communities.

SRS Operating Principles: To guide Trustees, paid staff and volunteers

- ⇒ We are driven by a recognition that each person is unique, that every individual has intrinsic value and has a constructive role to play in UK society
- ⇒ We are always open, friendly and welcoming
- ⇒ We are respectful, reliable, honest and transparent in all our dealings with one another and with others
- ⇒ We direct all of our efforts towards self-determination and ultimate independence for our clients
- ⇒ Our work is always led by the needs and interests of our clients
- ⇒ At all times we work in ways that ensure the all-round safety and security of our clients and everyone who works for SRS
- ⇒ We always work to the highest standards; keeping ourselves fully informed and knowledgeable about every sphere of our work

SRS Strategic Aims: 2020 – 2023 (the following six aims have equal priority)

- 1) To ensure that refugees' and asylum seekers' basic needs for immigration status, housing, literacy, education, physical and mental health, employment and personal safety are met
- 2) To work in ways that lead to SRS' service users moving into independence from SRS' services
- 3) Through advocacy, lobbying and other means, ensure that statutory and other bodies meet their obligations to asylum seekers and refugees
- 4) To continue to mobilise volunteers' involvement in supporting the work of SRS, and further develop the volunteering contribution to the organisation.
- 5) To continue to raise awareness and promote understanding of the refugee experience in the community
- 6) To ensure that Suffolk Refugee Support is effectively governed, led, managed and funded in order to maximise its impact, and that its work is informed by 'voices of lived experience'.

HR Sub Committee Report

The HR Sub Committee monitors SRS's policies on equality, diversity and protected characteristics in terms of employment and volunteering. Trustees are satisfied that SRS is an equal opportunities employer. We continue to progress towards more fully reflecting the people we work with and for and hope that this reflection will also be seen on the Board or that an Advisory Board is set up to ensure that clients and ex-clients views are heard and involved when policy is made. We continue to be proud that SRS often provides the first steps to employment and acts as a launch pad into wider career paths for refugees and asylum seekers.

Staff Team (as of September 2020)

Charity Manager	Rebecca Crerar
Operations and Skills Exchange Manager	Ellie Roberts
Advice Service Manager	Liz Wood
Resettlement Programme Manager	Susannah Kennedy
Employment & Training Coordinator	Jodi Peck
Employment Advice Worker and Skills Exchange Coordinator	Yvonne Chishaya
Employment Skills Assessor (AMIF)	Sarah Owens
Women & Family Advice Worker	Fatima Khan
Bilingual Advice Worker (General and Resettlement)	Faizaa Ali
Resettlement Advice Worker	Yacine Khiat-Selfe
Youth Coordinator/Advice Worker	Cathy Gonzalez
Youth Activities Coordinator	Kyler Jackson
International Women's Group ESOL Coordinator and ESOL Tutor	Michaela Freeman
International Women's Group Coordinator and ESOL Learning Facilitator	Catherine Costello
International Women's Group Crèche Leader	Shkurte Bejtullahu
Funding and Communications Officer	Martin Simmonds
Office Systems Coordinator	Marianne Walker

Board of Trustees (as of September 2020)

Chairman	Gerry Toplis
Vice Chairman/Treasurer	Dr Keith Faull
Secretary	Maggie Barradell
Trustee	Ian Stewart
Trustee	Danielle Waller
Trustee	Dr Pauline Lane
Trustee	Greg Dodds
Trustee	Marian Lanyon
Honorary Trustee	Alan Blackshaw
Honorary Trustee	Beteja Grajqevci Dovao
Honorary Trustee	Jenny Morcom

We would like to thank the following trustees who resigned during 2019/20 for their services to SRS:
Lucy Kerry and Nick Feldman

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed so generously to the work of Suffolk Refugee Support over the year 2019-2020, 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.

At a time when we are facing multiple challenges as an organisation—record demand for our services, complex needs and issues arising from the coronavirus crisis and a difficult funding landscape—your support is more important than ever. If you would like to help us continue our work, you can [donate through our website](#) or fundraise for us or donate via [Virgin Money Giving](#). Thank you!

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