



Suffolk Refugee Support Summer 2021 Newsletter

www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk

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Refugee Week in Suffolk

We celebrated Refugee Week in Suffolk recently with a series of events, both in person and online, to mark the contribution of refugees to our communities, particularly over the past year. We were delighted to welcome guests, including the Deputy Mayors of Ipswich and Woodbridge, to join members of our International Women's Group for a stroll in Christchurch Park to tie in with the Refugee Week theme 'We Cannot Walk Alone' and the [Great Walk Together](#). See page 2 for more Refugee Week news and events!



Asylum-seeking families in Woodbridge

We were informed recently that 14 asylum-seeking families will be housed at the former police station in Woodbridge as part of the Home Office's contracts to accommodate destitute asylum seekers while they await a decision on their asylum claims. Asylum seekers, who are fleeing conflict, persecution and oppression, are not allowed to work and receive £39.63 per week in subsistence payments to cover food, clothing, toiletries and all other essential items.

We are making plans to provide practical support, advice, orientation and a warm welcome to these families when they arrive. We have already been hugely touched and heartened by the many offers of support we have received from the community. We are working with local groups to provide welcome packs, and building a network of volunteers and community contacts to provide additional support. The families will have been through traumatic experiences and be in need of understanding and compassion. Together, we will provide a safe and supportive environment for them to rebuild their lives and recover from the effects of forced displacement. You can read more about the project on the Woodbridge Town Council [website here](#).

How you can help

If you would like to make a donation or set up regular giving to support our work in Woodbridge, you can do so securely [here](#).

We're grateful to Woodbridge Town Council for a small grant towards this work, but the great majority of our costs will have to be met from our existing, limited resources.

If you would like to talk to us about providing community support (e.g. a venue for English classes), please contact Catherine: ccostello@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

Thank you, I really appreciate your help, without you I wouldn't have come this far.

(Message from a client on securing a job at Ipswich Hospital)

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Refugee Week—recipes from around the world!

We know how important food can be for the people we work with to keep alive a taste of home, so to celebrate the cultural and culinary contribution refugees make to the UK, for Refugee Week we shared a few favourite recipes of our clients from around the world and held a live online cookalong led by a talented refugee chef.

Among the recipes was this fragrant and delicious vegetable biryani, incredibly moreish [Afghani Bolanis](#) (both vegan friendly!) and a rich and tasty [Burek](#) from Albania. We are working on a recipe booklet featuring these dishes and many more, and plan to run further cookalong sessions in future, so watch this space!

In the meantime, we are very grateful to the staff at Ipswich School for putting together some of their [own recipes](#) to raise funds for our work.

Finally, Sarah, who leads our cookery project, spoke about world cuisines including Afghanistan, El Salvador and Ethiopia on [BBC Suffolk](#) (from 2:22:15 in).

Did you know?

It is thought that biryani originated in Iran and comes from the Persian "birin biriyān", meaning fried rice?



Fatima's Vegetable Biryani for 4

Ingredients

2 cups basmati Rice, soaked for at least an hour
4-5 cups mixed frozen vegetable or fresh vegetables like potato cubes, carrot cubes, green peas, cauliflower cut into small pieces
1 medium onion and 2-3 cloves of garlic
1 spoon tomato paste
1 tsp biryani spices, or 7 spice mix
1 tsp turmeric
1 tsp chili powder
black pepper and salt to taste
Oil

To decorate – fried nuts (cashews) and parsley

If you don't have biryani spices or 7 spice mix, you can use: 1 tsp cumin, 1 tsp cinnamon, 4 cardamom pods (crushed), or any mix of spices that you like. Some people use garam masala. The amounts and choice of all the spices can be adjusted to your own taste.

For the chutney to go with the biryani:

1 clove garlic
1 green chilli (if you like it)
some fresh mint and coriander
the juice of 1/2 lemon
a little salt
a little water
some yoghurt

Method

Soak and then wash the rice.

In a pan, fry the potato and carrot, one by one, to brown the surface and keep to one side. Then remove them and fry the chopped onion and garlic, then add spices and cook till they smell nice. Add the vegetables, tomato paste and water then rice. Boil for about 25 minutes – 30 minutes (this will depend on the rice, how long it has soaked, and how fresh it is).

Add some water to the pan and then add the vegetables. Stir until the vegetables are half cooked.

When the dish is cooked, add the chopped nuts and herbs on top.

To make the chutney, combine all the ingredients except the yoghurt in the blender then add the yoghurt and stir. It should be a lovely light green, quite liquid.

Football session for young refugees at ITFC!

Many of those who attend our Sports Group love football, so we were delighted to be offered a coached session on the practice pitch at Portman Road during Refugee Week. More than 40 young people took part and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Thank you to Ipswich Town Football Club for leading the session and to the Suffolk Football Association for all their support. Thanks to ITFC also for supporting Amnesty International's [Football Welcomes initiative](#)—young Isaac and Milan were thrilled to be virtual mascots for an Ipswich game! Finally, thanks to the Suffolk Cricket Board for leading a session in Chantry Park recently (and unearthing some real talent!).



Elsewhere during Refugee Week we were excited to see Maria, an entrepreneur with whom we have worked closely on her clothing business, feature in [this series of photographic portraits](#) in the Guardian newspaper. Maria also featured on BBC Radio Suffolk during their Suffolk Day coverage, as did Khalid—who used to work with us and now runs the Kurdish café on Norwich Road in Ipswich—explaining why he loves the county so much and why SRS mean so much to him! Listen again [here](#) (from 1:54:00 in).

Our work with young people

We work with increasing numbers of young refugees and asylum seekers, many without any family or support network in the UK. As well as academic support and sporting opportunity, we try to provide fun outings and activities too. So we were pleased to visit Ipswich Museum recently with a group of young people who enjoyed finding out about the exhibits. We are also working with the museum on the [Crossings: Community and Refuge exhibition](#), which is coming to Ipswich next year. And we took a group of young people to Felixstowe on a hot, sunny day last month for ice creams and a swim in the sea—for some it was their first trip to the seaside!



University success stories

We are delighted to report that two of our clients have successfully passed their degree courses at the University of East Anglia. Back in 2018, Linda and Obehi were both asylum seekers and unable to access student finance. We supported them both to apply for a sanctuary scholarship at the UEA. These scholarships were created to reduce the barriers to participation in higher education faced by those seeking asylum in the UK. There are a limited number of bursaries provided each year and we were pleased both were successful in their applications. The scholarships covered their tuition fees and course related expenses, without which they would not have been able to study. We were also very grateful for additional support provided by the Ipswich and District Soroptimist International. Some of our talented volunteers were able to offer assignment writing support to both students during their courses to help them develop their academic confidence and abilities. We also supported Obehi to gain a summer work experience placement in the accounting team at Orwell Housing.

Linda has now completed her degree in Law and Obehi a BSC in Accounting and Management. Obehi was granted refugee status last year and we are now supporting her to find employment, while Linda is hoping to study a Masters in Law at the UEA. We would like to thank the UEA, Soroptimists, Orwell Housing and our volunteers for all their support and to say a huge well done to Linda and Obehi for overcoming all the barriers they faced and achieving this great success!!

I am grateful for all the support and encouragement I received from all the staff of Suffolk Refugee Support. I just wanted to thank you all. (A message from Linda)

Trustee vacancies

Would you like to help improve the lives of refugees in Suffolk? We are looking for new Trustees who are committed to our values and vision to help us continue to build a strong Board equipped to support our organisation. Trustees meet once a month, and in return for your time, energy and skills, we offer you a great team to join and the satisfaction and joy of knowing that your actions and dedication have made people's lives better. We're looking for applications to be made by July 26—if you are interested, please find further details, application form and our strategic plan [here](#).

1000 Dreams Project

1000 Dreams is a photographic project launched on World Refugee Day that aims to change refugee narratives through the stories of



1000 refugees across Europe told by 40 refugee storytellers. We are proud to have taken part by supporting our ex-client and journalist Osama Gaweesh to tell the stories of refugees in Ipswich. You can read more about the project on the [BBC here](#) and in the [Guardian here](#) and read one of Osama's [Suffolk stories here](#).

New government asylum legislation

The UK government published its new 'Nationality and Borders Bill' recently. Along with dozens of other organisations, we spent time taking part in the (tortuous) consultation process on these plans. However, this week the Home Office went ahead and published the Bill without publishing or mentioning any response to the consultation.

The Bill would treat differently asylum seekers who do not come directly from a country of persecution and who enter the UK 'illegally', deeming their claims to be inadmissible and threatening them with prison, despite the UN Refugee Convention declaring that the status of an asylum claim should not be dependent on the mode of entry into a country. The majority of people we have supported in Suffolk over the past two decades were forced to enter the UK by irregular means—today many are British citizens and make an enormous contribution to our society, but under these plans none would have been able to rebuild their lives with any security.

The government are keen to stress that refugees should take 'legal' routes to reach the UK. However, there are almost no safe, legal routes to do so, and the Bill does not commit to a target or give any detail on one of the few routes that does exist—the refugee resettlement programme.

It is worth remembering that only a tiny fraction of the world's refugees reach the UK (we host [approx 0.5%](#)), that asylum applications actually [fell last year](#), and that most of those crossing the Channel in small boats are proven to be [genuine refugees](#). And all this is against a backdrop of ever increasing numbers of refugees worldwide. You can read the Refugee Council's response to the Bill and how you can contact your MP [here](#).

Global Trends Report

The UNHCR published its annual [Global Trends report](#) on forced displacement recently and it makes for bleak reading. At the end of 2020 one percent of all humanity was displaced, and twice as many people had been forced from their homes compared to 10 years ago. We know behind every number lies a story of human suffering, but sometimes the figures can illustrate the scale of this suffering:



- ◆ 82.4 million people are forcibly displaced globally (up nearly 3 million on 2019)
- ◆ 11.2 million people were newly displaced in 2020
- ◆ 26.4 million people are refugees, i.e. outside their own countries (up half a million on 2019)
- ◆ 86 percent of refugees are hosted by neighbouring or low income countries
- ◆ An estimated one million children were born as refugees between 2018 and 2020
- ◆ Turkey continued to host the largest number of refugees with just under 4 million
- ◆ Only 34,400 refugees were resettled to third countries in 2020 (down 69% on 2019)

We hope you've enjoyed our latest newsletter—we'd love to hear from you with your feedback or if you'd like to find out further information. If you received this newsletter indirectly, and would like to join our mailing list, please email our administrator: mwalker@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

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