



Suffolk Refugee Support Autumn 2023 Newsletter

www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk

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

Registered Charity Number: 1078794



Ipswich Novotel announcement—our response

The government announced recently it would be ceasing to use a number of hotels to accommodate asylum seekers. The Novotel in Ipswich is among these, and the asylum seekers living there will be moved out in the coming weeks. We expect most people to be transferred to other Home Office asylum accommodation, but there is still a lot of uncertainty and we are seeing people at our office every day worried about what happens next. Many have made community links here, are involved in volunteering or studying, or have ongoing health treatment needs. Some people have been informed at short notice that they are being moved to other parts of the country they don't know at all. We are supporting people through this process, which can be highly impersonal, liaising with health professionals, providing vital travel items and referral letters, and giving as much reassurance as possible. You can read our response to the news in the [Ipswich Star here](#), listen to us discussing the situation on [BBC Radio Suffolk here](#) (from 2:06:30 in), and read our [full response here](#). We are also very grateful to the [Sanctuary Day Centre](#) in Ipswich that has provided so much valuable support to people at the Novotel over the past six months, and which closed recently.

"Enjoy your retirement Liz, I was so lucky to be part of your team. Thanks for all the support and your kindness." ❤️

"Liz you are a wonderful lady and it's been a privilege to work alongside you. Thank you for all you have done for so many." ❤️



We still can't quite believe it, but we recently said goodbye to Liz Wood, our Advice Service Manager, who is retiring. Liz has been with us for 15 years and we can't imagine SRS without her commitment, vast knowledge and humour. Her legacy is thousands of lives changed for the better, lifelong friendships and a community where refugees can thrive. We will carry this with us in all our future work. Thank you Liz, and happy retirement! If you would like to send Liz a message, please let us know and we will pass it on.

Supported by:



Community events and activities

So much of our time is spent trying to meet people's urgent needs and support them through bureaucratic and uncaring processes. Many of our clients find themselves in limbo, unable to move on with their lives and dealing with uncertainty, anxiety and separation from loved ones. Therefore, it's increasingly important that we make the space for community events, group trips and activities and the chance for people to escape their day-to-day worries and share their experiences and interests. In recent weeks we have organised a sports day for asylum-seeking families (complete with egg and spoon race!); we visited Flatford with a group of women thanks to the Dedham Vale AONB, including Flatford Mill, East Bergholt Church and the RSPB Wildlife Garden (pictured top right); and we had a wonderful Iranian food day where some of the talented cooks we work with were able to share their cuisine and culinary skills with other asylum-seeking families (pictured right). Thank you to Copdock and Washbrook Village Hall and to everyone whose support makes such a difference.



**STOP
PRESS**

We are recruiting!

**STOP
PRESS**

We are looking for an **Afghan Resettlement Programme Advice Worker** to support refugees arriving in Suffolk through the UK's Afghan Resettlement Programmes. The successful candidate will be responsible for helping vulnerable people to fully integrate into their new communities with a range of support and advice. The deadline is 23 November.

Full details here: suffolkrefugee.org.uk/current-vacancies/

Ipswich Town refugee football programme

The Ipswich Town Foundation refugee football programme, which is run in association with us, continues to go from strength to strength. In September, first team player Harry Clarke visited our session (pictured top right) and thanks to Suffolk Football Association and the fantastic Ipswich/Suffolk Community Boot Room, many of the 40 participants were able to play in proper boots for the first time. A couple of weeks ago, ITV Anglia visited (pictured bottom right), along with goalkeeper Christian Walton, to speak to our fab Health & Sports Coordinator and some of the asylum seekers taking part, and the project [featured on their highlights show](#). The initiative was also [highlighted](#) during the EFL's recent Week of Action. We're sure it is no coincidence that a club doing such fantastic community work off the field is currently having so much success on it!



Our 24th Annual General Meeting

We held our 24th AGM recently (pictured right) to reflect on our work over the busiest year we have seen and hear the inspirational stories of some of the people we work with. It was a packed house and amazing to feel so much support and compassion for refugees and asylum seekers. And of course the food, all made by local refugees and asylum seekers, was delicious! In particular, we highlighted some of the employment success stories we have been a part of over the past year. We heard from Ali, who is thriving in his role with a local housing association, Anastasiia, who lives in Lowestoft and secured an apprenticeship with an energy company, and Lazarus (pictured right), a talented athlete and asylum seeker who we supported to gain a volunteer placement and who recently completed the Ipswich Half Marathon in 1:29:57, coming 57th out of 1300 finishers! Among the food highlights were the cinnamon buns made by Ammar, a Syrian master baker whose fabulous sourdough bread is available from Your Local on St Matthew's St in Ipswich—get a taste of his skills [here!](#)



Suffolk Refugee Support Annual Report

We published our 2022-23 Annual Report recently, which we hope does justice to the scale and impact of our work during our busiest ever year. The report is full of case studies, quotes and useful information across all our services—[read it in full here.](#)

- We provided direct support to 1503 people from 49 countries (143% increase on previous year)
- We saw 1000 people new to our services (many of them new to the UK)
- We supported 300+ refugee and asylum-seeking children
- 150 people improved their English language skills through our ESOL classes
- 112 people secured employment with our support

Suffolk Refugee Support
Annual Report
2022-23



The last year has been the most challenging we have ever seen. The scale and pace of change, and the urgency of needs among refugees and asylum seekers in Suffolk has been unprecedented. Reflecting record global displacement, the number of people we supported in 2022/23 was more than double the previous year (already at a high level). Suffolk has welcomed around 1500 refugees fleeing the brutal conflict in Ukraine and we have stepped up with a range of support. We have responded rapidly to meet the urgent needs of growing numbers of asylum seekers arriving in temporary accommodation here, often at short notice and with few possessions. We have also continued to provide intensive support to meet the ongoing and longer term needs of refugees rebuilding their lives in Suffolk, including those who worked with British forces in Afghanistan, vulnerable resettlement clients or members of established refugee communities. We have expanded our services and our team, worked with new partners across the county, and responded flexibly to changing demands. We are proud of the achievements of our committed team of staff, volunteers and trustees in supporting and giving voice to those arriving here.

"It has been a privilege working with you all at SRS. You are an inspiration." [Jamie Lowther-Pinkerton, High Sheriff of Suffolk 2022-23]

"I really appreciate your efforts of helping people. I am proud to have such people like you in this world. Thank you so much. I wish you good luck in every part of life."

(message we received from an asylum seeker after we supported him to access a solicitor)

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 us: office@suffolkrefugee.org.uk

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