



Suffolk Refugee Support Christmas Newsletter

www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk

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Registered Charity Number: 1078794

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SRS Christmas Appeal



More people have needed our support this year than ever before. Many have come to us with urgent needs—we have provided more than 350 emergency underwear packs and footwear vouchers. We support people from Ukraine and Afghanistan, Syria and Sudan, all facing another Christmas forced apart from loved ones. Asylum seekers in particular have few resources to deal with loss and trauma, with those in hotels receiving just £9.58 per week. And when they receive refugee status people can end up on the streets before securing alternative accommodation and support. Can you help us to make sure the most vulnerable are looked after this winter?



£11 pays for a multipack of 5 pairs of pants and socks, to give people some basic dignity

£17.50 pays for a bundle of 10 bus trips, allowing people placed in accommodation outside Ipswich to attend English classes

£35 pays for a new pair of shoes or trainers for people who do not have suitable footwear

£75 pays for a rough sleeping pack (warm clothes, sleeping bag, food voucher) for newly -recognised refugees who have to leave their Home Office accommodation at short notice



Click the button below to give online, find our [donations form here](#) with BACs details for bank transfer, or send a cheque to 'Suffolk Refugee Support Ltd'. Please mark your donation 'winter appeal' so we can allocate the funds.

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Asylum update

Following the announcement that the Novotel in Ipswich would no longer be used to house asylum seekers, we have focused on [providing support](#) to those being moved and [highlighting the reality](#) of their experiences. Many of the residents had made community links here, were involved in volunteering or studying, or had ongoing health treatment needs. For people who have already been forcibly displaced, often more than once, being uprooted and moved again when they have begun to settle in a place of safety just adds to anxiety and trauma. We supported people through this process—working with health professionals to advocate for those with urgent needs, referring people to support organisations elsewhere, and providing as much reassurance as we could (in particular reassuring people that no one would be sent to Rwanda or the Bibby Stockholm barge). But while we see people as individual human beings, the system they are in can be quite impersonal and uncaring, with a lack of clear information or consideration of personal circumstances. Unfortunately, the situation caused a lot of uncertainty, with people's transport arrangements and onward accommodation being changed at the last minute (sometimes even mid-journey!). With the hotel now empty, we continue to raise issues with the Home Office and their partners around areas where the process caused unnecessary stress to vulnerable individuals. Our sincere thanks to everyone who helped to donate dozens of suitcases and travel bags to ensure people could at least move elsewhere with some dignity.

Also in the news recently has been the government's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda. We have [said from the start](#) that this scheme is cruel and unworkable, so we were pleased and relieved that the UK Supreme Court ruled unanimously that it was unlawful, and that Rwanda is far from being a safe country. This judgment is a victory for reason, compassion and the rule of law, and it is worth reflecting that many people we work with are seeking safety because there is no independent legal system to protect them in their home country. Vulnerable asylum seekers—the majority of whom qualify for protection in the UK—have had this threat hanging over them for too long, and we continue to call for this horrific scheme to be scrapped once and for all. The government should instead focus resources on creating safe, legal routes for people fleeing terrible situations, making fast and fair decisions on asylum claims, and supporting refugees to resettle and move on with their lives. You can read our [full response here](#).

Arrivals exhibition

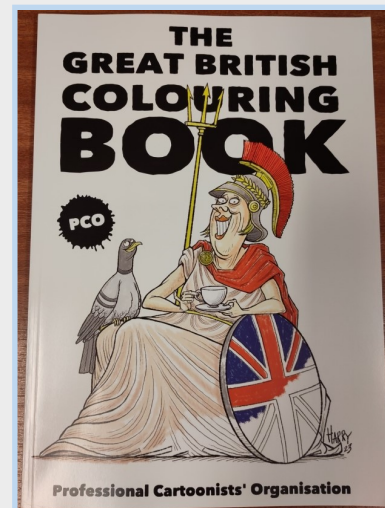


We were delighted to attend the launch of 'Arrivals: Celebrating Migration to Suffolk' at The Hold in Ipswich recently. It really is fantastic to see the stories of our diverse communities told in this way, and it has been a pleasure working with Suffolk Archives to ensure refugees are included on the project as staff, volunteers, guests and contributors. We're also thrilled that beautiful Afghan, Kurdish and Ukrainian outfits created by our sewing group are proudly on display as part of the exhibition, which runs until April. Entry is free—[find out more here](#), and [read more here](#).

Immigration statistics

There was a lot of coverage of the immigration statistics published recently. However, behind the headlines here are some of the numbers you may not have seen so widely reported:

- 1) 75% of initial asylum decisions in the year to September were grants of protection
- 2) The UK is 20th in Europe in number of asylum applications per head of population
- 3) Just 766 people were granted protection in the UK through resettlement schemes (the main existing 'safe and legal routes')—a drop of 45% on the previous year
- 4) Only 3% of people who migrated to the UK for long term stays in the year to June crossed the English Channel on small boats



Find out more from the [Refugee Council here](#), and useful background from [Free Movement here](#).

On a brighter note (literally!), we were very grateful to receive these fab colouring books, produced by the amazing people at the Professional Cartoonists' Association and 38 Degrees in response to a government order to paint over cartoon murals at an asylum reception centre. They are already bringing joy and brightness to families we work with this Christmas.

We were very touched to receive letters recently from Year 6 at Stratford St Mary Primary School. The students have been reading the book *The Boy at the Back of the Class* and our refugee stories.

"I think your work to help refugees and asylum seekers is life-changing and wonderful. The stories of the refugees have made me feel happy that they are in a safe country with your workers helping them."
"It is sad how families are suffering and that they are needing a safe place"
"The book helps me understand a little bit what it is to be a refugee and how serious this crisis really is"
"It shows how cruel the world can be. Some are mean, some are nice (you are the nice people)."
"We have been reading some stories on your website and have been inspired by your work"

This year has been the busiest ever for Suffolk Refugee Support, reflecting another year where global forced displacement has hit record levels. Next year is our 25th anniversary, and it's a sobering thought that our services are needed now more than ever before. We have given direct support to well over 1500 people this year, each of whom brings a story of pain and loss. We have worked closely with Ukrainian and Afghan refugees across Suffolk, and have seen more acute needs among asylum seekers arriving in the UK with fresh trauma and few resources. Sadly, some are facing Christmas on the streets following the Home Office's policy to evict people with as little as 7 days' notice following a positive asylum decision. Our thoughts are with them, and our heartfelt thanks to each and every person who has supported our work this year. We wish you a safe and peaceful festive period. [Pictured right—tree decorated by our sewing group at Christchurch Mansion as part of their [Christmas Tree Festival](#)]



We hope you've enjoyed this newsletter—we'd love to hear from you with any feedback. If you received this 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!