

Suffolk Refugee Support Spring 2024 Newsletter

www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk

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Registered Charity Number: 1078794

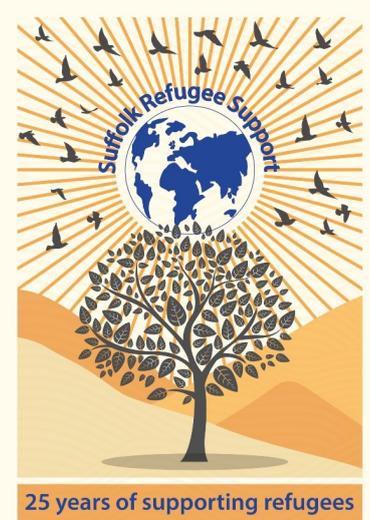
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25 years of supporting refugees in Suffolk

Suffolk Refugee Support was set up in 1999. Over the past 25 years, refugees from more than 50 countries have come to our door for support. Often we have been the first friendly face and listening ear they have found. Today, we see around us the change this has created. A thriving supermarket run by Kurdish refugees we supported in our early years today employs other refugees, while a local GP who was one of the first people we ever worked with is now a Medical Advisor to NHS England. Throughout the year we will mark our anniversary with celebrations, talks and stories, including a special Refugee Week event. To make sure you are invited you can become a member of SRS [here](#), and if you'd like to organise a fundraising event to help us continue our work in years to come we'd love to hear from you (we can help with quiz materials, for instance!).



25 years of supporting refugees

A huge thank you to [CP Creative](#) for their incredible generosity and creativity in designing our special 25th anniversary logo!

Celebrating International Women's Day



We brought together over 100 women from 19 different countries recently to celebrate International Women's Day with a joyful event full of food, laughter, song and solidarity. We are very grateful to our friends at [Karibu](#) for helping us to organise the event and to Music in our Bones, who have worked with our women's group, for leading the singing!



Maha Elnahas, right, pictured with her colleague at Suffolk Refugee Support, Rita Fadieleva. Image: Newsquest (Image: Newsquest)

We also marked the event by celebrating the strength and skills of two of the women from different parts of the world who play a fundamental role in our work today. Rita was a psychotherapist in Ukraine and [described to the East Anglian Daily Times](#) how keeping a sense of agency was a way of fighting back when forced to leave her home, while Maha, who had an interior design background in Egypt, [talked about](#) the challenges she faced when she arrived in the UK with two young children and no family or friends.

Supported by:



Asylum hotel update

Earlier this year we were informed that the residents at an asylum contingency hotel near Ipswich, where we have worked to support people for nearly two years, were going to be moved to other parts of the UK over a period of a few weeks. Using our experience from a previous hotel closure, we put in place extra resources to ensure people were supported through what can be a distressing and disruptive process. Our staff worked long hours to chase up paperwork and information on where



people were being sent to so we could prepare them for the move and refer to onward support, worked intensively with the NHS Health Outreach team to put extra support in place for vulnerable individuals and those with particular health needs, and lobbied the Home Office, Migrant Help and Serco continually for acute personal circumstances to be taken into account. The asylum system can be brutally impersonal and uncaring, but we're proud that through our persistent efforts children in GCSE year have avoided disruption to their education and potential homelessness situations have been avoided. We know that asylum seekers in parts of the

Winter appeal update

Thank you so much to everyone who gave to our winter appeal. Through your generosity we raised nearly £5,000 and were able to provide many essential items of clothing and footwear. Thanks also to everyone who donated a suitcase or travel bag to ensure people were able to move with dignity.

country where there is no refugee support organisation face far more negative outcomes. We were very touched when some of the residents who had taken part in our football project with the ITFC Foundation sent us a compilation video capturing their experiences and expressing their appreciation (pictured). We also [highlighted the experiences](#) of asylum seekers in hotels, emphasising the lack of agency people have and the damaging effects on integration of constantly moving people at short notice.

Winter trips and outings



We were delighted to continue our partnership with Dedham Vale National Landscape recently with a lovely (muddy!) walk from Manningtree to Mistley with a group of Ukrainian clients from Ipswich and Saxmundham (pictured, top right), finished off with well-deserved coffee and cake! We were also very grateful to our friends at Gecko theatre company for giving a group of young people we work with the opportunity to see their powerful new show Kin (top left). The young people were very excited to visit the National Theatre and we know how much access to the arts can have a transformative effect. Finally, we had great fun with some half term activities, including visits to Colchester Zoo and the driving range (top middle). Thanks to our wonderful volunteers and everyone involved for making these trips so memorable, despite all the rain!

Afghan cookery class

We held a tasty Afghan cookery class recently to celebrate some of the talented chefs we work with and to thank the fabulous volunteers who support our cooking and sewing groups. Thanks also to Suffolk Food Hall for hosting us and for all their continued support. Look out for more food events soon!



Volunteers needed!

We are looking for people with Maths teaching or tutoring experience to help young refugees and asylum seekers with extra one-to-one support or practice towards exams. Our Resettlement Team is also preparing to welcome refugee families to Haverhill and Lowestoft—if you are local to these areas and would like to offer orientation support please get in touch! If these might be the roles for you, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Libby (lruffle@suffolkrefugee.org.uk), or visit our Volunteer page for up-to-date details:

<https://suffolkrefugee.org.uk/what-you-can-do/volunteer/>

Immigration statistics

The Home Office has released its immigration and asylum statistics for 2023. Once again, beyond all the headlines, the numbers are not historically high, the great majority of asylum seekers (including small boat arrivals) are proven to have a genuine need for protection, and the backlog of asylum applications is still enormous. In particular, the figures show that:

- there were 67,337 asylum applications (84,425 people including dependents) in the UK in 2023, 17% lower than 2022
- 67% of initial decisions were grants of protection, meaning people were awarded refugee status or humanitarian protection (with even more receiving positive decisions on appeal)
- over 60,000 people were accepted as refugees following an asylum application – the highest number since records began
- more than 128,000 people are stuck in limbo waiting for a decision on their asylum claim
- more than 25,000 asylum claims were withdrawn (mostly by the Home Office in an attempt to reduce the backlog)
- Afghans were the top small boat nationality, accounting for 20% of small boat arrivals

You can find more facts and context on these numbers from the [Refugee Council here](#).

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!