



# Suffolk Refugee Support Christmas Newsletter

[www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk](http://www.suffolkrefugee.org.uk)

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Registered Charity Number: 1078794

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## Bringing some festive cheer around Suffolk

This time of year can be difficult for many of the people we work with who are separated from friends and family and facing great uncertainty. It has also been a challenging year for our clients and staff, with increased hostility towards asylum seekers and those who support them. This only makes us more determined to provide some cheer and positivity, so we have been throwing ourselves into festive activities. Our clients and members of the Kesgrave Ukraine Hub decorated this lovely tree at the Christchurch Mansion Christmas Tree Festival (open until 5th January). We also had [a lovely tree](#) with handcrafted items at Ipswich Minster, and contributed to a refugee-themed tree in Beccles. We are taking families and young asylum seekers to the Illuminate light trail in Ipswich, and we enjoyed a fabulous fundraising concert with St Peter's Band, featuring a brilliant Kurdish sitar player and Olena, a singer from Ukraine. We'll also be delivering presents to asylum-seeking families across Suffolk, with special thanks to St Felix Church (Felixstowe) and St Mary's Church (Woodbridge) for the lovely gifts, and Farlingaye High School for the Christmas hampers.



## SRS Christmas Crowdfunder Appeal

Can you help give warmth, safety and hope this winter? Many asylum seekers we support are traumatised and isolated and face a hostile and confusing system. We provide a warm welcome, essential advice and practical assistance. But as people's needs become more acute, our resources are at full stretch. By supporting our [Christmas Crowdfunder appeal](#), you can help us to support more families this winter. Please help us reach our target if you can, or share with friends and family.



Supported by:



## Hassan's story

**Hassan and his family are a great example of how refugees can integrate and thrive in their new communities when given a safe route to protection and the initial support needed to get back on their feet. Sadly, very few people can access safe routes to the UK and even the remaining Afghan resettlement scheme closed to new applicants earlier this year.**



My name is Hassan. I am 24 years old, from Kabul Province, Afghanistan. I was a Criminology student with lots of hopes for a positive future, but life in Afghanistan was never easy. Me and my family spent almost the whole of our life in war and financial crisis.

But I was proud of my Mum who used to work as a social worker, teacher and community helper. She was our idol and hope, as well as my Dad who taught us how to face the challenges in life.

It was 15th of August 2021. I can name it a black day in the history of my beloved country when the regime changed and my homeland fell in the hands of the Taliban. I can still remember that morning that every single thing was stopped. People were running to their houses and shops were closed. Streets and roads were empty, everywhere was chaos. I completely lost my hope, my future, my dreams. I thought this was the end of our life and of our country. We didn't have any hope except fleeing to another country because they wanted the individuals who worked with the previous government and to sentence them to death. We moved to Pakistan but it was made worse for us because of our identity. We were stopped at every police checkpoint and asked for money even though we were legally there. We contacted UNHCR where we were given hope to be sheltered somewhere we can carry on our life with peace, prosperity and respect.

With the help of the UNHCR we arrived in the UK on 4th April 2024 under refugee settlement after waiting for three years. Upon my arrival in the UK, tears rolled down my cheeks due to the scars of the persecution I faced in my country. I felt homeless and so scared about the future. The warm reception, accommodation and food I received gave me great relief and comfort. Having my basic human needs met in such an organised and coordinated way gave me hope.

Life in the UK at first was challenging because of the new culture, tradition and different language and lifestyle. Nevertheless we had to fit in here, which we did and we were happy and felt safe and sound. We were told by the Home Office that we were moving to a town in Suffolk. It is a nice and calm town with a diverse community and cheering and welcoming people. But with its positive points and good face, I still had some challenges here regarding a job and daily life.

Then Suffolk Refugee Support, which plays a vital role in the life of refugees and asylum seekers around Suffolk helped me a lot. They helped me regarding finding a job, making a proper resume, doing a formal interview, and learning English. Since the first day until I got a job I could clearly say there was a big hand of SRS behind my success.

Today I work for one of the UK's largest telecommunication companies. I am really happy with my job and me and my family will always be thankful to SRS, UNHCR and the UK Government for saving and changing our lives. We can study, work, play and travel without any fear and prohibition. I want to carry on with my studies and hope I will get the chance to serve the people of the UK and prove myself a positive and respectable citizen of this beautiful and lovely country.



## Sharing food traditions

We took part in a fabulous 'Landscape Table' day with [Natural Habitat](#) at Beeches Primary School in Ipswich recently. Our client volunteers enjoyed sharing bread-making skills and traditions from their home countries with the children.

The school told us: "The activities led by the Suffolk Refugee Support volunteers were brilliant. It was engaging, fun, and provided a wonderful opportunity for the children to learn about bread-making traditions from diverse cultures. The SRS volunteers were exceptionally kind, patient, and engaging with our children, making the learning experience supportive and memorable. The children loved every moment and are still buzzing about the day."



## Our response to new asylum plans

We are deeply concerned about the government's recent proposed changes to the asylum system, in particular plans to make refugee status temporary and precarious. These policies will impact people who have already lived through war, persecution and profound loss. Many reach the UK with virtually nothing, simply hoping to find protection. These new proposals will not stop people from seeking safety – they will just cause further suffering and misery. We have written to all Labour MPs in Suffolk to communicate our concerns, and spoken on both BBC Radio Suffolk and Suffolk Sounds. We also signed a [joint letter](#) coordinated by Together with Refugees opposing these cruel plans. You can read [our full response here](#), and listen to our Patron, Sir Nick Young, discussing refugee issues from his experience on [Radio Suffolk here](#) (from 2:37:00).

### We are recruiting!

We are looking for a **Housing Advice Worker** to lead on our work providing refugees and asylum seekers with housing-related advice and guidance. The deadline is 6th January 2025.

Full details here: [suffolkrefugee.org.uk/current-vacancies/](https://suffolkrefugee.org.uk/current-vacancies/)

"I will always be grateful to SRS. I passed the ESOL exam thanks for them. They provided the teachers to teach me English lessons for free...it was very kind of them to me. I will return to Ipswich one day to explain my gratitude to them."

A message we received recently from someone we supported when they were in asylum accommodation in Ipswich who is now working as a carer in London.

"It has helped me understand what refugees go through and how they are grateful for things we take for granted. It has made me furious how people go through this because of someone else's actions and I wish there was no conflict so no one has to go through this. It must be hard leaving everything you have ever known behind."

From one of the lovely letters we received recently from Year 6 at Stratford St Mary Primary School, who have been reading the book *The Boy at the Back of the Class* as well as our [Refugee Stories](#) and case studies.

Our heartfelt thanks to each and every person, community group and organisation who has supported our work this year. We wish you a safe and peaceful festive period.

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](mailto:office@suffolkrefugee.org.uk)

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