

Reading
Refugee
Support
Group

Reading
Wokingham
West Berkshire
Windsor and Maidenhead

Reading Refugee Support Group

35-39 London Street
Reading, RG14PS

Charity Reg. No: 1098058

Annual Report 2017-2018



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Drumming workshop at the children's festival

RRSG TEAM MEMBERS

2017-2018

Staff

Nick Harborne
CEO

Sarah Manase
Office Manager

Gaby Couchman
Operations Manager

Flora Roshi
Syrian Support Team
Manager

Sunday Kendi
Drop In coordinator

Mahmuna Hasnath
Caseworker

Matt Ayres
Caseworker

Lizzie Cairns
Housing Officer

Mandy Johnson
Syrian Support Worker

Reem Gabriel
Syrian Support Worker

Nicola Rubertazzi
Syrian Support Worker

Khalid Metwalli
Interpreter

Sharon Cole
Bookkeeper

Maggie Filipova-Rivers
City of Sanctuary Coordinator

Trustees

- Ms Betty Tickner
- Mr Mike Martin (Chair)
- Mr Andrew Boctor (Treasurer)
- Lorna Obure
- Faraj Ali Alajeeli
- Mr Tom Clark
- Mrs Emily Lloyd (appointed Jan 18)
- Mr David Richard Hanson-James (appointed March 18)
- Mrs Charlene Wattle (appointed Jan 18)
- Nora Honkala (resigned Aug 2017)
- Christian-Anders Benjamin Nygaard (Chair, resigned Dec 2017)

Vision and Mission

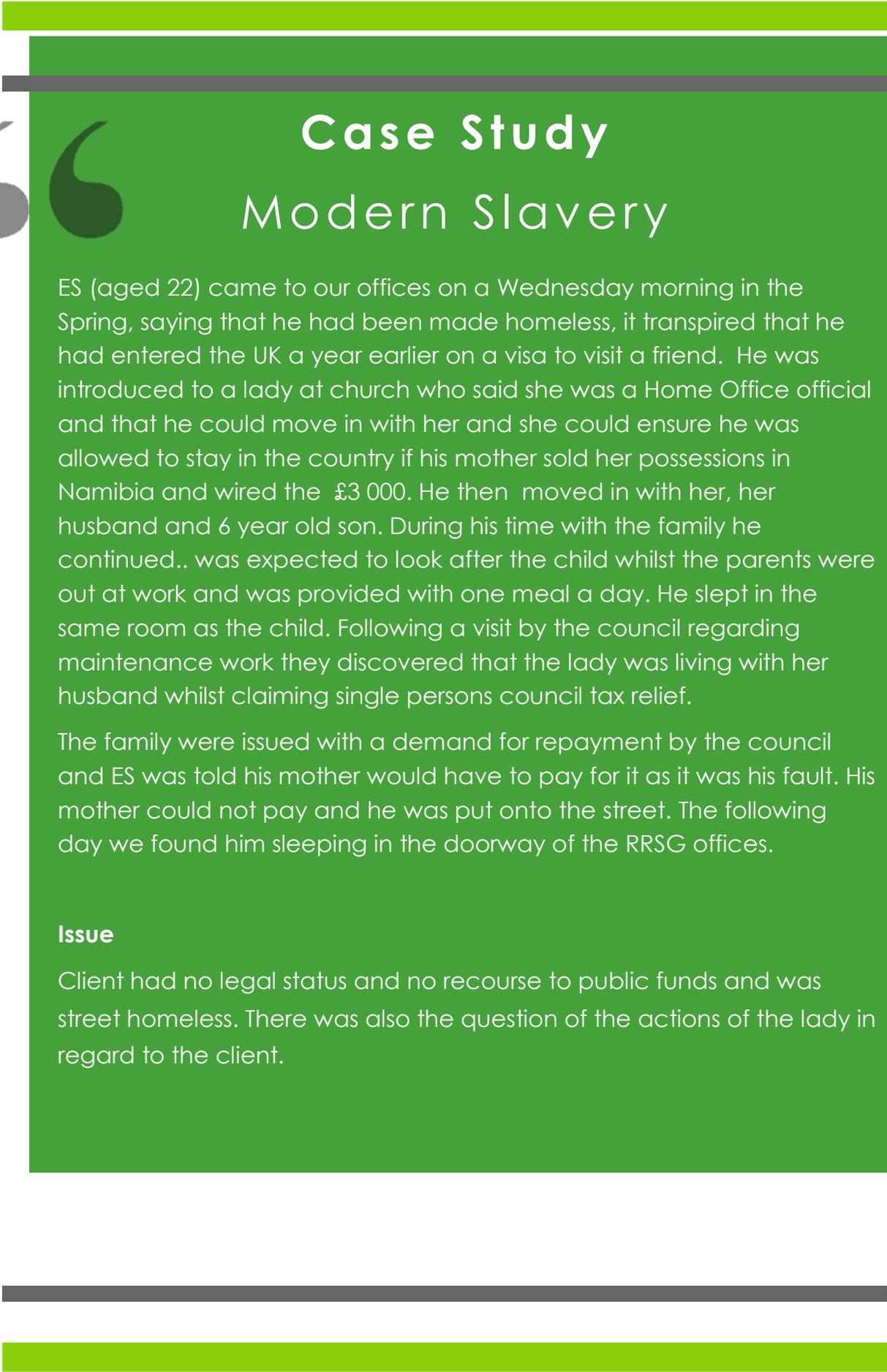
Vision

Our vision is for an inclusive and supportive society where refugees and asylum seekers are treated with humanity, dignity and respect.



Mission

Our mission is to improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers through providing support and advice, promoting awareness and facilitating integration into the local community.



Case Study

Modern Slavery

ES (aged 22) came to our offices on a Wednesday morning in the Spring, saying that he had been made homeless, it transpired that he had entered the UK a year earlier on a visa to visit a friend. He was introduced to a lady at church who said she was a Home Office official and that he could move in with her and she could ensure he was allowed to stay in the country if his mother sold her possessions in Namibia and wired the £3 000. He then moved in with her, her husband and 6 year old son. During his time with the family he continued.. was expected to look after the child whilst the parents were out at work and was provided with one meal a day. He slept in the same room as the child. Following a visit by the council regarding maintenance work they discovered that the lady was living with her husband whilst claiming single persons council tax relief.

The family were issued with a demand for repayment by the council and ES was told his mother would have to pay for it as it was his fault. His mother could not pay and he was put onto the street. The following day we found him sleeping in the doorway of the RRSO offices.

Issue

Client had no legal status and no recourse to public funds and was street homeless. There was also the question of the actions of the lady in regard to the client.

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The family were issued with a demand for repayment by the council and ES was told his mother would have to pay for it as it was his fault. His mother could not pay and he was put onto the street. The following day we found him sleeping in the doorway of the RRSg offices.

Issue

Client had no legal status and no recourse to public funds and was street homeless. There was also the question of the actions of the lady in regard to the client.

Help provided by RRSg

We used the emergency accommodation fund to put ES in a hotel for the night whilst exploring options. We then contacted the National Referral Mechanism and attended the police station with ES so he could make statement and be referred into the programme. The police agreed it was a case of modern slavery and ES was collected by the Salvation Army the same day and transferred to Gillingham for his protection. The police arrested the lady.



CHAIR'S REPORT

At the beginning of the period covered by this report, in April 2017, the Chair of the Reading Refugee Support Group was Andi Nygaard. Andy resigned as Chair in December 2017 moving to a new life in Australia and I took over. He was a wise and perceptive Chair who saw the organisation through a challenging period and I would like to thank him for his service.



From a trustees' perspective the dominant theme of the 2017/18 year was the growth of the organisation – growth in terms of the number of staff, income, complexity, the different areas in which we work and the number of partners with whom we work. This expansion of work was primarily driven by the winning of 4 contracts with Berkshire local authorities to run the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. While such growth in our core business of supporting refugees was very welcome it inevitably introduced stresses and

As the year progressed it became clear that the existing structure of the organisation was inadequate. So in January 2018 the board approved a new staffing structure which aimed for increased managerial capacity, economies of scale, clearer lines of accountability and the freeing up of time at senior management level to enable more strategic work. A key element in this process was the establishment of an Operations Manager post.

With regard to the board's role as employer three significant pieces of work took place during the year. The first of these was to review the terms and conditions of employment for staff, their remuneration and how it keeps pace with cost and cost of living increases. The second was a review of what support systems we can make available to staff who in their casework with refugees and asylum seekers can find themselves in seriously stressful situations. It is important that they have a space where they can unload and that they can access counselling support if needed. The third piece of work concerned safe working conditions for our staff. It was prompted by incidents in which our staff were exposed to inappropriate or aggressive behaviour. In response we reviewed the physical security in the office, introduced a video entry system and began work on a Lock Down Policy, now in place, for serious incidents.

Another strand of work we carried throughout the year was that of ensuring that the organisation has policies and procedures that are up to date and reflect good practice. This is not perhaps the most exciting work that a board of trustees has to undertake but it is a fundamental and relentless aspect of good governance. Nowadays a local charity, particularly one serving a vulnerable client group, has to have in place a raft of policies and procedures which protect people from all that can go wrong. Work that stands out in this context was an overhaul of our safeguarding policies that protect vulnerable people in the course of our work, the introduction of a new policy governing how staff use social media and, in common with everyone else, an overhaul of our data protection procedures in the light of the General Data Protection Regulations that came into force during the year. In reviewing our policies and procedures we have also been working towards the RVA "Safe and Sound" accreditation – a quality mark for good governance.





It has been a busy and successful year of expansion. If it was stressful at times then these were the growth pains that can hardly be avoided when you move from being a small charity operating in one area with one principal source of income to a medium sized charity operating across Berkshire with multiple partners and funders. If I had to single out one key challenge that lies ahead it is the matter of how the organisation can demonstrate the impact of its services on the lives of its users. We need to get better at asking the right questions, recording evidence of impact and storing the information in a systematic and coherent way. You can imagine that this raises issues about the need for a fit for purpose database, another challenge to which we are squaring up. We need evidence of impact for our own analysis of organisational effectiveness. However, it is also increasingly funders that require you to back up what you claim about changing people's lives for the better with convincing evidence.

I must thank the partners and funders listed elsewhere in this report for their continuing faith in the Refugee Support Group. My fellow trustees have been generous with their time and their wisdom. Finally, let me not forget the unstinting commitment of the Chief Executive, Nick Harborne. Being at the interface between the governance of the organisation and its operational side is a tricky balancing act which Nick manages very well.

Mike Martin Chair of Trustees

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Every year in the life of a charity is an exciting and challenging time. I am proud RRSG is emerging from this financial year 2017 – 2018 strengthened, better resourced, more financially stable and with a plan in place to further secure our future.

At our AGM 2013/14 Oct 14 the then Mayor of Reading Cllr Tony Jones and Colleen Molly the Development officer at City of Sanctuary helped launch the Reading City of Sanctuary (RCoS) bid. RRSG chaired the steering group which comprised of ACRE, RVA, The Mustard Tree, the Red Cross and RISC. With funding from Springboard RCoS was able to employ a coordinator, hosted through RRSG. The steering group strengthen, by Thames Valley Police and Reading Muslim Council, gained support from Reading Borough Council and local businesses and on July 17th Reading was awarded City of Sanctuary status. Reading is officially a place of welcome for refugees. RRSG can be rightly proud of the part it played in helping to achieve. It highlights the importance of playing an active part in a wider partnership that has defined RRSG as an organisation this year.



Receiving Reading City of Sanctuary Status

Government funding cuts to local authorities has meant decreasing funding to local charities, which then have to depend on each other. Again, RRSG is fortunate and proud to work in partnership under the Narrowing the Gap funding stream with Christian Community Action, Cirdic, Faith/Readifood and Reading Community Learning Centre. The benefits of this partnership are that our clients are better supported. Such partnerships are fundamental to empowering RRSG to work toward our vision and mission statement. Thank you to those organisations.

Another vital partnership was strengthened with Reading Borough Council this year when RRSG was awarded the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement contract for Reading. Led by the Operations Manager Gaby Couchman and Flora Roshi, the RRSG Syrian Team Manager, the support team now works across 4 local authorities, supporting 13 families including Reading, Wokingham, West Berkshire and Windsor and Maidenhead. RRSG was well placed with a 23 year track record of working with refugees and asylum seekers to work alongside the Local Authorities on their Syrian Resettlement programmes but we still embarked onto a steep learning curve responding not only to the needs of often traumatised families but also to the stresses and strains of a local small charity growing rapidly into a regional charity. Whilst we have certainly face challenges at times with increasing staff numbers placing demand on limited resources; desk space, computers, meeting room etc. In terms of the governance of RRSG the trustees have used the opportunity to review and strengthen our Business Plan and Fundraising Strategy as we grow. We believe we have reached a point where we have a few years of stability to look forward to during which we can plan to secure our longer term future and vision.

We also need to get better at talking to our clients. It is easy for any charity to get consumed by the complexities of doing the right thing that they forget involve their clients in the decision making process that steers the organisation. At RRSG we are fortunate and privileged to have the refugee voice represented at Trustee level, on the staff team and in our volunteer team. But we must continue to facilitate and encourage our users to be able to contribute to the design and delivery of the support and services they use.

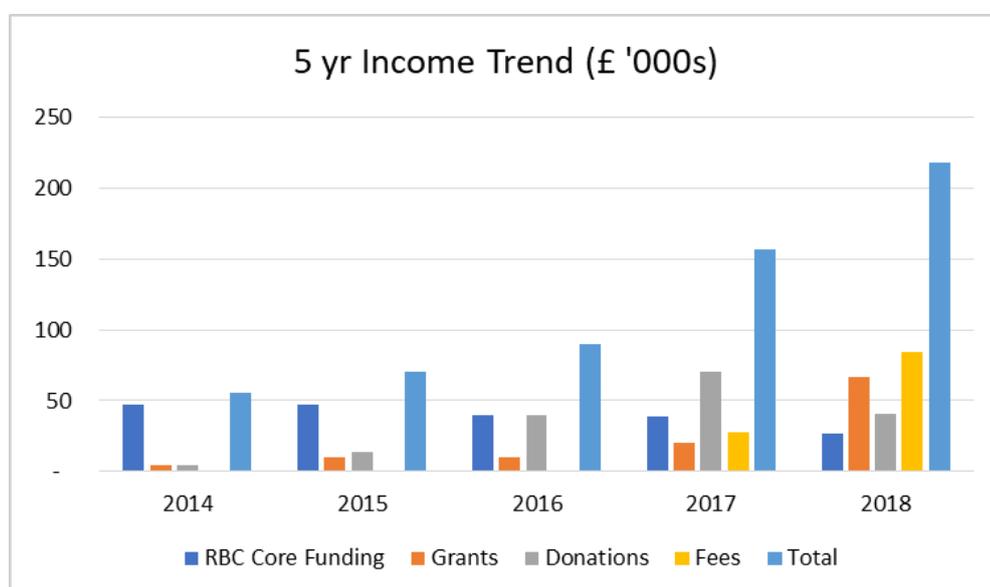
Nick Harborne, CEO



Matt and Tomson fundraising for Sanctuary Strikers

FINANCIAL REPORT

The significant growth experienced by the Charity over recent years has continued in the 2017/18 financial year with income growing by 39% to £218k (2016/17: £157k). This represents a four-fold growth in income over the past 5 years. However, it is important to understand what is underpinning this growth in income and the financial commitments that come with it. The chart below shows the income trend over the past 5 years and the shifts in income streams.



What the Charity has been seeing is decreasing core funding from Reading Borough Council (RBC), but an increase in grants and fees. Fees is a new income stream that has come about through being awarded contracts by Local Authorities in the region to support Syrian refugees under the Central Government's resettlement scheme. The Local Authority contracts (and to a lesser extent grants), although treated as unrestricted income, do come with the need to increase the cost base to deliver the services, often with fairly tight margins

The income stream breakdown for 2017/18 saw RBC funding drop by 31% to £26k (2016/17: £38k), general donations drop by 42% to £41k (2016/17: £70k) – a drop here was thought likely given a significant one-off donation of £25k in the previous year. The big drivers behind the income growth in 2017/18 were grant income increasing three-fold on the previous year to £66k (2016/17: £20k) and fee income from Local Authority contracts also tripling to £84k (2016/17: £28k)

In line with the increased income and contracts to deliver services, the Charity saw expenditure increase overall by 87% to £210k (2016/17: £112k). Due to the need to recruit staff to support the Syrian refugee resettlement contracts, staff costs was one of the main drivers behind the increase in costs, rising by 93% to £126k (2016/17: £65k). Note that this also created the requirement for the associated service delivery costs of £31k and increased premises costs as office space had to be increased and enhanced to accommodate growing staff numbers.

The income and expenditure detailed above give the Charity a small

Reserves

The Charity maintains reserves to protect the it from short term fluctuations in income and to provide working capital for activities which are funded in arrears.

The policy is to hold reserves equal to 3 months of expenditure on the core costs of running the charity.

Andrew Bactor, RRSB Treasurer

New Beginnings

Case Study



FB and WB arrived in the UK 1.5 years ago, they are now settled in very well. Their English language is at a very good level now that they need very little support. Their children are also doing very well, they don't have any issues at nursery. The father has now started a part time job in addition to attending his English classes at Newbury college. We at RRSg are very proud of him and pleased to be able to support him to reach his target.



SYRIAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME REPORT

During this year we extended our support to two more local authorities in Berkshire. In total this year we supported 10 Syrian families in Reading, Wokingham, Windsor & Maidenhead and West Berkshire area. As a result the Syrian team has grown to 4 members of staff, to respond to the support needs of the project.

The project has been very rewarding, from picking up the families from airport, welcoming them to the new area, helping them to register with benefits, GP, school and practical support to understand how things work in UK, as well as the culture differences. The families have fled the violence, threats to life and discrimination in their country Syria. Many have been living in the camps in the neighbouring countries for some years. Their journey has been long and suffering and with high hopes when they arrive in the UK to build a new life for themselves and their children.

We support them and work very closely with families and liaise with statutory organisations like GPs, schools and job centres to make sure that we all work together to understand the complexities of their needs, to help them to settle and feel welcome.

One of the challenges that families face is not being able to speak or understand English. We help them to enrol for ESOL lessons and join English conversation classes at Reading Refugee Support Group where they learn and socialise with other families. We introduce them to other community groups and befriender groups, to library and other local events. We work to increase their confidence looking for volunteer work and searching for jobs. Our aim is to help them to feel part of the community, building their confidence, empowering them to become independent and building their new life in UK.

The Syrian team's dedication and perseverance have seen families that have embraced the new culture, in a year they have been looking for work, volunteering, or found a part-time job. Their English has improved and even they are volunteering to help the new families to settle and been an inspiration for them.

Flora Roshi Syrian Resettlement Program Manager

SYRIAN TEAM REPORTS

Samera Abbas-Majid

West Berkshire & Reading Case Worker

I currently support 4 Syrian Refugee families in West Berkshire and 2 families in Reading and that involves liaising with the LA and other supporting groups like WBAR.

Working for the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme is very exciting, rewarding and challenging. Our daily tasks vary; from welcoming new families to supporting them all the way through their application for welfare benefits, enrolment to English language courses, applying to nurseries, schools or colleges depending on their educational level, registering them to a GP, Dentist and Optician then providing continual support to ensure they are progressing, getting their rights and fulfilling their duties.

Our target is to help these families to integrate into society and supporting them to become strong and independent within a few years. Our aim is giving them and their children potential for a great future.

Our main challenges are:

- The families that we support have all been through very difficult times and had to move to different places fighting for their safety before arriving to UK. When they eventually arrive here they expect a lot from us, so it takes us a lot of time and effort to get their trust and confidence that we are doing our best to support them.
- Most of these families come to UK with no or little English language, so for us simple tasks could take much longer than expected. Example, calling the electricity supplier to pay their bills or to set up Direct Debit, the company would need authority from our families so that we can talk on their behalf. Our families must then answer many security questions in English like full name, address, DOB which is very difficult for them within the first few months of their arrival to UK.

Soha Hafez

Windsor and Maidenhead case worker

2018 marks our third year supporting Syrian families in Maidenhead and Windsor area.

We have 2 very successful case studies. N who arrived in April 2016 with her 2 teenage boys, the boys now are working part time while studding at Reading College. They are fully independent, and their language skills improved massively.

We have another family who arrived in October 2016, M is now working part time and looking to increase his working hours. He is fully independent and manage his family affairs quite well.

We have 2 new families who arrived in the summer of 2018. M and his family are settling very well in the area. He has 3 teenage children and all of them are registered now at Reading college to study English. M and his wife A started ESOL classes at a local community centre.

Shady Hagag

Wokingham case worker

I am appointed case worker for families living in Wokingham area, we have 4 families of 8 parents and 11 children with total of 19 person. Our oldest family is just completed two years now in UK and the newest is in country for few weeks. We have support from different local community groups like Quakers and Gossip Girls in addition to the Wokingham Council in order to help preparing the houses and help integrating the family with the community in the neighbourhood around them.

Building Connections

Case Study

A arrived in Wokingham under the Syrian Resettlement Programme with his wife and three kids in December 2016. As a family they were supported with integration into their local community and accessing services by RRSB staff and volunteers. The whole family began to increase their independence and develop their language skills by attending schools, ESOL courses and our drop in centre. It was here that they built connections many others including volunteers and other Syrian families who were settled in Wokingham. And as a result of attending English classes and hard work the level of English improved rapidly, which has again helped the family to become more independent as the father managed to find a part time job. The mother's English improved as well as the kids from the school, they have friends from the neighbourhood and from the school and they are integrated very well in the community. The father is offered now to increase his working hours due to his commitment and both parents are in the process of learning to have driving licenses to increase their chances of finding better job and be fully independent of benefits.

ADVICE SERVICE

Our casework team has been led by [Gaby Couchman](#) (Operations Manager)

Volunteer Caseworker team

[Liz Ollerhead](#)

[Rachel Giglio-Peterson](#)

[Isabella Fleitis Fermini](#)

[Nayaab Khalid](#)

[Dima Wazani](#)

[Matt Ayres](#)

Staff Team

[Mahmuna Hasnath](#)

[Lizzie Cairns Housing Officer](#)

Our advice service deals with a wide range of queries ranging from support with immigration status changes and understanding of the processes, dealing with immediate risk of destitution, accommodation issues and ongoing challenges with mental health. As a result of the continuing hostile asylum system the reality of facing destitution is becoming increasingly common. The only entitlement for accommodation support whilst seeking asylum is the National Asylum Support System (NASS) which is means tested and almost certainly results in relocation to a 'dispersal area' outside of the South East of England due to affordability. This inevitably takes clients away from family, support networks and ties to education. We are increasingly seeing issues relating to homelessness with clients who have gained refugee status who are often placed in completely unfurnished properties with no means of affording essential items such as beds and cookers. We work with the council and other charitable partners to try and help clients facing this situation.

In the past year we have continued to see clients who have been victims of trafficking, slavery and domestic violence. We have supported several women who have been recent victims. This support has included assisting with applications to the National Referral Mechanism (5 female and 1 male), emergency accommodation, asylum processes and integration.

Another continuing challenge faced by our service users is access to mental health support. Our client's mental health issues are commonly derived from experiences in their home country i.e. torture as well as their journey to the UK. Their mental health can often be exacerbated by ongoing delays in asylum decisions. The scarcity of mental health support nationally as well as specific cultural and language needs of our service users creates a barrier to improving wellbeing amongst refugees and asylum seekers.

The statistics compiled for this report also do not fully reflect the number of refugees and asylum seekers we are reaching as case is recorded by lead individual, not inclusive of family members. They do however show a significant increase again in demand for the casework advice team and we firmly believe we are having a direct positive impact in the lives of vulnerable people.

Our casework team has been led by Matt Ayres (Operations Manager) along with Mahmuna Hasnath (Solicitor) and Lizzie Cairns (Housing Officer). Our sincerest thanks also go to our volunteer caseworkers and advisors without who this work would not have been possible.

Casework intensity and queries

In the past 12 months the casework and advice team have undertaken **483** appointments, a **24% increase on the previous year** and conducted 513 hours of casework support, a **35% increase on 2016/17**. **137** of these appointments directly related to destitution, including applications for accommodation provision under the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) section 95 and section 4 provisions of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Case Study

AG is an old client who has refugee status. He had been served notice by his landlord as the Council were acquiring the property and wanted vacant possession. He had attended the council requesting support and had been given a Housing Action Plan with a list of landlords whom he could contact. He was required to contact 15 landlords a week and keep a log of his calls or he would lose his entitlement to housing support. He had done this for two weeks and had achieved no success. When he came to our office he was becoming desperate as his wife was due to give birth to their second child two days after the eviction notice was due to be enforced.

Issue: Family were facing becoming street homeless and didn't know what to do. The council were not responding to his requests for help and had erroneously stated that he hadn't supplied the information they needed. **Help provided by RRSg:** Firstly we tried emailing the responsible Housing Officer and when we received no response we raised it up to senior management within the Housing Department who finally got things moving. We gained an extension to the eviction notice with the landlord and helped the family to find new accommodation with the support of the council, who at one point had stated that they could only help if the entire family attended their offices as homeless on the day of their eviction. Family happily in a new house now and we also linked them with a lady who telephoned during this period with a baby cot she wanted to donate.

Client Data by Country

Country	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Sudan	23	15	8
Afghanistan	14	9	15
Syria	13	9	6
Pakistan	8	15	12
Albania	7	5	0
Sri Lanka	6	8	6
Ghana	5	0	0
Iran	5	7	11
Iraq	4	7	6
Ethiopia	3	1	0
Gambia	3	1	0
Sierra Leone	3	1	1
Turkey	3	2	0
Zimbabwe	3	7	15
China	2	1	0
Kenya	2	6	3
Kosovo	2	1	1
Libya	2	3	1
Senegal	2	1	0
South Africa	2	0	0
Tanzania	2	3	2
Algeria	1	0	0
Cameroon	1	0	0
Eritrea	1	1	2
Guinea	1	0	0
India	1	2	1
Macedonia	1	1	0
Morocco	1	0	0
Nigeria	1	2	2
Somalia	1	2	5
Tibet	1	1	1
Trinidad	1	0	0
Uzbekistan	1	1	1
Vietnam	1	0	0
Bangladesh	0	1	0
Botswana	0	1	0
Burundi	0	1	1
Congo	0	2	1
Rwanda	0	1	0
Thailand	0	1	0
Yemen	0	2	1
TOTAL	127	121	107

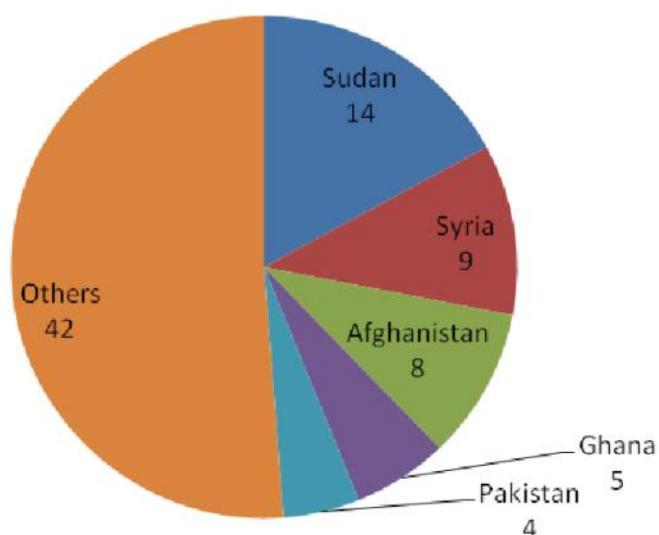


Drumming up support for Reading

Out of these cases, 82 were new cases a **34%** increase from 2016/17 (which itself saw a **24%** increase from 2015/16)

Top six new clients by country.

Number Of New Clients By Country Of Origin



New cases by immigration status

Immigration status of new clients 2016-17	No of clients		
	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Asylum seeker	35	22	23
Refugee (5 years)	15	14	14
Indefinite Leave	6	9	4
Failed asylum claim	3	0	0
Discretionary Leave	3	1	1
Exceptional Leave	1	1	1
Human Rights claim	2	0	0
Humanitarian protection	6	0	0
British Citizen	0	1	0
Mixed	3	6	0
Other	8	7	6
TOTAL	82	61	49

All cases by immigration status

Immigration status of all clients 2016-2017	No of clients		
	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Asylum seeker	60	57	64
Refugee (5 years)	26	20	23
Indefinite Leave	8	13	1
Discretionary Leave	4	4	3
Human Rights claim	2	0	0
Failed asylum claim	3	0	0
Humanitarian protection	6	0	0
Exceptional Leave	3	3	1
British Citizen	1	1	0
Mixed	3	6	0
Other	11	9	6
TOTAL	127	121	107

At RRSG we could not provide this invaluable support to our service users without the help of volunteers. In the past 12 months we have had 29 volunteers assist us with our services and projects and we are indebted to them for all their dedication and passion when undertaking these roles. In addition to the casework team we would like thank the following people:



Team members and volunteers working on fundraising

Our Volunteers

Monday Caseworker
Drop In Support

Liz Ollerhead,
Rachel Giglio-Peterson
Claudia Paradis, Emma Bryant,
Anas Monaffal

Monday English
conversation helpers:

Adrian Lawson, Hadil Tame,
Merry Cross, Cristina Barba,
Alison McQuitty

CV and job search

Mandy Johnson,
Emma Bryant

Wednesday
Conversation Club

Merry Cross, Jean Scott Bar,
Adrian Lawson

Our Volunteers

Office Admin volunteers Cristina Barba, Jean Scott-Barr,
Parwin Hama-Khan

Client Database wizard Stephen Cook

Social media Queen Alice Driver

Homework Organisers Sarah Burke,

Head of Transport (need a Adrian Lawson
bike, a minibus driven to the
airport, a gazebo putting
up?)

Head of Musical Tomson Chauke
Entertainment and
Drumming workshops

English 1 2 1 Liz Bailey

Interpreter and Syrian team
volunteer Soha Hafez, Hadil Tamim

Volunteer Awards 2017

Volunteers were invited to attend the RVA Volunteer Award Evening. This years Alice Driver received a nomination and received a special award acknowledging her dedication as our social media queen for over 5 years whilst battling illness. Thank you Alice, you are inspirational to us all.



RRSG at Volunteer awards



Case Study

YN first visited RRSg on 17/05/2017 with concerns related to a recent arrest. RRSg advised the client that this would be a matter for his solicitor but could provide food parcels starting the following week. After initially referring the client to his solicitor for advice related to his arrest, RRSg gave YN support by writing a personal statement for his court appearance. In addition to seeking legal advice, YN also visited RRSg for advice related to an asylum claim appeal which would be made on the understanding that his original application was not made on the correct grounds. Advice provided by RRSg on the asylum appeal included providing support with Home Office correspondence. YN was also being supported in his new asylum claim by a gay rights asylum support group located in London.

Following his court appearance and subsequent prison sentence, YN is participating in English courses as part of probation conditions. Whilst YN would like to continue these classes and progress to the next level in September, the pending Home Office decision may present a barrier to funding opportunities. YN is exploring options for funding with the Red Cross.

Despite the efforts made by the client to fulfil the conditions of his probation, he received demands for payment of a fine relating to his court case. RRSg telephoned the bailiff and advised them that the client would be accompanied by RRSg to his court appearance. At this appearance, the fine was removed.

YN is seeking ongoing support from RRSg with permission to work requests and judicial review. RRSg are able to provide evidence to the Home Office showing they failed to substantively consider his request to work previously.

YN has been attending pop-up groups arranged by RRSg. At these sessions YN has been working on literacy. Despite making slow progress, YN has been attending local museums and other sites in the area with his tutor and practicing writing skills. His spoken English is significantly better than when he first had contact with our services.



DROP-IN SERVICE



Over the past 12 months, we have continued to develop our drop-in service, funded by the People's Health Trust. The objective of the drop-in is to provide a weekly meeting point where our service users can improve their integration, skills, confidence and access casework and advice services.

191 service users accessed our drop-in service in the past 12 months, a 16% rise on the previous year.

Our drop-in service provides the following activities and support:



Drop-in centre in action

English Conversation Group

We provide support with English learners of all levels including absolute beginners who may also face the challenges of low level or no literacy skills. Our English tutors work in small groups or one to one to improve their English skills in a practical manner and build their confidence. As a result of the popularity of our English classes and limited access to other English support across Reading we were able to extend our services to another class on Wednesdays, again with the help of the Controlling Migration Fund. This group also develops practical English skills but also centres around socialising .

'I like to talk to people, I forget my problems, I like to learn English'

'I was scared before to go out and speak with anyone, but now I feel so nice to be around and open up with RRSB community. I love all staff here'

'I like talking one to one with the volunteers'

Employability Support

This year we developed a specific advice service at our drop-in to help service users to access courses, volunteering opportunities and develop CVs in order to improve their employment prospects. We had previously seen a gap in this support provision when it came to cultural and/or language barriers. To which volunteering or accessing courses could greatly improve employment opportunities and integration.

Casework and Advice Support

In addition to our generalised casework support midweek. We provide a casework and advice service at the drop-in. We provide short advice sessions whereby we may signpost to other agencies, form fill or refer to other internal services including longer midweek appointments with our caseworkers.

'I am very thankful for what Reading Refugee Support Group are doing for me'

'They are very helpful, and I feel satisfied and I do appreciate, and great effort was done by the team of Reading Refugee Support Group'

Integration and Signposting and Awareness

In general our drop-in coordinator and centre volunteers provide a safe and welcoming space for refugees and asylum seekers to access the support they need. We also use this platform to ensure that our service users are aware of other local services and opportunities, aiding integration. As well as promoting health and wellbeing by way of bringing in external agencies to provide awareness sessions i.e. TB check drives or staying warm in winter campaigns.

Drop In Feedback

72% of clients stated they felt supported and valued at RRSG

73% felt their confidence had increased as a result of accessing our services

98% stated that they had made friends whilst accessing our services

50% stated that they felt part of their community in Reading

54% stated that they have accessed or felt comfortable accessing other services in Reading regarding help with housing, employment or education.



International woman's day celebration

NUMBERS AND FIGURES



483+ Case worker
Appointments
2017-2018

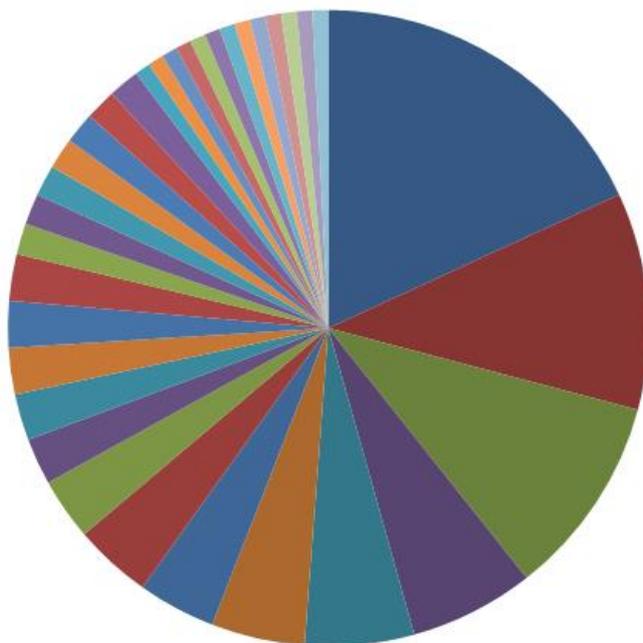
32+ Nationalities Represented

(Including; Syria, Sudan, Pakistan and Afghanistan)

98% Clients made new friends
at the drop-in centre



Country of Client 2017-2018



SANCTUARY STRIKERS

In the spring of 2017 a former client and volunteer at RRSB decided to establish a football team with the support of the charity. Sanctuary Strikers FC is a football team to encourage refugees, asylum seekers and others to integrate together in the spirit of hope, it follows from an informal weekly practice which had been taking place over the previous two years involving former clients of the charity who had met through the various social gatherings and support services offered.

The step to establish a fully registered team to play in the Reading and District Sunday league was ambitious and has involved significant effort by a number of volunteers.



Team photo of Sanctuary Strikers

The cost of establishing the team including registration fees, insurance premiums, kit and equipment totalled over £5000 in the first season and this was met with one off donations from national bodies such as the Football Association 'Grow the Game Foundation' and other organisations such as local churches, mosques and other faith groups. The monthly running costs of £450, for pitch hire, training facilities, referee fees and other minor expenses were met in the first season from the same sources. Part of the cost has been to provide tracksuits and hoodies for the players with the club name printed on the back and we firmly believe in the message of integration and hope that this sends. We have chosen not to ask the players to pay subscription fees if they are not in full time work as this would be unaffordable for many of them who are either in education or unable to work due to their immigration status.

On the pitch the first season was average in terms of results, we finished the season in the bottom half of the table. However it exceeded our expectations in terms of bringing together young players from numerous religions and countries of origin in a spirit of fun and mutual respect.

Entering into its second season the team has won the first three games and has secured financial backing to cover its costs for the year through individual donations and grants from the Peoples Trust and FA.

Gaby Couchman and Matt Ayres, Operations Managers

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

For the year ending 31st March 2018

	2018	2017
	£	£
Income Resources		
Grants, Donations	215,962	123,917
Other Revenue	1,942	32,950
Interest	0	20
Total Income	217,904	156,887
Expenditure		
Wages & Salaries	126,266	65,295
Freelance & Consultancy	5,373	1,112
Cost of delivering services	30,967	-
Administration Costs	12,144	7,307
Staff Training and development	1,642	1,289
Travel and subsistence	1,653	3,009
Publicity and Marketing	3,239	1,284
Meetings and Events	395	4,645
Refugee Welfare & Expenses	-	15,896
Office Equipment	1,286	2,572
Membership & Subscriptions	1,275	822
Bank Charges & Interest	880	745
Management Fees	-	-500
Professional Fees	8,965	928
Sundry Expenses	-	284
Premises	11,578	7,180
Depreciation Expense	621	
Volunteer Costs	3,399	
Total Expenditure	209,683	111,868
Excess of Expenditure over Income	8,221	45,019

A SPECIAL THANKS TO

TO ALL OUR MEMBERS

FUNDERS

- Reading Borough Council
- London Legal Support Trust
- The People's Health Trust
- Reading Quakers
- New Beginnings Fund
- Springboard
- Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead
- Wokingham Borough Council
- West Berkshire Council

PARTNERS

- Faith/Readifood for their generous provision of food parcels to help support destitute clients.
- The staff and students of Abbey School and Queen Anne's School for their dedicated support to refugee children with their school work.
- The Shed Café - Reading City of Sanctuary Coffee Bank scheme.
- RISC - Reading City of Sanctuary Coffee Bank scheme.
- Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC)
- Reading City of Sanctuary (RCoS)

PARTNERS

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- RISC - Reading City of Sanctuary Coffee Bank scheme
- Reading Community Learning Centre (RCLC)
- Reading City of Sanctuary (RCoS)
- ComuniCare
- Connect Reading
- Reading Voluntary Action (RVA)
- Cirdic
- Christian Community Action (CCA)
- Reading Advice Network (RAN)
- Mother tongue
- Reading University
- Reading Voluntary Action



Money raised by generous donors for RRSg events tent

SUPPORTERS

- The Grumpy Goat
- Brand 786
- Reading Film Theatre
- Henley Business School
- Reading Family Church
- Dialogue Society

DONORS

- Caversham Baptist Church
- Reading Quakers
- Reading Rotary Club
- Mothertongue
- St Laurence Trust
- London Legal Support Trust
- St Andrews Church, Caversham
- Wokingham All Saints Church
- Naccom
- City of Sanctuary



Mid Thames Quakers



BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Registered Charity No: 1155173

+ READING VOLUNTARY ACTION



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD



Reading Borough Council Working better with you



City of Sanctuary

saintlaurenceading



Reading City of Sanctuary

Rotary



Rotary Club of Reading



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL



NACCOM THE NO ACCOMMODATION NETWORK



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Reading Refugee Support Group

THANK YOU

