

Reading
Refugee
Support
Group

Reading
Wokingham
West Berkshire
Windsor and Maidenhead



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service

Reading Refugee Support Group

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Reading, RG14PS

Charity Reg. No: 1098058
Company number: 4515238

Annual Report 2018-2019



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A message from our Patron Lord Alf Dubs



"You may know I was one of the 669 children rescued by Nicholas Winton in the 2nd World War.

In 2016, I sponsored an amendment to the Immigration Act 2016 to offer unaccompanied refugee children safe passage to Britain amidst the European migrant crisis which was accepted by the government.

Unfortunately the Home Office abandoned the scheme after accepting only 350 of the planned 3,000 child refugees. Many people will be shocked that the government is proposing policies that will keep families apart and put young people in serious danger. It goes against our humanitarian traditions, and must be condemned and opposed by politicians all parties.

I know that Reading Refugee Support Group continues to uphold these traditions and I congratulate everyone involved in supporting the group over the year and the staff who have worked tirelessly to help people fleeing persecution.

Your dedication is just as important today as it has ever been, living in such troubled times as we do. I would also like to thank members of the public across Berkshire who have shown such compassion in their support of RRSG.

As a refugee myself I am proud to be a Patron of Reading Refugee Support Group and look forward to being part of your celebrations. On behalf of all the refugees and asylum seekers you have helped and supported over 25 years, thank you."

Alf Dubs



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Welcome to the Reading Refugee Support Group's annual report for the year ended 31 March 2019.

It has been an exciting year for us. As we moved into our 25th year of operation, we were nominated for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, a huge honour which acknowledges the

work our volunteers do in providing advice, support, integration activities and a welcome to refugees and asylum seekers.

Indeed volunteer numbers, on whom we depend at our Drop-In Centre, increased by an amazing 150% this year. This enabled us to offer smaller, more effective working groups. Feedback from our Drop-In sessions showed that 88% of those attending felt that the Drop-In had helped them become part of the community – up from 50% the previous year.

Our Advice Service helped 151 clients, an increase of more than 18% year-on-year and our Homework Club for the children of refugee families saw a 100% increase in uptake, with very positive feedback from teachers.

All in all, we feel we are well placed to sustain our work into the future. To build on this we have employed RRSB's first ever Fundraising and Communications Manager and have already achieved increases in unrestricted income and in total income over the previous year. Please see the Donations form on page 30 to help us continue this trend!

Our challenges for next year are many. Feedback from our drop-in centre tells us people want more trips and fitness activities for women only groups. Worryingly there is an increase in refugees who have survived torture, so appropriate mental health support at RRSB is a priority, for staff and volunteers as well as our clients. Helping people into volunteering and work is also a priority as the best way to help people integrate.

It's going to be another busy year ahead.



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.



VALUES

Our Values guide the staff and trustees of Reading Refugee Support Group and are central to the work of the organisation. Our values state:

- that social justice, human dignity and respect as prescribed by the European Convention on Human Rights and by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) must be upheld.
- that diversity including race, culture, ability, sexuality, gender, age, religion and other beliefs is beneficial to the community and should be celebrated.
- that the rights of individuals defined in the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the responsibilities of signatories to that convention should be Respected and upheld.
- that working in partnership with other organisations improves effectiveness and spreads understanding.
- that maintaining confidentiality in working with those we seek to help is of the greatest importance in generating trust and security.
- that the services and activities of the organisation should be accessible to all people who need them regardless of their individual circumstances.



CHAIR'S REPORT



April 2018 to March 2019

During this period Reading Refugee Support Group moved into its 25th year of operations. In a former role as the Chief Executive of Reading Voluntary Action I was responsible for providing a good deal of development support for the RRSg in its early years. I am therefore doubly proud to see the organisation alive and kicking in 2019.

Back in those early days, while the need for such an organisation was clear enough, we could not have envisaged the terrifying escalation of a global refugee crisis in which, by 2017, there were 65.6 million people forcibly displaced worldwide because of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. There is no sign of the crisis diminishing and I think it is now clear that we are facing a future in which the number of displaced persons is likely to grow as a result of climate change.

Throughout the UK there are local organisations dealing with the impact of this crisis. The fact that we are well positioned to play our part in Reading and the west of Berkshire is down to many people who have supported the Refugee Support Group over the years – volunteers, employees, funders, partners and the public at large. To all of them over the 25 years I want to say thank you.

Over the year the key activities of the board of trustees were as follows:

- Revising and developing the policies and procedures which make for good governance. With around 45 documents to be maintained, this is a process in which you have to be well organised. Early in 2019, working with the Chief Executive, we developed a review schedule for all these documents which will enhance our effectiveness in this process. In November 2018 we were awarded the RVA “Safe and Sound” quality mark – a recognition that our policies and procedures are fit for purpose.

- Listening to feedback from both our clients and our volunteers about the service we provide and acting on it. This is essential but not always straightforward. There is sometimes a significant gap between the expectations of what support we can provide and the reality of what is possible. We are learning about managing expectations.
- Planning and participating in the recruitment and appointment of our Fundraising and Communications Officer – a post which looks set to have a significant impact on our income generation potential.
- Monitoring our compliance with the hugely important General Data Protection Regulations and the development of the systems we need to be compliant.
- Supporting the Chief Executive in dealing with a particularly difficult staffing matter.
- Considering options with regard to moving into new premises. Our RISC offices have served us well but we have outgrown them and it has been difficult to provide the necessary privacy for client meetings.
- Conducting a trustee-led review of the effectiveness of the board. For this we used the tool called the “Governance Wheel” provided by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. At our meeting in February 2019 we considered the evaluative feedback of each trustee. Out of this process we identified these areas as priorities for improvement: the diversity and strength of the board, trustee induction, campaigning and awareness raising, measuring impact, opportunities for users to influence the organisation and clarity about strategic direction. These priorities will be integrated into the new business plan.

My thanks go to fellow trustees who work well together with enthusiasm and understanding in the face of challenging issues. Particular thanks go to Tom Clark who stood down as a trustee not long after the end of the year. Tom was Vice Chair and helpfully stood in for me at a couple of meetings I was unable to attend.

Although he is still with us at the time of writing I cannot finish without mentioning our Treasurer, Andrew Boctor. Andrew has announced that he will stand down before the end of 2019 due to a move abroad. His grasp of the organisation’s financial position and his clear and concise reporting to the board have been a major asset.

Mike Martin Chair



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Looking back at my report last year, it struck me that I talked a lot about RRSB as an organisation and the challenges it faces: funding cuts, increasing competition for decreasing numbers of grants, business plans, fundraising strategies and our growth.

Whilst all very vital to the running of any organisation, it is sometimes easy to get consumed by this day-to-day administration and management of processes and procedures to the point where you risk becoming isolated from the actual reason the organisation exists. So I re-read our mission statement and vision, and asked the question: are we delivering these? In my head I immediately started listing everything we were doing and realised I was going through our business plan.

I love Mondays at RRSB. It is our Drop-In day. From 10am – 1pm the conference room at RISC is filled with people, from all over the world, chatting, learning, drinking coffee, smiling, laughing, talking, complaining, writing CVs, discussing jobs and volunteering, learning English, teaching English, sharing stories, being friends. It is difficult to work out who is a volunteer and who is a refugee sometimes. Invariably someone will shake my hand and say hello, and that's when I know that RRSB is delivering against its Mission Statement. It's not an action point completed on time from the business plan, it's the grip in the handshake and the smile in the eyes from someone saying 'thank you'. Someone who two years ago was imprisoned in a room without natural light for over 2 months with 50 other people, tortured regularly, who is now telling me in English how his son has just got a job. Or the determined look in the eye of the mother as she tells me, in English, about the barriers she faces getting registered as a nurse having lost all record of her qualifications when her village was shelled.

RRSB has increased its income this year; for the first time we have employed a fundraiser and we are planning our 25th Anniversary celebration in November 2019. We have a diverse, wonderful and committed staff team and board of trustees, a business plan and a fundraising strategy all in place. Things are going well. How do I know? Mondays.

So I think RRSG's biggest challenge in the year ahead, indeed our responsibility, is to tell stories, good news stories, stories I hear about every Monday. In its 25th year, RRSG has been nominated for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, a prestigious award, equivalent to the MBE for an individual. For me this is a massive good news story as it highlights the contribution which volunteers have made to RRSG and to the lives of people we seek to help over the past 25 years. Our volunteers extend RRSG's 'welcome' far and wide and help create the very stories we need to share.

Nick Harborne CEO

I joined RRSG in December 2013, Alice joined RRSG in early 2014 as a volunteer so I have worked with Alice for about 6 years.

Alice liked writing and communicating and volunteered once a week, leading RRSG's social media presence on Facebook and Twitter, and helping redesign and maintain our website. Alice also had a tumour.

Eight years of treatment - radiotherapy and chemotherapy finally took its toll and Alice passed away peacefully on 6th June surrounded by her family. Alice did one of the most important jobs there is. She communicated. Her focus was always trying to bring people together - to increase people's compassion for each other and to increase people's understanding of each other.

Alice has left the world better off for her being in it. And that is a wonderful legacy that we at RRSG will continue to build on, we will celebrate Alice's life at RRSG and we all want Alice's family to know that we are really proud of her.



*Alice Driver
1990— 2019*

Alice loved rainbows. I know Alice's own rainbow will be ever present in our thoughts and our work at RRSG. I know because Alice left us all some very clear instructions which we will all strive to follow.

*“Try to be good to each other, all of you.
Be brave, and be the kindest
human beings you can be.”*

The significant growth experienced by the Charity over recent years has continued in the 2018/19 financial year with income growing by 52% to £332k (2017/18: £218k). This represents a greater than four-fold growth in income over the past five years. However, it is important to understand what is underpinning this growth in income and the financial commitments that come with it.

The income stream breakdown for 2018/19 saw fee income from Local Authority contracts increase by 76% to £148k (2017/18: £84k) and income from grants and donations grow by 14% to £150k (2017/18: £132k). There was also Other Income of £34k relating to the re-imburement of expenses incurred in delivering contracts.

As a result of the increased income due largely to new contracts to deliver services and some investment, the Charity saw expenditure increase overall by 58% to £332k (2017/18: £210k). Further Local Authority contracts and investment in income generation led to the recruitment of staff for the Syrian Resettlement Programme and a Fundraising Manager. As a result staff costs is one of the main areas of increase in expenditure, rising by 63% to £206k (2017/18: £126k). Note that this also created the requirement for the associated service delivery costs of £57k, up from £31k in the previous year.

The income and expenditure detailed above meant that the Charity broke even over the course of the year (2017/18: £8k surplus), leaving it with funds of £97k with which to maintain a reserve, deliver the requirements of grant agreements and deliver contracted services.

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 three months of expenditure on the core costs of running the charity. The trustees consider the current required reserve level of £45k is covered as per these accounts.

Andrew Boctor, RRSB Treasurer

FUNDRAISING REPORT

This has been an incredibly significant year for Fundraising at RRSB.

The Fundraising Strategy for the year centred on increasing unrestricted income to sustain the organisation in the face of continued local government cuts. As RRSB's first ever Fundraising Manager I oversee the fundraising and marketing for the organisation, and I'm pleased to report that there has been healthy growth of both

regular and one-off giving online throughout the twelve months.

Unrestricted income

Monthly Regular Giving was singled out as a key area of focus for increasing RRSB's unrestricted income which saw an increase of 34% and is a promising sign that this new focus is working. Overall online giving increased as well this year by 113%.

Grants

Grant funding remains an important income source for RRSB, and we have continued to apply for grant funding from The Big Lottery and other charitable trusts or businesses.

Other successes

This year we secured RRSB's first Corporate Partnership with Deloitte's Reading office. This is a three-year partnership that will involve Pro Bono professional support, volunteering and fundraising and will launch in June 2019.

This year's Reading Half Marathon was also a huge success, with five people running for RRSB, including a Trustee who ran the race blindfolded, and the London Legal Support Trust Reading Walk was well attended and well supported. Thank you to all who took part.

Along with established fundraising events, we have been planning lots of new fundraising and profile raising events such as: showing three films (in Reading, Wokingham and Newbury) and launching a coffee morning for Refugee Week in June; taking part in Reading Fringe Festival in July; a grand 25th Anniversary celebration in November; and a Christmas event at Reading Minster in December.

All in all, this last year has ended with a great deal of positives and, as we move into the next year, I'm optimistic that we can continue to increase our unrestricted funding and increase the awareness of our organisation across Berkshire.



Jonjo Warrick Fundraising and Communications Manager



Since December 2015 RRSg has been involved with the Syrian Resettlement scheme and during this financial year April 2018-March 2019 in total we have supported 15 families in four local authorities.

Four families in Windsor & Maidenhead
Four families in Wokingham
Two families in Reading
Five families in West Berkshire

The programme consisted of supporting Syrian families to settle in the area, helping them to claim benefits, registering with the GP and dentist, registering the children at schools and helping the families to get involved in the community and integrating.

Families have a dedicated caseworker who will work along with the family to navigate the system, help them to understand the new culture, how things work and support them to build their new life in UK.



When the families arrive, they are very thankful for the opportunity that is given to them to be in a safe country and build a new life with hope for tomorrow for their children and them. They are resilient and keen to achieve great things. When we speak with the parents, they say they would like to open their own business, they are skilled and they would like to find a job so that they can work and give back to the country that welcomed them. When we speak to children and ask what they would like to do, they say they would like to be doctors, teachers. It is not easy for the families to understand the system and the culture when they don't speak the language. It is difficult and they need time to get used to all the new things. Patience is difficult for them as they have been for many years in limbo; they just want to build the life that once was taken from them.

We recognize the challenges they face and work with the families and the organisation to better understand our clients and work together in supporting the families to settle and achieve their full potential.

A thank you goes to the Syrian Resettlement team, who have gone above and beyond to help the families to settle and are doing an amazing job.

Flora Roshi Syrian Resettlement Programme Manager

SYRIAN TEAM REPORTS

Samera Abbas-Majid West Berkshire Case Worker

I currently support five Syrian Refugee families in West Berkshire and that involves liaising with the local authority, welfare system, schools, Berkshire School of English and other supporting groups like West Berks Action for Refugees (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 or optician and providing continual support to ensure they are integrating into their local communities, getting their rights and fulfilling their duties.

Soha Hafez Reading Borough Council Case Worker

RRSG supported two Syrian Refugee families in Reading; we help and support families by liaising with the local authority, welfare system, schools, Reading College and ESOL classes.

The language barrier is our biggest challenge. For the families to be independent, they need to improve their English. This is not easy for some older members of the family who have never had any proper education before.

Differences of culture and traditions are also a big issue for some families. Part of our job is to explain how things are done here, from booking GP appointments to school holidays and celebrations.

Shady Hagag Wokingham Case Worker

I am appointed case worker for families living in the Wokingham area. We have 4 families of 8 parents and 11 children with a total of 19 people. Our oldest family has just completed three years in the UK and the newest has been in the country for a few weeks.

We have support from different local community groups like Quakers and Gossip Girls in addition to Wokingham Council, in order to help preparing the houses and help integrating the family with the community in the neighbourhood around them.



ADVICE SERVICE

Our casework team has been led by our Operations Manager Matt Ayres

Volunteer Caseworker team

Liz Ollerhead

Rachel Giglio-Peterson

Isabella Fleitis Fermin

Nayaab Khalid

Dima Wazani

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 southeast 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 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.

“



Case Study

MS and her daughter entered the UK in 1999 from war-torn Somalia. The reasons for her asylum claim are not known to RRSB but she and her daughter were granted ILR in early 2000. She had had to leave behind two elder children whose whereabouts she did not know. Happily – with the intervention of the Red Cross Tracing Service – she was to find these two children who had fled with relatives to shelter in a refugee camp in Nairobi. At the end of 2012 the family was eventually reunited.

Help provided by RRSB: RRSB had helped MS apply for a family reunion visa which along with much form-filling had involved DNA tests and other biometric information.

She has made 148 visits to RRSB over 14 years but this in no way represents the contact during that period. This has been on a more informal basis through MS & family's engagement with RRSB outreach and integration activities e.g. the Women's Group, the Youth Project, the Homework Club, as well as telephone advocacy on her behalf and home-visits. MS now has 5 children and the most recent was born with health problems. Because of the trust and long-term relationship RRSB staff have built up with MS, they were able to persuade her to engage with other agencies e.g. Home Start. Her visits to RRSB now are immigration queries and integration activities. As a British Citizen she goes to CAB, N:quire & Welfare Rights for welfare queries but without the confidence and knowledge of English & Life Skills in this new country that has built up over the years and been facilitated by RRSB, this would not be possible.

”

CLIENT DATA BY COUNTRY

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 in the 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 in that we are doing our best to support them.

Most of these families come to the UK with no or little English language, so for us simple tasks could take much longer than expected. For example, to book an appointment with their GP, it's very hard for them to understand what the reception is asking for, so we have to help them with these tasks until their English is enough for them to book GP appointments themselves.

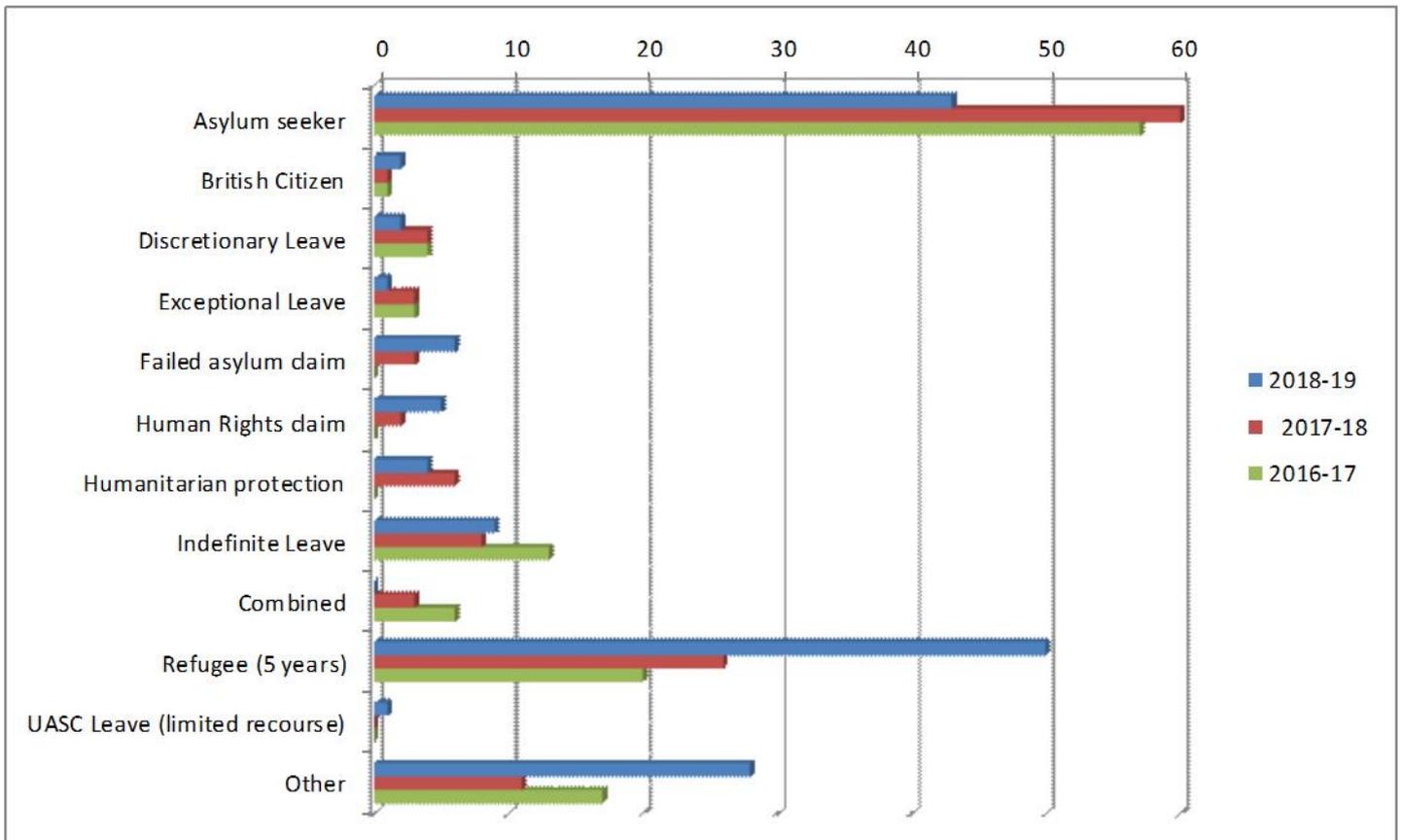
151 Clients Supported
36 Nationalities Represented

Country	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Syria	27	13	9
Sudan	22	23	15
Pakistan	17	8	15
Kenya	9	2	6
Sri Lanka	8	6	8
Iran	7	5	7
Afghanistan	6	14	9
Albania	5	7	5
Ghana	4	5	0
Sierra Leone	4	3	1
Cameroon	3	1	0
Tanzania	3	2	3
Zimbabwe	3	3	7
Bangladesh	2		
China	2		
Iraq	2	4	7
Senegal	2	2	1
Somalia	2	1	2
South Africa	2	2	0
Algeria	1	1	0
Botswana	1		
Eritrea	1	1	1
Gambia	1	3	1
Guinea	1		
Macedonia	1		
Malawi	1		
Mali	1	0	0
Nepal	1	0	0
Palestine Authority	1		
South Sudan	1		
Tibet	1	1	1
Ethiopia	0	3	1
Libya	0	2	3
Other	9	15	19
TOTAL	151	127	121

CASES BY IMMIGRATION STATUS

All cases by immigration status 2018 - 2019

All clients	No of clients		
	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Latest immigration status			
Asylum seeker	43	60	57
British Citizen	2	1	1
Discretionary Leave	2	4	4
Exceptional Leave	1	3	3
Failed asylum claim	6	3	0
Human Rights claim	5	2	0
Humanitarian protection	4	6	0
Indefinite Leave	9	8	13
Combined		3	6
Refugee (5 years)	50	26	20
UASC Leave (limited recourse)	1		
Other	28	11	17
TOTAL	151	127	121



RRSG

VOLUNTEERS

At RRSg our volunteers are vital for the support we provide to our service users. From April 2018 to March 2019, we have seen a 150% increase in volunteer numbers at our Drop-In sessions. This demonstrates how RRSg not only has a positive impact with our clients, but also our volunteers. We are indebted to our volunteers for all their dedication and passion when undertaking these roles and we thank the following people:

Thank You!

Drop-In and English Conversation Support

Martin Ashford, Sarah Burke, Jatou Bobb, Diksha Chakravati, Merry Cross, Marc Edwards, Sahar Hemami, Liz Holton, Naomi Iliff, Mandy Johnson, Margaret Kagunya, Margaret Laurie, Adrian Lawson, Andrew Linnell, Lucy Norman, Stephen Pick, Jeremy Rowe, Jean Scott-Barr, Frank Spence, Rhiannon Stocking-Williams, Hadil Tamim, Mo Van Boxel, Alfie Wardle, Amy Warmington.

Database, office admin, research & social media

Henry Cooke, Stephen Cook, Lara Dolamore, Leng Forrest, Svetlana Sylhasani, Will Page.

Caseworkers/Advisors

Yara Abdalla, Nayaab Khalid, Constanza Maccari, Liz Ollerhead, Dima Wazani.

Awards
2018-2019

Queen's Awards for Voluntary Service

In 2018 RRSB was nominated for the QAVS by Alice Chigamira, a former RRSB Chair.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK to recognise outstanding work done in their own communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate the anniversary of The Queen's coronation. It is the MBE for volunteer groups.

We received this certificate, presented by Cllr Debs Edwards, Mayor of Reading, and Mr James Puxley, Lord Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire, to commemorate our nomination while we await the final decision from the national panel.



Thank you
Alice!



Case Study

JM first came to our office on the 18th April 2018, in a distressed state. She was seven months pregnant and had fled her UK boyfriend who she had been living with beyond the end of her visa expiry. He had become violent towards her and she had gone to a friend's

The friend had told her she had to leave after the council discovered she was staying in a council property. She had gone to the council for help and was told she was entitled to nothing as she had no recourse to public funds. They would however be able to support her once she had given birth. At the same time she had already been told she had a complex pregnancy and that no doctor would allow her to travel, this did not stop her being sent bills for thousands of pounds from the hospital.

Having assessed the situation we advised her to claim asylum due to the fear of what her husband and his family would do if she returned home. She agreed and we phoned to make her an appointment with the Home Office but explained it was likely she wouldn't be able to travel to an interview because of the doctor's advice.

The Home Office worker who answered the call said that she would try and get her an appointment in Reading and put us on hold. When she came back she said that JM should wait until after the birth to claim; we responded that this would be held against her at a later date. The response was that the Home Office had a target of two weeks to offer first appointments and they couldn't meet that with JM so they didn't want her to apply!

We insisted on a reference number and told JM not to worry as we had sourced accommodation through other means and that the NHS had agreed not to charge her for her treatment. It was therefore surprising when someone else from the Home Office called JM on her mobile on the 4th May and told her she had to apply for asylum: she was confused and scared by this and contacted us. We received an appointment letter for her interview on the 10th May saying she had to attend on the 16th May which meets the Home Office target. We are now talking to her doctors.



DROP-IN SERVICE

Over the past twelve months, every Monday from 10 am to 1 pm, RRSB has opened its doors to refugees and asylum seekers from different backgrounds and situations. The objective of the Drop-In is to provide a weekly meeting point where our service users can improve their integration, skills and confidence, and access casework and advice services.

Alongside providing a safe space where refugees and asylum seekers can get the support and advice necessary to rebuild their lives in the UK, the Drop-In offers casework sessions, volunteer-based English classes, as well as employability advice through our 'Job Club'.

We have continued to develop our Drop-In service, funded by the People's Health Trust; average client attendance per month was 94.



funded through



Drop-In centre in action

English Conversation Group

English Conversation Support runs as part of the Monday Drop-In, and as a stand-alone session on Wednesdays at the Quaker Meeting House. The sessions are run with a holistic approach and provide refugees and asylum seekers with the opportunity to develop their English skills and confidence while befriending others in our local community.

As Drop-In volunteer numbers have grown by 150% over 2018-19, we have been able to provide smaller, more effective working groups. Clients tend to find volunteers that suit their learning style, and learning methods include discussing newspaper clippings, exploring English grammar or studying an atlas, as people share stories of their journeys. The Wednesday Group often has a topic for discussion, which has included the rules of cricket, and fish and chips. This year volunteers have also provided extra support to help prepare clients for the summer GCSE and A-Level exams.

"You people are great. You are always helpful and understanding people's problems when I have no hope."



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

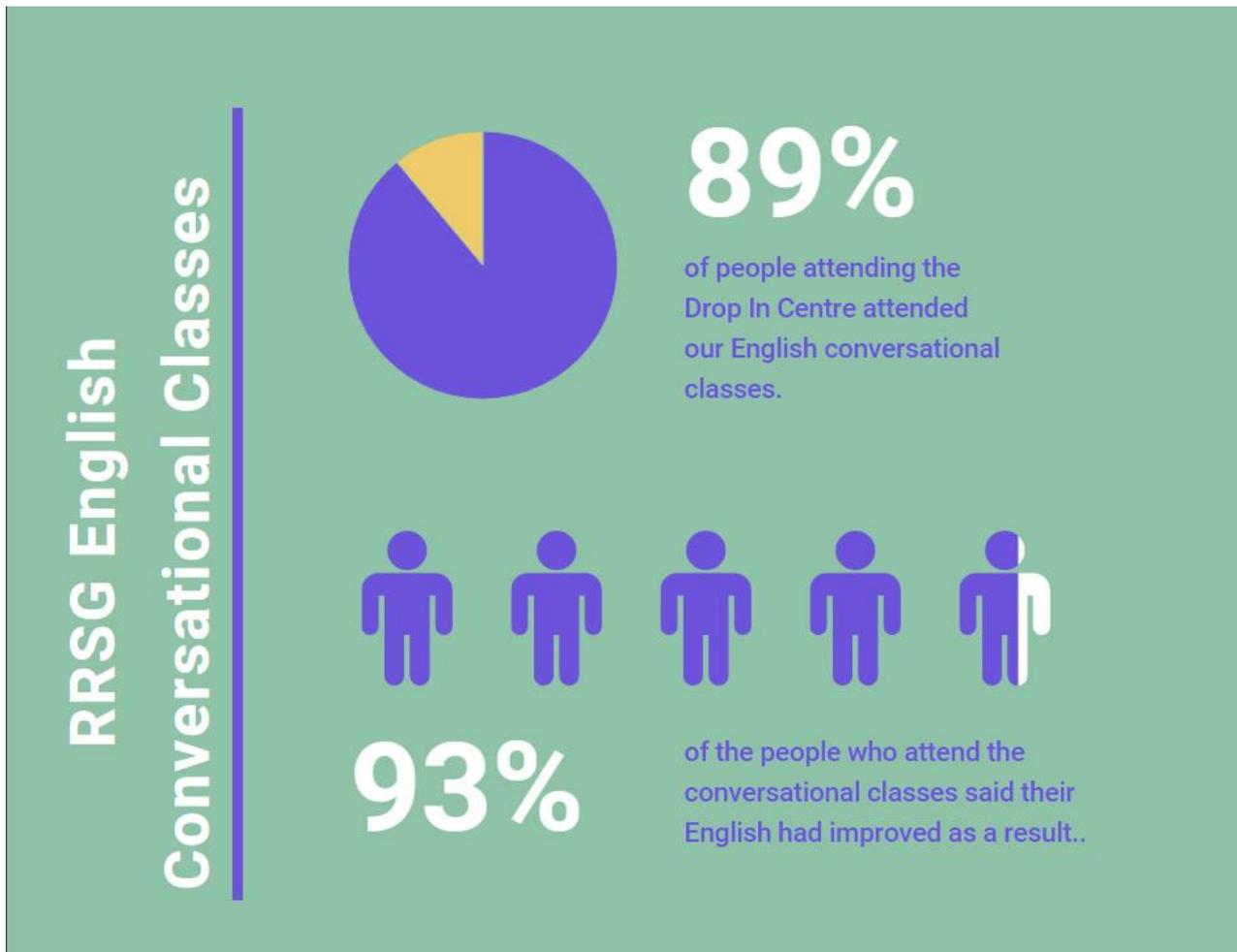
"I would like to thank and provide my appreciation to all people who work at the Drop-In and for their effort in facilitating the troubles that have confronted us".



funded
through



We have also partnered with Reading City of Sanctuary to provide clients with one-to-one English sessions led by volunteers. This has proved to be highly useful as clients have been able to further develop their English and build their support networks.



"You give me new hope, hope of life. I am always grateful: I always pray for you to keep strong and help more people."



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 e.g. TB check drives or staying warm in winter campaigns.



98% of clients made new friends

92% of clients reported their English had improved.....

86% of people made new friends..... at our Drop-In Centre.



HOMWORK CLUB

Over the last year the Homework Club has continued to improve and grow with the funding from Controlling Migration. It increased from one day a week at the Abbey School to two days a week: Tuesdays at Abbey School and Thursdays at Kendrick School.

In March 2019 we had a total of 13 children who were members of the Homework Club, an increase of more than 100% compared to March 2018 when we had 6 children regularly attending.

AW, aged 12. His family came from Mali in 2008. He attends Homework Club every week and recently applied to become Wokingham Borough Council Student Representative for Culture and Celebrations, which he then successfully got.

He recently attended his first council meeting where he got to input his own ideas and will be attending future meeting from now on.

AW said he wanted to become the student representative because he wants all people from different backgrounds to feel appreciated and be engaged in the community. AW previously said he has experienced some racism/prejudice in the past and he wants to help communities come together so that everyone can experience the same opportunities.

TA, aged 10. She came with her parents from Sudan in July 2018. Once she had been enrolled in a school, she got to attend for only a few weeks and then it was the summer holidays. Her mother came to our Drop-In in October upset because TA was refusing to go to school as she could not speak English and was finding it really hard.

She started coming to the Homework Club in December, where it was found she was really behind on all of her homework. Since then, TA has caught up with the majority of her homework and her English has dramatically improved.

Her teacher has written comments in her homework book 'fantastic', 'Homework Club has really helped' and 'great writing'.

In March 2019, TA was asked to apply to become a Young Interpreter. This is a great achievement for TA, considering she hardly spoke any English six months ago.





The Sanctuary Strikers overcame a challenging season, involving major managerial changes, to be promoted to Division Three of the Reading & District Sunday League. We organised the Club's very first End Of Season Awards for the players this year. One player, Mo, who joined the team with low confidence and very limited English, was awarded both the Most Improved Player Award and the coveted Players' Player Of The Season Award, and he gave an emotional and inspiring speech to the other players.



Mo at the End Of Season Awards



THANK
YOU

SPECIAL THANKS

TO ALL OUR FRIENDS



BERKSHIRE
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
Registered Charity No: 1155173

- Reading Borough Council
- London Legal Support Trust
- The People's Health Trust
- Reading Quakers
- Springboard
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Wokingham Borough Council
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Controlling Migration Fund
- West Berkshire Council

FUNDERS

- Faith/Readifood for their generous provision of food parcels to help support destitute clients - Narrowing the Gap (NTG) partners
- The staff and students of Abbey School and Kendrick 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) NTG partners - Amazing support for our client group
- Reading City of Sanctuary (RCoS) Partners under the Controlling Migration Funded Conversation Classes and Pop-Up English cafes
- CommuniCare. Support for our clients, NTG partners and data-base consultants.
- CIRDIC NTG Partners
- Christian Community Action (CCA) NTG Partners
- British Red Cross

PARTNERS



- RISC
- Reading Film Theatre
- Dialogue Society
- Reading Family Church
- Connect Reading
- University of Reading
- Reading Voluntary Action (RVA)
- Reading Advice Network (RAN)
- Shed Cafe



- Reading Quakers
- Reading Rotary Club
- London Legal Support Trust
- Nacom/The Guardian
- City of Sanctuary
- The Castle Tap
- The Grumpy Goat
- The Berkshire Community Foundation





**INCOME AND
EXPENDITURE**

**For the year ending
31st March**

	2019	2018
	£	£
Income Resources		
Fee income	148,219	84,129
Grants, donations	149,741	131,833
Other revenue	34,195	1,942
Interest	0	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total Income	332,155	217,904
Expenditure		
Wages and salaries	206,036	126,266
Freelance and consultancy	7,353	5,373
Cost of delivering services	57,147	30,967
Administration costs	16,507	12,144
Staff training and development	5,225	1,642
Travel and subsistence	5,447	1,653
Publicity and marketing	2,570	3,239
Meetings and events	502	395
Office equipment	3,609	1,286
Membership and subscriptions	850	1,275
Bank charges and interest	1,053	880
Professional fees	12,684	8,965
Premises	10,340	11,578
Depreciation expense	559	621
Volunteer costs	2,185	3,399
Total Expenditure	332,067	209,683
Net income / (expenditure)	88	8,221



Simply put, we need your help.

Local Authority core grants are decreasing annually.

RRSG has been going for 25 years. Unfortunately we think our services will be needed for another 25 years.

Please consider supporting our work financially. We are asking 1000 people to donate £2.50 a month. Less than a cup of coffee. This will help us employ a Case Worker for 1 year to provide free advice and support for refugees.

The best way to make a regular donation is online at:

www.rrsg.org.uk/donate

If you are a taxpayer, gift aid will automatically be added to your donation.

You can also make a donation by direct transfer, cheque or cash. Please complete the Gift Aid form below if you are a taxpayer. This allows us to claim an extra 25% of your donation back from the government.

Gift Aid Donation Form (please tick)

- Cheque (payable to Reading Refugee Support Group) £_____ enclosed.
- Cash for £_____ enclosed.
- Direct Transfer for £_____ Account: 50095528 Sort Code: 08-90-16

I enclose my donation to **Reading Refugee Support Group** Charity No:1098058 to help provide vital support to asylum seekers and refugees. I declare that I am a UK tax payer and have paid income tax or capital gains tax equal to the tax reclaim on my donation. I want RRSg to reclaim tax on this donation and any future donation until I inform RRSg otherwise. ***Please return this form with your donation to: admin@rrsg.org.uk or post to 35-35 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS***

Full Name

Address

Postcode:

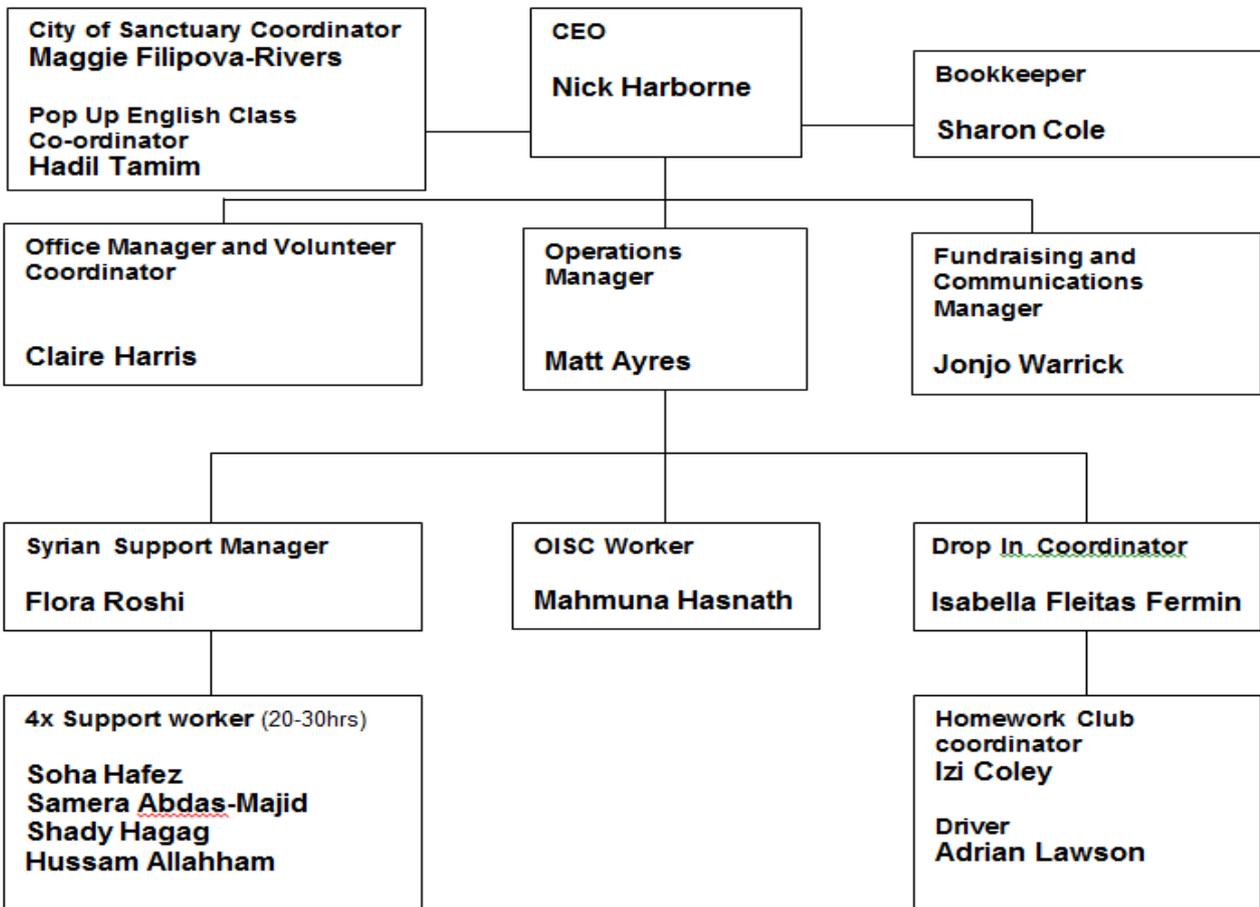
Signed:

Date:

TRUSTEES 2018-2019

- Mike Martin (Chair)
- Andrew Boctor (Treasurer)
- Lorna Obure (resigned Sept 2018)
- Bet Tickner
- Faraj Ali Alajeeli
- Richard Hanson-James
- Charlene Wattleby
- Tom Clark
- Emily Lloyd

STAFF TEAM 2018-2019



Reading Refugee Support Group

THANK YOU TO:

Henry, who spent a lot of time putting this report together.



Drop-In Centre trip to Bournemouth