



Reading
Refugee
Support
Group

Reading Refugee Support Group



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service

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Charity reg no: 1098058
Company no: 4515238

Annual Impact Report and Accounts

2019-2020



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A message from our Patron Lord Alf Dubs

I have been fighting for improved protections for child refugees travelling alone since 2016. It was disgraceful to use child refugees as a “bartering chip” with the EU, when the government dropped the family union rights from the withdrawal bill legislation. It was a betrayal of Britain’s humanitarian position.



It is bitterly disappointing that after my victory in the Lords the government then voted down my amendment in the Commons in January. What could be more humane than asking that unaccompanied child refugees stranded in Europe be able to join relatives in this country?

We must never give up though and I know everyone at RRSg is tireless in your campaigning in Berkshire, especially around trying to get mental health support for refugees who have been tortured.

I am proud to be Patron of Reading Refugee Support Group. Thank you for supporting me in my campaigning and I will do all I can to support you. Please carry on defending and advocating for refugees and asylum seekers with same passion and determination that you have done as you celebrate 25 years as a charity. That is a considerable achievement of which you should all be very proud of.

Congratulations.

Alf Dubs



A message from our Patron

Olivia Graham Bishop of Reading

I was delighted to be asked to join Lord Alf Dubs as a Patron of RRSg. I am passionate about social justice issues, and refugees and asylum seekers are a particularly vulnerable group in our society and our world. I worked with refugees in the Horn of Africa many years ago, and I know that, even back then, the UK was not seen as being a particularly welcoming environment. Things have got worse on this front.



Every year thousands of ordinary people are forced to leave their homes and countries. None of us would do this lightly. Each refugee or asylum seeker has a back story. All contain tragedy and trauma, and some of them are truly horrific. This was brought home to us with particular force this year when a young man, ex-child soldier from Libya with severe unaddressed trauma and mental health issues, took the lives of three innocent people in Forbury Gardens, Reading, and although his crimes were inexcusable they might have been avoided if good mental health support had been provided.

RRSG, and organisations like it around the country, do vital work in helping those who come here in distress to navigate our bureaucratic systems; in supporting individuals and families through the challenges of rebuilding their lives in a new country; and in advocating both for individuals and for a more humane, more healing and welcoming national approach to these vulnerable people. Refugees have so much to offer to our society. They bring skills, insights and experience, and the brightness of diversity into our communities. I am proud to be associated with RRSg and its work.

+Olivia Graham
Bishop of Reading

VISION & MISSION



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

This year we have increased our commitment to campaigning. We are supporting Lift the Ban, Safe Routes and advocating for dispersed asylum seekers living in hotel accommodation in Berkshire.

We are aware that the resourcing for Reading City of Sanctuary has not been successfully replaced this year after our grant ended and we will strive to ensure we strengthen and expand the work of RCoS going forward.



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.

This year we have increased communication between our caseworker advice service and our integration activities to strengthen our holistic support for our service users. This is an ongoing priority.



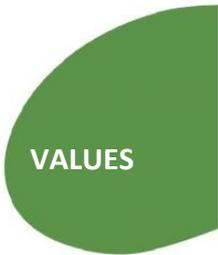
We have continued our drive to secure dedicated mental health support for staff and service users. This is proving difficult within the constraints of austerity measures but we will not waiver from this priority.

We held election hustings allowing our users to raise their issues and discuss them directly with parliamentary candidates.



Our 25th Year celebration at Reading Town Hall was a colourful, vibrant and proud statement of diversity and cohesion that Reading as a town is proud of. RRSRG will seek to build on such events next year.

We will work towards embracing a culture of “nothing about us without us” in all areas of our work where appropriate and realistic.



Our Values are central to the work of the RRSG and guide the staff and trustees.

We will check in every year to ensure we are upholding these values which are:

1. 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.

Politicians, activists and the media are consistently misleading and confusing public opinion by using incorrect terms such as 'illegal asylum seekers'. RRSG will continue to publically challenge misrepresentation of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers in the media where appropriate and effective.

2. That diversity including race, culture, ability, sexuality, gender, age, religion and other beliefs are beneficial to the community and should be celebrated.

RRSG has increased our collaboration with arts organisations, our partnership working with the LGBTQ+ community and the Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality. We are also proud to fund, host and chair Reading City of Sanctuary.

3. 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.

RRSG is linking in with national campaigns working towards achieving this.

4. That working in partnership with other organisations improves effectiveness and spreads understanding.

Thank you to the many organisations across Berkshire who we work alongside .

5. That maintaining confidentiality in working with those we seek to help is of the greatest importance in generating trust and security.

RRSG, its staff team and trustees are committed to increasing lived experience on our board and within our staff team. We are working towards an active service user forum and to realising the goal of 'nothing about us without us'.

6. That the services and activities of the organisation should be accessible to all people who need them regardless of their individual circumstances.

We are examining how we can increase communication between our casework support teams and our other support activities to ensure increasingly holistic support services.

April 2019 to March 2020

Writing, as I am, in the wake of both the Covid 19 epidemic and the appalling murder of 3 innocent people in Reading's Forbury Gardens I must confess to a feeling that the year covered by this report – April '19 to March '20 – feels like it happened a long time ago in a different world. However, I must set this aside and start by remembering that the year was one of celebration for the Refugee Support Group.



Our 25th anniversary was marked by two wonderful events: "We are 25" in Reading Town Hall on November 4th and the Carol Concert in Reading Minster on December 7th. The large attendance, generosity and passion evident at these celebrations really brought home to me the strength we derive from being an organisation that is owned and supported by local people.

In the course of the year and following a governance review we recruited 5 new trustees who brought strength and much needed skills to the board. In May Linda Stacey joined us. In July Mary Richardson re-joined the Board having previously been a Chair of the RRSg. In December Mary agreed to become Vice Chair and I am thankful to have her experience supporting me as Chair. September saw Ram Kasozi and Emma Broomfield joining us and in October we were delighted to appoint a new Treasurer Jon Linley. Jon's predecessor, Andrew Boctor, was a hard act to follow but Jon is already showing a firm grip on the role and is working well with our Finance Manager, Tony Cornwell, who also joined us early in the year.

A major part of the governance function is that of ensuring legal compliance and good practice and I think this was the year when we really got our act together, working closely with the Chief Executive. In the course of the year, we reviewed the following policies and procedures: Conflicts of Interest, Financial Reserves, Volunteer Agreement, New Trustee Induction (a new policy), Staff Appraisal, Safeguarding of Children and Adults, our Organisation Risk Assessment, Confidentiality, Health and Safety and our Client Service Agreement. We also oversaw an audit of our Compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations that was undertaken by Nick Harborne. This was a high priority for an organisation holding highly sensitive personal data.

On a more outward looking note we developed campaigning activities. Earlier in the year we agreed a Position Statement which outlined where we stand with regard to the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. We focused in particular on the campaign to “Lift the Ban” on asylum seekers working, the legislation that bars people with temporary immigration status from accessing some publicly funded services and the frankly disgraceful treatment of refugees and asylum seekers by the Home Office. The toxic culture in this government department has recently been highlighted in the Windrush Report. In the run-up to the 12th December General Election, we raised these and other issues with parliamentary candidates who attended our Wednesday Drop-In. It was a pleasure to see some of our clients engaging with these candidates and drawing on their experiences to illustrate their point.

Other issues that were a continual focus for trustees throughout the year were as follows.

- Mental health - both of our staff who engage in stressful work week after week and of our clients, some of whom have endured horrors that are beyond our imagination. The dangers of ignoring the latter issue have been tragically underlined in the days preceding my writing of this report.
- Demonstrating our impact – the need to provide evidence of the difference we make is crucial and we have begun work on a major Impact Report.
- The management of our casework – early in the year I met with an experienced volunteer caseworker who gave valuable critical feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of our service. Since then we have appointed a new Casework Manager and addressed the issues raised.
- Premises – we have outgrown where we “live”. Finding new premises is a long-term project but we have made a good start with our partners Deloitte LLP helping to produce a plan that weighs up our options.
- Finances—the need to raise the level of public giving to the organisation. The foreseeable future does not look good in terms of securing income from government or grant-making trusts. We need to harness the goodwill that is out there in the public domain to safeguard the future of this organisation and we have a way to go.

A big thank you must go to my fellow trustees, our staff and our partners and funders who are listed elsewhere in this report. It’s always a bit risky to single out individuals but I feel I must give special mention to Nick Harborne, our Chief Executive, who manages to hold things together when stress levels are running high. Thanks Nick.

Mike Martin MBE Chair

Idris came in to collect his Residents Permit. He said “thank you for everything Nick”. Slightly puzzled because all I had done was open the post, I looked at him and noticed tears welling up in his eyes. “RRSG gave me food and clothes when we first got here in 2012 with my wife and my children. We had nothing. I am working now. Everything is ok now. I will never forget RRSg. Thank you.”

Idris’s (name changed) story is both heart-breaking and life-affirming at the same time, which pretty much describes working at RRSg. Amidst the hatred and racism that are seeping into our communities through the ubiquity and anonymity of social media channels, there are good news stories that keep you going, like Neil from Deloitte and Adrian (RRSG volunteer), who both kept me going when I joined Neil for just one day of his 900 mile bike ride from Lands End to John O’Groats, a challenge he took to raise funds for RRSg. It reminds you we are all human and we all need help, and when you get that help, or when you give that help, wonderful things can happen. Please watch “We are 25” on our website. This year is a year of celebration for RRSg. For a small charity, we have achieved lots!



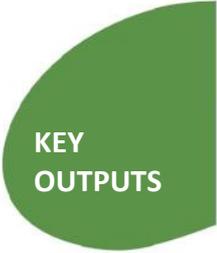
Some people’s stories continue to challenge us at RRSg. People who have been tortured, professionally tortured, need appropriate mental health support. RRSg will continue to battle to get this in place for all refugees and asylum seekers. Also for staff and volunteers, who will often hear the most graphic details as they seek to find the right support for people.

We conducted the first baseline survey of our user group using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale. 43.68% scored below the UK average, with 13.38% scoring below the NHS recommended cut off for low mental wellbeing. It is a battle to get funding for support across the entire organisation, but we won’t stop trying until it is in place.

We are also exploring strategies to buy our own refugee centre and office. This would be a safe space with disabled access, dedicated learning resources and confidential but welcoming appointment rooms, offering social amenity space dedicated to celebrating diversity and bringing communities together. RRSg has proudly been supporting people for 25 years. A permanent office would be a fitting legacy to underpin the next 25 years.

I work alongside a fantastic bunch of people. I have seen Idris’s story repeated, many times, all down to the compassion and dedicated team of staff, trustees and volunteers at RRSg. **Thank you, everyone.**

Nick Harborne CEO



Our Achievements, Performance and Service User feed back 2019—2020

Casework Support

- **47%** of people were female, **53%** were male.
- Top three enquiries: new asylum applications, failed asylum applications and 5 year leave to remain visa renewals.
- **64%** of people came from 7 countries.
- RRSG’s casework support services helped **221** people with **511** different enquiries, an increase in clients of **34%** in 2018-19.

Country	2019-20
Sudan	20
Pakistan	14
Syria	14
Kenya	8
Sri Lanka	6
Zimbabwe	6
Iran	5
TOTAL	73

Drop in Centre

- We held **98** Drop In Centre sessions with English conversational classes and job clubs.
- There were **2019** attendances.
- **4** service users found full time employment, **5** users are in part time employment, **7** users found volunteer positions and **8** users accessed higher education.

Volunteering

- We conservatively estimate over **40** people regularly volunteered for RRSG donating over **6211 hours** of time at a value of over **£90,000***

Food Parcels

- Working partnership with Readifood, we distributed over **1300** food parcels.

Reading City of Sanctuary Pop Up English Classes.

- We have provided in the region of **560** hours of one-to-one support to clients over the past year supported by over **20** volunteers

User Involvement

- We held **2** user forums , conducted **2** user feedback surveys and **1** annual Mental Health Wellbeing Survey.

Diversity

- **25%** of trustees and **50%** of our senior management have **lived refugee experience.**
- Our staff team is **46%** male & **53%** female. **62%** of employees identify as BAME.

Research Partnerships

- Healthwatch Reading: “Our top three priorities” By RRSG Refugees & Asylum Seekers
- University of Reading: Reading Migration Survey. Ruth Evans
- University of Reading: Tacking Loneliness. Olivia Bridger and Ruth Evans

*<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc376/index.html>

RRSG Service User Involvement and Satisfaction Surveys.

We have increased service user involvement across RRSg with employees, volunteers and trustees with lived experience. We hold drop-in-centre feedback surveys every 6 months and we conducted our first baseline Mental Health Wellbeing Survey which we will run annually (see page 12).

In our most recent survey, 23 drop-in-centre attendees responded. The average attendance at our centres is 21.

Positive Results:

- 87% of attendees reported that they attend on a regular as opposed to on an occasional basis.
- 83% of attendees reported that they attended English classes.
- 96% of attendees reported that they felt supported at the drop-in-centre.
- 100% of attendees reported that they felt their confidence had improved as a result of attending.
- 82% of attendees had spoken with new people and made new friends.
- 91% of attendees felt the drop-in had made them feel part of the wider Reading Community.

Results that need further consideration by the staff team and RRSg Trustees

- 8.7% drop in centre attendees surveyed attended Job Club
- 22 % of attendees reported Job Club had helped them access jobs or volunteering positions.
- 34% of people felt they had been helpfully signposted to other organisations for more specialist help and support

Comments left by service users:

“This is my first day here. I am really happy.”

“I still don’t know where to go in Reading.”

“I wish RRSg extend (sic) services to Newbury.”

“Maybe a support LGBT group in Reading?”

“I want to ask for help so I can find a home to live.”

“Thank you so much, all the time you help me.”



In February 2020 RRSG registered as a licenced user of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS) and undertook our first baseline survey across our service user community. We will repeat this survey on an annual basis to help ensure our policies and services are reflecting the support needs across our service user community. We also asked 2 questions relating to satisfaction with RRSG support services in general and in relation to support around Covid-19.

2019—20 Baseline Survey

The survey scores from 14-70 points, where higher scores indicate higher mental wellbeing and vice versa. The average UK score is 51, with studies suggesting that scores between 41-44 indicate possible depression. Scores below 40 are considered by the NHS to indicate low mental wellbeing and, according to Bianco (2012), probable depression.

Results:

- Out of 125 people who received the survey, we had 89 responses (71% return rate)
- 4 respondents were female, 45 were male (49.4%: 50.6%)
- 86 respondents were aged 18+, 2 were under 18, 1 did not disclose their age
- 43.68% of clients surveyed scored below the UK average (51)
- 10% of clients surveyed scored 41-44, suggesting possible depression (Bianco, 2012)
- 13.38% of clients surveyed scored below 40
- Female client average: 52.5. Male client average: 50.75

- Of our client group, 43.68% scored below the UK average, with 13.38% scoring below the NHS recommended cut off for low mental wellbeing.
We need to investigate how to support client’s mental wellbeing and will continue discussions with statutory agencies.
- One client commented “I’m not sure what RRSG provided during the COVID-19”.
We need be more aware of how we communicate information and how people may or may not be able to access the information we communicate.
The website should be updated with Zoom links for our Monday and Wednesday virtual drop-ins.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS) were developed to enable the measuring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. The 14-item scale WEMWBS has 5 response categories, summed to provide a single score. The items are all worded positively and cover both feeling and functioning aspects of mental wellbeing, thereby making the concept more accessible. The scale has been widely used nationally and internationally for monitoring, evaluating projects and programmes and investigating the determinants of mental wellbeing.

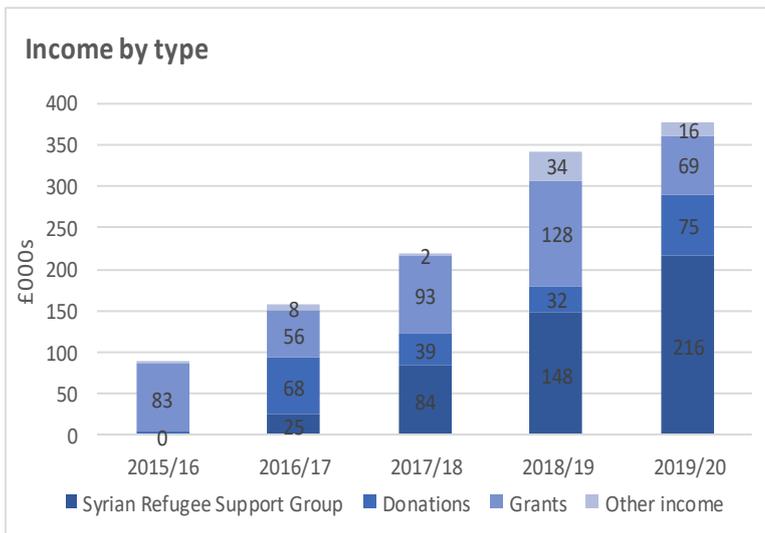
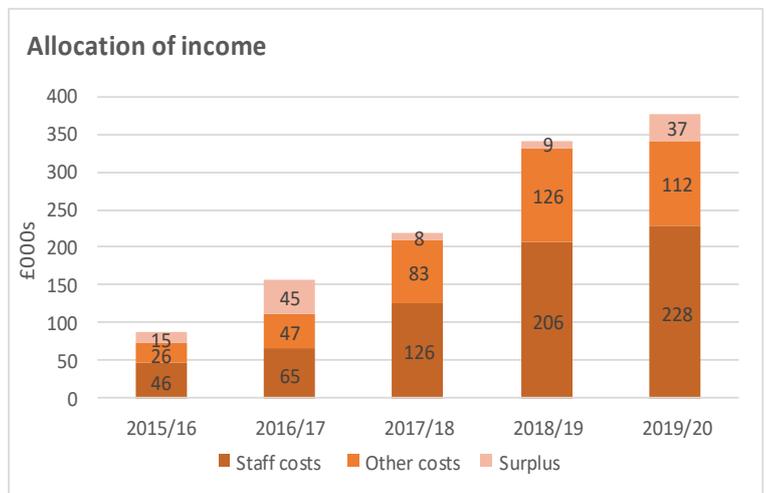
<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/using>

The significant growth experienced by the Charity over recent years has continued in the 2019/20 financial year with income growing by 13% to £377k (2018/19: £332k). This represents a greater than four-fold growth in income over the last five years, driven by an increase in services provided under the Syrian Refugee Support Scheme, which generated income of £216k in 2019/20 (57% of total income).

Income from donations and grants fell slightly, to £144k in the year (2018/19: £150k); the reduction in grant income was partially offset by increased donations.

Expenditure has increased to £340k (2018/19: £332k) to support the growth of the Charity. Staff costs remain the primary area of expenditure, with costs in the year of £228k (2018/19: £206k) representing 61% of income (2018/19: 60%).

Notably, investment has been made in the addition of an experienced accountant on a part-time basis, in recognition of the increased scale and complexity of the Charity's operations. The Charity continues to exercise tight control over the remainder of the cost base, with other costs of £112k in the year (2018/19: £126k).



A combination of the above factors has led the Charity to a surplus of £37k in the year, leaving it with funds of £133k with which to maintain a reserve, deliver the requirements of grant agreements and deliver contracted services.

The Charity maintains reserves to protect it from short term fluctuations in income and to provide working

capital for activities that are funded in arrears. The policy is to hold reserves equal to three months of expenditure, which the trustees consider to be £85k based on these accounts.

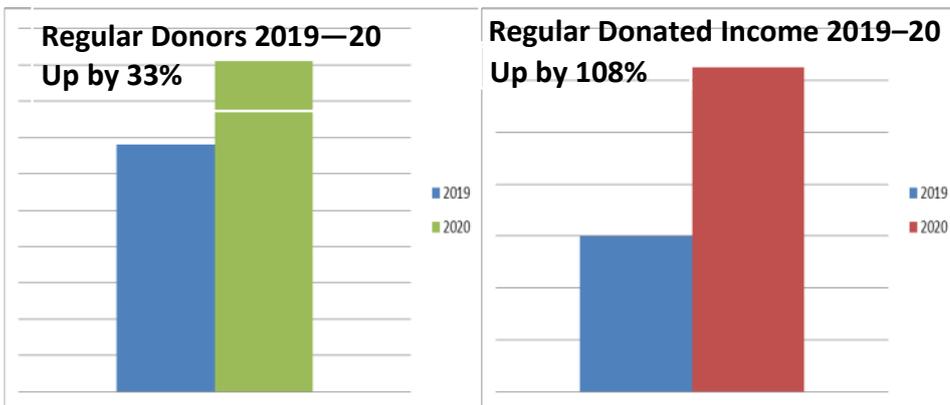
Jon Linley, RRSB Treasurer



While COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented challenge for us as a charity, for the people we support and for the world as a whole, it appeared at the tail-end of a truly special year for Reading Refugee Support Group.

Regular Giving

Our main fundraising priority is increasing our monthly regular giving. We made steady progress this year with 91 current regular donors contributing £1,251 each month, a 71% increase from March 2019.



Grants

We have been very grateful to receive grant funding from The National Lottery, Berkshire Community Foundation, Springboard and the People’s Health Trust this year. This has allowed us to deliver our most important services:

our weekly Drop-Ins, Casework support sessions, English Classes, and Homework Clubs for schoolchildren.

Events

It has been a year of standout Fundraising events for us. We had record attendances at our Refugee Week screenings of On Her Shoulders in Reading and Wokingham, 27 walkers completed the Reading Legal Walk; and we had the unforgettable Carols Service at St Mary’s Minster with the Gospel Choir of the Year, Reading Community Gospel Choir.

We’re proud to be part of the local community and we had a great time at community events this year including Reading Pride, Forbury Fiesta, Reading Town Meal and Reading Gaol Hug. Other highlights include the powerful **Conversations With Refugees** event for Reading Fringe Festival and Rapid7 cycling the distance from the UK to Greek Refugee Camps on Broad Street in Reading.

We have received a great deal of generosity this year, and I want to thank some of our biggest donors this year: Reading Between The Lines, Craft Theory, AKM Geo, Reading Quakers, Henley Quakers, The Carnation Trust, Kendrick School, Unite South East, Highdown School, Bradfield College, St John’s Church amongst many others. **Thank you.**

Jonjo Warrick Fundraising and Communications Manager

COPORATE
PARTNER

Our three year partnership with Deloitte Reading launched this year and it's been a huge success, with enthusiastic volunteers, pro-bono services and numerous fundraising events raising an incredible £12,951!

One million futures made brighter



In 2016, Deloitte set out to help one million people get to where they want to be through access to education and employment. RRSG is proud to be one of their 70+ societal partners helping them to achieve this milestone.

One Million Futures is the Deloitte UK firm's social impact ambition. "As the Fourth Industrial Revolution unfolds, millions of people are being left behind, unable to fulfil their aspirations and potential. Focusing our efforts on addressing inequality, our goal is to help one million people get to where they want to be through access to education and employment."

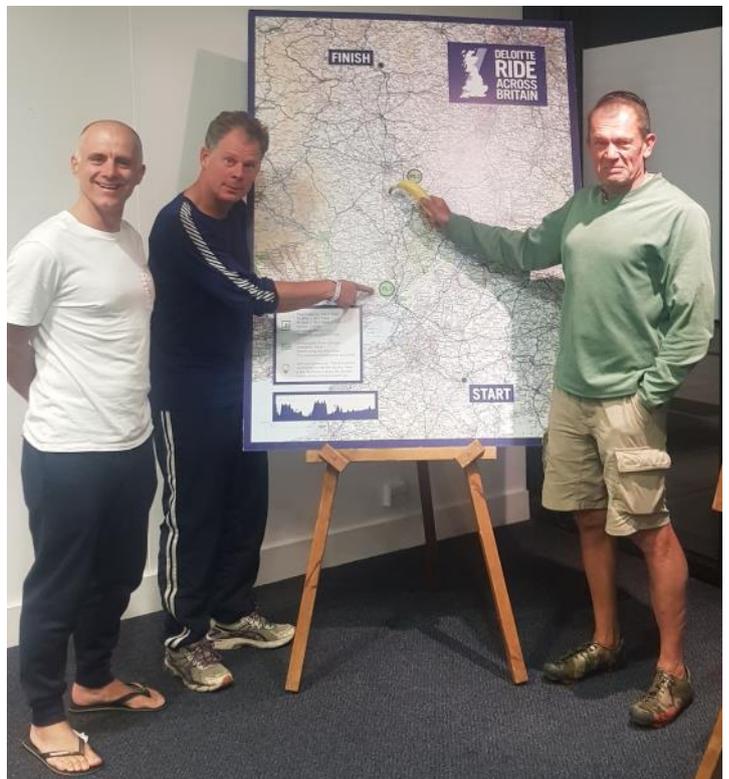
One Million Futures focuses on reducing inequality, helping people to overcome barriers to education and employment. **"We are proud to be working alongside RRSG".**

Special thanks from RRSG to our partnership managers Charlene McNeil and Dan Barlow, and supporter **Neil Roantree.**

Neil rode 980 miles from Land's End to John O'Groats in nine days. He was joined by our own Nick and Adrian on day 3 for a mere 100 miles. Neil raised a staggering £3,176. We say 'staggering' as he couldn't walk for a week afterwards.

We have also had great support from Deloitte's in house expertise who helped us develop a property plan and strategy around acquiring a new office and, when we asked, Deloitte stepped in immediately to help adapt our new website in response to COVID-19.

Looking forward to next year.



Thank you

25th YEAR
CELEBRATION

25th Anniversary Event

We are 25! Held in November 2019 at the beautiful Reading Concert Hall, this event was uplifting and powerful

evening celebrating everything the charity has achieved for Refugees in the past 25- years. Hosted by BBC Radio 3 presenter Fiona Talkington, there were stories from key figures throughout our 25 year history. We had inspiring messages from our patron, Lord Alf Dubs; University of Reading Vice-Chair Dominik Zaum

and long-time volunteer Merry Cross. We had a fashion show of national dress from our client's home



countries, as well as live music performances from Reading Civic Choir, Raudiophonics Choir and local Refugee-led band Limpopo Groove.

There was a stirring theatre performance from young local students, and we unveiled our new photography exhibition Refugees Of Reading. **Carol**



Thank you to **Sonning Flowers** who loaned us the most beautiful flower arrangements for the evening.



Reading Gospel Concert

In December **2019 National Choir of the Year Award Winners, Reading Community Gospel Choir** held a very special Christmas Carol event to raise



money for Reading Refugee Support Group. The event featured Gospel renditions of classic Christmas Carols.



Section 2



RRSG SUPPORT
SERVICES AND
PROGRAMMES

1. Syrian Support Program
2. Casework and Advice Service
3. Drop In Centre
4. Reading City Of Sanctuary



For the past five years RRSG has been involved in the

resettlement programme supporting Syrian families coming into the UK, helping them to settle in. Currently, we are supporting 19 families in 3 Local Authority areas: Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire.

During this financial year, we welcomed 5 new families.

The support approach for each of the families will be different depending on how long they have been here as well as each family's unique circumstances. The caseworker will put in place a support plan that is tailored to meet these criteria.

When the families arrive the support is intensive for the first few months, helping them settle in their new environment. Over time, caseworkers will work with the families to build their confidence to become independent and learn to do things on their own, like booking doctor appointments or taking a bus.

As the families become less reliant for such support our emphasis will be around helping them to improve their English, we will encourage them to join our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes and find other providers or volunteers that can help.

We will encourage them to look for local volunteering opportunities, and ultimately help them to find a job. We encourage them to connect with the community and introduce them to other organisations in the area.

It takes time for these families to adapt to the change, to the new culture, the new systems and most of all not being able to speak or understand English. Often they are confused about the system and misunderstand things, resulting in frustrations. Our caseworkers are patient, help them to understand and resolve any issues.

We will work with the families to overcome their challenges. We partner with other organisations such as the Job Centre, ESOL providers, schools and other charities like Gossip Girls in Wokingham, WBAR in Newbury, with the aim being to better support the families as they settle in the area.

Family x arrived 3 years ago. The Local Authority found the family struggling to manage their lives. Despite being here for some years they are still struggling to understand the benefits system., and they couldn't interpret the information that was sent to them. The LA assigned the family to our support. We managed to help the family apply for the correct benefits leaving them financially better off. We also dealt with medical problems of the parent, which they were unable to explain to the GP previously.

Flora Roshi Syrian Resettlement Programme Manager

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. Our casework team has been led by our Casework Team Manager and Solicitor Mahmuna Hasnath supported by Hussam Allahham.

Over the last academic year we have greatly benefitted from recruiting three Pro Bono Law students from the University of Law (Reading and Guilford), one Law student from the University of Reading and a recently qualified Para Legal. The students received training, shadowed our Solicitor during triage and booked appointments and provided remote help during the early stages of lockdown. Thank you to Kaylie, Caitlin, Amira, Bronte and Oscar. It has been a pleasure to have you with us. **This case study shows what you do.....**

Toxic Environment

DG is an asylum seeker with diagnosed severe depression and PTSD caused by torture in Syria, his asylum case has been ongoing for **seven years**. He, his wife (SG) and their 2 year old son have relied on support from friends in the church during this time. However, this had to end because the family they had been staying with were having a new baby. We have been working with DG and his SG for over four years and decided to apply for Home Office accommodation, the application was originally bounced back by the Home Office asking for documentation they had already received by recorded delivery and we re-sent it with a covering letter again by recorded delivery. Eight weeks had passed from the original application by the time Easter approached and still no decision by the Home Office. DG and SG were becoming increasingly distressed as they had to be out of their accommodation by Easter weekend. We had to resort to applying for emergency accommodation which should be dealt with in a 24 hour period. We applied on the Tuesday of Easter week and by the Thursday had still not heard anything. We called Migrant Help on the Thursday afternoon to find out what was happening. They came back to us at 5pm and said the Home Office were refusing the application for emergency accommodation because **they had not received a response to their request for further information** on the original accommodation. We pointed out that it had been sent by **recorded delivery and had been signed for**. After an hour Migrant Help called back and asked us to send the paperwork through by e-mail which we did by 7pm. It was then agreed that the family would get emergency accommodation and we highlighted DG's diagnosed mental health problems again in regard to the emergency accommodation.

The family were picked up at Reading Police station (pick up point!) on the Friday morning and taken to Heathrow Lodge. SG called one of our caseworkers on his mobile on the Friday afternoon in a distraught state she said that the 'Lodge' was full of men hanging around smoking, that they had no food, or money and nobody had talked to them. The caseworker had the emergency number for out of hours issues with the Home Office accommodation and gave it to SG. Between them they called over thirty times during the weekend and never received an answer. On Saturday evening they received vouchers to buy food but they had no cooking facilities. The child was scared and DG was traumatised by the environment and the fact that men were being taken away in vans, seemingly against their will. After the holiday weekend the Home Office moved the family to a more suitable location and eventually **admitted they had received all of the information but had lost it**.

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

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

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.

Thank you to our many partners with particular thanks to Reading Community Learning Centre, Readifood, Reading Family Churches, the Quakers, The Red Cross, Sanctuary Hosting, RVA, and CommuniCare. A special thank you to Microsoft who helped us reconfigure some donated laptops for the drop in.

The People's Health Trust has supported the Drop-In-Centre for four years with grant funding. We are so grateful as the centre has been so successful that it has become an integral part of our services. Sadly we could not renew this grant and are currently seeking sponsorship or donations to keep it going.



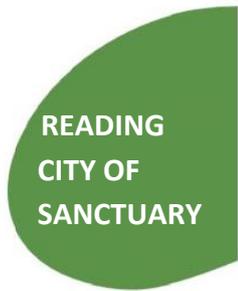
Drop-In centre in action



From a volunteer:

“I've been volunteering on the "pop-up" programme for two years. I've been matched with people anxious for the opportunity to practice speaking English and although I have no formal teaching experience, I've enjoyed meeting them and hopefully increasing their confidence in using English. We talk (once a week) about life in England, life in their home countries, the news, the weather, our families. And sometimes about the English language, from how to write a formal letter to useful expressions and ones best avoided. Sometimes - I hope - I can be a link to the support and expertise available at RRSg. I've learnt a lot’.

”



City of Sanctuary UK is a national charity supporting a network of groups across the UK and Ireland who are part of a movement to build a culture of welcome and hospitality within their communities. RRSG host and chair the Reading City of Sanctuary (RCoS) group, which saw Reading being officially awarded City of Sanctuary status in July 2017. 

Reading City of Sanctuary holds the vision that Reading and Berkshire will be a welcoming place of safety for all. Wherever refugees live, we want them to feel safe and find people who will welcome them and to meet this aim we have a number of programmes and activities. **Our thanks to the advisory group members:** Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality, Reading Voluntary Action, Reading Muslim Council, British Red Cross, Reading International Solidarity Centre, and to Alice and Janet who are individual members.

Pop-Up Language Support

The pop-up language support envisions that every sanctuary seeker in Reading has the opportunity to have one-to-one language and befriending support. We have provided in the region of 560 hours of one-to-one support to clients over the past year, we have grown the pool of trained volunteers and the list of participating clients.

University of Sanctuary

University of Reading has been making steady progress towards becoming a university of sanctuary. Progress this year includes:

- Formation of a working group within the University where RCoS is represented
- Engagement with City of Sanctuary UK
- Reading university has made progress towards developing a Sanctuary Café on campus
- A UoR staff member helped to train RCoS pop-up volunteers

Client testimonials

'I would like to thank you for your support to me in learning the English language. I also thank my tutor for the effort he has done on my behalf. I achieved great benefit through the lessons he gave, which improved my language for much better. I hope these lessons will continue with us for as long as possible'

'The lessons were excellent. I was happy to join you. It was helpful for me. Communication with the volunteer was fun and useful. Thank you for this program to help others improve the language'

'The one-to-one class is most useful for me. I improved my English knowledge and I learned about UK culture and places'

'So easily we can forget English language. But this class we can talk with teacher, so very useful to me'

'I enjoy chatting with volunteer Oliver. He is good, helps me speak and learn English vocabulary, with sports and clothing themes-because they are practical'

Section 3



ANNUAL ACCOUNTS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Annual Accounts
2. Donors and Funders
3. Staff Team and Trustees
4. Donation Form

INCOME
AND
EXPENDITURE

For the year ending 31st March 2020

	2020	2019
	£	£
Income Resources		
Fee income	216,163	148,219
Grants, donations	144,290	149,741
Other revenue	16,290	34,195
Interest	0	0
Total Income	376,743	332,155
Expenditure		
Wages and salaries	213,571	206,036
Freelance and consultancy	12,303	7,353
Cost of delivering services	35,067	57,147
Administration costs	9,314	16,507
Staff training and development	4,290	5,225
Travel and subsistence	8,367	5,447
Publicity and marketing	3,936	2,570
Meetings and events	9,614	502
Office equipment	0	3,609
Membership and subscriptions	3,161	850
Bank charges and interest	0	1,053
Professional fees	2,929	12,684
Premises	36,716	10,340
Depreciation expense	328	559
Volunteer costs	538	2,185
Total Expenditure	340,133	332,067
Net income / (expenditure)	36,610	88

**PARTNERS
& FUNDERS**

SPECIAL THANKS

Grants and significant Donations

- AKM Geoconsulting
- Cecily at Kendrick School from their cake sale
- Deloitte
- High Sheriff of Berkshire Lucy Zeal and Police Crime Commissioner
- Highdown School (Mapledurham House)
- J&F SB
- London Legal Support Trust
- Margaret Fingerhut (Reading City of Sanctuary)
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Controlling Migration Fund
- Mr Martin Lloyd
- Mr Peter & Mrs Liz Driver
- Mr Petr Sadilek
- Ms Margaret Laurie
- People's Health Trust
- Reading Borough Council
- Reading Quakers
- Reading Rotary Club and St Laurence Trust
- Sarah Snow - Education For Development
- Springboard Reading
- The Berkshire Community Foundation
- The Carnation Trust
- The National Lottery Awards For All fund
- Unite Union - Reading Branch & South East Branch

As always, whilst we tried our best to include an acknowledgment to everyone who supports us, we are so sorry if we have inadvertently missed someone. Please do let us know and we will correct the situation immediately.



Mid Thames Quakers



Statutory Partners

- Reading Borough Council
- West Berkshire Council
- Wokingham Borough Council

PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS



- Beenham Simple Meal Group and Beenham Wind Orchestra
- Bottomline Technologies
- Bradfield College
- British Red Cross
- Christian Community Action NTG Partners
- CIRDIC NTG Partners
- City of Sanctuary UK
- CommuniCare. Support for our clients, NTG partners and database consultants.
- Connect Reading
- Craft Theory Festival
- Dave Maul and Oakford Social Club
- Dialogue Society
- Faith/Readifood for their provision of food parcels - **Narrowing the Gap (NTG) partners**
- Grazeley Parochial Primary School
- Healthwach—Reading
- Henley Friends Meeting
- NACCOM
- Practical Solutions International
- Rabble Theate
- Rapid 7
- Reading Advice Network Reading City of Sanctuary Partners under the Controlling Migration Funded Conversation Classes and Pop-Up English cafes
- Reading Community Learning Centre. NTG partners Amazing support for our clients.
- Reading Family Church
- Reading Fringe Festival
- Reading Pride
- Reading Voluntary Action
- RISC - Reading City of Sanctuary Coffee Bank scheme
- Sanctuary Hosting
- Sonning Flowers
- St John & St Stephen's Church
- SupportU
- Teneo Ltd
- The Castle Tap
- The Cedars School, Aldermaston
- The Grumpy Goat
- Shed Café - Reading City of Sanctuary Coffee Bank scheme
- The staff and students of Abbey School and Kendrick School for their dedicated support to refugee children with their school work.
- UK Garrison
- University of Reading
- Wavelength Charity
- West Berks Action for Refugees
- Wokingham Film Society
- Wokingham Freemasons
- Wokingham Gossip Girls

As always, whilst we tried our best to include an acknowledgment to everyone who supports us, we are so sorry if we have inadvertently missed someone. Please do let us know and we will correct the situation immediately.



Our Volunteers and Supporters are the unsung heroes at RRSg. We wouldn't be able to run RRSg without the incredible support of our volunteers, supporters and friends.

We conservatively estimate over **30** people regularly volunteered for RRSg donating over **6211 hours** of time at a staggering value of over **£90,000** (using the Office for National Statistics calculator* value of £14.43p/h). Volunteer roles include fundraising, admin, befriending & mentoring, outreach arts & crafts coordinator and RRSg ambassadors talking about RRSg.

The start of RRSg's new year continued as the year before, with an increase in new volunteers being allocated to help at the Monday and Wednesday drop-ins. At the start of lockdown, digital sessions were set up and a small number of volunteers now participate in these sessions each week. During lockdown, volunteer Sophie provided seeds and volunteers from the Hemen Farm and helped deliver food parcels.

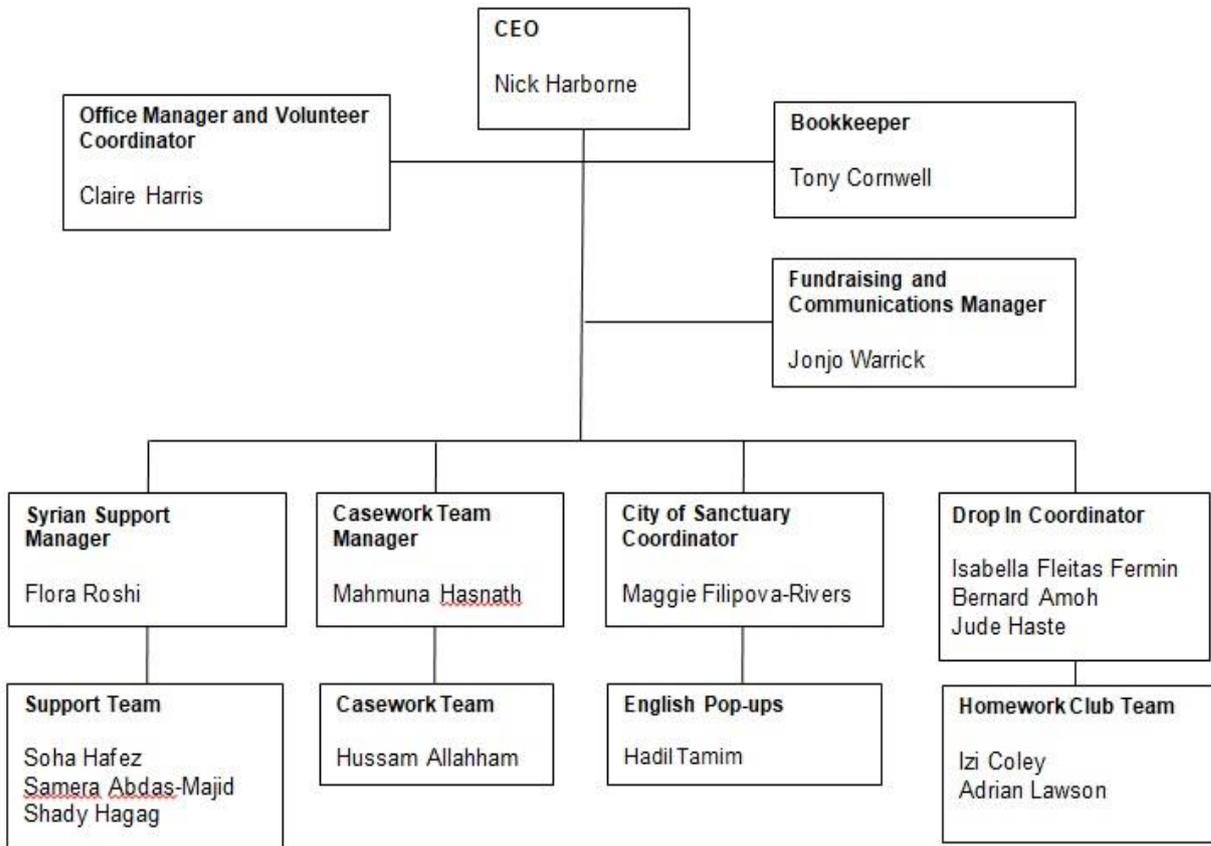
In the background we continued to benefit from the efforts of Stephen, who rounded us up like a benign shepherd and ensured we were using the new database system CharityLog to the best of our abilities. Vin worked with Jonjo on writing grant applications, and others have helped at Reading Pride and the annual Christmas party.

Special mention goes to Adrian and Merry, whose initial desire to help several years ago, kick-started the drop-ins, which have grown into such well-attended and necessary sessions for our clients.

Our volunteers all bring different skills and styles to the table, and form part of the thread that makes the tapestry of Reading Refugee Support Group. We would not be able to provide the services that we do without your invaluable help. **Thank you all.**

Drop-In & Admin				Fundraising & Events	Case-workers	RCoS Advisory	RCoS Pop Ups	
Mo	Olivia	Jatou	Liz	Stephen C	Kaylie	Martin	Liz H	Michael
Jean	Marina	Naomi	Sarah	Vin	Omira	Sulayman	Liz B	Hazel
Frank	Sarah K	Mike	Hilary	Tomson	Caitlin	Victor	Graham	Ian
Marc	Adrian	Collin	Mandy	Alice C	Bronte	Janet	Cecilia	Emily
Andrew	Catherine	Henry		James	Oscar	Zainab	Veronica	Shula
Stephen P	Lesley N	Sophie		Lesley		Alice C	Emmy	
Lesley	Jeremy	Tom		Izi		Lorraine	Andrew	
Yasmine	Cecilia	Daniel				Alice	Martin	
Meri	Marc	Marina				Arjen	Hilary	

STAFF TEAM
2018-2019



Thank you to a fantastic staff team who all go above and beyond what is expected of them to help people, often in quite a challenging environment. RRSR would be no where without the loyalty, dedication and compassion of staff and volunteers, past and present.

Thank you.

TRUSTEES



Mr Mike Martin MBE (Chair)
Voluntary Sector Expertise



Mrs Ram Kosozi
Proposals & Contracts
Lived Experience



Ms Bet Tickner
Former RBC Councillor



Dr Mary Richardson (Vice Chair)
Education Lead



Mr Faraj Ali Alajeeli
Human Rights Lawyer
Lived Experience



Mrs Linda Stacey
Training, Careers & Development



Mrs Emily Lloyd
Corporate Fundraising



Mr Jon Linley (Treasurer)
Finance



Mr Richard Hanson-James
Business and Insurance.



Mrs Emma Broomfield
HR Lead



Mrs Charlene Wattley
Safeguarding Lead



Thabo Makuyana
Human Rights Activist
Lived Experience (joined Sept 20)



We need your help.

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

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.

You can make a regular donation 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.
- Bank Transfer to Account: **50095528** Sort Code: **08-90-16** for £_____

giftaid it

I enclose my donation to **Reading Refugee Support Group** Charity No:1098058 to help provide vital support to asylum seekers and refugees. **Please tick the correct box** below.

- 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 donations until I inform RRSg otherwise.
- I am not a tax payer and I am not eligible to reclaim gift aid.

Please return this form with your donation to: admin@rrsg.org.uk

or post to: 35-39 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS

Full Name

Address

Postcode:

Signed:

Date:

Note:

All personal details of individuals mentioned in case studies have been changed to protect people's anonymity and confidentiality.,

We have consent to publish pictures from those who feature in them.



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

***Alice Driver
13th December 1990 - June 6th 2019***