



**Annual Report**

**for the Year ending**

**31 March 2016**

## Chair's Report

The Reading Refugee Support Group was set up to assist, help and provide relief to refugees and asylum seekers in the Greater Reading area. Over the past few years the international flow of asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced people has grown at a dramatic rate. The desperation and suffering of these people is now all too evident through increased media coverage; documenting the extraordinary lengths and risks taken by these people to cross borders and seas in order to seek safety. These trends are also reflected in the number of people seeking asylum in the UK since 2010. Over this period the RRSg has welcomed some 50 new families per annum. In 2015-16 the RRSg also assisted a number of local authorities across Berkshire, thereby expanding our area of operation considerably and contributing to facilitating the delivery of the UK's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

Our two core paid staff, Nick Harborne (Director) and Flora Roshi (Administration and Volunteer coordinator) continued to take the organisation forward and proved to be outstanding in terms of commitment to our aims and values. We have also had new expertise join our Board of Trustees – Andrew Boctor, Marian McNichol and Lorna Obure, all providing unique skills and making the guidance of RRSg a more manageable job.

My sincere thanks go to Kate Smart who resigned from the Board of Trustees and has been instrumental in helping RRSg reshape its structure, aims and grow over the past year.

With the assistance of one of our volunteers – Alice Driver – the RRSg continues to develop its online presence and maintain its profile on social media. Going forward this is an area that will require particular attention as social media plays an ever growing role in the ability of organisations like ours to make better use of the wonderful explosion of sympathy for the plight of asylum seekers and refugees that emerged following a number of harrowing scenes in 2015-16. Moreover, social media will increasingly become important as a vehicle for fund raising as the RRSg, like other voluntary organisations, adjust to public sector austerity.

As always enormous thanks goes to all of our volunteers without whom we would not be able to deliver the services we do. We thank each and every one of you for the generous time you devote to working with us as administrators, publicists, fund raisers, on stalls, in the office, advising clients and offering a warm welcome to RRSg.

We continue to work with other organisations and successfully developed a new Homework Club at Queen Anne School through the kind support of BG Group Community Fund – we thank them for their commitment to education for our clients' children and look forward to working with them in the future. Our support of the

Reading City of Sanctuary bid is moving forward positively with funding from Springboard.

The financial year 2015/2016 saw our income rise £70,637 to 89,839, although expenditure also increased from £57,392 to £77,726. We have been successful in accruing funding from the LLST People Health Trust, BG Group. Online fundraising through Local Giving, Virgin Giving, donations and general fund rising via our website and events resulted in generous contributions from our supporters. General fund raising increased almost 4x to £40,016

Notwithstanding the growing public sympathy for asylum seekers and refugees the financial outlook of organisations like ours is uncertain. Public sector funding, itself struggling with a more austere funding landscape, can no longer be relied on to provide sufficient funds to keep many voluntary organisations going. An important focus of our work in the last year has thus been the diversification of our funding and to develop a strategy for channelling public support into an effective way of supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Reading and Berkshire. Our 1 in a 1000 campaign is an important element in this, but financial diversification and sustainability remains critical to the RRSB operations in the short and long term.

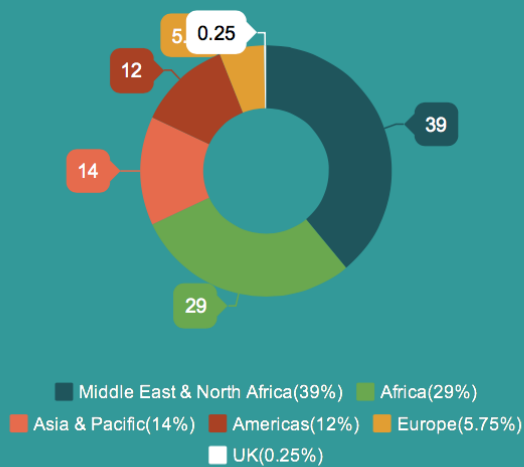
We continue to develop the organisation and adjust our service and profile to best serve the interest of refugees and asylum seekers in Reading and Berkshire. We are building partnerships with other organisations in Reading to address both our reach, capacity and financial position. We remain positive that the changing public sector landscape is providing opportunities, as well as difficulties, that will enable small voluntary organisations like the RRSB to provide assistance, help and relief to the growing number of people seeking such in the UK. In this context we are delighted that the Bishop of Reading has agreed to become our Patron this year and we look forward to working with him closely.

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to the Board of Trustees who also give their time so generously to support RRSB and wish you all a very successful year ahead.

**Christian (Andi) Nygaard, acting Chair of Trustees**

# 2015/16 RRSRG Annual Report

Where do displaced people live?



Based on UNHCR figures for 2015

If refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people were a country, they would be:

#1 Fastest population growth in the world 2005-2015<sup>^</sup>

2nd largest country in the EU

21st largest country in the world<sup>^</sup>

<sup>^</sup> Save the Children, based on UNHCR Global Trends 2015

60

The average number of new RRSRG clients per annum since 2010

142

The average number of clients helped per annum since 2010

24

Nationalities seeking refugees and asylum in Reading<sup>^^</sup>

<sup>^^</sup> Largest groups come from Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and Iran

More people ask for UK help



60% Of asylum applications are initially rejected<sup>\*\*</sup>

<sup>\*\*</sup> Based on Home Office 'Immigration Statistics' Aug 2016

Thanks to Alice Driver, Marian McNichol and Andi Nygaard for creating this summary – to remind us why RRSRG matters.

## Financial Report

In financial terms 2015-16 was a positive year for the charity in terms of increasing its income. Income grew by £19k to £90k (2014/15, £71k), with £10k of this restricted to specific projects. This is particularly pleasing given the funding challenges that are being faced.

Reading Borough Council (RBC) has again been the main funder, providing £40k of income to fund the core advice and support services to Asylum Seekers, but fundraising activities during the year raised another £40k, with a good spread of grants and individual donations, which shows significant progress on the previous financial year where only 23% of core funding came from sources other than RBC. However, funding from RBC continues to be a challenge with budgets being cut and a new joint bidding process meaning that the charity has secured funding of around £35k for the coming year, which then drops to £25k in the following year. This means that the current levels of income received through fundraising need to continue to grow to fill this funding gap as the charity adapts to this significant reduction in RBC funding.

Grants from the London Legal Support Group (£6.5k), Springboard (£10k), BG Community Involvement (£2k), the Mayor Fund (£1.5k), contributed to core income raised.

The charity also won contracts with local authorities in Hampshire and The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to work on the Government's resettlement plan for Syrian Refugees. The Hampshire contract began during the 2015-16 financial year contributing £5k to income.

### Income and Expenditure

For the reasons set out above income rose from £71k to £90k, although expenditure rose from £57k to £78k, with £9k increasing because of restricted income and the rest due to increased core activities. Staff costs, as expected, remain the most significant cost at £50k (2014/15, £41k). All other core costs stayed broadly in line with the budget. All significant client costs were funded via the Red Cross destitution fund.

Despite an increase in core funds the group's future remains uncertain, with the continued reduction in funding from RBC. Nevertheless, trustees and staff remain committed to continue making our vital services available to the refugee community in the Reading area, and we are positively planning to meet their needs. Efforts continue to diversify the income streams of the charity and reduce over dependence on any one funder.

Thanks as always are given to the staff and volunteers both in the office and those who work to support us in other ways, for their boundless time and energy without which we would be unable to provide the support we do.

**Andrew Boctor: RRSB Treasurer**

## Manager's Report

What a year. There is no doubt that RRSB is battling for survival in the face of funding cuts that will hit the entire voluntary sector in Reading - our Reading Borough Council grant will be cut successively over the next 2 years. Local and national funding sources will be increasingly competitive. Can RRSB respond to what we believe will be an increasing demand for our services?

As a priority, RRSB need to ensure that we continue to listen and respond to the needs of our service users. We need to ensure that there is an increased understanding and awareness of the basic and essential needs of a refugee fleeing their homeland, and that we are able to build upon this foundation to develop the skills and independence of refugees in order for them to lead a fulfilling life.

Last year the picture of the body of Aylan Kurdi lying drowned on the beach brought the tragedies to often endured by refugees home to us all. This became a changing point in the public's perception of refugees and the issues surrounding what RRSB believes is only the beginning of an international refugee crisis. At RRSB we received many offers of help, support and funding from the public in the time immediately after the photo hit the headlines. People from all over Reading were asking "what can we do to help?"

This is the way forward for RRSB: to harness this support and energy and provide the opportunity for people to help in whatever way they can. Fund raising for RRSB will be an ongoing priority, as it is for any charity, and we keenly promoted our 1-1000 campaign this year – aiming to get 1000 people in Reading to donate the equivalent of a cup of coffee on a monthly basis. But equally important this year was the progress made by Reading City of Sanctuary (RCoS) bid, a national charity in its own right which links towns across the UK by their comment to making their town or city a place of welcome for refugees and asylum seekers. RRSB hosts and chairs the steering group (Reading Voluntary Action (RVA), RISC British Red Cross (BRC), Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality (ACRE), Mustard Tree and the Muslim Council) and acts as the employer for the CoS coordinator who works one day a week with funding from Springboard. Our first project was supported by local independent coffee shops introducing a 'coffee bank' where people can buy 2 drinks and leave one in the 'bank'. Clients from BRC RRSB and ACRE can then withdraw from the bank and enjoy the same café culture the rest of us enjoy. Thank you to Shed Café who were our first partner.

RRSB also need to get better at telling people's stories. The media is so quick to pick up on the fact an extremist posed as a refugee to gain access to France and then committed highly published atrocities in Paris. And suddenly all refugees and asylum seekers are potential terrorists and the connection that Aylan Kurdi created with people is forgotten. So we need to find safe spaces for people to feel comfortable, to feel part of the Reading community, to have opportunities to contribute to and well as benefit from it and if willing people need to be able to tell their story. We are grateful to the Health Trust Lottery who gave us funding to open up and develop our drop in centre, to help develop such a space. We now provide English classes, talks, trips, a job club and a safe social space just to come to have company

and talk. We provide access to computers and the internet, a weekly lunch club as well as the homework clubs we have been running now for a few years now.

The drop in centre is an invaluable resource for newly arrived Syrian refugees who we are supporting. RRSB was clearly in a place to offer its 23 years of expertise and experience and is working with one local authority under the government Syrian refugee relocation scheme. We are meeting with and planning to work with other authorities around Berkshire who will be offering accommodation and support to around 70 families over the next 5 years under this scheme. It also puts RRSB in a unique position: with a 23 year history of working with refugees we are able to connect many other grass roots organisations we have come across over the years, linking up different areas of support for our clients. We also have volunteers directly from our client group who are able to step straight into the shoes of newly arrived refugees and effectively lead RRSB in its response and support with their first-hand experience. Down to the father or mother who has been tortured or abused down to the small child wetting their bed because of post-traumatic stress of the constant shelling they experienced, our networks and experience are vital.

And it has to be said, this is just the beginning: many issues and traumas may well appear many months and years later. If and when they do, RRSB will be here

Finally, we must thank all our volunteers on whom we depend and without whom we could not provide this valuable support service. From our caseworkers to our fundraisers to our admin and IT support, to our English teachers and our trustees, thank you for your support your work and your dedication this year.

**Nick Harborne Manager**



## **Our Advice Service**

Refugees and asylum seekers endure terrifying and unimaginable experiences arriving in this country having fled persecution, torture, war, sexual abuse and famine. RRSB's mission is simple: to improve the lives of those that end up in the Reading area by providing support and advice and helping them to navigate through layers of bureaucracy which may be alien to them.

Our caseworkers have been led by Behnam who RRSB is indebted to for his continuing loyalty and support. Our sincerest thanks also go to:

Ildephonse

Teona

Rosie

Mafaz

Lizzie

We have expanded our drop in sessions to create a drop in centre with funding for 2 years from the Health Lottery (10am -12.30pm) each Monday with appointments Tuesday to Thursday 10am – 1pm.

During this year we assisted a total of 107 clients (98 in 2014-15). Of this total 50 were new clients this year (48 in 2014-15) indicating numbers of client remain steady with a slight increase from the previous year.

Again the in majority of cases people are formally seeking asylum.

Table 1 New clients 2014 – 2015

New Clients 2015 - 2016 by immigration status	No of Clients	
	2015 - 2016	2014 - 2015
Asylum Seeker		25
British Citizen		0
Discretionary Leave to Remain		1
Humanitarian Protection		2
Indefinite Leave to Remain		0
Mixed Status		0
Other		7
refugee -five years		8
Refugee indefinite		1
<b>Total</b>		<b>44</b>

Table 2 All clients 2015 - 2016

Clients 2015 - 2016 by immigration status	No of Clients	
	2015 - 2016	2014 - 2015
Asylum Seeker	64	58
British Citizen	0	1
Discretionary Leave to Remain	3	4
Exceptional Leave to Remain	1	0
Humanitarian Protection	1	1
Indefinite Leave to Remain	8	3
Mixed Status	0	1
Other	6	8
refugee -five years	23	18
Refugee indefinite	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>98</b>

Table 3 All clients by Country 2014 - 2015

<b>No of active Clients dates by country 2015-16</b>		
	<b>No Clients</b>	
<b>Country</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2014-15</b>
Afghanistan	15	11
Zimbabwe	15	11
Pakistan	12	13
Iran	11	6
Sudan	8	7
Sri Lanka	6	7
Syria	6	4
Iraq	6	1
Somalia	5	4
Kenya	3	4
Tanzania	2	3
Undefined	2	2
Eritrea	2	0
Nigeria	2	0
Algeria	1	2
Congo	1	2
Palestinian Authority	1	2
Burundi	1	1
Guinea	1	1
Tibet	1	1
Uzbekistan	1	1
Yemen	1	0
Sierra Leone	1	0
Libya	1	0
Kosovo	1	0
India	1	0
Uganda	0	3
Mauritius	0	2
Turkey	0	2
Bhutan	0	1
Malawi	0	1
Morocco	0	1
Gambia	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>98</b>

## Our volunteers and projects: 2015-2016

RRSG is very grateful to all the volunteers support .Their help is essential in services we are able to offer to our client and help them to build their life in Reading and their help have been enormous in the advice services that we offer, project that we run and many activates that RRSG have run during this year. All of our volunteers share the same vision to help the most vulnerable and with the help and their support we have been able to reach as many clients in need.

During this year we have said farewell to some of our volunteers and 8 new volunteers have joined our team bringing the total number of volunteers to 22 with a contribution of 65 hours for week.

Volunteers: April 2015-March 2016

Support areas	New Volunteers	Total numbers of volunteers	Number of volunteers hours per week
Casework advice		4	20
Administration	2	4	16
One to One English Classes		3	4.5
English Classes	2	2	3
Homework Club	3	4	8.5
Social Media		1	3
Computer/IT		1	1
Translation	1	1	8
Organising and assisting events		1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>65</b>

Volunteers April 2015- March 2016

### Casework Volunteers

Behnam Balalimood

Rosie Louise Deller

Teona Parsons

Mafaz Ali

### Admin Volunteers

Cristina Barbara

Dane Bates

Dhurata Hazizi

Caroline Hearst

Ildephonse Rugema

**Computer/IT/Social Media volunteers**

Stephen Cook

Alice Driver

**Homework Club**

Kate Butler

Andrea Thomas

Mariama Sheriff

**Integration Activities**

Alison McQuitty

Liz Bailey

Elaine Edge

Cecilia Bainton

Adrian Lawson

Merry Cross

**Fundraising Volunteer**

Tomson Chauke

**Interpreter**

Khalid Metawalli

**Our integration work**

English for speaker of other languages (ESOL) Project

ESOL is a project that is tailored to help the clients that need help to learn English. The client might not speak English or just speak little. One to one lesson will not only help the client to learn but will help them build their confidence, self –esteem, build their independence and help them to integrate in community. This year RRSg support four clients from Syria, Iran and Sudan.

**Flora Roshi (Volunteer and Outreach Co-ordinator and Administrator)**

**Activities**

During this year RRSg participated and organised different event to raise awareness of asylum seeker and refugees and the hardship they face.

In the summer time RRSg participated in some events organised in Reading. A day of outdoor fun and drumming workshop run by our volunteer Tomson at Reading Children’s Festival, East Reading Festival, Oxford Road Fun Day and Caversham Festival which was enjoyed by youngsters and their parents. At the Water Festival we had use of a boat donated and the public was invited to see inside and make a donation for RRSg.

12th of February, Rebecca Totterdell - a violinist with the orchestra of Welsh National Opera and music teacher at the Abbey School organised a fundraising concert for

us. It also marked her last year working at the school and she has kindly decided to mark this by donating the proceeds or the recital to RRSG.

To mark the Refugee Week RRSG on 16th June with fantastic help from the Reading Film Theatre, we held a screening of the critically-acclaimed film Leave to Remain which focuses on the lives of young asylum seekers. After the film we held a panel discussion including Maurice Wren CEO of the Refugee Council, our patron The Bishop of Reading Rev Andrew Proud, our own supporter Yamikani and LTR film director Bruce Goodison.

This year once again the support of our volunteers has been immeasurable; their skills, knowledge and their spirit have helped RRSG to continue to meet the client's needs despite the shortage of staff that has been going for the past years.

Throughout the year all our volunteers have been committed and determined in their work to support refugees and asylum seekers, and to help them in their long journey of survival and sanctuary. Volunteers are the heart of RRSG and their outstanding work has made RRSG a strong organisation that continues to help our clients to integrate in the community.

Their support has been in the following areas:

- Casework advice
- Reception
- Administration
- One to one English classes (ESOL)
- Homework Club
- Organising and assisting events
- IT, design and fundraising support

## Activity and Event Summary

April 2015	All staff at RRSB attended 'sexualized trauma training' BBC Radio Berkshire interview with Yamikani
May	RRSB website designed by Brand 786: official launch at the parlour of the Mayor of Reading Cllr Tony Jones London Legal Services Trust Review/MOT: achieved 'outstanding'
June	Visit to Cedars Lodge – family detention centre in Crawley Homework club started at St Anne' School Refugee Week. Leave to Remain shown in partnership with Reading Film Theatre 16th June.
July	Fire awareness training all staff. Springboard funding for a City of Sanctuary coordinator. Stall and drumming workshops at the Oxford Road Community fun day 4th July Attended the Equalities Alliance Inaugural of Hate Crime Forum 8th Held an RRSB Iftar at RSIC Stall and drumming workshops at the Caversham Community Festival 11th July Stall at the Eid festival Palmer Park 16th July
Aug	Tackling Poverty Conference RBC Blast Community Radio interview.
Sept	Mythbusting talk at Quakers t LLST sponsored walk
Oct	Rotary Club Talk RISC talk RRSB AGM
Nov	Fostering and Adoption Workshop for Muslims at our drop in centre Attended Interfaith reception at Mayors Parlour Attended FGM Symposium (ACRE)
Dec	Christmas party for Clients Staff party Resettling Syrian Refugees: delivering a multi-agency resettlement programme in the South East RRSB started supporting Syrian Refugees under the relocation programme in Hampshire
Jan 2016	Keynote speaker 19th Holocaust memorial service Henley Business School social media project start BBC Radio Berkshire interview re City of Sanctuary
Feb	Speaker at Fabian Soc Safeguard Training for all staff The Abbey School, Kendrick Road, Reading Violin Recital on behalf of RRSB
March	Speaker at the Big Brew – St Bartholomew's Attended Equality Alliances' 2nd Pan Equality Conference Henley Business School presentation Attended 'The war that we don't see' at Reading University

## **Homework Club 2015/16 Report**

This year is the fifth year that we have run the project.

### **Queen Anne's**

The season started in Sept with a meeting of myself and Helen Rich from Queen Anne's. Helen ran the club and organised the girls. Queen Anne's runs on a Tuesday afternoon and whilst not being as popular as The Abbey due to the location of the school was still successful.

Cecilia Bainton was the volunteer who turned up to check everything was running smoothly and that girls, children and parents were happy. The club was run well and whilst there was an average of 5 children attending this grew to 8 during some weeks.

One boy in particular flourished at Queen Anne's (Helen even accompanied his mother to parents' evening as a translator).

We organised Jude Haste to come and give two 30 minute drama sessions to the children, with the aim of boosting self-esteem and confidence, which worked really well and we will aim to repeat.

### **The Abbey**

The Abbey had two sessions a week and had a good attendance rate. Between 20 – 25 pupils each session. Andrea Thomas was the volunteer and she mainly attended on a Thursday afternoon.

Andrea would wander around the two rooms and check that everyone was working well, after she had taken the register. We investigated introducing the same drama workshops that worked so well at Queen Anne's band and will carry this forward next term.

So to conclude, a mostly successful year at both schools with some lessons for us to build on and apply suggestions from both volunteers to next year.

Both volunteers have been excellent and very reliable. Thank you.

We look forward to continuing to develop the Homework Clubs with the help of Abbey School, Queen Anne's School and the financial support of BG Group.

**Kate Butler Volunteer Coordinator**



## **Integration work**

Drop-in service report April 2015 – April 2016

In the past year we have responded to the demand for increased services for asylum seekers and refugees living in Reading. With the help of The People's Health Trust funding we have been able to work in consultation with our service users to develop a Monday drop-in service. This not only enabled us to increase our advice and casework service but it also developed our work to further assist refugees and asylum seekers in promoting their wellbeing and develop key skills. In the past year we have developed the following projects to support our service users:

### English conversation classes

With the help of English tutors we have been able to establish an English club at our Monday drop-in service. We help asylum seekers and refugees at all levels to learn English free of charge. Our tutors cater the classes to the individuals attending, teaching basic phrases and developing their knowledge of vocab and grammar. This has a huge impact on their ability to integrate in their community and gain self-confidence in time that can be stressful for our service users. By delivering this service in a safe and welcoming environment we are able to further provide the opportunity for our service users to socialise and better communicate their needs.

In addition, our service users often ask for more 1:1 English classes during the week, with the help volunteer tutors we are able to provide this service. We have seen a marked difference in the increase in confidence and independence of these service users as a result.

Case study told by one of our English tutors

'One of our students couldn't write a word in English when she started, and as an Arabic speaker, she was used to reading and writing from right to left. With the help of our classes she was able to write down a description of each of her six children in English and read it to the class. It was a massive achievement'.

### **Promotion of Health and Wellbeing**

In the past year our Drop-in Co-ordinator has developed projects designed to help address the health concerns of our service users. The projects also provided welcome respite to ongoing asylum processes and pressing concerns of asylum seekers and refugees that often result in increased mental health and physical health conditions.

The first project that we developed at the drop-in was the creation of a women's group to help provide an opportunity for our service users to socialise and welcome new arrivals. This group had the opportunity to share common experiences, find

peer support and with the help of sign posting from our Co-ordinator they could further develop their confidence and independence by accessing additional recreational and education courses in Reading.

We also developed a series of confidence building sessions promoting beauty and well-being to increase the self-esteem of our service users. We utilised the services of local practitioners to help deliver these sessions. Furthermore, we established an exercise class to continue to promote a healthy lifestyle. This project was very popular with our service users.

Responding to the health concerns of our service users we also used the drop-in service as a platform to promote awareness of health conditions for all of our clients. Bringing in health experts we were able to promote awareness of conditions such as Tuberculosis and Diabetes.

## **Reading City of Sanctuary End of Year Report**

In February 2016 Reading City of Sanctuary gained a project coordinator Kate Butler. The project had already been launched and the steering committee established. Kate's role was to develop the business plan which had been drafted by the steering committee and put into practice the schemes which had been agreed.

Our vision was discussed and decided upon and the business plan finalised in March 2016. We aim to develop Reading as a town that welcomes and supports refugees and asylum seekers and have four strategic aims.

Firstly we aim to increase awareness about facts and issues affecting refugees and asylum seekers. Secondly we want to build alliances with groups and individuals who wish to work together to build Reading as a city of Sanctuary. Thirdly we hope to increase access for refugees and asylum seekers to a wide range of opportunities to enrich their lives and enable them to prosper across the town.

Finally we are working towards Reading CoS becoming an independent organisation.

It was agreed that we would start by raising our profile by securing a couple of schemes that we could launch with the help of the press.

We felt also that Reading Cos would carry more weight if it had the backing of some statutory organisations such as RBC or Reading Police.

In March Stan Gilmour, Commander of Reading Police signed the declaration and he now sits on the steering committee. Kate also spoke to Reading buses and RBC who are both supportive and gave indications that they would also sign.

Reading Community Learning centre have given us their support as have Reading Chronicle.

We have been successful in securing three coffee bank schemes around Reading and bike scheme at The Bike Kitchen at Jacksons. We held two events during refugee week and have a steady and committed team of volunteers from the Muslim community.

Looking forward we need to overcome a couple of hurdles which have come to the forefront. One is reaching out and being able to communicate with refugees and asylum seekers so that they can benefit from the work we do.

Secondly we need to engage with more members of faith groups in Reading and find volunteers.

The next steps will be to set up a school of Sanctuary stream, provide training sessions for interested parties and to secure funding so that we can continue to function.

## **Website and social media development**

2016 started on a high for social media, with RRSg's collaboration on a project with a group of students from Henley Business College at Reading University. They took on the role of social media/website consultants, advised us to make several improvements (which we then implemented), and provided us with the basis for an ongoing series of blogs – which became the Keeping Up with the Syrians series. This blog followed the experiences of a Syrian family, through the process of arriving in the UK, claiming asylum, and facing the challenges of starting a new life as refugees. The blog was entirely based on real RRSg case studies, and so showed the many ways in which RRSg supports our clients, in an engaging and easy to understand way.

In June, RRSg organised a film screening with Reading Film Theatre of Nicky's Family, a feature-length documentary about the life of Sir Nicolas Winton, who rescued hundreds of Jewish refugee children from Czechoslovakia, just before the Second World War. This event was very well attended, due to a long running publicity campaign, using both social media (facebook and twitter) and traditional media (posters and flyers). This method of combined promotion clearly works well. Hopefully next year's film screening (we plan to make it an annual event) will be completely sold out!

Our social media following has more than doubled since the last AGM report. As of 04/08/16, we now have 361 Facebook 'likes' (up from 178 last year), and 383 Twitter followers (up from 143 last year). On the whole, Twitter seems to be more useful for networking with other organisations, while Facebook is great for engaging with

individuals – which is better for real-life engagement, for example with event attendance, attracting new volunteers, and raising awareness of RRSg's work

**Alice Driver – website editor and social media manager**

## Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2016

	2016 £	2015 £
<b>Income Resources</b>		
Grants, Donations	89,826	70,611
Interest	13	26
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>89,839</b>	<b>70,637</b>
 <b>Expenditure</b>		
Wages & Salaries	49,283	36,111
Administration Costs	5,942	5,623
Training	320	714
Travelling	286	233
Premises	7,009	6,731
Events	4,870	1,156
Refugee Welfare & Expenses	4,860	2,797
Office Equipment	3,067	1,654
Membership Fees & Subscriptions	538	587
Bank Charges & Interest	209	(4)
Professional Fees	990	1,712
Sundry Expenses	352	88
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>77,726</b>	<b>57,392</b>
<b>Excess of Expenditure over Income</b>	<b>12,113</b>	<b>13,245</b>
 <b>NET ADDITION TO RESERVES</b>		
Opening Reserves	31,212	17,967
Closing Reserves	43,325	31,212

## **RRSG funders**

Reading Borough Council

BG Group

London Legal Support Trust

The Health Lottery

## **RRSG donors**

### **Other supporters we thank:**

British Red Cross for supporting our clients with small grants.

Faith Christian Group 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

The Grump Goat

Brand 786

Reading Film Theatre

Henley Business School

The Mayor of Reading Cllr Tony Jones

St Bartholomew's Church

Reading Quakers