

Refugee Support Devon

Annual

Review

Year ending

31st March

2017



WE
ALL SWIM
IN THE SAME
SEA

The banner features the text 'WE ALL SWIM IN THE SAME SEA' in large, colorful, block letters. The letters are arranged in four lines: 'WE' (red), 'ALL SWIM' (orange and yellow), 'IN THE SAME' (red, yellow, and red), and 'SEA' (orange, red, and yellow). The banner is decorated with numerous colorful fish cutouts in various patterns and colors, including pink, yellow, black and white, and white with polka dots. The banner is hanging from a yellow netting structure.

CHAIR'S REPORT

This has been an exciting and challenging year for Refugee Support Devon. In addition to our ongoing work with asylum seekers and refugees, staff and volunteers have been instrumental in welcoming new families to Devon under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme as well as assisting a number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. RSD's capacity has therefore needed to grow and we were pleased to welcome Michael Grace as full time Outreach Co-ordinator for the resettlement scheme. In July we were sad to say farewell to Abigail Grace our Project Development Worker who left RSD to take up further academic studies. However we were pleased to welcome Neli Montes de Oca as our new Casework Co-ordinator, and Julia Crockett, who joined the team as Education and Employability Co-ordinator. As we go to press we are expecting to appoint a Resettlement Co-ordinator for Teignbridge and the South Hams area to be based in Newton Abbott.

Staff and volunteers at RSD have worked hard this year at raising RSD's profile in the community and this, together with the continuing media focus on

refugees, has enabled us to raise funds and recruit more volunteers. RSD has been the hub for the annual Refugee Week in June and a second refugee awareness week held in January with a variety of events to engage members of the public.

As always our heartfelt thanks goes to RSD's many dedicated volunteers without whom we would not be able to offer vital support to our service users or generate the kind of public interest that supports a positive understanding of refugee issues. I would also like to thank RSD's directors who continue to work on developing the organisation's strategic direction. During the year we said good-bye with many thanks to Hannah Sweeney who served RSD well as acting treasurer for a number of years, and Chris Pac-Soo from the University of Plymouth. Arabella Comyn replaced Zenzi Hobogwana- Graham as our representative from the University of Exeter. We were also pleased to welcome to the Board Anna Roderick, a legal specialist and member of refugee action groups in East Devon.



Over the past two years groups have sprung up all over Devon to campaign for and to welcome refugees. Volunteers from RSD and Exeter City of Sanctuary organised a well attended networking gathering in March to bring groups together from all over the county, and so to better co-ordinate our welcome efforts.

Media reports on the plight of refugees continue to figure prominently in news broadcasts, showing that the situation of refugees stuck in camps across Europe and the Middle East has not eased. The government's recent decision to severely reduce the number of child refugees the UK will take has been disappointing. The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, whereby the government promised to resettle up to 20,000 refugees from Syria, runs until 2020. We wish to continue to encourage supporters to lobby our parliamentary representatives to make sure that a new government in the meantime does not renege on this promise.

Jennifer Longford

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers continue to play a pivotal role in absolutely everything we do. We are indebted to their commitment, time, skills and experience to make a positive impact on the lives of the most vulnerable in our community.

In spite – or perhaps because – of the often negative coverage that the refugee crisis continues to receive in the general media, the surge of interest in volunteering with us has continued unabated. A total of 297 people expressed an interest to volunteer with us this year. We invited 99 of them to participate in one of the 8 information sessions we ran over the course of the year. This included a session each in East Devon and South Hams, which were designed to support resettled Syrian refugees who came to Devon under the UK government scheme. We were then able to take on 33 volunteers for specific projects (including the UK Syrian scheme), bringing our total cadre of volunteers to 84.

We continued to build on our very successful

partnership with Plymouth University to offer placements to social work students enrolled on undergraduate and postgraduate level courses. This year, we welcomed Stacey Pike and Josie Harmen who brought with them huge amounts of enthusiasm and commitment to support clients and our projects.

We feel very privileged and humbled to have such a generous and talented team of volunteers.



“The global refugee situation can seem overwhelming but knowing we do make a positive impact on the lives of individuals is rewarding.”

(Drop-in volunteer)



DROP-IN SERVICE

The drop-in service has always been at the core of RSD, and for many clients it is the first point of contact. A dedicated team of volunteers and a Casework Coordinator, Neli, provide essential assistance to refugees and asylum seekers on a range of issues, from help to search for a job to accessing legal advice.

Throughout the year we saw 121 individuals at our drop-in, with a total of 516 visits between them. Although there was an increase in the number of service users by 18%, in comparison to last year, many of the clients were also supported outside drop-in hours and within the community with the help of outreach support volunteers, reducing the need for

“I appreciate your help as I don’t know what to do without you. I look up to the care and help you offer to refugees and asylum seekers in Devon. Thanks again.” (Service user)

“Thanks...without you nothing would have happened.” (Service user)

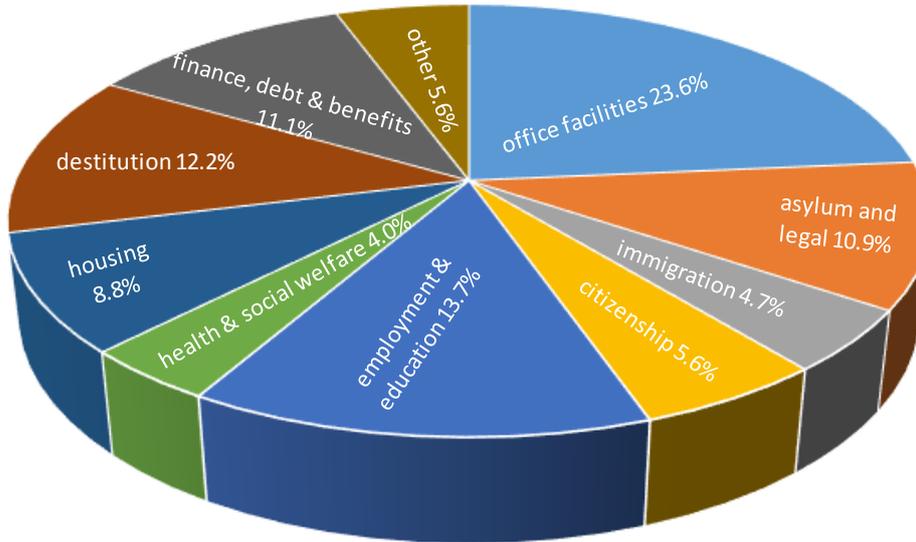
repeated visits to the drop-in.

On exceptionally busy days up to 14 service users visited our drop-in service on a single day. Just under half (40%) of the people we helped this year were from Afghanistan. Others seeking our help were from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Ivory Coast and a further twenty countries around the globe.



DESTITUTION

Type of assistance, Drop-in Service 2016-17



“Without help of RSD we wouldn’t been able to face our life difficulties.” (service user)

There has been an increase in refugees and asylum seekers needing to access our emergency fund. We distributed £5,370 to 22 individuals, 12 of whom have dependent children. Nearly half (41%) of the payments from this fund covered the cost of travel expenses, which included journeys to solicitors in Plymouth, Bristol and beyond. 35% of the money was used to cover food essentials, the remainder included medical and clothing costs.

We issued 71 Foodbank vouchers for individuals and families, and we continue collecting fresh food from Exeter Food Action of the Devon and Cornwall Food Association to distribute alongside our fresh allotment produce to those facing hardship.

OUTREACH

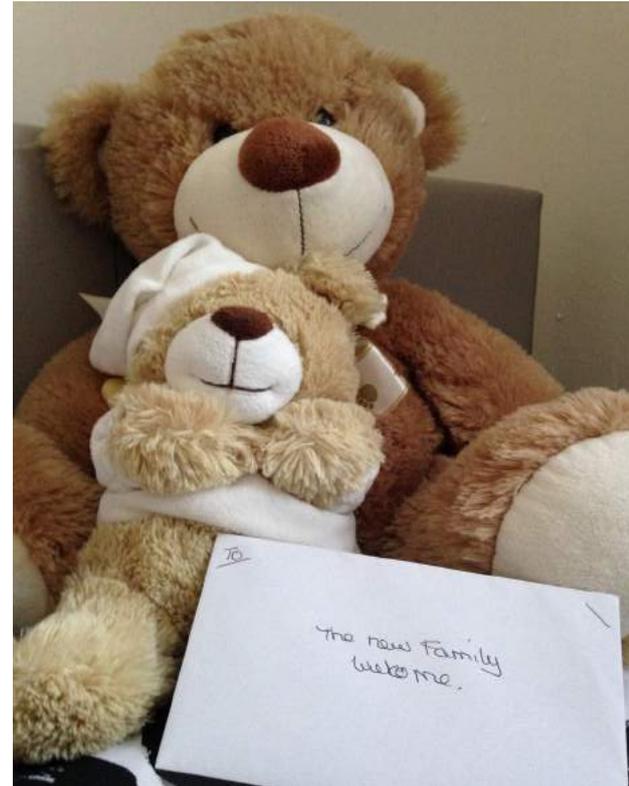
RSD provides increasing support to individuals and families in the local community. This support has been essential for many people, especially those who lack the confidence and need encouragement to increase participation within their local communities. Outreach support includes accompanying to appointments, home visits, one to one tuition and welcoming new families to Devon. Outreach is key to our work within the resettlement schemes and our educational projects.



VULNERABLE PERSON RESETTLEMENT

WELCOME PROJECT

This year has seen the start of families arriving in Devon as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme. This is a national scheme to resettle Syrian families from countries around the Middle East. The county, through pledges made by individual district councils, has agreed to resettle 41 families. RSD has played a key role in welcoming and coordinating the initial needs of the families and then supporting them more generally in their integration into life here in Devon.



During the year we have helped resettle 10 families in Devon. We have managed this with the help of a range of veteran and new volunteers. 25 volunteers supported the project, and this number is constantly growing. We are very happy to say that some of the earlier resettled families are now also starting to volunteer with us in welcoming new arrivals.

The project is a collaboration with several other local organisations. We work closely with Devon County Council and Devon's District Councils. The Olive Tree Association provides ESOL, Hikmat Devon have an emergency phone line and invite resettled families to many events and Multilingua provide much needed interpreting and translation. We have also developed strong links with services within health, education and job centres around the county.

Exeter Mosque, The Riverside Centre and Exeter's Church of the Latter Day Saints donate groceries, toiletries, cleaning equipment, tool boxes, sewing kits and toys to prepare houses for each family before arrival.



We have also received generous donations from local support groups - Newton Crisis Aid, Ottery Refugee Response, Beyond Borders Totnes, Dartington Trust, and the Quakers - to purchase extras for the families' homes. More support groups are forming - raising money and creating initiatives to welcome families into their towns and cities - to whom we are most grateful. We feel incredibly proud to be in a county where there is so much local kindness, generosity and support. We look forward to welcoming the families who will be resettled in Devon in the future.

EVENTS + COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the year RSD has hosted and attended many events. For Refugee Week, in June, information and activity stalls were located along the length of the Exe Estuary Trail from Exeter Quay to Lypstone. It was a fantastic event raising awareness of the refugee crisis and the problems that refugees face. We also looked fetching in our bright yellow Refugees Welcome t-shirts!





During the week we also held a coffee morning in St Stephens Church and a film screening with discussion panel at Exeter Phoenix.

This year we introduced another week of events in January to continue to raise awareness during the winter months. Many organisations joined us, including Exeter City of Sanctuary, The Global Centre, Exeter Phoenix and STAR at the University of Exeter. Events included a story telling café, coffee morning, film showing and panel discussion. It was a great success - a week we hope to repeat next year.

There has been much local interest to support refugees and we have been pleased to be invited to talk at many groups in towns throughout Devon. It has been a delight to see the passion and enthusiasm coming from communities all over the county and a pleasure to encourage and support these initiatives. This culminated in our Networking and Campaigning Event in March attended by representatives of 19 local groups.



“We aim to work together as a county to create a welcoming atmosphere for arriving refugees and push for the legislation to enable more refugees to find safety in our towns and cities”.

SCHOOLS PROJECT

In the last year RSD has held workshops and assemblies about refugees and the role of RSD in 11 different schools within Devon, to a total of 2300 children, ages ranging from 5-16 years old. We are pleased that schools recognise the need for more discussion around refugees and grateful that they are so positive about our input.

"Children are amazing, brutally honest and engaging! We encourage them to respectfully share their views, good or bad about refugees. With refugees in the news so much, they all have an opinion even the younger ones".

Older children explore what being a refugee is like and challenge myths and stereotypes. Younger children learn stories and songs about things we have in common with refugees, and things we all need to make us happy.

"It is heart warming to spend time with the adults of our future, the many words of kindness and solidarity we hear gives us hope".



Favourite moments in all sessions are when talking about the great contributions of refugees. Without fail, whatever age, jaws drop and mouths open wide to discover fish and chips, or the Mini Cooper came from refugees living in Britain.

This year RSD, joint working with the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement service (EMTAS), developed a free downloadable resource for teachers about refugees.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYABILITY

31 volunteer tutors assisted 45 students throughout the year. This includes one-to-one ESOL tuition and a weekly computer class focusing on employability, in which 18 students participated.

Education outcomes included students passing the Trinity B1 Speaking and 'Life in the UK' test which are necessary for securing some immigration applications. Students also gained confidence and practical language skills enabling parents to confidently speak with their children's teachers at school; make and change appointments, for example with their doctor; compile CVs and complete job applications; prepare to attend mainstream GCSE and BTEC courses.

Volunteer tutors attended development days, held monthly, covering a range of topics from teaching absolute beginners to getting to know the college library which resulted in more students taking advantage of the resources available to them as a student at Exeter College.

A new provision, highly valued by those who have an existing level of education and English language to be able to use it independently, is free access to the Library of the University of Exeter. RSD is grateful to the university for this practical support.

“I would like to thank RSD for the wonderful works. Your assistance and encouragement has helped me to acquire a job. I will forever be grateful for your guidance and kindness.”



WOMEN'S GROUP

Yoga, dance, cookery and needlework activities were facilitated by Farideh and Mary at the weekly women's group held at the Beacon Centre between April and December. Eight women - refugees and asylum seekers from a range of countries, including Afghanistan, Nigeria, Guinea and Syria - attended on a regular basis and were joined by RSD volunteers and social work students to enjoy the activities together. During the summer months trips to the beach were on offer and international picnics enjoyed.

Attendance slowed down towards the end of the year as some of the women began working, volunteering or busy with family, so it was with sadness that the group wound down in December. At

the time of print RSD is hoping to re-ignite a women's networking group and plans are afoot for some monthly activities later in the year.



ALLOTMENT

The allotment has been well organised and productive this year. We have increased the amount of fresh fruit, vegetables, salad and herbs available to those in need. By changing our weekly sessions to Tuesdays more clients at the drop-in are able to benefit. (We also wash everything and display it in a more tempting fashion!) Helen, Pat and Jean continue as RSD's regular allotment stalwarts, and we've had help from four clients and several other volunteers through the year. We are pleased to welcome Denis as an occasional gardener and even more important as trimmer and mower-in-chief! We hope to encourage even more use of the allotment next summer.

ACCOUNTS SUMMARY

	As at 31 March 2016	As at 31 March 2017
B/forward	37,060	66,017
Income	97,883	159,345
Expenditure	68,926	111,165
BALANCE	66,017	114,197
Restricted	26,347	42,511
Unrestricted	39,670	71,686

A full set of our annual accounts is available from RSD and is also published on the Charity Commission Website. The accounts report contains further details of the organisations Reserves Policy and how unrestricted funds may be utilised.

Staff during the year:

Annette Hughes (Manager)
Trupti Desai (Administrator)
Abigail Grace (Project Development Worker)
Neli Montes de Oca (Casework Coordinator)
Michael Grace (Devon Outreach Coordinator)
Julia M Crockett (Education and Employability Coordinator)

Trustees during the year:

Jennifer Longford
David Mezzetti
Hannah Sweeney
Bob Mycock
Peter Bainbridge
June Marshall
Chris Pac-Soo
Naomi Pardington
Elena Isayev
Anna Roderick
Arabella Comyn

THANK YOU to:

Our Grants from: The Henry Smith Charity, Lloyds TSB Foundation for England & Wales, Odin Charitable Trust, Hilden Trust, Leigh Trust, Edith Maud Ellis 1985 Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Devon County Council, Devon County Council Equalities Grant, Devon Community Foundation & Comic Relief, Girdlers Trust, Santander Discovery Foundation, Jamieson Bystock Trust, Thomas Wall Trust, Spectrum Housing.

Special thanks also to all those community members who have donated so much through the year, individually and through community groups such as Ottery Refugee Response, Exmouth and Exeter Quakers, Newton Crisis Aid, and many, many more. These funds enable us to maintain our Emergency Fund for those in financial hardship, and to help resettled refugees to turn their new houses into homes.

Apologies that we do not have the space to mention personally all the hundreds of supporters and groups who have donated throughout the year – you know who you are, and we thank you all.

Exe Estuary Walk Event Photos by: www.jonchater.com



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Company No. 7731995

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