

# REFUGEE SUPPORT DEVON

## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2020



### We're back!

We are delighted to announce that, more than six months after the Exeter Community Centre closed its doors in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, RSD staff and volunteers have begun returning to their offices. RSD staff and volunteers have been working from home since the Community Centre closed on 20 March and have found various ways of continuing to provide as wide a range of services to their clients as possible. Some things however, such as routine photocopying and scanning of documents, are not easily done at home and it is almost impossible to help clients remotely to fill in forms or in making telephone calls.



RSD Casework Coordinator Neli Montes De Oca and Administrative Assistant Nick Floyd back in the drop-in office.

The Community Centre reopened in a very limited fashion back in July, allowing us to go in once a week to collect mail and perform essential office tasks but strict rules remained in place, limiting the number of people allowed in the building and specifying what they could and could not do when they were there. It was not possible to resume RSD's drop-in but Casework Coordinator Neli Montes De Oca -working closely with the Community Centre's admin team to ensure everyone's safety - began meeting clients again by appointment in August. Initially she worked alone once a week but in September she was joined by regular members of her drop-in volunteer team and other members of RSD staff. Face-to-face meetings with clients now take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Renovation work in the Community Centre - which has gone on throughout the closure - still has not finished, so the usual RSD drop-in office was out

of bounds initially and Neli and her team had to meet clients in smaller temporary offices. It was a great relief to everyone when the old offices were cleaned at the end of September and we were given the 'all clear' to return. Things are still far from 'back to normal' and Neli is very much aware that a 'drop in' service that only operates via appointments is neither logical nor satisfactory. Certainly it is less than ideal but it does mean that she and her team of volunteers are once again able to provide vital face-to-face support to clients who really need it: and we are very glad to report that, at the time of writing, Exeter Community Centre remains open for Neli and her team to continue offering their services despite the second lockdown.

### Communications/PR Trustee required! Can you help?

We are currently looking for a PR specialist leading on communications and public relations to join our Board of Trustees. If you think you can help in getting our messages across to our supporters, donors, volunteers, service users - and the rest of the world! - and have both professional experience of PR and a sympathetic understanding of our charity's work please e-mail us at [info@refugeesupportdevon.org.uk](mailto:info@refugeesupportdevon.org.uk) . A full description of this role is available by visiting [https://refugeesupportdevon.org.uk/images/uploads/PRComms\\_Trustee\\_role\\_Oct\\_2020.pdf](https://refugeesupportdevon.org.uk/images/uploads/PRComms_Trustee_role_Oct_2020.pdf) .

Thank you!

## Fundraising update 1 - a new trustee, brownies...and pizza!

Grace Frain first volunteered with RSD a five years ago when she commenced her studies in Exeter and worked alongside us whilst part of Student Action for Refugees. Since last year she has become a Trustee, commenced studies digitally for a Masters in Refugee Protection and Forced Migration and started a brownie business with a charitable twist...



Grace with boxes of brownies

Raising funds to continue operating is an ongoing issue for a small charity like RSD. Much of our work is totally reliant on private donation and grants. We are particularly grateful to all our supporters, especially those who make regular monthly donations via the 400 appeal, and the fundraising team whose written applications to trusts and fund-holders keep us going from year to year. There is however, always more that can be done and at the end of last year Grace joined the RSD Board as a fundraising trustee with specific remit to investigate as many fundraising opportunities as possible, particularly ones that we don't currently utilise and can raise the RSD profile with potential funders. COVID-19 intervened just as Grace was getting to grips with the role and had begun planning a week of events alongside other trustees Liz and Jenny, unfortunately

none of which could go ahead. With no events came a project involving chocolate and lots of it... she donated over £500 to RSD as a result of a brownie fundraiser. She said 'I initially started it to fundraise for Calais Food Collective and it was such an overwhelming success I couldn't resist doing it again. I sold 68 boxes worth of brownies, either delivered locally or posted nationwide, for £6 each, plus a handful of extra donations, another success. Local boxes contained information on RSD and their work to not only share great tasting treats but to spread the message of our work, educate the local community and encourage people to get involved in what we do.'

And indeed, more community support has since come with 'The Flat' restaurant fundraising £350 from a 'Back Out to Help Out' scheme where £1 out of every £10 spent when dining in at the restaurant has been donated to RSD. When asked about the initiative Chloe (middle) said they wanted to 'use our small business to experiment with models that aren't just profit driven but that acknowledge our responsibility to care for and give back to the local community'. They felt RSD was the place to channel their efforts after 'witnessing the cruelty of COVID on top of the



The Flat's wonderful staff team

cruelty of this government towards refugees and asylum seekers, made it abundantly clear the prevalence of racism in this country's immigration policies. We saw it as just one of the ways we can support anti-racism work, and starting small and local is important. It's easy to think we need to send money far away, to different countries to make a real difference but actually the great work that RSD are doing here in Devon is what we need to support to help make our city and county a better and safer place for everyone to live and thrive'. As local business owners they simply could not stand by and wanted to be part of the solution. It is wonderful to see members of the local community wanting to fundraise and especially after a scheme such as Eat Out to Help Out to take it upon themselves, step back and help others out.

Our thanks to the Flat for their wonderful generosity. We are happy to return the compliment and say 'please check out The Flat for the best pizza in town and consider supporting their work'. Find them on [www.theflat.co.uk](http://www.theflat.co.uk) or at 142 Fore Street Exeter. Also: Grace's brownie sales have developed into a business 'Brownies Beyond Borders', where 25% of profits from all sales are donated to refugee charities beginning with Refugee Community Kitchen providing 1600 hot meals daily for people in the Calais, Dunkirk and Grande-Synthe region of France.

Find out more on Grace's Instagram @glf\_veganchef.

## Fundraising update 2 - Giving Tuesday 2020

Christmas at a time of Covid - what are you planning this year? Giving Tuesday is on the 1st December and is themed GiveBack 2020 - it's a chance for anyone who feels fortunate to give back and to take a positive step forward into the New Year. The RSD trustees are already planning what they will do...and they would love you to join them.



Chair of trustees Jenny Longford comments: “Many people know how lonely Christmas can be - particularly at a time like this when our normal life is so disrupted. Now more than ever, RSD would appreciate your donations - large or small - so that we can continue to support our clients. Maybe you’d like to fund a vital prescription charge for a destitute asylum seeker? Or pay for a vital transport cost to a Home Office appointment? Here are some examples of how your donations are spent...

- £10 - pays for a vital medical prescription for those who are destitute
- £20 - provides mobile phone credit to enable vital communication with solicitors and family
- £50 - purchases a bus ticket to attend an immigration hearing or legal appointment
- £100 - helps to equip someone’s first home with essentials after long periods of destitution or insecure accommodation. It can also pay for a team of volunteers to be trained to help respond to queries from asylum seekers and refugees
- £500 - funds a staff member for a week to coordinate volunteers and respond to queries from the most vulnerable
- £1000 - ensures a staff member is set up with appropriate IT equipment to be able to work from home or our office or when doing outreach work in these uncertain times.

Trustee Liz Oxburgh wants a change from mince pies this year and is going to make Maamoul cakes instead. Liz says: “I found the recipe in ‘Eat With Us’ and I will be posting videos of how I get on - look out for them on the RSD website.” Eat With Us is the recipe book we published earlier this year - it contains recipes from around the world donated to us by our clients, volunteers and supporters. Grace Frain, RSD’s fundraising trustee and an experienced chef, will be trying it out too so why not get a copy and have a go yourself? You could join Liz and Grace in trying out a new recipe - we’d love to know how you get on - or, as it’s such a beautiful little book, filled with attractive colour photos of delicious dishes, you could buy it as a stocking filler for someone else. Copies are £6.00 including P&P. Visit <https://refugeesupportdevon.org.uk/contact-us/> and tell us the number of copies of the book you would like and your address.



Liz Oxburgh: making Maamoul cakes and videoing her efforts.



‘Eat With Us’

RSD Treasurer Chris Hill says: “Sadly I’ll probably be seeing fewer people over Christmas this year, so I expect I’ll spend less than usual on presents. I’ll be donating some of the money I’ll save to RSD.” You can join Chris in making a donation by visiting [refugeesupportdevon.org.uk](https://refugeesupportdevon.org.uk) and clicking on the ‘donate now’ button. You’ll find lots more information about Giving Tuesday 2020, including Liz’s video updates and other ideas about how you can support RSD on our website,

<https://refugeesupportdevon.org.uk/news/giveback2020-1st-december-2020-giving-tuesday-are-you-ready-to-try-our-recipe-challenge/> .

Whatever your plans, we hope that you have a happy and safe Christmas season.

## Refugee Week Competition winners

### Imagine Eavesdropping

While Boris and Cummings  
play mind games at Number 10  
they notice a fly on the wall  
could it be eavesdropping  
thoughts turn to previous brainstorm  
castles in the air  
either to be aggrandized  
or tilted at Don Quixote-like  
when undermining the dreams of others  
chortling  
certainly made their eaves drop  
talking of castles  
one can always  
escape to the country  
to one's castle and cottages  
....drrrrr.....ummm  
perish the thought that  
the little matter of permission  
has been overlooked  
remember we are here to make the rules  
and rules are made to be broken  
perhaps swot-up on planning regs  
the mere mention of swotting  
and the fly flees  
one could literally  
be left with one's pile  
where the eaves have indeed dropped  
into rubble and dust  
do you see what I mean  
not really  
well we are in a pretty little pickle  
going back  
to the beginning of time  
could Eve  
ever have imagined such a thing

Roger Trehella

The three winners of Liz Oxburgh's online competition for Refugee Week are reprinted on this page. Everyone who entered has been sent a copy of the RSD recipe book and our latest Annual Review. The three winners were also sent £20 Waterstones vouchers. Liz would like to thank everyone who participated or visited her website and we in turn would like to thank Liz for organising the competition and to Devon County Council for sponsoring the prizes.

### For Sami

Your unspoken journey  
across continents and oceans  
to seek asylum here  
in this city  
of grey stone  
did not take away  
your gentleness

Hilary Bee

### Tonight you will eat at my house

Tonight you will eat at my house  
First I'll walk to market, freely, through the old streets  
At noisy thronging stalls I'll jostle neighbours  
Test tomatoes, quince and garlic  
Cash in hand, I'll ponder the options  
Taste the green oil and the seven spices  
  
On the way back I'll stop for coffee  
Thick and black with fragrant cardamom  
Join the gaggle in the courtyard  
Exchanging news and confidences  
Then wrap their laughter up and take it home  
  
Later, while I cook, the building settles  
Gathers children, husbands, pauses  
Our table is small, but tonight we will be many  
The young ones seated on the floor, around them  
All the faces of divided generations  
Tonight you will eat at my house

Heather Chadwick

## Congratulations, Nourah and Abbas!

RSD clients Abbas (pictured below) and Nourah recently obtained full UK driving licences and we are very happy to share their success via this newsletter. Abbas will be using his new qualification to find employment and Nourah is feeling particularly proud and excited as it is the first driving licence she has ever had. Nourah has also



started a voluntary hairdressing and beauty therapy service at the St Sidwells Centre in Exeter, which we hope will be of interest to all our female readers: full details are given in the adjacent flyer. Nourah has

long experience as a hairdresser and beautician and is looking to establish herself professionally, so any ladies interested in her services are invited to contact her as soon as they can to arrange a visit.

**The Sidwell Street Stylist**  
*Beauty treatments and hairstyling for ladies*

Cut and blow-dry  
Facial threading  
Body waxing (legs, arms, back)

Every Thursday  
9:30-11:30  
Starting Thursday October 8<sup>th</sup>

*This new service is offered by a volunteer with 4 years international experience and hundreds of happy clients*

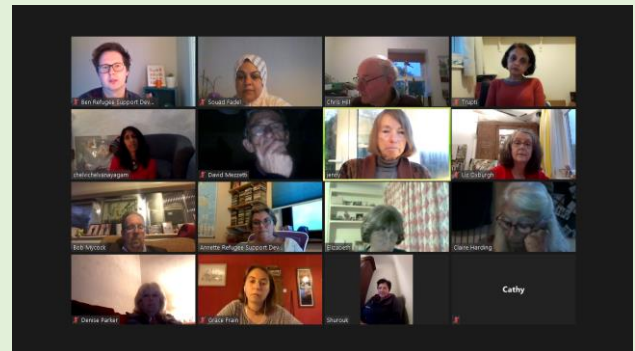
To book an appointment please text me, Noura, on:  
**07475282888**

*This service is free but clients are welcome to make a donation to St Sidwell's Centre*

## RSD AGM report

RSD's AGM was held via Zoom on 20 October. Because the AGM had to be held remotely it was decided to keep to a brief, formal agenda and the meeting was attended by the RSD Board of Trustees, members of staff and several volunteers.

Chairing the meeting, Jenny Longford welcomed three new trustees - Shurouk Al-Sabbagh, Grace Frain and Ben Hudson - to the Board and thanked Elena Isayev, who stepped down as a trustee earlier this year, for her work providing an important link to the university for three years and spearheading the sanctuary scholarships. She also thanked all volunteers, donors, staff and funders for their help and hard work. The remaining members of the Board were unanimously re-elected. Treasurer Chris Hill presented RSD's accounts for the 2019-20 financial year: income was £212,000 and



RSD's 2020 AGM was held via Zoom

expenditure £184,000. Reserves of £135,000 (£60,000 restricted and £76,000 unrestricted) are carried forward. Secretary David Mezzetti thanked all members of The 400 Appeal, who make monthly donations to RSD; and volunteer Claire Harding congratulated everyone at RSD on holding the organisation and its valuable work together during the coronavirus crisis. Education and employability coordinator Denise Parker thanked the ESOL volunteers for the creative ways by which they had kept their work going in difficult circumstances. VPRS resettlement coordinator Souad Fadel praised RSD Manager Annette Hughes for always being available to help sort problems out. Full AGM minutes are available by e-mailing [info@refugeesupportdevon.org.uk](mailto:info@refugeesupportdevon.org.uk). Our thanks to everyone who attended, we hope to return to the normal AGM format - with falafels! - next year.



The 400 appeal