



Rhif Elusen / Charity no. 1174459

## **Aberaid Annual Report from the Chair and Treasurer for the year November 2020 – November 2021**

Presented at the AGM November 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 - Zoom meeting

Another year has gone by for Aberaid and we continue to find ourselves working in a challenging situation as the Covid pandemic makes it very difficult for us to organise the kind of activities that we did in the past. Even as trustees and committee members we have not been able to meet as a group. Fortunately, this has been compensated through the facilities of Zoom and we have met on a fortnightly basis throughout most of this last year.

I am very grateful to the trustees and members of the committee who have attended willingly and given advice and encouragement to Michael Freeman and myself who have been working more directly with the family that we support through the community sponsorship scheme. We were sorry to lose Claire Pickard who stepped down as our minutes secretary in the spring. Our long-standing member, Sion Meredith stepped back for a while for personal reasons but remains in touch at a distance. Caroline Clark has recently kindly agreed to join the committee.

### **The Family**

The family have now been here for two and a half years and they continue to do well in Aberystwyth. Particularly important is the excellent educational opportunities that they have found for the three boys who quickly settled into the schools here. The children's English is improving all the time and they enjoy school work. The father of the family has been working for two years in a local restaurant and is now gaining skills as a baker. He was furloughed for some time but for most of this last year has been working. He values the income, of course, but also the experience and the opportunity to improve his English. In September Coleg Ceredigion initiated in-person teaching again and, like most of the Syrians, the father has appreciated the opportunity to return to classroom English lessons. His employer generously enables him to organise his hours around the classes. He is a keen student.

We are particularly grateful to Liz Mullan who has offered English zoom classes for the family but particularly aimed to help the mother who is not happy to go to Coleg Ceredigion classes. Sadly, even though there has been more opportunity for her to go to the house the mother seems hesitant to meet.

There have been health issues for both parents and there have been times when the father has been off work on medical grounds. Both are waiting for further appointments at the hospital. They also have worries and concerns for their wider family scattered though parts

of the Middle East and Europe. In October all the family tested positive for Covid but fortunately nobody was very ill.

On a very positive note, the father passed his driving test earlier this year and was able to buy a car. This gave the family new opportunities and now the father also has an extra job as a Deliveroo driver which he manages to fit around his other commitments.

As part of our work with the community sponsorship scheme we organised a face-to-face personal plan meeting with the parents in July. This was to allow the parents to talk through their long-term aims. The plan is that they should be independent of everyday support from Aberaid and, in particular, become independent financially. This has not been achieved yet as there are some outstanding debts and we continue to pay the utilities bills. It was agreed that they would soon be able to take on this commitment and achieve this by July 2022. In 2024 they become eligible for 'leave to remain' status and it is expected that they will require some help with this – including possibly some lawyer's fees. The father is very capable of organising his finances and dealing with everyday matters but they do consult with us over more complicated official letters relating to school, medical or financial matters.

### **Citizens UK**

Citizens UK supported our Community Sponsorship scheme but we decided to step back from paying their fees after this year. However, they continue to invite us to Zoom meetings for community sponsorship groups which allow volunteers to share experience across the UK.

### **Arabic classes for children**

For over a year Aberaid was paying for Arabic classes originally in person and later online. We were not able to go on funding these and gave the parents warning that it would stop at the end of the summer term. For some time after that there was a teacher who offered on-line lessons free but she has since moved abroad so all of this has stopped.

### **English classes and friendship meet-ups**

Some members of Aberaid have participated in on-line English lessons since the beginning of the year but that has now stopped since Coleg Ceredigion opened. However, as a separate initiative in this last year some of us have found other volunteers to work with individual families to practice English. It offered the opportunity for friendship pairing at a time when it was difficult to meet up. Currently we are looking into the possibility of organising a coffee meet-up possibly at one of the cafes in town.

Dr. Andrea Hammel has involved some of the committee in the 'Refugees from National Socialism in Wales: Learning from the Past for the Future'. In fact, from a personal point of view I can say this project has provided an opportunity to meet up and, in part, plan for an exhibition in Aberystwyth Arts Centre in Autumn 2022. There have been meetings in the Arts Centre, then an outdoor summer party at the Castle and more recently a children's art workshop.

### **Fundraising**

Over the last year our resources have dwindled and there is little opportunity for further fundraising which we feel needs a particular aim and rationale when there are so many charity calls.

### **Afghan crisis**

When the Afghan crisis arose in the summer and Ceredigion Council were looking for support we have offered our services in helping with housing needs. The Home Office provides good initial funding but only for one year and, as a charity, we were able to offer to accept cash donations that people wished to give for Afghan families arriving locally. These are kept as a separate funding stream. Two Afghan families are coming to Ceredigion.

### **Meetings attended**

Aberaid trustees have continued to attend the regular Ceredigion Refugee Resettlement Meetings and have given presentations when invited by local societies. Recently Michael also visited a group in Llanidloes who are hoping to develop a new community sponsorship initiative. We continue to work with the Red Cross staff.

**Aberaid wishes to extend its huge thanks to all our members and supporters in the community especially our volunteers, trustees, members of the local Arabic-speaking community and council officials, all of whom have worked together to welcome refugees to the area. Thank you, Diolch yn Fawr and Shukran to all.**

**Moir Vincentelli,  
Chair, Aberaid**

### **Aberaid Annual Account, 9.11.2020-8.11.2021**

#### **INCOME**

membership	£210.00
donations	£1,669.41
Donation, Afghans	£485.20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,364.61</b>

#### **EXPENDITURE**

Arabic classes	£2,040.00
Family support	£2,031.96
Bank charges	£90.00
translation	£153.55
Morlan	£300.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£4,615.51</b>

<b>Balance 9.11.2020</b>	£2,809.98
income	£2,364.61
expenditure	£4,615.51
<b>balance on 8.11.2021</b>	<b>£559.08</b>

**Michael Freeman,  
Treasurer, Aberaid**