



Rhif Elusen / Charity no. 1174459

Aberaid Annual Report 2024

About Aberaid

Aberaid was established in 2015 in response to the crisis in Syria. Its aim is to support and raise funds for Syrian refugees settling in the Aberystwyth area. Since then the area has welcomed some people from Afghanistan and many more from Ukraine. In 2017 Aberaid raised sufficient funds to undertake a Community Sponsorship scheme to find housing and pay costs to settle a family here. That family has now been here for over six years, achieved the 'right to remain' status in 2023. In the same year the whole family visited their relatives in Jordan during the summer holidays. They continue to do well in Aberystwyth and the three boys are happy and doing well at school. The eldest will sit his GCSEs in 2025. They would like to move to a larger house and have put in an application for social housing.

By contrast, most refugee families are supported through government schemes which are administered through Ceredigion County Council. In November the Council ended the contract with the Red Cross and the three workers are now directly employed through the County Council.

Aberaid is an entirely voluntary organisation which works closely with the County Council. The charity currently has five trustees (Moirá Vincentelli (Chair), Michael Freeman (Treasurer), Medi James, Vivien Geuter (Minutes Secretary), Andrea Hammel). In this last year we have had very few formal meetings and activities are largely organised through the regular Wednesday meetings at Morlan Community Centre.

Meetings attended by Trustees

Ceredigion Council Refugee Resettlement Meetings: Aberaid attends these meetings three times a year, which involve various community bodies such as the police, NHS, education services, and the fire service.

Public Engagement: Aberaid is sometimes invited to speak about its work at local events, which provide opportunities to seek donations. However, these invitations have decreased in recent years. Aberaid trustees and volunteers remain active in related causes, such as peace vigils for Gaza.

Morlan Centre Meetings

Since 2023 we have held regular Wednesday morning meetings at Morlan Centre in conjunction with the 'Warm room' opening of the building. We are very grateful to the Morlan Centre for offering us this meeting place and especially Eifion Roberts who has supported us so willingly. The main aim is to offer an informal meeting to encourage English speaking (and even sometimes Welsh). It has proved to be a useful drop-in place where people can make friends or come for specific advice when needed. Council workers, Alison Dunnette and Luned Jones usually drop in and sometimes arrange to meet people on individual matters. A regular feature has been the attendance of Rob Allen, Community Development Outreach for NHS.

Since 2022 growing numbers of Ukrainians have moved into Ceredigion and some of them attend regularly but increasingly as they find work and settle here they have less time to attend. The Syrian families who have been here for longer now have a strong group network and join us for particular events especially at half-terms and holidays when we organise children's activities.

Increasingly we have extended our reach to people, especially women with young children and Arabic speaking women often associated with medical or university staff.

Aberaid has also worked with university staff on community outreach. In late 2023 there was a Creative Writing project with Syrian people, and this was presented as a performance in November this year. They ran a second version of that workshop in December this year.

In June there was an event held at the bandstand in Aberystwyth with creative and community dialogue activities. In August a group of Syrian families visited Braich Goch near Machynlleth for a day out in the countryside and in October some of the families visited the water sports centre at Llandysul.

In the summer of 2024, we were successful in a grant application for a Community Cohesion Fund award to support our work and improve the exhibition display in the Morlan Centre. The paid decorating was undertaken by two Ukrainians and the first exhibition which opened in early December showed the work of refugees living here: two Ukrainian artists, one Syrian blacksmith, a Ukrainian photographer and a nail art specialist. At the opening we also saw the performance from the Creative Writing project.

On 22nd December the Ukrainian community held a traditional Christmas play event which brought many of the Ukrainian families together to practice. It was a heart-warming event and was well attended by the community.

Some Aberaid volunteers also attend the Coleg Ceredigion English practice class run by Sarah McKenna on Thursday mornings.

Fundraising

In the immediate aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis, we attracted considerable funds including the evening event, 'Hope and Harmony: A night of music, poetry and Syrian cuisine' in conjunction with Aberystwyth University on 4th November 2023. Since 2022 we agreed to allocate £200 to Ukrainian families as they moved to the area for any immediate needs. We also respond to other specific requests – laptops, baby equipment, bicycles, online courses.

By the end of 2022 we decided to use some money more strategically and we have been able to offer a contribution to ongoing costs of rent for a limited period. The gap between what people receive on Universal Credit and the actual cost of housing means that it is hard to find properties in town. This is particularly relevant to Ukrainians as they move on from their hosted situation to living independently. During 2024 we had distributed most of the funds raised in the early stage of the Ukrainian crisis and that scheme is now closed. Most of the families have been able to work sufficiently to cover their needs.

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.

Moir Vincentelli

Chair Aberaid

ABERAID Accounts 9.11.2023 to 8.11.2024	
Balance on 9.11.2023	£1,747.46
Income Summary	
donations	£3,159.68
interest	£3.65
Ceredigion CC grant	£620.00
Carmarthenshire CC grant	£1,837.52
Total income 2023-2024	£5,620.85

Hope and harmony

Expenditure Summary		
Syrian Dinner Project	£1,300.00	Hope and harmony
Donation to Ukraine train	£512.34	Hope and harmony
Insurance	£157.00	
Subsidising rents	£3,130.00	
Painting Morlan (part, grant aid)	£224.97	
Account fee	£60.00	
total expenditure 2023-2024	£5,384.31	
balance on 8.11.2024	£1,984.00	

Michael Freeman, Treasurer, Aberaid

Friday 20th December 2024