



Chair's Report for Refugees Welcome Crawley April 2023 – March 2024

Overview

The past year for Refugees Welcome Crawley (RWC) has been one of growth and challenge. Our volunteers have continued through increasingly difficult times to welcome, support and improve the wellbeing of refugees and people seeking sanctuary in our local area. The most significant challenge of the past year has been the increase in homelessness amongst refugees evicted from asylum accommodation following grant of refugee status.

The main focus of our work has continued to be with people accommodated by the Home Office in local hotels while they await the outcome of their asylum claims. Numbers have fluctuated over the past year with the Home Office transferring people out of some hotels including to Napier barracks and the Bibby Barge and moving families into others that previously accommodated single people. As a charity, RWC continues to offer support to the Syrian and Afghan resettlement scheme families we have supported since their arrival with some families still having a dedicated family befriender or visiting English tutor. We also provide English classes for Ukrainian refugees in Crawley and East Grinstead.

Governance

The **governance of RWC** in the past year comprised a Board of 6 Trustees including the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary; a Steering Group of 8 members and a total number of 50 active volunteers. Volunteering roles over the year have included English class teachers for adults and children, one-to-one tuition and Conversation group volunteers. Others have given their time as interpreters or family befrienders, by delivering clothes to hotels or helping with sewing, gardening and charity events.

Our charity service users have also benefitted during the year from visiting yoga and dance teachers and from Art sessions offered to them in Crawley.



Thanks

First thanks must go to the resilient, dedicated and kind hearted volunteers who are at the centre of our organisation and continue to give of themselves and of their time with patience, flexibility and compassion.

Especial thanks to those who have worked alongside the Chair to resolve the most problematic of situations, in particular our advice session volunteers at the homeless drop-in sessions, our treasurer for overseeing the charity finances and all the English teachers with their endless ingenuity and good humour needed to successfully teach constantly changing classes at all levels with minimal resources. To those who sort clothes at the unit or deliver them to hotels, to the Horley group for setting up such a hospitable Welcome Group, to family befrienders, Sewing Group volunteers and to any other volunteer not singled out for thanks. Much of the work of volunteers goes on unseen behind the scenes but making a world of difference to every person benefitting from it.

Clearly, RWC could not achieve a fraction of its current impact without the generous funding of our donors – individual giving, those attending fundraising events and grant making organisations.

Particular thanks go to individuals making one-off or regular donations and to **Ifield Community College** for their Diversity Day collection. We are extremely grateful to all our grant funders - to the trustees of the **Wates Foundation, the St Christopher's Trust, National Lottery Fund, Sussex Community Foundation Trust, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, the Yorkshire Building Society Fund, the Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, Moat Church, The Longley Trust, St Mary's Balcombe, Active Sussex, Worth Parish, St Vincent de Paul Society and West Sussex County Council.**

Our grateful thanks also go to **High Ashurst Outdoor Activity Centre** for the enjoyable active days out for hotel men last Spring and to **One World Orchestra** for an amazing music festival session in Brighton for a group of our keen musicians. Their musicians also visit the hotels to lead much enjoyed interactive music sessions for all who want to take part.

Funding from these sources has enabled us to supply clothes and shoes and pay rent for the storage unit; English books and resources for classes; travel tickets for essential journeys to medical appointments, solicitor appointments or to the Home Office; sports and games equipment; pre-loved bicycles, bike equipment and repairs; phones and phone repairs for those without this essential means of communication and internet access; interpreter and translation costs and destitution support for homeless



Charity no: 1186127

refugees including subsistence money for food , sleeping bags and occasional hotel nights for those in exceptional need including illness.

Clearly, all of these have a direct and positive impact on the lives of our refugees and people seeking asylum. In the words of just a few:

'I want to thank you for everything you did for me, the things you brought for me, clothes, your support, your love etc. I'm so thankful. I wish all the best'
H from Congo

Partnerships

RWC works in close partnership with **Sussex Aid for Refugees (SAR)**, specifically in the provision of clothes, shoes and other essentials for the hotel guests. Both charities work alongside each other also in supporting the wellbeing of guests and identifying those in need of special help.

Sharing the burden of support is invaluable to RWC and we could not continue to function as we do without this. Special thanks go to the tireless founder of SAR for her outstanding work in sourcing and packing thousands of items of clothes for hotel guests arriving with very little. Unusable donated clothes are collected from our clothes storage unit by Astra ReCycling, thereby creating a welcome income stream from 'rag money'.

We would also like to thank **Alliance for Better Care (ABC)** for their excellent medical and wellbeing support for people seeking asylum in hotels and for their invaluable help for our organisation, especially for the regular network meetings for local organisations involved in refugee support and for hosting our Horley Welcome Club.

We are most grateful to **Crawley Community Church** at the Charis Centre, **St Paul's Methodist Church** and the **URC Church**, Three Bridges, for their welcoming hospitality to us, our learners and our homeless clients. We also recognise the work of **Crawley Love Your Neighbour** who run weekly football sessions much enjoyed by players from the hotels.

We are also hugely appreciative of all the hosts from **Refugees at Home** and **Room for Refugees** charities who have hosted homeless refugees during the past year. This has been a vital turning point in the lives of the guests, enabling them to escape homelessness, build their independence and prepare to move on into rented accommodation from a safe and welcoming home environment We desperately need more hosts in the local area and would encourage anyone thinking about this to contact



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one of the charities above to find out more. Equally, landlords with rooms to rent at an affordable rate are much needed for new refugees evicted from asylum hotels who can pay rent at the local housing allowance rate but haven't yet been able to find a job to increase their income.

Our Activities

English (ESOL) classes

RWC volunteers teach two very well attended classes each week in Crawley for adult learners as well as two classes specifically for Ukrainian refugees. We teach at two levels – Beginners and Intermediates – and we never know exactly how many students will arrive for the class. Often every seat is occupied and somehow, we find room for all who want to learn. Generally, our students arrive somewhat dispirited and leave smiling and chatting to each other. Humour often plays a part in our learning and students become more relaxed as they get to know each other. An important part of the session is the coffee break in the middle when students can get together and share a drink and biscuit together. Wellbeing concerns are often raised along with requests for travel tickets, sim cards or bicycles and passed on to RWC Chair after the class. It's hard to overestimate how important English learning is for integration in the community and for managing the significant challenges of finding work and reaching independence once refugee status is granted.

A recent survey of our students in both classes showed 100% satisfaction score for what they think of their classes. Comments showed that all like learning English and many added that they like their teachers and enjoy meeting and connecting with other people. Many also said they would like more frequent classes and to take home the books to study from.

"Everything is very good. I am very satisfied for your support. Thank you very much for doing these things. When I first came here, I didn't learn much English. When I attended this course, I became bolder in speaking. Thank you for your support .Thank you"

From one of our teachers: "It's rewarding seeing the learners progress and say that they have enjoyed the lesson." And another "Lovely to make a difference in what must be an otherwise bleak and uncertain world. I enjoy hearing laughter and seeing them learn."

Children's Literacy



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From our lead volunteer: *"We started the Literacy Sessions in early 2023, welcoming a diverse range of age groups from refugee families, some residing in hotels and others in rented accommodation. Our students speak various languages, including Afghan, Ukrainian, Spanish, and Arabic. Each student is provided with a notebook to track their progress in speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills."*

"Our activities often adapt to current events, with younger students (ages 5-6) engaging in drawing and word practice to enhance their speaking abilities. Older children are given specific tasks from books or worksheets, while KS4 students focus on revision skills. These sessions have been incredibly rewarding, clearly impacting our students' development and confidence."

And another volunteer *"The literacy sessions have been particularly rewarding as the children are so willing to learn. When they first start the sessions, they tend to be very shy which is only to be expected but they soon start enjoying the sessions and being with other children. I am amazed how quickly they progress with each session and their handwriting is very neat."*

Horley Welcome Club

From a Horley volunteer: *"The club has changed venue and diversified since last year. We are a group of fifteen volunteers, including three lead volunteers."*

We now work in the Horley Health Hub, thanks to ABC, who are very supportive."

Weekly Conversation sessions concentrate on English, and what began as weekly gardening sessions now include art under the expert guidance of a volunteer art teacher. The guests have made and decorated clay pots, and are now screen- printing T-shirts with their own choice of design. Our successful bid for funding from Reigate and Banstead Council means we are well resourced for materials."

The untidy, unproductive garden is now in bloom- the first strawberry was picked last week. Our emphasis is always on welcome, with a drink, snack and a chat, in English if possible. Some volunteers have become much more involved in helping especially vulnerable individuals negotiate the outside world. The unpredictability of numbers and irregular attendance are challenges, as is the sudden removal of our guests by the Home Office. So far, we have mainly worked with single men though this may change if more families are moved into the area."

From another volunteer: *"Sessions are enjoyable and watching people's confidence and general wellbeing improve, as well as improving life chances in the UK is very rewarding. Also working along with friends makes this an even more enjoyable experience."*



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Women's Dance Group

From our Women's Dance teacher: *"Since October 2022, I have been running fortnightly women's dance classes at one of the hotels. These are fun and accessible classes that explore Latin dance moves and other styles of dance that the participants can share with the group. The number of participants varies each week, with anywhere between 2-15 participants. Many participants have commented on the lack of activities and structure at the hotel and have expressed how they look forward to the classes. I noticed a significant lift in morale after the class and it was great to see participants interacting and possibly making friends. I hope to continue these classes but in a central location where there will be the opportunity for refugee and migrant women living in other accommodations around Crawley to also attend. "*

Gardening

Gardening at Worth continued in the warmer months with one Afghan family growing vegetables under the guidance of two RWC volunteers. This is especially rewarding for the family who live in a flat but had a large and productive garden they had to leave back home in Afghanistan.

Resettled Refugee Family Support

Family Befriender report: *"Over the past year I have made weekly visits to an Afghan refugee family. I spend my time with their 5-year-old son, focusing mainly on phonics, early reading skills and maths. He has made great progress at school, he can now chat to me and tell me the names of his classmates, what he does at school, and his favourite lunch! I have also helped the family with occasional other tasks such as taking the mum to a hospital appointment and explaining how to register their new baby's birth. "*

Each year we celebrate Eid and Christmas with our resettled families, gathering in a local park for an picnic and outdoor games for Eid and hosting a children's Christmas party with Santa distributing presents at Christmas time. These are always really rewarding and enjoyable occasions, with delicious Syrian cooking taking centre stage on the refreshments front!



Sewing:

RWC volunteers led two sewing groups this year, initially a session for asylum seeking women and later in the year for Afghan women recently arrived on the Afghan resettlement scheme. With machines and some material supplied by county council funding and later supplemented by donors, a group of around 12 attended each week, creating beautiful garments for themselves and their families to wear. As the lead volunteer says, *"We will miss our excellent Kurdish needlewoman who not only made wonderful Kurdish clothes but kept our begged and borrowed machines working, cut out patterns and helped less talented sewers. She was inspiring and a reminder that not all of the world can buy the underwear they need from M&S."* Once the Afghan refugees had moved on into longer term accommodation, clothes mending sessions were set up by the volunteers in two of the men's hotels but this hotel too was soon to close and the sewing sessions therefore ended. The machines are currently in use at a hotel outside Horsham supported by the local refugee support group. In August sewing volunteers supported a one-day activity event for refugees with sewing, embroidery and crochet work. Many thanks to the sewing group volunteers who gave up their time to make these sessions so rewarding.

Homeless support and Advice Drop-in

From an Advice Drop-in volunteer: *"Homelessness continues to be an issue locally with refugees being evicted with just 28 days' notice once they receive their biometric residence permit (evidence of refugee status)."*

The local authorities are mostly without capacity to offer emergency accommodation unless there is a family or a priority need and the criteria for this has become increasingly difficult to reach, even where clients present with significant physical or mental health conditions. Consequently, we are generally supporting around ten to twelve homeless refugees at any one time. Life as a street homeless refugee is very tough and our support options are limited.

We refer refugees evicted from Crawley hotels to Open House to register on their waiting list for a bed space in the hostel. Registered clients can also access the resource centre each morning to use the shower, WiFi, phone charge and other support. Refugees from hotel accommodation in Mid Sussex cannot currently be registered at Open House and there is no comparable service in this district.



We also provide limited destitution support for people seeking asylum who have become homeless where a claim has been mistakenly withdrawn by the Home Office or who have left inappropriate accommodation and ended up outside.

On receipt of refugee status, all financial and accommodation support from the Home Office ends so we assist new refugees in making Universal Credit claims for living costs and also for housing costs at local housing allowance rate if they are lucky enough to find an affordable room. This is a huge challenge with very little available and landlords preferring tenants/ housemates who have a job. We signpost and refer new refugees to appropriate employment agencies such as Employ Crawley.

Our work with these clients is complex and challenging and their search for accommodation and work remains incredibly difficult. Rough sleeping means physical and mental health rapidly declines and becomes a risk. Rough sleepers can be referred to StreetLink but outreach workers do not visit every night, meaning the refugee has to continue hoping someone will come to find them. If they are verified as street homeless, some emergency accommodation may be provided for a limited space of time.

We support at the drop-in sessions with emergency food, clothing, SIM cards, advocacy, referrals, form filling, Migrant Help calls and, if it's a crisis situation, hotel rooms. Any help that's needed, if we can provide, it we do. We spend time with them supporting giving as much moral support as we can to keep them going, it's not an easy task."

Training and Volunteer Support

Following feedback last year, we have added training opportunities to our volunteer offer. Horley volunteers have attended two mental health training sessions led by Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group . RWC Chair and another volunteer attended Mental Health First Aider training; a volunteer training session on the asylum process was led by RWC Chair and a session on ESOL teaching was also offered to English teachers.

Monthly coffee mornings were started this year for volunteers to meet informally and raise concerns and mentoring is on offer to any volunteer who would like to access this by therapists from SARAS (Systemic action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers). A volunteer survey indicated that 75% of volunteers find volunteering highly rewarding and 25% very rewarding. There is a concern from Chair and Trustees that the increasing challenge of homelessness support with such limited options to resolve their situation will lead to burn out amongst volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to access all forms of support as above and to bring issues of concern to the Chair and Trustees.



Annual accounts

	RWC	
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE TO	31-Mar-24	
INCOME		
Donations	£12,265.02	
D Atkinson	£5,380.00	
St Christophers	£6,000.00	
Just Giving	£3,788.50	
Active Sussex	£2,163.20	
Ifield Community	£880.00	
Astra ReCycling	£1,601.00	
St Marys	£2,200.00	
National Lottery Fund	£6,000.00	
Wates Foundation	£7,000.00	
YBS Charities Trust	£1,050.00	
Sussex Community Foundation Trust	£6,000.00	
Reigate and Banstead BGC	£2,244.00	
Howard Hlowarsch Trust	£1,000.00	
TOTAL INCOME	£57,571.72	
EXPENDITURE		
Monthly expenditure	£28,756.55	
Hire of halls	£3,648.25	
Insurance	£290.36	
DBS	£12.00	
P+H (storage Unit)	£4,000.00	
Clothing for Refugees	£4,401.96	
Activities (Dance&Yoga)	£1,380.25	
Mini Mayhem (Kids Entertainment)	£500.00	
Crazy Beanz (Kids Entertainment)	£250.00	
Currys (Mobile Phones)	£2,628.96	
Migrant Help (interpreter costs)	£715.65	
Volunteer expenses	£3,416.78	
Gatwick Detainees Training	£150.00	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£50,150.76	
INCREASE in FUNDS	£7,420.96	
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2024		
Balance at 1 April 2023	£16,333.71	
INCREASE	£7,420.96	



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TOTAL	£23,754.67	
CURRENT ASSETS		
Barclays Current Account	£23,754.67	

Treasurer's Report

This Financial Year has seen a large increase in the need for RWC to provide support to those in need, both in person and financially. Financially, this has led to an almost 27% increase in our expenditure to £50,150.76, the highest in our history, Happily, our income also rose, by 141%, to £57,571.72, again a record. This was due to the efforts of many of you, especially [REDACTED] in obtaining grants. Major factors affecting the figures are as follows:

INCOME

Donations , mainly from individuals rose by 48% to £12,265.02

Just Giving donations up 212% to £3788.50

New Grants from:-

National Lottery £6,000

Wates Foundation £7,000

Sussex Community Trust £6,000

Charities Trust £1,050.00

Continuing Grant from St Christophers £6,000

EXPENDITURE

Monthly expenditure (expenditure incurred supporting RWC service users) up 70% to £28,756.55

Hire of Halls up 57% to £3648.25

Storage Unit down by 64% to £4,000

Clothing up by 162% to £4,401.96

Volunteer expenses up 126% to £3,416.78

Overall, there was a surplus of £7,420.96 , taking our balance to £ 23,754.67 (up 45%). Although the current financial position is positive, any continuation of the current level of expenditure will mean that we will need to seek more grants/donations in the coming year.

RWC Treasurer



Charity no: 1186127

RWC Officers 2023-2024

RWC Steering Group: Eliane A, Iyadh D, Mo F, Pam H, Ruth L, Kate M, Bernadette O, Samar Q

The year ahead

We expect the year ahead to hold a continuing level of challenge. RWC will continue to adapt to the needs of the refugee and asylum-seeking community in our midst and to do everything we can to support them.

We have no way of knowing if the asylum hotel population will decrease and how the impending election will change the political landscape for our services and service users.

We do not expect the demands on our services to lessen in the near future, particularly in regard to homelessness.

On a positive note, we hope to expand our offer to those we support to include weekly drop-in sessions for games or craft activities, chat and refreshments as this was a request that arose from our recent survey. Other requests included trips out, more sporting and volunteering opportunities. We will endeavour to find ways this can happen and to work with other agencies and networks.

Last word:

We consider ourselves privileged to be working with refugees and people seeking sanctuary, recognising the resilience and courage it takes to rebuild a new life in a strange country. Every day we learn a little more about life in other countries and other cultures, about the loved ones and the ways of life they miss and the problems that led to having to leave it all behind, and about their hopes for the future. We gradually get to know more about the people they were before they arrived here with nothing and about who they would like to be in the future. We learn about similarities and differences between us all and share conversation, laughter and learning amidst the bleakness of the refugee context in hostile times.



It would be easy at times to become dispirited or overwhelmed by these challenges and so the positive appreciation of those we support is often much needed

I have to admit that I will never forget your help for the rest of my life, you have a very kind heart and you have always helped me, thank you very much"

A from Iran



Charity no: 1186127

RWC

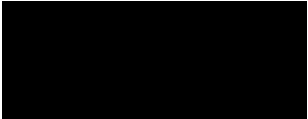
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HH trust	£1,000.00
TOTAL INCOME	£57,571.72

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INCREASE in FUNDS	£7,420.96
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2024	
Balance at 1 April 2023	£16,333.71
INCREASE	£7,420.96

TOTAL	£23,754.67
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CURRENT ASSETS	
Barclays Current Account	£23,754.67



Treasurer

Date: 24/09/24



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Refugees Welcome Crawley

On accounts for the year
ended

31 March 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1186127

Set out on pages

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31/03/2024**.

Responsibilities and
basis of report

As the charity's trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

12 November 2024

Name:

Mrs Jane Gareze FCA ATT

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Chartered Accountant (ICAEW)

Address:

Gravelye Farmhouse, Hanlye Lane

Cuckfield, West Sussex, RH17 5HR

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.