

Refugee Resource **Review** 2016-17



Overview

Highlights of 2016-17

More than 250 refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable migrants of 29 nationalities supported; 59% of these were women

Over 1,300 documented visits to our office

Worked with over 45 partner organisations to help clients to address and resolve problems

What we do

We provide psychological, social and practical support for refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants to help them heal from trauma and suffering, and to build new lives as part of Oxfordshire's diverse community.

How we do it

A holistic approach: Our range of therapeutic services works holistically together to relieve mental and emotional distress, improve well-being and empower people to connect with the local community. Our services include counselling and psychotherapy, mentoring, specialist services for women, men and young people, advice and advocacy support, a hardship fund for destitute clients, and bursary funding so people can access training and employment.

Client-centred: Our clients' needs are at the centre of all decision-making. We achieve this through regular consultation with clients to shape our ways of working and service provision and via external evaluations. In 2016-17, we re-established our Refugee Advisory Board to give us feedback on our services.

Partnership working: We work with, and through, other organisations to provide the best possible end-to-end service for vulnerable people. We take time to plan our services and talk to other providers to avoid duplication and ensure join-up. In the past 12 months, we have worked with multiple partners including:

Oxford City Council, the British Red Cross, Oxford Spire Academy, Social Services, EMBS, Citizen's Advice, Oxford University Museums, Emmaus, Shelter, Oxfordshire MIND, Abingdon and Witney College, Crisis, Asylum Welcome and Oxfam.

Sharing our expertise: We provide training for other organisations on mental health, and effective ways to work with refugees and migrants, to ensure our clients are treated with understanding and compassion when trying to establish themselves in the UK. In 2016-17, we worked with staff teams from the Oxford Job Centre and Oxford City Council Housing Office, as well as professionals from educational and mental health bodies.

Our volunteers

The support of our dedicated volunteers at Refugee Resource is absolutely vital in delivering the services we do. We have a pool of around 100 volunteers, across all our services including



Members of our women's project in discussion during a workshop. Photo: Rachel Lebus

mentoring, counselling, social inclusion, front-of-house, women's services, fundraising and marketing, and our trustees.

"Your skilful handling of the sensitive and emotional subject of trauma allowed for valuable participation from our audience. Your techniques were very useful to our practice; especially the concept of enabling clients to release their trauma gradually and appropriately in a safe environment." Mike Simera, CRUSE Oxford Training Coordinator

We also published a report on primary healthcare needs and access to services for refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants in Oxford, in partnership with Healthwatch Oxfordshire.

Country of origin

Afghanistan	13%
Albania	4%
DRC	3%
Eritrea	17%
Iran	3%
Iraq	3%
Pakistan	4%
Sri Lanka	3%
Sudan	14%
Syria	16%
Other	20%

* The names of all clients referred to in case studies in this review have been changed to safeguard and protect their identities.

Message from the Chair and CEO

This year has seen many changes in the external world, politically, socially and with regard to migration, with heated public debate and dissent in our country on this issue. At Refugee Resource, we feel that our work with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants to heal themselves and start building lives in their new communities has never been more important. As an organisation, we have grown and developed to adapt to the changing environment that we find ourselves working in. We have placed a strong emphasis on partnership working to give the best possible support to our clients, and invested in our training programme so that other local service providers, such as Social Services, better understand how to work compassionately and effectively with refugees and asylum seekers.

Thanks to the generosity of our funders and supporters, not least of which being the Big Lottery, we were able to employ two new staff – a Social Inclusion Co-ordinator and a Partnership Development Manger - to support our existing services and develop and strengthen our relationships with other organisations. In December, we were also delighted to employ an experienced Child Psychotherapist to pilot our new schools-based counselling service to support refugee children and their teachers, partnering with Oxford Spires Academy. It was also a year where, due to an increasing number of staff and volunteers, we out-grew our old premises and moved to a larger office with better facilities, and also put a new pension scheme in place.

Our growth as an organisation has been largely in response to an intensification of need for our services. We have seen increasing numbers of clients, many of whom are highly distressed and require therapeutic support as a result of experiences in their countries of origin or during their journey to the UK; others have very little English and need extra support in order to be able to acclimatise and start building a new life. Levels of destitution are rising and in the cold winter months we provided 15 ‘hardship

packs’ for our most vulnerable clients; this compared to seven in the previous year. We have been pleased to maintain our work with the City Council on supporting the Syrian families who have been arriving throughout the year, and also with the Police and Crime Commission to provide a specialist counselling service for refugees who are victims of crime.

We have also been very lucky to have the support of many amazing volunteers who generously give their time as mentors, in the office, and to give a warm welcome and advice to clients

via our front-of-house service. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our talented staff team who have worked tirelessly throughout a year of change, and also to our Board who have provided stability and guidance, and led the process of bringing in a new Chair.

Many thanks to everyone who has supported the work of Refugee Resource during the year; our life changing work would not be possible without your commitment and expertise.

Belinda Coote **Chair** Kate Hood **Chief Executive Officer**



“We provide a space where people feel listened to and treated with respect and dignity,” Men’s Service Coordinator (left) in discussion with a service user. Photo: Rachel Lebus

Counselling and Psychotherapy

73 clients supported through one to one and group counselling

60 clients received individual counselling, including 8 young people in school

14 clients attended the women's therapeutic knitting group

88% of clients reported an improvement in mental and emotional well-being

Our Counselling and Psychotherapy Service (run in accordance with British Council for Counselling and Psychotherapy guidelines) expanded to include a new volunteer counsellor and a school-based therapy service. Our team of seven counsellors worked with 73 clients, including 23 children and young people in 2016-17.

Many clients referred to Refugee Resource exhibit signs of mental and emotional distress with complex grief, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), severe anxiety, depression and a sense of lost identity featuring highly as causal factors. In addition, we find that asylum seekers, because of the temporary nature of their status, carry an additional burden of fear, poverty and uncertainty, which can make it difficult for them to cope and feel part of society. Refugee Resource counsellors have a wide breadth of expertise and use different therapeutic approaches to tailor their responses to suit different backgrounds and needs.

Our work is supported by our dedicated interpreters, for whom we run one of the few interpreters' support groups in the UK.

"When I started counselling, I wanted to commit suicide but little by little the sessions helped me to trust. I started to feel that there were good people around my family and me and I realised that people could actually trust me!" Service user

"A very big thank you for the presentation - it was really enlightening. The information will be really useful for all of our customers. I think that working together will help and support those that need our help." Training Recipient, Job Centre/ Department for Work and Pensions

We have been working in an environment of increased austerity; cuts in service provision have left people more vulnerable to homelessness and destitution, which impacts on their sense of well-being. Clients have also reported increased incidences of racism and abuse and, faced by all of these challenges, we have found that they can very easily lose the mental stability that they have worked so hard to achieve. To mitigate this, we have scaled up our training with service providers, such as the Housing Department and the Job Centre, to increase their understanding about our clients' behaviours and needs, so they can work more supportively. Feedback from these training initiatives has been excellent.

We have also shared our specialist expertise in working with refugees and asylum seekers with other mental health professionals, including NHS counsellors and Oxford Psychotherapy Society.

New school-based therapy service

In December 2016, we set up a new school-based therapy service at Oxford Spires Academy (OSA), a secondary school in East Oxford. Our qualified child and adolescent psychotherapist offers individual psychotherapy sessions for young people who have been identified as needing therapeutic support. The advantage of a school-based service is that it is accessible and

delivered in a familiar and non-threatening environment, which is essential for young people who need time to re-establish trust in others. In the first four months of this project, eight young people from Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and Albania were given therapeutic support. Initial feedback has been good, with OSA saying that the counselling service has helped to support these students at moments of crisis, improving their ability to cope at school. We also provide regular consultation sessions for teachers to support them in their work with the young refugees and asylum seekers.

Women's therapeutic knitting group

A Refugee Resource counsellor has run a therapeutic knitting group for women since 2013. Despite coming from diverse backgrounds and countries, their bond is rooted in the experiences that they have in common: the daily struggle of life in a foreign land, sometimes without papers, coping with loss and trauma, and a yearning to belong.

"The quality of the support we have received from Refugee Resource has been superb. The therapist we have worked with is very skilled and experienced, and highly respected by both students and staff... giving us a context for sometimes difficult behaviour, so that teachers can better understand what's going on under the surface. This helps us to respond more appropriately to challenging behaviour, or to low moods." Melanie Tuck, Head of English as an Additional Language (EAL) at OSA

Right: One of our experienced counsellors in a session with a client. Photo: Rachel Lebus

Case Study

Ahmed* used to be a happy family man and successful history teacher. His world fell apart after he was reported to government authorities for subversive activities. Armed men came for him, raped his wife and daughters, murdered his baby son, and took away his other two sons. Shortly after, Ahmed's wife killed herself and her sister took his daughters in. Ahmed fled and eventually found his way to the UK, where his request for asylum failed because he was unable to present a coherent case. After a suicide attempt, his case was taken to appeal, a process that can take many years.

At the point of his referral to Refugee Resource, Ahmed was homeless, afraid and alone. He barely slept, suffered frequent flashbacks and was taking high levels of anti-psychotic drugs. It was essential to ensure that he felt safe and secure and then, with time and patience, to help him deal with his trauma. After a while, he was able to reduce his medication, felt less exhausted, and gradually realised that his deep sense of anxiety lay in his inability to protect his loved ones, for whom he now started to properly grieve. Ahmed was eventually able to tell his story and was granted leave to remain in the UK for five years as a refugee. The Red Cross located his daughters and he can now send them small amounts of money from his job as a cleaner. This has given him reason to live. He is taking GCSEs at college and aims to retrain as a teacher in the UK. He remains vulnerable but has two friends whom he trusts, a room in a shared house and he is no longer considered to be at risk of suicide.



Mentoring

39 active mentoring pairs

407 meetings with over 678 hours of mentoring support

93% of mentees report increased confidence after 6 months of mentoring

We provide one-to-one support for clients by pairing them with a volunteer mentor, whom they meet regularly. Together they work towards reaching the client's personal goals, which may range from getting to know their local area and community, to improving their English, or accessing education, training or employment opportunities.

"I really value our shared interest in what is going on in the world. It has been lovely to see the change that has occurred over the time we have worked together - I am glad to be a part of it." Mentor

Our mentoring model covers three different approaches from befriending to help reduce a client's sense of social isolation; to broader goal-focussed mentoring that empowers clients to get to know their communities; or a more intensive coaching approach that involves the setting and regular review of task-focussed goals. We nuance each approach by matching the experience of our mentees with the kind of mentoring support that a client is looking for, and, as in previous years, positive feedback indicates that this approach is working, with 93% of all mentees feeling more confident after being in a mentoring pair for six months.

Our volunteer mentors come from diverse backgrounds and it is essential that they have the training and support that they need to work sensitively and effectively with the person that they are



paired with. We take care to ensure that this happens through a comprehensive interview and on-going training. During the year, we delivered 21 training sessions for volunteer mentors, covering issues related to cultural awareness, understanding boundaries and ways to empower clients, supporting victims of trauma, understanding PTSD, listening skills and supporting people with English and Maths.

"It is good to have a friend who is English – and to know this new country and culture." Mentee

We run our mentoring training through a close working relationship with Abingdon and Witney College, which enhances the quality of the training that we provide for mentoring volunteers.

Case Study

Joslyn* was introduced to Refugee Resource by a relative who had also received mentoring support. As she was new to the UK, Joslyn wanted help to get to know the local area, to find volunteering and employment opportunities, and the chance to practice and improve her English. Joslyn has been meeting her mentor once a week for over six months and, with her support, has been able to access local initiatives, particularly for her children one of whom has a place at a nursery and the other who now has swimming lessons. Joslyn says that her experience of having a mentor has exceeded her expectations – she has become more confident, her English has improved, and above all she has felt supported. Joslyn is now actively involved in the local community – she has a job, she volunteers with three other local charities and she is helping to set up a community organisation.

Our service meets the Approved Provider Standard of the Mentoring and Befriending specialists at the NCVO, and we have been working towards re-accreditation at the start of the next year.

Mentors and mentees meet together regularly. Above: photo by Fran Monks taken as part of "The Gratitude Project" commissioned by the Oxford Festival of the Arts. Right: photo by Rachel Lebus.



Women's Service

56 active members of the women's project, including 23 new members this year

130 women on our regular mailing list

96 sessions delivered with 50 different activities

72% of women supported reported feeling more confident and less isolated

26 members accessed education, training, volunteering, work placement or employment opportunities

Our vibrant women's project includes members from Afghanistan, Burma, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Turkey and various African countries who meet up to three times a week to take part in a wide range of activities designed to promote physical, mental and social well-being. The success of this group lies in the enthusiasm and commitment of the many women who participate – taking part in weekly Zumba, yoga and exercise classes, and sessions designed to learn about each other's cultures, share diverse experiences, and better understand how to adapt and navigate the complexities of living in their new country.

As interest in the project built, we responded by increasing the number of sessions from one to three days per week. There are now 56 active members, 23 of whom joined this year, who were able to take part in 50 different themed group activities that were on offer. This year Abingdon and Witney College started running a weekly family learning group, provided an 'English with daily life skills' course, and helped to prepare group members to step into further education. Next year the project plans to publish a book of traditional recipes from different countries to raise money to fund further group activities. There were also visits to local museums, the Oxford Playhouse and the Botanical Gardens.

More sessions were initiated and led by long-term members of the group who wanted to take on a greater role in shaping this service. This is an important measure of the extent to which women have found a safe space in which to build their confidence and self-esteem. We also work with, and support, women wanting to take up volunteering and work opportunities and have built on-going relationships with local businesses, such as shops, hairdressers and restaurants that regularly accept our clients for placements and on-the-job training.

"If you hardly speak English and are a stranger in a foreign culture, it's like being blind and deaf when you want to talk to someone. I felt powerless and invisible before they helped me. Now I have a voice and I can help others like me." Women's project member



Case Study

Sarah* joined the women's project five years ago when she was stressed, depressed and isolated. But coming to the group has changed that: *"I felt like I was at home with family when I was at Refugee Resource."* Sarah's experience and qualifications were not recognised in the UK and she wanted to improve her English and go back to study. With the support of the women's project and her new friends, Sarah's English quickly improved and her confidence started to build. After a few years, she also devised and ran beauty workshops for the women. Sarah was able to follow her dream of returning to study. She attended adult learning courses at EMBS Community College, and then went on to study for a political science degree at Ruskin College. She is due to graduate in January 2018. In Sarah's words: *"The help from Refugee Resource made my life change – it is an essential place for people like us"*.

Eden Habtemichael, our Women's Service Coordinator, won the prestigious Women on the Move: Woman of the Year 2017 Award – one of several organised by Migrant Organise and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to recognise and celebrate inspirational leadership and contribution from migrant and refugee women to UK society. This is both a reflection of Eden's journey as a refugee and her leadership of the Women's service, and a deep recognition of the challenges that our clients have and continue to face. Accepting her award, Eden said: *"It celebrates all of the amazing refugee women in the UK and the difficulties they have had to overcome."*

Left: Abingdon & Witney College tutor delivering an English and family learning class with members of the women's project. Right: Women's group members and our Women's Service Coordinator share food, music and activities from their different cultures. Photos: Rachel Lebus



Advice, advocacy and outreach

83 clients received advice and advocacy support through our social inclusion work

53 clients received specialist advice from our resident Citizen's Advice Worker – all reported an improvement in their financial situation and/or accommodation

56 young people were engaged with our weekly football group and other activities

62 people accessed training, education or employment with support from our services.

In order to benefit fully from our therapeutic and mentoring services, many of our service users also need help to address a wider range of social issues. So in 2016, we invested in a social inclusion programme to provide advice and, where necessary, involve other organisations in helping clients to resolve issues that they face. Working alongside our partners, we have helped clients to access further and higher education, secure sources of funding, and attain volunteering opportunities and permanent jobs with some of Oxfordshire's major employers, among other things. We now have a regular schedule of appointments and 'drop in' sessions for clients and this clear pathway of support has helped to ensure the high level of successful outcomes illustrated above. We also provide bursary funding to provide timely financial support for some clients to access employment, education and training.

We participated in a number of local initiatives to facilitate joined up ways of working, including working as part of a Citizen's Advice-led, Big Lottery-funded consortium to recruit volunteers to advise and enable refugees and asylum seekers to access mainstream services. We attend quarterly coordination group meetings in support of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and meet regularly as part of an Oxford City Council consortium to help resettle Syrian families in the UK as part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS).

Bursary

This year ten people received bursary payments totalling £8,540. £7,718 was given through our partnership with the Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundations Trust for medical training and another £882 through our Refugee Resource bursary for travel, and course and exam fees.

Football club

Our football club continued to grow over the year to around 50 members, of whom half are existing clients and the other half are from the wider local community. On average, 20 young men play every week. The club provides an important means by which young people who have newly arrived in the city can make friends, get to know their local community and feel a sense of belonging.

"I like coming to this football group because I make new friends and it gives me something to do." Service user



Our team has been integrated into other local leagues and initiatives, with players participating in tournaments, including one sponsored by the East Oxford Police. Two of our under-16 boys also joined the East Oxford football team.

Case study

Khadija* had to flee the conflict in Syria before she had chance to complete her studies in medicine. Arriving in Oxford as a refugee, she approached Refugee Resource for advice, and we helped her access bursary funding from the Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundations Trust to enable her to study for her IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam, thereby ensuring that she met the language proficiency skills that she would need to further her studies.

In order to gain some work experience in the UK while in the process of pursuing her medical career, we suggested that she become qualified as a community interpreter with a national provider of adult learning. We also put her in touch with the British Red Cross with whom she trained as an events volunteer, part of which involved work experience in a nearby hospital. Khajita also now works as a teaching assistant at a primary school where she supports refugee children. With our support, Khadija applied for various undergraduate courses and was accepted on the degree course in pharmacy at Reading University; her dream of pursuing a career in medicine can now finally become a reality.

Left: Football club team members take a break at half time. Photo: Mathew Lebus

Financial review 2016-17

This was a year of growth for Refugee Resource – with the addition of three new staff and the new school-based counselling programme, we needed to move to larger premises and our expenditure budget grew accordingly.

The current global refugee crisis is leading to increasing numbers of people arriving in Oxfordshire to seek asylum, and we continued to work with Oxford City Council to help support new refugees arriving as part of the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme. We also renewed our contract with the Police and Crime Commission to continue to deliver therapeutic support to victims of crime from our client group.

Demand for our expertise, especially the specialist skills of our counselling team, continued to grow, and we scaled up our training programme with service providers such as the Housing Department and the Job Centre, to increase their understanding about our clients' behaviours and needs, so they can work more supportively. We are working to monetise this service.

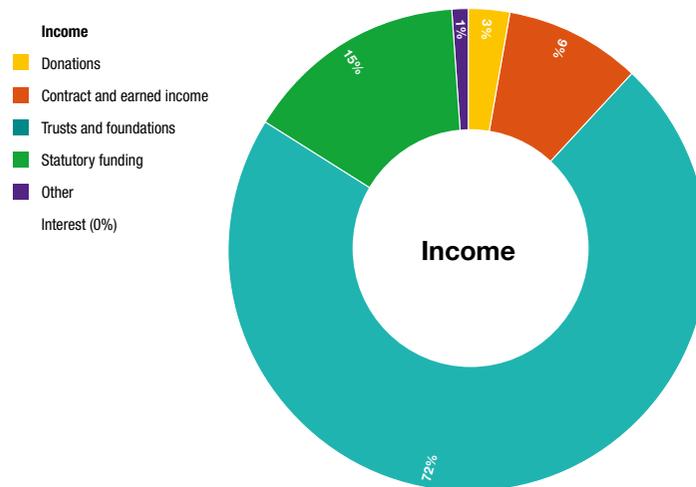
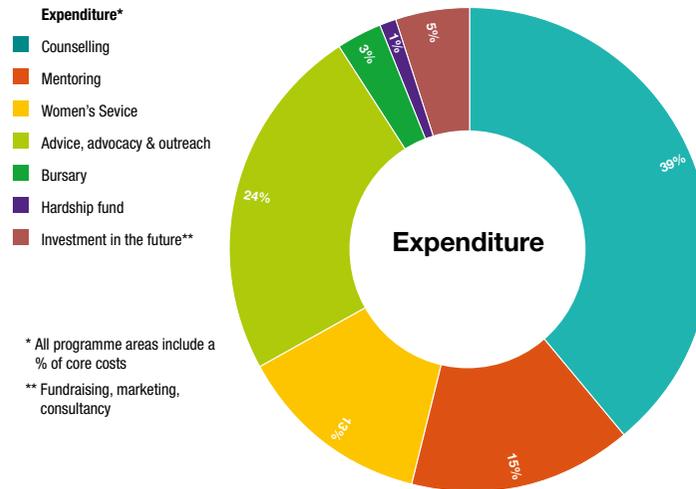
In 2016-17, we reviewed and updated our reserves policy; this dictates that we keep a relatively high level of reserves due to both the nature of our work and our income cycle. Our counselling and psychotherapy work with vulnerable and traumatised clients is long-term and it could be unsafe to end this abruptly; we therefore need a minimum of nine months to wind-down this service.

Fund balance at 31 March 2017*

	2016	2017
Restricted funds	£14,000	£8,000
Unrestricted funds	£210,000	£276,000
Total	£224,000	£284,000

Income:	Expenditure*
2017: £402,000	2017: £343,000
2016: £225,000	2016: £289,000

*These figures have been rounded to the nearest £1,000



Refugee Resource gratefully acknowledges the support of the many individuals, organisations and funding bodies who contributed to our work during the year.

They include:



CHK Charitable Trust
The Rayne Foundation
Oxford Clinical Commissioning Group
St Michael's and All Saints Charities
The Equator Fund
M&C Trust
Oxfordshire Virtual School
Abingdon and Witney College (co-funded by the European Social Fund and Skills Funding Agency)

About us

www.refugeeresource.org

Established as a charity in 2003, Refugee Resource aims to relieve distress, improve well-being and facilitate the integration of refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants in Oxfordshire. Our work is based around three key values: empowerment, healing and integration.

We provide a place of safety and welcome for 250-300 clients each year, some of whom require specialist counselling to heal from trauma and others who participate in our range of therapeutic activities aimed at helping people to move from a position of alienation to inclusion within the wider community. Our services work together holistically and we put our clients at the centre of all that we do; we work in partnership, and share our expertise, with other local organisations to ensure the best possible services and outcomes for our clients.

Company no: 04558542. Charity no: 1098876

Trustees in 2016-17:

Belinda Coote (Chair since 1 Jan 2017)
Ray Fishbourne (Chair until 31 Dec 2016)
Ken King (Treasurer)
Louisa Daubney
Tan Lea
Thibaut Mills
Yusef Salehi
Orlando Trujillo

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How to donate

Please support us in helping refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants rebuild their lives in Oxford. Every donation we receive makes a significant contribution towards continuing our work.

You can donate to Refugee Resource:

- Online via Everyclick.com
- Make a single donation by bank transfer, or set up a regular donation by standing order
Account name: Refugee Resource
Account number: 04253100
Sort code: 16-58-10
- Send a cheque made payable to 'Refugee Resource' to our address

For more information visit our website: www.refugeeresource.org.uk/donate

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Front cover picture: Members of the Refugee Resource women's project. Photo: Rachel Lebus