

Refugee Resource Review 2017-18



Overview

Highlights of 2017-18

311 refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable migrants from 36 countries supported

Over 1,425 documented visits to our office

Worked with over 48 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. Our Refugee Advisory Board gives us regular and direct 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



Preparing for our Community Café. Photo: Oxford Film Shed

including: Oxford City Council, the NHS, the British Red Cross, Oxford Spires Academy, Social Services, EMBS, CAB, Oxford University Museums, Shelter, Oxfordshire MIND, Abingdon and Witney College, Crisis and Oxfam.

Sharing our expertise: we provide training to other organisations on working with complex emotional and mental health issues, and effective ways to work with our client group, to ensure they are treated with understanding and compassion when trying to establish themselves in the UK. In 2017-18, we delivered training to staff teams from the Oxford Job Centre, Oxford Housing Office, Key 2, Aspire, and Cruse, as well as professionals from educational and mental health bodies, including other counselling services.

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

"I've seen significant changes in clients' mental health. If Refugee Resource wasn't there offering nurturing, holistic support, I can't think of any other resource that could take it up... It doesn't even bear thinking about." A partner organisation

Country of origin

Albania	4%
Afghanistan	11%
Democratic Republic of Congo	2%
Eritrea	11%
Iran	5%
Iraq	3%
Kosovo	2%
Pakistan	2%
Sri Lanka	2%
Sudan	8%
Syria	2%
Trinidad and Tobago	2%
Turkey	2%
Uganda	2%
Other	22%

Message from the Chair and CEO

In 2017-18, we welcomed even more refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants seeking therapeutic support and practical assistance than ever before (311 clients made 1425 visits, up 9% from 2016-17). We are proud to be able to provide a place where people who have suffered the most traumatic of life experiences and abusive treatment at others' hands, can come to heal, regain their trust and then ultimately start to rebuild their lives.

Our organisation continued to grow during the year; demand for both our services and our expertise has never been higher due to a climate of austerity and service cuts, coupled with an increasing number of people arriving in Oxfordshire who need our specialist support. In the past three years, our expenditure budget has grown by almost 50% and we have seen a corresponding growth in service provision, as well as an increase in staff and volunteer support.

As our reputation for providing a high quality, reputable and unique service has grown, we have been able to secure additional grants from local agencies such as the Oxfordshire Community Foundation High Sheriff Award and Police and Crime Commission (PCC) with which to deliver additional small-scale project work. We were also very pleased to secure new funding from both Comic Relief and Children in Need to support new work with young people; a recent area of focus for us and a response to other local services closing down. Our focus continues to be working in partnership with other local organisations to provide the best possible, end-to-end service for our clients and we are also working to support smaller grassroots community organisations with their work wherever possible.

We have also been working hard to ensure that our back office functions are robust and sufficient to support the needs of a growing organisation; we developed a new bespoke database system, started a review of our tools for monitoring and

evaluating our services, and updated our financial management systems. In addition, we have worked hard to ensure that we are compliant with new GDPR data protection regulations and to ensure that all our safeguarding procedures are up-to-date; our staff team have had training from both the PREVENT and the Modern Slavery teams in recent months.

In addition to our ongoing service provision, we are very much looking forward to starting work on our new programme areas in 2018-19; working with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (funded by Oxfordshire County Council); innovative work with partners looking at young men's mental health (Comic Relief

funded), and an awareness raising project on FGM led by our Women's Service (supported by the PCC). We are grateful to all our funders, including the Big Lottery, who provide support, insight and guidance, as well as financial support, and also to all the partner organisations with whom we work on a day-to-day or project basis.

As we look forward to the next year, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful team of dedicated and professional staff, associates and volunteers who continue to provide an extraordinary level of care and expertise.

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



Refugee Resource staff give regular talks and training to other organisations about PTSD, FGM and other issues that face our client group. Photo: Refugee Resource

Counselling Service

79 clients supported through one-to-one and group counselling

19 young people seen via our in-school counselling service

23 clients attended the women's therapeutic knitting group

55 people receiving counselling reported a reduction in symptoms of mental distress

Our team of seven counsellors continued their excellent therapeutic work with some of our most vulnerable clients during the year, including young people and unaccompanied asylum seeking children via our school-based therapy service. Our Counselling and Psychotherapy Service (run in accordance with British Council for Counselling and Psychotherapy guidelines) is recognised for our specialist expertise by other professional bodies including the NHS, legal firms dealing with asylum claims and other voluntary agencies, who consequently refer people to us.

Many clients are referred as they exhibit signs of mental and emotional distress, with complex grief, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), severe anxiety, depression and a sense of lost identity frequently experienced as symptoms. 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.

In 2017-18, we continued to deliver training to other organisations around mental health and how to work with refugees and migrants

“That little room (the counselling room) is like magic. One person listening to you and talking to you makes such a big difference”

A counselling service client

affected by trauma, including to Oxford City Council Housing Department, Oxford Job Centre and Cruse Oxford (bereavement counsellors), Sanctuary Hosting and Oxford Co-operative Training Scheme. In this way, we hope to build understanding and capacity in other organisations which will last into the future, as well as to ensure a more understanding and compassionate environment for our clients outside Refugee Resource.

“Before I talked, I wanted to kill myself. I got angry. I don't know what's happened to me. Now I feel calm and peace.” A counselling service client

Our counselling team also runs a unique service in that all the interpreters we use are recruited and supported in-house via one-to-one and group supervision sessions, as well as via ongoing training, to ensure a high level of support for this difficult work. Many of our interpreters come from the same communities as the client and we aim to have people who speak all the languages necessary to ensure everyone who needs to is able to engage with our counselling services; this year, in response to demand, we were able to recruit new Tamil, Mandarin, Kurdish Sorani and Kurdish Kurmanji interpreters.



External evaluation

Every few years we carry out an external evaluation of services (funded by our Big Lottery grant), in which clients and partners have the opportunity to give us feedback so that we can ensure we are working in the most effective and joined-up way possible. In 2017-18, we were pleased to get a glowing report back along with some helpful feedback to improve our services overall:

“The counselling service is unique in Oxford, and is one of a handful of specialist services nationally. Its reputation is excellent across a wide geographic area, with referrals being made from as far away as Wales... (it) is delivering high-quality, transformative support for clients with complex needs, who find its support invaluable.” (extract from Butterfly Consultancy report; February 2018)

“The service provides much-needed support to some very traumatised young people... although the school has long experience of working with asylum seekers and refugees, the level of trauma in our newly-arrived students meant that we found some of them difficult to manage and struggled to meet their needs... The improvement in individuals' behaviour and engagement with school has been very noticeable. The service also provides support for staff... we have been able to discuss our concerns over individual students, and also get advice on our own issues of stress” Melanie Tuck, Head of English as an Additional Language at Oxford Spires Academy

Left: One of our counsellors giving a training session on PTSD and the issues that face our client group. Photo: Refugee Resource

Case Study

Joseph* is in his thirties and comes from Africa; he had been tortured on several occasions because of religious conflicts in his home country. He moved to Oxford to find work and members of his own community, and now has been living in the UK for eight years.

When Joseph started counselling, he was very withdrawn and complained of frequent headaches and flashbacks of his torture, constant fear of being followed, and chronic pain due to his physical injuries. Counselling, with the support of a skilled interpreter, initially focused on helping him to feel more stable and safe, understand the impact of his traumatic experiences and build his confidence in accessing a range of services. In time, he found better accommodation and a job – he derived great satisfaction in being able to come off disability benefits.

As his sense of stability improved, we began working on the traumatic incidents he had experienced, to process his grief about family members who had been murdered, and his strong sense of survivor guilt. Joseph showed great determination in healing these experiences, while realising that he would always live with the wounds. Our Social Inclusion Co-ordinator supported him with job applications and interview practice, and he persisted in retaking his driving theory test many times until he finally got his licence.

Four years after his initial visit to Refugee Resource, Joseph is married, has reasonable accommodation and a job he enjoys caring for vulnerable people. He feels he has recovered more than he believed was possible, and, despite some practical issues with accessing services due to language barriers, he feels more empowered and able to solve problems by himself.



A counselling session in progress. Photo: Rachel Lebus

Women's Service

58 active members of our women's service including 12 new members

142 women on our regular mailing list

2 women passed entry level 2 English and 1 woman passed entry level 3 English

80% of the women reported feeling more empowered, more confident and less isolated

75% felt their health and well-being has improved

Our women's project continued to be very popular and successful, with 58 regular members meeting three days a week to take part in different activities and training sessions.

The women follow a varied programme, supported by external trainers and facilitators, designed to promote their physical, mental and social well-being, including weekly zumba, yoga and basic exercise classes, and educational training, information workshops, and joint community engagement activities. They engaged in 110 sessions during the year, including special events such as a family science day, run in partnership with the British Science Association, where they and their children learned about food and their bodies. Lawyers Against Poverty ran a series of workshops for our women to teach them about their legal rights in the UK.

"I feel I am understood, I can come and ask questions, I can chat, and I feel I belong. I am far from my family, so the Women's Group has become my family, we support each other."
Women's Service member

The women are very engaged in the planning and delivery of the programme as well as in participating. Many of the women who have been involved with the group for longer, volunteer to lead

some of the activities and also act as interpreters for newer members of the group whose English may not be as good.

"Cooking for the homeless people is fulfilling. I know it is not a lot, but it is my little way of giving back to the British people who have opened their doors for me when I needed it most. It is now time for me to give back."

Women's Service member

During the year, some members of our women's project were involved with activities to improve their skills and gain practical experience in preparation for work and studying: Abingdon & Witney College delivered a course about English with daily life skills; Oxfam delivered a series of workshops around how to search and apply for the right job, writing a CV, and knowing your rights, and are offering volunteer placements for the women, accompanied by coaching.

Community Cafes

A highlight for the women's project was the delivery of their first pop-up Community Café in March 2018. The project aims to bring together vulnerable and isolated sections of our community and to break down social barriers; in this instance, working in partnership with Oxford Homeless Project and Oxford City of Sanctuary, the focus was on people who are homeless or vulnerably housed. Twenty-two women cooked for over 100 people from homeless, refugee and other vulnerable community groups. The project is supported by the Oxfordshire Community Foundation High Sheriff's Community Integration Award and the women will deliver a series of four community cafes, serving food from their home countries (including Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Algeria, Pakistan, Kenya, Sudan, Syria,

Turkey and the Democratic Republic of Congo) over the next 12 months. As part of this project, 28 women have also undertaken the Food Hygiene Level 2 course.

Case Study

Anna* fled her home country in 2017, as she was frightened for her child's safety and her own. As a single mother adjusting to a very different culture and new language, she felt very much alone and not sure where to go for help: *"I felt as if I was walking in the dark with my hands stretched out in front of me, not knowing what was next but I kept going for my child,"* she says. A local shopkeeper gave her the address of Refugee Resource, and she says she felt she had reached a place where people knew what she had been through, and wanted to support her. Anna very quickly joined the women's service and started attending two English classes per week, and meeting other women she can relate to, which she feels helps not only herself but also her son: *"My child was only spending time with me but now he gets to know the other mums and other children and it prepares him for when it will be time to go to nursery. My coming across RR is like day and night for both my son and myself."*

Anna is now a very active member of the group, regularly taking part in activities including the Oxfam 'Future Skills' programme, and volunteering on the Community Cafes project, through which she has done her Food Hygiene training. She says, *"The speakers and workshops... enable me to understand for myself a range of subjects on health, rights, education and I am learning about life here in the UK."*



Women's Service members prepare and serve the food to vulnerable and isolated members of the community in our Community Café. Photos: Oxford Film Shed

Advice, advocacy and outreach

117 clients received advice and advocacy support: 59 were given specialist support by our inhouse Citizens' Advice service and 62 were seen by our Social Inclusion Adviser

39 young people regularly attended our weekly football group

81 service users reported an improvement in their financial situation and/or accommodation

70 clients accessed employment, education or training

124 people reported feeling less isolated and/or more confident after receiving support through our services

In 2017-18, we were able to reach many more people than we have in previous years due to developments in our services which have enabled us to expand our capacity and reach; this is especially true of our Social Inclusion Service which enables clients to access advice and advocacy services inhouse, and also refers people to other agencies where necessary.

This service works alongside, and complements, our therapeutic services, helping clients address a wide range of complex social issues which otherwise could prevent them from emotional and psychological healing.

"I just don't think there is any other way of these clients having access to that kind of specialised help. I don't think there are people qualified to be dealing with the particular issues that asylum seekers and refugees are facing; no other organisation that has the time or expertise to listen to these clients. That's what these clients need, they need to talk." Refugee Resource partner organisation

Working collaboratively with more than 48 partners, we helped clients to access further and higher education and training, and

attain both volunteering opportunities and permanent jobs. Forty clients got involved in voluntary work, including for Oxford University Museums and their work was shown as part of the 'Syrians Unknown' and 'Identity Without Borders' exhibitions. Six women took part in the 'Future Skills' programme run by Oxfam GB, which includes six month volunteer placements in their shops, and many others found opportunities with Aspire, the ARCH reading scheme, and in local primary schools. Eleven clients were supported to find and access work experience placements at a variety of places including Oxford City Council, Oxfam GB and small local businesses such as hairdressers. We worked with 23 clients to secure paid employment with local employers including at the new John Lewis store, and at a local restaurant.

Clients were able to access education, ranging from entry level English and Maths to higher education courses, due to interview coaching, practical assistance with applications and securing funding. For example, we helped one client secure a place to study at Birbeck University along with scholarship funding; another client is now studying for a degree in pharmacy at Reading University, and a third client is at Ruskin College undertaking an access course for health professionals. Clients have been supported onto vocational programmes and training including hairdressing, childcare and pharmacy with Adult Learning and local colleges, such as City of Oxford, and Abingdon and Witney Colleges.

We are investing in increasing the level of understanding and expertise across agencies working with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants in Oxfordshire, by joining a number of local initiatives to share ideas and learning, and facilitate ways to work better together. We attend the quarterly unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) co-ordination group meeting, and are part of a consortium working with Oxford City Council to support Syrian families resettled via the

Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). We are also a member of the Oxfordshire Anti-Slavery Network which brings together key players from across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, such as police, social services, NHS, Fire and Rescue, City Council, The British Red Cross, Elmore, and faith groups. We are part of the Stronger Together Partnership, which is a consortium of seven advice agencies supporting people in crisis in Oxford, as well as a new initiative to establish a Refugee Pathway, based on the successful models of the Homeless and Mental Health Pathways.

This service works alongside, and complements, our therapeutic services, helping clients address a wide range of complex social issues which otherwise could prevent them from emotional and psychological healing. The exceptional level of commitment given to the most vulnerable of clients by the Social Inclusion team was noted in the recent external evaluation by Butterfly Consultancy:

"They are not merely given advice and then referred on to other services, as might occur in other advice centres; they are accompanied throughout the process of resolving their problems...described by a staff member as 'The Rottweiler approach: we won't let go until we know the issue has been resolved'."

Bursary funding

In 2017-18, we gave 14 people financial support via our bursary programme to access education, training and employment opportunities. Overall we gave out £9,215 in funding: six people were funded by Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundations Trust for medical training to become doctors, nurses, dentists, etc (£7,611); £1,399 was given out in small sums of £50- £200 to nine

clients through our Refugee Resource bursary fund for travel, books/ equipment, courses, exam fees, etc, and two clients benefitted from grants for travel expenses worth £204 that we secured for them from Oxford Poverty Action Trust (OPAT).

Football Club

Over the past year, 39 young men have been involved with our weekly football group, which aims to improve both their mental and physical well-being. The group gives the young people not only the opportunity to get some exercise, but also to form friendships and peer support networks, which contribute to positive mental and emotional health.

Case Study

Amina* first came to Refugee Resource for counselling five years ago and was supporting herself with a part-time job at a café. She had previously done a bit of interpreting and wanted to get a qualification so that she could secure more work, so we signposted her to a community interpreting course: she completed this course and went on to get some paid interpreting work.

She also wanted to get some hands-on experience in a care setting so we worked with her to undertake training for the British Red Cross Events volunteering team, and then to do work experience at a nearby hospital. We also helped her to apply for various undergraduate courses, and she eventually secured a place to study pharmacy at a good university. At the same time, with our support, Amina continued to apply for various jobs and finally found a position as a teaching assistant at a local primary school, supporting children whose first language is not English, which she loves.



Our Social Inclusion Service provided advice to 117 people in 2017-18. Photo: Rachel Lebus

Mentoring Service

37 active mentoring pairs

299 meetings with over 457 hours of mentoring support

100% of mentees report feeling increased confidence after six months of mentoring

Refugee Resource's mentoring service provides one-to-one support for clients by pairing them with a volunteer mentor. Some clients receive additional support before, after or during counselling, or for others it is the main service they receive.

Mentors and mentees meet regularly over a 12-month period, and 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 found the training that we were offered by RR to be completely spot-on. It was well-structured, well-delivered, relevant and informative." Volunteer mentor

We put a strong emphasis on training and then supporting our volunteer mentors to ensure both they and the mentees have a positive experience. We run our mentoring training through a close working relationship with Abingdon and Witney College, Community Adult Learning. During the year we delivered 14 training sessions, attended by 53 pending or active volunteers, and also those from other organisations working with refugees and migrants in Oxfordshire. These sessions covered core mentor induction training and topics including cultural awareness, understanding boundaries and ways to empower clients, supporting survivors of trauma, understanding PTSD and supporting people with English and Maths.



Mentoring pairs meet regularly to work towards the mentee's personal goals
Photo: Rachel Lebus

Our service meets the NCVO Approved Provider Standard for Mentoring and Befriending; in May 2017 we were assessed and received re-accreditation for another three years.

The external evaluation of services, carried out by Butterfly Consulting during the year, highlighted that clients value both the relationship they have with their mentor as well as the practical support they are able to offer, and underlined the professional nature of our service:

"The mentoring service is externally accredited and professionally run. Refugee Resource focuses on ensuring that they select and train volunteer mentors well, so that they are equipped to offer effective support to clients. Mentors state that they feel well supported in their role, and feel cared for by Refugee Resource."

Case study

"Absolutely, very helpful;" this is how Zahra* who came from Syria to Oxford in 2017, describes her weekly meetings with volunteer mentor, Kay*, whom she has been working with for almost a year. Zahra has been adjusting to living in the UK, and Kay enjoys learning about Zahra's culture and experiences, so the mentoring experience involves them learning from, and about, each other. Kay has helped Zahra with some practical issues such as helping with the process of getting her son into a nursery, learning English and with finding possible volunteering opportunities.

Before beginning her mentoring relationship with Kay, Zahra was feeling quite isolated but now reports feeling much less so and also more confident generally; *"I never thought it would help me,"* says Zahra, describing her thoughts about mentoring before she started. However, now she would definitely recommend Refugee Resource's Mentoring Service to others in a similar situation to hers.

Kay also reports her experience of being a mentor as a positive learning experience and has gained satisfaction from helping Zahra set and work towards achieving the goals they have identified over time.

Financial review 2017-18

In 2017-18, we experienced the third consecutive year of growth due to the increase in need for our services brought about by more people arriving in Oxford needing our support, increasing poverty and austerity, and the closure or reduction of other services. We secured several major grants through competitive processes: three years of funding from Children in Need to continue our school-based therapy service until 2021; funding from Oxford City Council to run a two-year Mentoring and Volunteering project which constitutes an extension of our existing mentoring and social inclusion programmes; and three years of funding from Comic Relief for our work with young men until March 2021. The latter includes counselling work, our weekly football group, and a new experimental strand researching innovative ways to raise awareness and address issues around their mental health.

In addition, we were lucky to receive a £20k legacy gift which we will use to support our bursary funding and to train our front-of-house team in giving advice and advocacy. We will also be starting a new programme in 2018-19 working with unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), having secured two tenders from the County Council for a mentoring and counselling programme working with this group; we will also be working with them to deliver a training project which is the third stream of their UASC programme.

Fund balance at 31 March 2018*

	2017	2018
Restricted funds	£8,000	£39,000
Unrestricted funds	£276,000	£298,000
Total	£284,000	£337,000

Income:	Expenditure
2018: £436,000	2018: £382,000
2017: £402,000	2017: £343,000

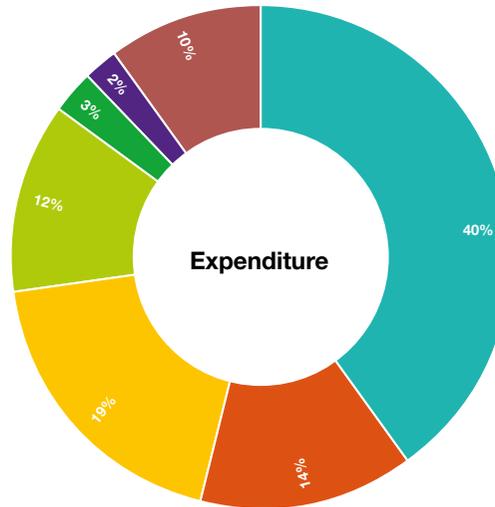
*All figures in this section have been rounded to the nearest £1,000

Expenditure*

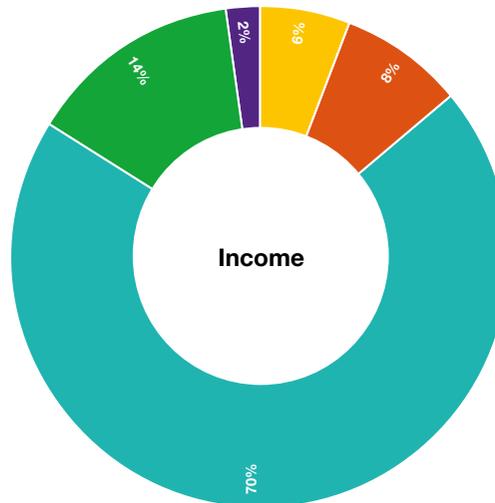
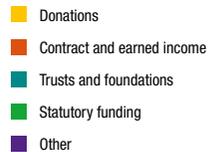


* All programme areas include a % of core costs

** Fundraising, marketing, consultancy



Income



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

They include:



Abingdon and Witney College (co-funded by the European Social Fund and Skills Funding Agency)
 CHK Charitable Trust
 The Equator Fund
 M&C Trust
 Oxford City Council
 Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
 Oxfordshire Community Foundation – Step Change Fund
 Police and Crime Commission
 The Rayne Foundation
 St Michael's and All Saints Charities

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: healing, empowerment and integration.

We provide a place of safety and welcome for more than 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

Refugee Resource Board 2017-18

Belinda Coote (Chair)

Ken King (Treasurer)

Louisa Daubney

Ray Fishbourne

Tan Lea

Thibaut Mills

Dr Caroline M Roseveare

Yusef Salehi

Michael Taylor

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: Refugee Resource clients and their families enjoying a game of tug-of-war on the beach during our annual summer excursion. Photo: Refugee Resource.