

# Impact Report 2014/15

How Refugee Council has performed  
and delivered services for refugees  
and asylum seekers



SUPPORTING AND  
EMPOWERING  
REFUGEES

# Welcome from our Chief Executive

A traumatised survivor of trafficking able to envisage a life of hope and happiness; an exiled doctor or dentist assisted to qualify to practice in the UK; a young teenage refugee rescued from the horrors of an adult detention centre; or a family supported to take the opportunities that resettlement from a refugee camp to the UK can provide. As we come to terms with the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War, these are the kinds of life changing and enhancing impacts that the Refugee Council makes every working day of the year.



This report outlines some of the impact that the Refugee Council has on the lives of our beneficiaries and, in doing so, illustrates the benefits that stem from our profoundly human-centred ethos and our empathetic and respectful treatment of our clients as people first and refugees second.

When our beneficiaries – whether young, old, families or single adults – tell us how important the Refugee Council is to their lives, and how much they value the understanding and trust we show them, the time and care with which we attend to their needs and the tenacity and persistence we display when advocating for their rights, we can be incredibly proud of what we achieve. This is possible because everything we do begins with us looking at the world through their eyes.

Working in this way requires time and resources, so it is thanks to our supporters that we are able to go that extra mile; to make that critical intervention and to ensure the lessons we learn and the evidence we generate underpins our advocacy. We advocate not only for refugee rights, but also for the benefits that flow from viewing refugees as assets, not problems.

I hope that what you read in this report will demonstrate that the Refugee Council continues to use resources wisely and effectively. We demand much from our inspirational staff and volunteers, so the validation and endorsement of their work that your support represents, over and above its financial value, is of crucial importance.

With the world changing in front of our eyes and the needs of refugees growing by the day, 2016 is set to be a year of even greater challenges. Thanks to your support, we are confident that there will be opportunities too and we look forward to continuing to work closely with you in the future.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M Wren'.

Sincerely, **Maurice Wren**, Chief Executive

# The Refugee Council

Since 1951 the Refugee Council has supported people in desperate need, forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution or torture and who come to the UK seeking safety. We deliver services to extremely vulnerable people in the UK, including traumatised children arriving alone, survivors of torture, and those forced into homelessness and destitution. The Refugee Council also advocates for a fair, humane and effective UK asylum system so that refugees can rebuild their lives in a welcoming place of safety.

## Our services in action

Refugee Council delivers a range of expert advice and support services for asylum seekers and refugees which support individuals through the asylum process, helping men, women and children to rebuild their lives in the UK.

## Our programmes include

**Children's Services:** Helps separated children seeking asylum receive high quality support and advice – including where a child's age is disputed – along with activities to help traumatised children feel safe and make new friendships.

## Therapeutic and Destitution Services:

People seeking asylum can often fall into destitution, this key service helps to deal

with basic needs such as housing and income, and progress out of destitution. It also ensures that asylum seekers and refugees have access to therapeutic support to improve their psychological wellbeing and enhance their integration into a new life in the UK.

## Integration and Employment Services:

Provides specialist advice and support to newly recognised refugees so that they can make the transition from asylum support to mainstream statutory support and safe, secure accommodation. This helps refugees make positive steps towards building a new and integrated life in the UK and supports the individual to understand the steps required to progress towards further education, training or employment, including re-training for doctors and other health professionals.

## Resettlement Gateway Protection

**Programme:** This specialist programme supports vulnerable refugees, relocated directly to the UK from refugee camps overseas. Our advisors work with, advocate for and empower refugees to have a more independent and sustainable future in the UK.

**Advocacy Team:** Works to achieve policy changes and raise awareness of issues faced by those who are forced to flee their countries.

## Some key success in 2014/15 across our services:

- Refugees Into Jobs project supported 93 people
- Building Bridges project supported 75 health professionals
- 210 people supported on housing issues
- 383 received advice & guidance with their new refugee status
- Destitution Services supported 244 destitute individuals through case work, medical & legal advice and gave food, clothing and showers
- Children's Services helped 2,197 unaccompanied children: of these 85 were supported through our trafficking project, 195 were supported with age disputes, and 342 attended our English & Maths classes or social evenings
- Therapeutic Services supported 657 clients, including victims of torture, violence and rape through one-to-one counselling and group work
- Advocacy campaigned for the Government to resettle more Syrian refugees, which now stands at 20,000 during this parliament.

## Some of our services in detail

We aim to deliver a portfolio of discrete, holistic and expert services for the benefit of people at all stages of the UK asylum and refugee system, designed to transform the lives of beneficiaries and to complement other specialist and mainstream services.



### Integration services

Refugee Council worked with 593 adults, the core issues that service users presented were access to settled housing, asylum related health and wellbeing and financial stability.

- 40 people supported out of street homelessness
- 37 people supported into new tenancies
- 100 people prevented from being street homeless
- 150 people supported to access welfare
- 233 appointments arranged with financial institution and local authorities

### Education and training

We supported 93 refugees in the year with our employment programme overall.

Outcomes achieved:

- Job outcome 49
- Qualifications achieved 20
- Accessing volunteering 76



### Building Bridges programme

The project supports the retraining and requalification of refugee health

professionals (doctors) enabling them to access health posts commensurate with their experience and qualifications. The contractual year started in September 2014.

- 20 new doctors registered on the programme over 12 months
- 23 doctors continued on the programme
- 14 health professionals received support through Beneficiary Fund
- 18 health professionals attended the International English Language Test Scores provision at Refugee Council
- Total 75 clients supported



### Children's Section programme

UNHCR reports that over 51% of refugees are children and it is no surprise, therefore, that in 2014/15 our Children's Services have, between them,

supported over 2,000 unaccompanied children. These children have come from 67 different countries of origin. The most common countries of origin are Syria, Afghanistan, Albania, Eritrea, Sudan, Iran and Vietnam.

- The Age Dispute project was developed within the Refugee Council's Children's Panel in 2010, following an on-going concern for separated children whose age is not accepted. The Age Dispute project allows children the rights and freedoms they are entitled to under UK law. A total of 195 children were supported in 2014/2015.
- The Children's Panel supported 1,575 separated children seeking asylum to receive high quality support and advice around their asylum applications, and to feel safe and to be properly looked after.

- The Youth Development project supported 342 separated children to thrive and develop into active members of society through providing cultural trips, social evenings, educational classes, skills development workshops and liaison with schools.
- The Trafficked Children's project supported 85 children who have been trafficked from outside the United Kingdom through advice, liaisons with local authorities and legal representation.

## Therapeutic Casework Unit

Last year we supported 657 asylum seekers nationwide. 79% of our clients reported that they have felt 'frequently' or 'always' helped by TCU, with the overwhelming majority reporting they felt we were 'always' there for them.

The most common issues we have helped clients to deal with have been: overwhelming anxiety, depression, fear of detention or deportation, and sleeplessness. However, some people have experienced more severe trauma.

Approximately 56% of those currently coming to us are women, and 44% are men.

In our group work, the majority are attended by women – for example our mothers and toddlers and our creative focus groups. Other groups that use narrative therapy are open to all.

*"Refugee Council is fantastic, Andrew and Chloe [Refugee Council, Staff] are fantastic people, they helped me with everything, I can't even express how grateful I am. I was desperate, sick, lost and with a lot of problems and they were there for me, always with a smile on their face. Chloe is so loving and helpful, she is such a nice girl and so smart... I want to send flowers to Chloe. Thank you from the bottom of my heart and God bless them all."*

Refugee Council client (*Integration Services*)

## Suna's Story

Suna\* is a 19 year old refugee who joined her mother in the UK, who was also a client of Refugee Council. When she first came to our charity with her mother in December 2014, Suna could barely speak English and seemed completely lost and frightened. She was under pressure from the Job Centre to look for work. She had no IT skills as she came from a remote village in her country with no access to a computer.

We worked with her intensively, helping her with her benefit claim which included numerous calls and letters to the Job Centre explaining her lack of IT skills and ability to use Universal Jobmatch. We were eventually able to sort out her Job Seekers Allowance. We also helped her to find courses in which she could improve her English and IT skills.

Now Suna has transformed into a confident young woman, volunteering in a charity shop which we helped her to find – she's practically running the shop on her own – and uses the computer confidently. She is being supported to look for work in care and get her GCSEs to apply for an Access to Medicine course. Her long-term goal is to become a nurse.

*\*Name has been changed to protect identify of the client*

## Members of the Board of Trustees for 2014/15:

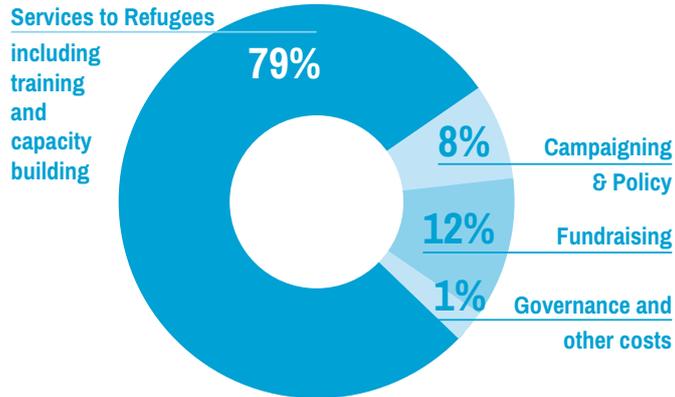
- Dr Graham Abbey (stood down 2015)
- Mabrouk Alloune, East London Community Law Service
- Sirak Hagos Berhe, Investing in People and Culture
- Heather Foster (Treasurer) (stood down 2015)
- Richard Foster (Chair), Criminal Cases Review Commission
- Hussein Mohammed Hassan, ILAYS
- Benjamin Hopkinson, North of England Refugee Service (NERS)
- Vaughn Jones, Praxis
- Connie Mante (stood down 2014)
- Stella Maravanyika, Zimbabwean Association
- Anne-Marie Lawlor
- Salah Mohamed, Welsh Refugee Council
- Rita Paulino, South Sudan Women Association
- Sunetra Puri (stood down 2014)
- Ernest Rukangira, Diversity Living Services
- Jan Shaw, Amnesty International UK



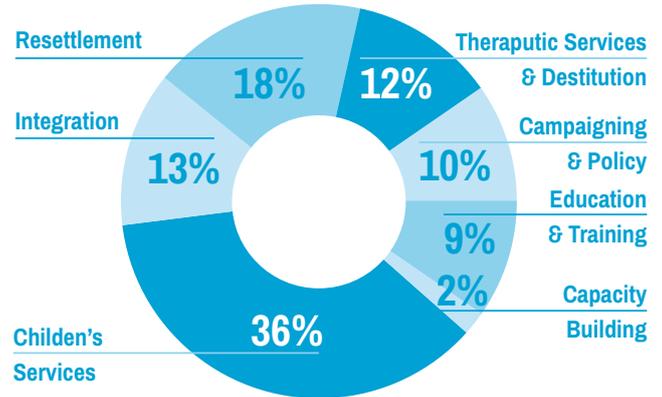
Messages sent to refugees from supporters in Refugee Week, June 2015

# Where did we spend our money in 2014/15?

This chart shows where our total income was spent:



For every £1 we received, 87p went towards:



2014/15 was a transitional financial year for the Refugee Council, with total income of £4,608k falling £912k short of our total expenditure of £5,520k. This was partly connected to the end of our Home Office funded Asylum Support work for adults. Whilst this change was expected and planned for, it meant major changes for both our operational and funding environment. Trustees made the decision to keep our other vital services going during this transition period, and authorised use of reserves to fund this whilst the charity secured a more sustainable balance of funding.

Full details of our financial position and results for 2014/15 can be found in our Annual Report and Accounts on our website: [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/about\\_refugee\\_council/annual\\_accounts](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/about_refugee_council/annual_accounts)



Children's Section, showcasing artwork produced by young people, © Refugee Council

We are hugely grateful for all the help given by our supporters and volunteers through 2014/15 which has made such a difference to the lives of refugees and asylum seekers, at a significant time of crisis. Thank you.

Contact us at [supporter@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:supporter@refugeecouncil.org.uk) or call 0207 346 1205.

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