

Refugee Council Impact Report 2016-17



SUPPORTING AND
EMPOWERING
REFUGEES



Welcome from Andrew Halper, Chair of Trustees at the Refugee Council



© Andrew Halper

Andrew Halper, Chair of Trustees at the Refugee Council

The past year has been a busy, challenging, and inspiring one for the Refugee Council.

In 2016, more people than ever before were forced – by war, violence, or persecution – to flee their homes. There are currently over 65 million forcibly displaced people around the world.

The people of Britain have responded to the ongoing refugee crises with goodwill and generosity. For the Refugee Council this meant renewed support for the vital, transformational work we do.

To those of you who already support the Refugee Council, it is your kind donations that have allowed us to carry out our life-changing work. Thanks to you, we have boosted our capacity across the country, substantially increasing the number of

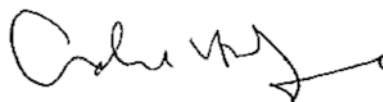
people we are able to support, including refugee children who have arrived in the UK with no one to care for them, people who have fallen into destitution and have nowhere else to turn, and those who have experienced horrific trauma.

We also need to say a very heartfelt thank you to our hundreds of dedicated volunteers who, every day, make such a huge impact on the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum.

If you are thinking about supporting us, we invite you to find out more about our work and to get in touch to see how you can support refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

This year, the Refugee Council has distinguished itself not only as a leading provider of specialist services to refugees and asylum seekers, but also as a respected thought-leader, questioning the scale of the UK's response to the crisis and challenging Government and civil society to honour Britain's proud tradition of welcoming refugees in deeds, as well as words.

Looking forward, the Refugee Council will continue to develop its candid, constructive dialogue with Government, as well as exploring how we might further extend our service reach. By working together with national and local government, civil society, the business community, NGOs and the public, we should aim to become more than the sum of our parts as we strive to make the UK an abiding and welcoming place of safety.



Andrew Halper
2017

Welcome to the Refugee Council

Over the past year we have supported **7,522** refugees and asylum seekers.

We delivered training to **1,230** carers and support workers who work with separated children.

The Separated Children's Advice Panel supported **3,318** unaccompanied children this year.

Our Youth Development project has seen **325** children attending the centre in Croydon.

Our Trafficking project helped **97** young people who had been trafficked, **77** girls & **20** boys.

Our Destitution project supported **222** people and **173** of those were new clients to the service.

The Refugee Council has been providing expert support and advocacy to refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK for 66 years. We help them feel safe, secure, and hopeful for what may be the first time in many years.

Our vision is of a United Kingdom committed to welcoming those who have lost everything; a place where people can restart their lives and build a dignified, fulfilling future.

In 2016-17 we helped some of Britain's most vulnerable people, including survivors of torture, and children traumatised by trafficking and the desperate journeys they have made without their parents.

We provided a warm meal, clean clothes, and vital advice to asylum seekers sleeping rough with nowhere else to turn. We helped refugees find jobs, access training, and find somewhere to live. We retrained refugee doctors and nurses so that they could use their skills in the NHS. We campaigned for a fairer, more effective, and humane asylum system so that refugees can begin to rebuild their lives in safety.

Overview

In 2016-2017;

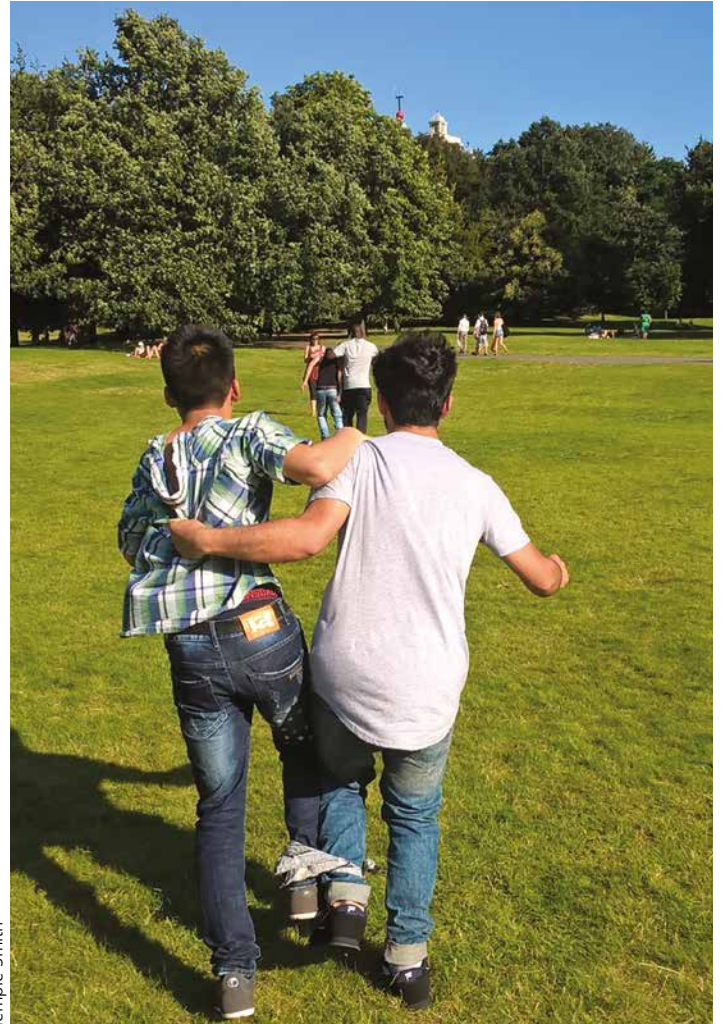
- We supported over **7,500** refugees and asylum seekers, an increase of **35%** on the previous year.
- Our Children's Services supported **3,318** unaccompanied children.
- Since we won the campaign for a resettlement scheme for Syrian refugees in the UK, we've been pushing the Government to grant them refugee status. We won. This means Syrians can now access university, and travel to other countries so they can see their families again.
- In partnership with the British Red Cross and UpRising, we won the £1 million Dream Fund – now we can give our expert therapeutic support to lone refugee children in three more regions across the UK.
- Over **300** volunteers supported our work and we continued to invest in their regular training. We could not do what we do without them.

Essential services for unaccompanied children

Many of the children we support have witnessed the killing of loved ones, some have been forced to become child soldiers, or have been trafficked and forced into domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, or other forms of forced labour. Nearly all have undergone long and terrifying journeys. Many arrive traumatised and can be targeted by criminal gangs, or placed unlawfully into adult detention centres. We are there for all of these children.



© Sarah Temple-Smith



Children take part in a three-legged race on a day out with My View

For over 20 years the Refugee Council has provided the only service to which all unaccompanied children in the UK are referred. Our expert team of Advisers provide practical and emotional support such as help with navigating the asylum process, with maths and English classes, therapeutic services, and social activities.

- In 2016-17, we helped **3,318** children.
- At our centre in Dover, throughout the year we welcomed **348** children who had arrived from Calais, giving them something to eat, a clean change of clothes, and the support and care they so desperately need.
- We provided specialist advice and support for **97** children who had experienced trafficking.

© Sarah Temple-Smith

My View provides psychotherapeutic support for lone refugee children. Here, they tackle the climbing wall on a day out

“Now I believe in myself”

My name is Sabrin and I’m from a small country in East Africa called Eritrea. I arrived in the UK in 2014. When I found the Refugee Council, it became like my second home.

At the Refugee Council I found people who supported me no matter who I was or where I came from. They made me believe that I can be whoever I want if I kept focused. I was so glad to have people who cared about me. Throughout my journey with the Refugee Council my confidence and self-esteem have grown. Now I believe in myself. I’ve gone from a shy young girl to a confident young woman.

I’m now a Young Leader at the Refugee Council, which means I help to run the educational and therapeutic activities I used to attend, supporting other young people, and speaking out on issues affecting lone child refugees.



© Sabrin

Sabrin is currently studying BTEC Science level 3 and dreams of becoming a dentist. Here, she poses for a selfie after her science class!

- The Department for Education recognised our expertise with lone child refugees. On their behalf and in partnership with the organisation Every Child Protected Against Trafficking (ECPAT), we delivered training for **1,230** foster carers who are looking after unaccompanied and trafficked children.
- We supported **325** children to help them integrate into school, improve their language skills and giving them a place to feel safe, make friends, and begin to look to the future.
- **123** young people attended our cricket club, where they can get active, socialise, and receive vital support from Advisers. Volunteers are helping young people with their homework, and older club members are now supporting younger members through our Peer Leader scheme!
- We supported **153** children whose age had been disputed, helped them to access their rights as children.
- Without this help, children do not receive the correct support from social services, could be placed in detention centres or housed with adults in unsuitable accommodation.
- We had significant successes in the courts, achieving landmark judgements in two cases. The first succeeded in making it unlawful for the Home Office to conduct age assessments based on physical appearance, which would be used to put children in detention. The second ensures children receive the proper care and support of the local authorities while age assessments are undertaken.
- Being held in adult detention can be extremely traumatic for a child. We secured the release of **25** children from detention where they were being incorrectly held as adults.
- Our My View project provided psychotherapeutic support for **122** children.

Refugee resettlement

The majority of the world's refugees are unable to travel far beyond the borders of their home country and live in refugee camps for many years. Indeed, many children have lived their entire lives in such camps. Refugee resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a country in which they have sought protection to a third country which has agreed to admit them. The Refugee Council works in partnership with local councils to provide a full support service for resettled refugees.

We help resettled refugees to find housing; access education, training, and employment opportunities; to register with health services, and access many other services which enable people to begin to rebuild their lives.

We aim to make sure resettled refugees can live independently by the end of this programme.

In 2016-17 we supported **1,050** resettled refugees through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, and the Gateway Protection Programme.

One year on, brothers who fled Aleppo help Syrian refugees in Yorkshire

After fleeing Aleppo, brothers Alan and Ghaith were resettled in Yorkshire where the Refugee Council has been helping them to rebuild their lives. Now they are providing vital support to other Syrian families.

"From the moment the Refugee Council met us at the airport I have no words to describe the help they have given us. They are brilliant," says Ghaith.

Since meeting Alan and Ghaith at the airport one year ago, Richard, who works in the Refugee Council's resettlement team, has seen so much progress. "From the beginning, they both had drive to do things for themselves," says Richard. "Today, after twelve months of support from the Refugee Council, they are doing really well here in Yorkshire and are now supporting other Syrian families."

The brothers take newly arrived families to appointments, to their new homes, and show them around the city. "There was a little boy in the hospital awaiting an operation, who Alan visited every day. They also help us with interpreting, which is incredibly important," Richard explains.

"Refugees can find it very hard to settle in to their new life," Ghaith says.



© Refugee Council

Brothers Alan (centre) and Ghaith (right) with Richard (left), who works in the Refugee Council's Resettlement team in Yorkshire

Therapeutic services



© Refugee Council

Our Therapeutic Service offers mothers and toddlers a place to come together to chat and play

Supporting refugees and people seeking asylum to overcome trauma

News coverage has made the reality of the horror that refugees face only too clear. The Refugee Council supports refugees and people seeking asylum who have been through horrific experiences including rape, torture, and trafficking. Many have lost their homes and families, and are faced with building a new life from scratch.

“This is where I have a brief moment where I kind of live, not just exist. Where I am able to run away from my constant ugly thoughts of being a moving ‘corpse’ where despite the ability, skills, intelligence, you are as good as dead.”

“After leaving my homeland I felt so sad and was filled with guilt and shame. Thanks to being able to talk about this with you and practicing the mindfulness exercises you provided I have been able to sleep properly for the first time in months.”

Refugees and asylum seekers often present with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety, and suffer from flashbacks and nightmares. This is exacerbated by the complexity of navigating the asylum system, and the fear of being returned to the persecution they fled.

The Refugee Council provides specialist one-to-one therapeutic counselling and group therapeutic sessions for people who have survived traumatic experiences. Our therapeutic approach addresses the clients’ basic needs of food, shelter, health, and legal services to enable deeper psychological work to begin.

■ In 2016-17 we supported **572** people with therapeutic services.

Integration

Helping rebuild lives

Many people seeking asylum wait for months or even years for their refugee status. When it finally comes, it should provide a sense of safety, relief, and hope. However, newly recognised refugees are given only 28 days to find a stable source of income, somewhere to sleep, and get essential documents and a National Insurance number. After that, they must leave their asylum accommodation and no longer receive approximately £5 of daily asylum support. The result is that many refugees are left homeless and financially destitute.

In 2016-17 the Refugee Council supported **635** newly recognised refugees to make the challenging first steps towards rebuilding their life in the UK. This included:

Help with the asylum system & documentation

- We help people secure identity and immigration documentation to enable access to mainstream services. We also refer them to a solicitor who could help them reunite with family members.

Support to move towards financial stability

- We help people access welfare support by making sure they have essential documents, helping them open a bank account, and advocating on their behalf with government bodies and local authorities.
- Our Refugees into Jobs project helps people access support and training so that they can move towards financial independence.

Help with housing

- We support those fleeing domestic violence to find a refuge, and families and vulnerable individuals to make a homeless application to their local authority. We help others to secure night shelters or appropriate hostel spaces.
- Our Private Rented Scheme helps clients to secure longer-term accommodation.

Support with health and wellbeing

- We help clients register with a GP, and our health befrienders help them access a range of health services.

Building a community

- We help clients overcome isolation by referring them to activities and services in their local or wider communities.



© Refugee Council

This year the Refugee Council supported 17 refugee doctors to retrain and use their skills in the NHS

Refugee doctors working in the NHS

We work with the NHS to retrain refugee health professionals, helping them requalify to use their skills in the UK. This year we helped 17 doctors gain employment in the NHS.

A doctor from Iran said, "My success wouldn't have been possible without your support and encouragement and I always say to my family and friends that contacting the Refugee Council was one of the best decisions I've made in my life."

Destitution and accessing health care

Supporting asylum seekers facing homelessness

An alarming number of asylum seekers are at great risk of going hungry and homeless on arrival in the UK. This is because the Government's decision on an asylum claim can take months or years.

During this time, people seeking asylum are not allowed access to employment, welfare support, or funding for further education. They are forced to rely on asylum support payments of approximately £5 a day. This small amount must cover food, clothing, basic necessities, and travel to important meetings that decide the outcome of their asylum claim.

Some people seeking asylum are receiving no asylum support at all. Isolated, at high risk of facing homelessness, and trapped in a spiral of poverty, they turn to us for help.

■ This year our Destitution Services supported **222** people.

We provide hot meals, showers, laundry facilities, a barber, and opportunities to socialise with others going through the same experience. We help people see a GP for urgent health needs.

We also help people find a way out of destitution by providing access to immigration and legal advice. What's more, our amazing volunteers support clients with everything from English lessons to helping them navigate the asylum system and learn about life in the UK.

Improving health and wellbeing

People seeking asylum suffer disproportionately with illness as they often face poverty, social isolation, and low self-esteem – all barriers to a healthy life.

That's why we're working with the Department of Health to help refugees and asylum seekers find out where to go if they or their children are unwell.

Volunteers from refugee backgrounds provide ongoing support within their communities.



© Refugee Council

Refugee Council Health Befrienders provide crucial support to refugees and asylum seekers to access health services

“Many refugees and asylum seekers suffer with health problems and have nowhere to turn. Together, we’ve volunteered thousands of hours to help people take care of their own and their family’s health. Many of us are refugees ourselves and have had similar experiences. We know first-hand how important this support from the Refugee Council is.”

Refugee Council Health Befrienders

We trained our volunteers to help people overcome barriers to getting the care they need, such as language, form filling, knowledge of where health services are located, confidence to discuss personal issues, and being able to use the internet.

We also provided training for the health sector to improve their understanding of the health needs of refugees and people seeking asylum.

■ In 2016-17 we supported **1,782** people.

Advocacy

Advocating for refugees and people seeking asylum

The Refugee Council's Advocacy team works hand-in-hand with our services to drive change and improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. We do this through work with parliamentarians and officials, public campaigning, and research. This year we tackled a huge range of issues, some that were in the news, and others undertaken behind the scenes.

A step forward for Syrian refugees

Following intensive behind the scenes advocacy, and through briefing of parliamentarians, we were delighted that the Government announced in March 2016 that Syrians arriving through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme would be granted refugee status, rather than humanitarian protection. This means that this group of refugees are now able to access universities and more easily visit relatives in other European countries.

A voice for the children of Calais

You may remember images of refugee children from Calais splashed across front pages in the UK, alongside calls for 'teeth checks' to verify their ages. We responded robustly to this irresponsible media coverage: our main message was that you can neither tell the age of a person by looking at them nor by taking x-rays of their teeth.

Experts from our Advocacy team and Children's Services' appeared in the Guardian, the Telegraph, on multiple regional BBC radio stations, Good Morning Britain and BBC Breakfast. We also shared our views with MPs so that they were equipped to respond in Parliament, and raised the issue with the Home Office, encouraging them to take action.

A ruling with 'far reaching consequences' for refugee children

The Home Office treats someone claiming to be a child as an adult if they believe they appear to be 'significantly over the age of 18'. This means they are not given the care they require as a child, and can end up in adult detention. We have long called for this policy to be changed as it puts children's safety at risk. We worked alongside a law firm to secure the release of a child who had been put into adult detention, and the policy of detaining somebody on this basis was ruled unlawful by the High Court. In a ruling which has 'far reaching consequences' Mr Justice Silber ruled that someone's age is a matter of 'objective fact' and cannot be based on physical appearance or demeanour.

For too long the Government has been jeopardising the safety of children who it should be protecting. We believe the Government should ensure that everyone who claims to be a child receives a sensitive, timely, lawful, and expert led age assessment. This ruling was a very positive step in the right direction.

Speaking out for England's Forgotten Refugees

In May 2016, we published research documenting the experiences of newly recognised refugees, who often face destitution once they receive their refugee status. The report, England's Forgotten Refugees, secured good media coverage when it was launched, and we have used the findings to raise issues affecting newly recognised refugees with officials in the Home Office, the Department for Work and Pensions, and parliamentarians. This report influenced the scope of the the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees 'Refugees Welcome?' Inquiry.

The treatment of vulnerable pregnant women

In January 2017, the Home Affairs Select Committee published a report about asylum accommodation, following a year-long inquiry. We submitted evidence relating to the needs of vulnerable groups, especially pregnant women in initial accommodation centres, and were pleased to see the Home Affairs Select Committee reflect these in their recommendations.

Working to reunite refugee families

In February 2017, we jointly published a report on refugee family reunion with Oxfam, Amnesty International UK, and the British Red Cross. This set out the changes all organisations wish to see to the UK's family reunion rules and form the basis of the advocacy work we continue to do in this area.

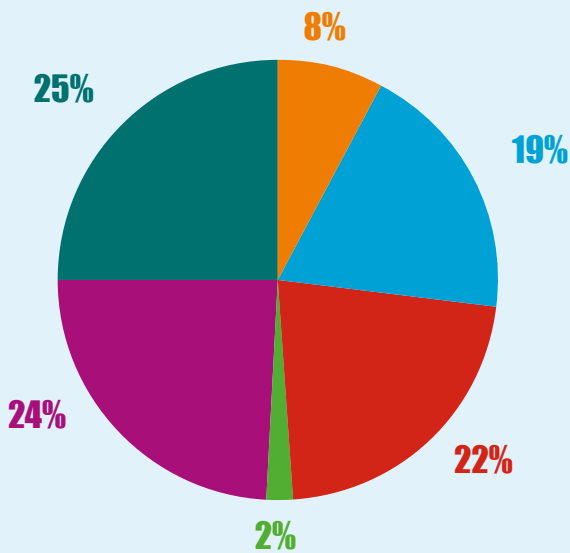
Finances

2016-17 was another year of significant financial improvement for the Refugee Council, with the generosity of our supporters allowing us to continue the expansion of our work, as well as put in place plans to ensure the sustainability of our activities and finances for the future.

Total expenditure increased from £5.9 million to £7.4 million and overall income grew from £6.3 million to £9.5 million. This 50% increase included a major one-off grant of £1.5 million from Goldman Sachs Gives to be

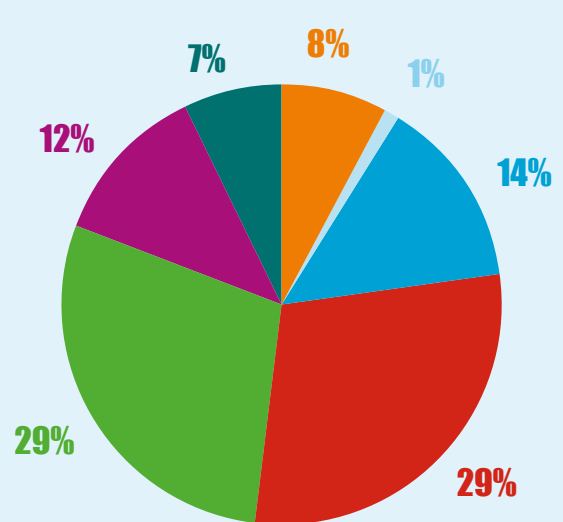
spent over the next three years, providing employment and educational support to resettled Syrian refugees. Free unrestricted reserves now stand at £2.7 million.

Last year, 57% of our funding* was from individuals, trusts and foundations



- Central Government Grants
- Local Government Grants
- Other income from Charitable Activities
- Grants and Donations from Trusts and Foundations
- Donations and gifts from individuals
- Legacies

86% of our funding* is spent on our charitable work



- Fundraising
- Children's Services
- Resettlement
- Integration
- Therapeutic Services & Destitution
- Advocacy
- Asylum Support

* Note - these numbers exclude the amounts in relation to surplus office accommodation that we let out and the impact of a one-off pensions accounting item.

For our full accounts including further detail and explanation on these figures please see: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/about_refugee_council/annual_accounts

We are hugely grateful for the help given by supporters and volunteers in 2016-17, which has made a real impact on the lives of refugees and asylum seekers, at a time when there are more people displaced around the world than at any time since the Second World War.

Thank you so much for your ongoing support.

Contact us at supporter@refugeecouncil.org.uk or call **020 7346 1205**

Please keep in touch with our work on  **Facebook** and  **Twitter**

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk



Photo Above: © PA Images

Front cover photo: Kellie, the Refugee Council's Destitution Coordinator, with volunteer and former client, Arnold © Lydia Shellien-Walker

To protect their identities, some of the names and images of clients in this publication have been changed.

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