

Derby Refugee Forum and Derby Refugee Advice Centre Annual Report May 2020 - May 2021

Chair's Report - Mrs. Joan Stannard

It is a credit to the tenacious and committed people at Derby Refugee Advice Centre (DRAC) and Bosnia Herzegovina Centre that DRAC has continued to operate throughout the Covid pandemic. Ferid Kevric and Janet Fuller have continued to be available for emergency, face to face advice alongside a few of our volunteers and interpreters. They have all remained active and effective supporting asylum seekers and refugees in different ways and linking with our partner organisations such as British Red Cross, Upbeat Communities, Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity and the Local Authority. Our volunteer coordinator/administrator, Ruth, has been active on Zoom with these partners and fulfilling administration roles effectively. Additional funding bids came into fruition and along with the generosity of the Bosnia Herzegovina community and Nedzad's organisational skills, this enabled the continuation of an enhanced food bank and extra vouchers for our needy clients.

Other interpreters and advice volunteers joined the team at various points throughout the year and we have recently increased our capacity for appointments. Everything has been carefully set out with strict cleaning, mask-wearing for clients, volunteers and staff and social distancing. We will ensure this continues even as legal restrictions are withdrawn to keep our volunteers and clients, who may not yet be vaccinated, safe.

We have restarted the English and Maths tuition groups which are always well received. There has been support available for writing CVs to improve work chances and we hope to expand other social activities again in the near future. This does much to support the health and wellbeing of clients who feel very isolated. Many have been waiting two years or more for Home Office decisions and it can be soul destroying, especially when they see others arriving much later being processed more quickly in the system.

Finally, a huge thank you to all who have continued to support us through interpreting, managing, advising, working in the office, cleaning and keeping us cheerful and refreshed with cups of tea.

All of you are hugely important to the DRAC team and our clients appreciate all that you do more than you can imagine.

We hope to report a return to a much greater capacity of work in the next year. We know that unfortunately the demand for support has not decreased. I know that all the people involved will continue to provide a great service to those in need.

Joan Stannard



Thank You!

Lottery Community Fund continued to be our main stay of funding for the Centre, but without the continued support from our local churches, schools, groups, individuals and organisations, we wouldn't manage to provide many of the services that we offer. Unfortunately we don't have the space to thank everyone individually, but without their support we couldn't give the food, clothing, household items, toiletries and extra help that we do. So, to each and everyone of you who has supported us and our clients through a very difficult year, we would like to say a huge thank you.



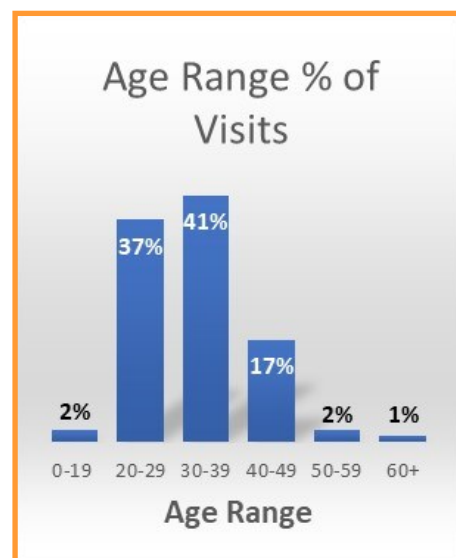


Total Advice Sessions	728
No. Service Users	347
No. New Service Users	170
Average Sessions per Day	6
No. Service User Nationalities	36
Total Sessions since 2002	33258

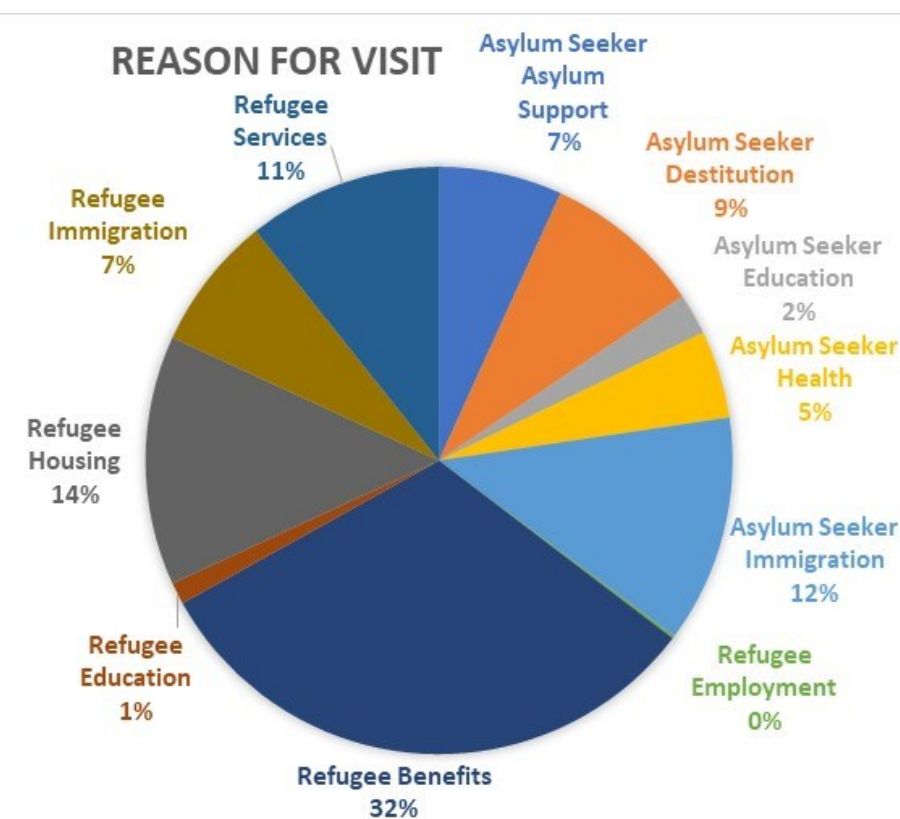
From May 2020 to May 2021 Drac, like every charity in the global pandemic, tried to give the best possible service within restrictions and safety requirements. Food and general destitution support were paramount at the beginning and gradually a small group of volunteers joined Ferid and Janet in offering socially distanced face to face advice sessions for emergencies. Generally this was by

appointment only and it became increasingly obvious that there was a great need for support, intervention and referral. Positive liaison with the British Red Cross, Upbeat Communities and Derbyshire Refugee Solidarity meant that we were able to offer a combined approach to help refugees and asylum seekers who were so often isolated, frightened and overwhelmed by incredibly challenging living situations, compounded by language difficulties and closure of public facilities.

We carried out just under half the number of advice sessions completed in the previous year but saw almost 60% of the service user figure. The major difference was in the proportion of refugees to asylum seekers; 64% were refugees compared to 53% in 2019/20. Advice given on refugee benefits was the biggest contributor to the increase, as jobs were lost and with no access to public IT facilities people found it really hard to access the benefit system and complete Universal Credit applications. Debt and utility bill issues featured strongly as life confined to home, coupled with home schooling, lead to big increases in gas and electricity usage. National Energy Action have been particularly supportive in dealing with complex bills.



Asylum seeker destitution remained stubbornly high at 9% of visits and the chaotic changeover to



the new Aspen card at the end of May left many asylum seekers without financial support for days and on occasion weeks. Home Office inactivity, however, did mean less movement of asylum seekers in and out of Derby other than those in Initial Accommodation and Hotels, who were the responsibility of Migrant Help.

Even with reduced numbers we saw 36 different nationalities, reflecting a very diverse refugee/asylum seeker community. However Iran, Iraq (especially Kurdish), Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia remained the main countries of origin.



Volunteers at Derby Refugee Advice Centre.

Derby Refugee Forum/Derby Refugee Advice Centre has over 40 volunteers who give their spare time, skills and expertise to help refugees and asylum seekers in the City. The covid pandemic saw people re-evaluate their priorities and like many organisations we have seen people resign from their volunteer roles, although the majority of our volunteers have remained with us. We have also been in the fortunate position to have new people apply and take up some of our vacant roles.

Our advice sessions have continued throughout much of the lockdown, thanks to our volunteers being able to keep up their commitment. By giving almost 410 hours of advice we have helped people in some tricky situations.

We are incredibly grateful to our volunteers, both new and old, for their work and commitment each year, supporting our clients and keeping the organisation running smoothly during a pandemic.



Maths and English classes

Volunteers have continued to run the English and Maths classes in-between lockdowns, face to face but socially distanced, with a maximum of 12 per class. Classes ran between September to the end of October and started up again in March after the lockdown. In May we added English Conversation to our weekly classes to go alongside the beginners English, 2 improvers English and Maths classes. Although numbers per class have remained low, we have run 35 sessions in total, with 183 attendees. Our students have really enjoyed face to face classes in a covid safe environment. A big thank you to our volunteer tutors, for their enthusiasm, commitment and flexibility in making the classes work and providing our clients with much needed learning opportunities.

Lottery Update

Our lottery work has diminished dramatically over the last year due to the restrictions during the pandemic, but we are happy to say that we have still managed to continue with some of the work that was safe to do.

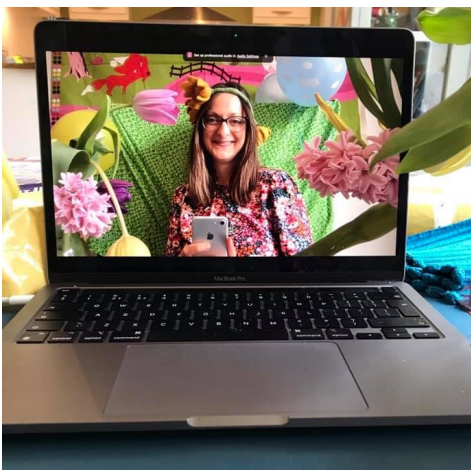
Schools:- We were incredibly grateful to be given food again this year from Bonsall School as part of their harvest festival. We were also grateful to the children at Crich School who wrote and sent us some lovely letters and stories about their lockdown memories.

Healthcare:- Much of this year has been concentrating on providing our clients with up to date Covid information that they can understand, translating the vaccine programme information, self testing and general safety precautions. We were part of a report sent out from Healthwatch Derby, regarding access to GP surgeries. This prompted conversations with other sectors of the

NHS who wanted to understand more about the Asylum journey. Once lockdown eases we are hoping to continue with our training sessions.

Gardens and Green Spaces:- Although we haven't been able to do much in this area, we have been in contact with some local organisations in the hope we can run some outdoor sessions when restrictions ease and people are comfortable to do so.

Theatre:- Despite the local theatre being closed we have managed to do some great projects socially distanced and virtually with Maison Foo. Two socially distanced bread making workshops and 2 virtual meet your neighbour parties, one in Dec and one in April, have been much appreciated by refugees and asylum seekers in the city to lift spirits during lockdown.





Brief on finances 2020-2021

The combined project with DBHCA, which secured funding from Big Lottery Reaching Communities programme is in its second year and nearly all of the core cost came from there. This has given stability to both organisations, by providing a place for work, a proportion of the funding for work place management and fundraising activities and the sustainable continuation of salary for the Volunteer Coordinator/Admin Assistant post. This is also the first year that we spent more than raised throughout the year but this was to be expected. We did not apply for additional funding as the underspend from the previous year was a barrier to apply for small pots, apart from Foundation Derbyshire for equipment. Still we have our reserves over the annual expenditure and this is a slight barrier to apply for funding with some funders. This year we used Restricted funding from Derbyshire Community Foundation, which provided £4973 for a smart board. By negotiating with the supplier, we managed to get a better board at a lower price and buy additional equipment to turn it into a powerful computer, used for training and meetings. Further sources of funding of £5217 from YAPP and £1676 from Martin Lewis Fund are from grants given in previous financial year, but not spent and transferred to this financial year.

I wish to thank all funders and all volunteers who publicised our work via presentations. Also thanks to the many churches, community organisations and individuals whose donations enable us to deliver our goals to our clients.
Ferid Kevric, Treasurer

Fundraising Income

The majority of fundraising income came from similar sources to previous years - donations from churches, organisations, and volunteers. Individual regular donations, via direct payments to the bank, have increased. There were 57 donations from £10 to £500. Thanks to all and particularly to those who donate regularly. The coming years focus has to be in fundraising from other sources.

Expenditure

The expenditure for this financial year doesn't fully reflect activities of the Derby Refugee Forum/DRAC. The main expenditure was associated with equipment, staff salary contributions and emergency food. The rest of the expenditure was volunteer expenses and stationery. The Centre, staff salary, insurances and space for activities has been covered through the joint funding bid with DBHCA. From this year, HSBC Bank regulations mean there will be additional costs of using the bank and paying by cheques. It is advisable to start thinking about online banking, but for that purpose a new Policy must be adopted by Management Committee.

<u>Income</u>		<u>2020-2021</u>		
2019/2020		Unrestr.	Restr.	Total
19735	Grants	0	4973	4973
6836	Donations	5122	0	5122
26571	TOTAL	5122	4973	10095
<u>Expenditure:</u>				
2239	Office Cost	1774	431	2205
8360	Salaries Contrib.	0	4047	4047
0	Rent & Room Hiring	0	0	0
360	Interpreting Cost	383	302	685
4320	Destitution Cost	1358	1531	2889
974	Manag. Vol. cost	280	0	280
50	Equipment Cost	0	4715	4715
2823	Sundry	1336	840	2176
19126	TOTAL	5131	11866	16997
7445	Year movement	-9	-6893	-6902
20903	Start of period	21455	6893	28348
0	Transfer between	0	0	0
28348	Carr. Forward	21446	0	21446
<u>Assets and Liabilities</u>				
28348	Bank	21446		
300	Cash	300		
28648	Total assets	21746		
28648	Net Assets	21746		



Funded by
Foundation
Derbyshire

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