



Derby Refugee Forum

# ANNUAL REPORT

2024/2025



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# Foreward

## JOAN STANNARD, CHAIR

I am delighted, from time to time, to see some of our clients who have become regular visitors over ten years or more. They still see Derby Refugee Forum as a place where they are greeted as friends, can join in workshops, meet others, and learn, as well as get encouragement and support when difficulties arise. We are met with smiles and sometimes even a hug! This long-term relationship has been built up by our workers and volunteers who do so much to help make our workplace welcoming.

We are sorry to lose Ruth, our project co-ordinator, this January. She has worked hard over eight years delivering workshops, co-ordinating volunteers, building relationships with other organisations to support our work etc. Her warmth and friendship is greatly missed. She has moved on to another post with Derby City Council.

We are delighted, however, to have appointed Selma to this post. She has made a wonderful start and has shown kindness, empathy, and efficiency. We wish her well in her new post. Thanks to other members of staff who have stepped up to make this a smooth transition.

We continue to spend a great deal of time with housing problems. The situation has not improved over the last twelve months. Homelessness, unsuitable housing, and overcrowding are big issues. It is difficult to secure affordable, private rented accommodation and there is a dire shortage of social housing. It is almost impossible for single men or women to be allocated this, even if they are street homeless. It is a national problem and there are no quick solutions. We continue to work with Derby Homes, Upbeat Communities, and Derventio housing to secure the best outcomes and inform clients of the situation and their rights.

Thanks to the Bosnia Herzegovina Community for another year of partnership, in which Lottery funding was again secured for five years. The use of their centre is a generous gift for Derby's asylum seekers and refugees from around the world.

Thanks also to the DRF committee and all the volunteers, without whom we could not offer the great range of support and activities that we do. They are a very skilled bunch of people who remain so positive through difficulties. It is great to see them try to solve problems rather than dwell on them! We are urgently looking for more new recruits in a variety of roles. If you or a friend are interested, do not hesitate to contact us.

Finally a big thank you to all the individuals and organisations who have contributed financially and in other ways, enabling us to provide food parcels and vouchers, snacks, sleeping bags, clothing, pay wages, and volunteer expenses. Without this we could not continue our work, which is needed more than ever.

Joan Stannard



# Our Organisation

The Derby Refugee Forum was established in 2002 and is a registered charity, currently operating from the Bosnia and Herzegovina Centre in Derby. We are run almost entirely by a dedicated team of volunteers who work tirelessly to support refugees and people seeking asylum. We provide a safe, respectful and inclusive environment where individuals can access practical help, emotional support and opportunities to rebuild their lives. Our aim is to empower people as they navigate the asylum system and work towards integration into the local community.



## Our Core Services:

### Advice & Support

We hold free drop-in advice sessions every Tuesday and Thursday, offering one-to-one guidance on housing, benefits, legal support, healthcare access and more. We also provide signposting to specialist services when needed.

### Basic Needs Assistance

For individuals facing destitution, we offer emergency food parcels, toiletries and sleeping bags.

### Education & Skills

We offer weekly English and Maths classes on a drop-in basis, designed to be accessible to those with varying schedules and learning needs. These classes build confidence and are a key part of helping people integrate and access further opportunities.

### Workshops & Wellbeing Activities

We run regular workshops and creative sessions focused on practical life skills, wellbeing and community engagement. Topics range from mental health and hate crime awareness to CV writing, budgeting and art therapy.

### Social Events & Trips

Throughout the year we organise cultural outings, celebrations, and community events—from Eid and Christmas parties, to trips to local theatres, football matches and community gardens. These help reduce isolation and promote belonging.

### Safe Space & Community

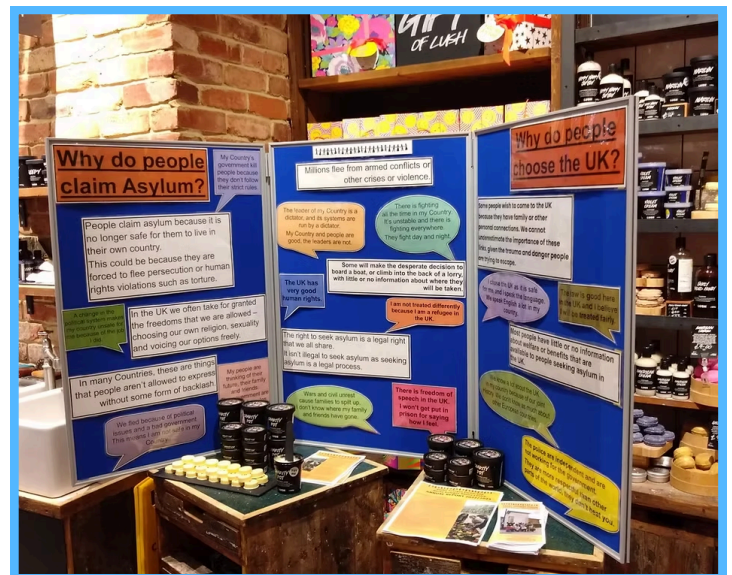
We offer a welcoming, confidential space where individuals can share their concerns and feel supported without judgment.



# Our Mission

## ***Supporting sanctuary seekers in Derby through advice, education, and community***

Our mission is to provide compassionate, accessible and practical support to refugees and asylum seekers in Derby, empowering them to overcome challenges, integrate into society, and rebuild their lives with dignity. We strive to create a safe and welcoming environment where individuals can access advice, education, basic needs and community connections, while raising awareness of the difficulties faced by those seeking sanctuary.





# Our Figures & Impact

## Advice Sessions

From May 2024 to June 2025, the Derby Refugee Forum provided a total of 2,124 advice sessions, supporting 811 individuals. On average, we delivered approximately 152 advice sessions per month, highlighting the sustained and growing demand for our services. The significant increase in demand can be attributed to a rise in positive remain decisions within Derby, resulting in more people requiring urgent, ongoing support as they navigate complex challenges. DRF remains committed to providing a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment where clients can access tailored advice and support to help them integrate successfully into society.

The most common issues brought to our advice sessions include:

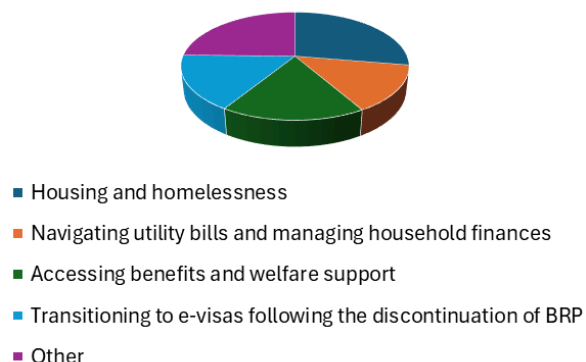
- Housing and homelessness
- Navigating utility bills and managing household finances
- Accessing benefits and welfare support
- Transitioning to e-visas following the discontinuation of BRP (Biometric Residence Permit) cards

This year, the majority of our clients originated from Sudan (203), Iran (126), Eritrea (120), and Iraq (115). These figures reflect the diversity of our client base and underscore the necessity of culturally informed, accessible services.

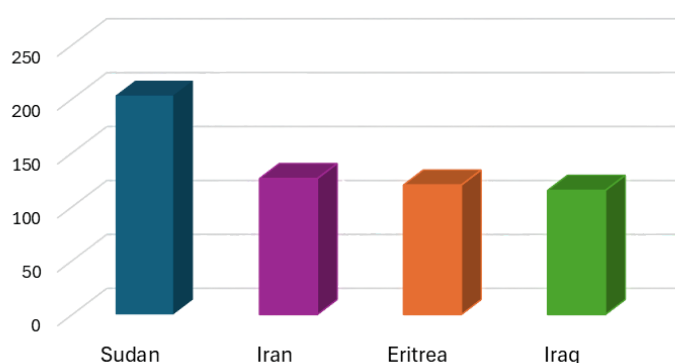
In addition to advice, we supported individuals with basic essential needs:

- 126 sleeping bags distributed to those facing rough sleeping
- 61 food parcels provided to clients in food poverty
- 100 Primark vouchers, offered to help with warm clothing and essential household items. The value given has depended on the individuals needs and has ranged from £10-£100

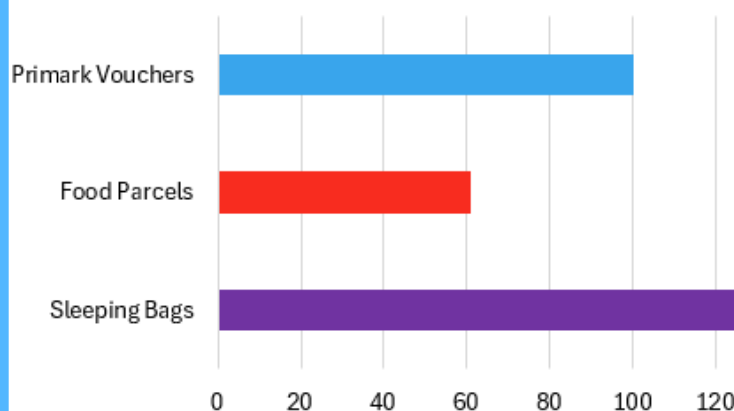
**Reasons for Visiting the Centre**



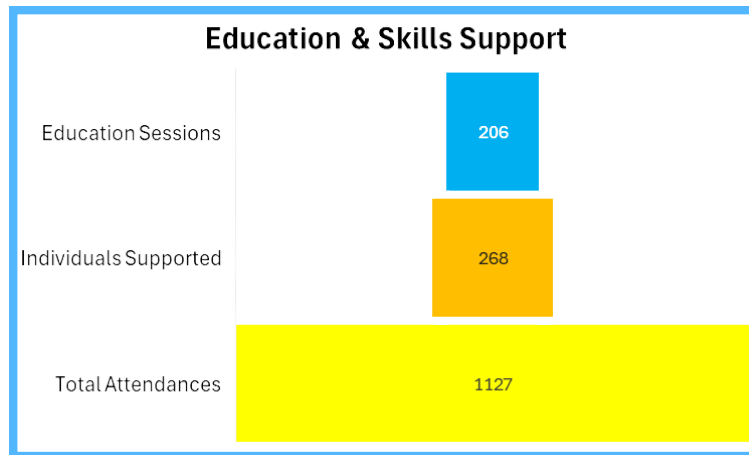
**Client Country of Origin**



**Essential Support Quantity**



## Education and Skills Support



A crucial element of our integration support comes in the form of English and Maths classes, which have proven immensely popular. Over the reporting period, we delivered:

- 206 education sessions
- Supporting 268 individuals
- With 1,127 total attendances

These are drop-in sessions, which we intentionally maintain to ensure accessibility and reduce barriers for attendance. Many of our clients have unpredictable schedules or multiple appointments across various agencies. The flexibility of drop-in sessions allows them to participate without the pressure of formal registration or penalties for absence.

## Workshops and Wellbeing Activities



To further promote integration and holistic wellbeing, we ran 28 workshops, engaging 131 different individuals, with a total of 255 attendances. These sessions covered a range of practical, health-related and cultural topics, including:

- Free eye tests, provided by Ophthalmic Clarity, resulting in clients receiving much-needed glasses and eye care
- Hate crime awareness and prevention
- Workshops in partnership with Artcore, using creative expression for community building and mental wellbeing
- Healthcare access guidance, including how to register with GPs
- Financial literacy and help with utility bills
- CV writing and employment preparation



# Our Figures & Impact

## Community Engagement and Social Cohesion

DRF places a strong emphasis on community integration and social inclusion. Throughout the year, we organised and participated in a wide variety of events and activities aimed at bringing people together in a positive and inclusive environment:

- Eid party celebrating cultural and religious festivities
- Trip to St Matthews Church, including a nature walk, mosaic-making workshop and an engaging session with a local glassmaker
- Laverstoke Garden Party
- Football trip to support Derby County U21s in the Cup Final against Burnley
- Family bingo night
- Christmas party, creating joy and a sense of belonging during the holidays
- Outreach at Crich School, strengthening ties with local institutions
- Participation in Upbeat Communities' Women's Market

### Halloween Arts & Crafts with Artcore



### Crich School Visit





## More Of Our Events, Workshops, & Activities

Rock Painting



St Matthews Church, Morley



Refugee Week



Eid Party



# What You Say About Us...

"I don't speak English and they provide me interpreter to explain my matter"

"Excellent service, wonderful treatment, trusted advice"

"The only organisation provide help I'm dealing with everything, council tax, schools, e-visas which we cant do by ourselves"

"Volunteers treat me very nice and kind"

"It's hard for me and my kind of people to do things without their help"

"DRF make my life more easy"

"I feel that they are dealing with me as family"

"One day I lost my ID and they helped me till I got my ID, I was so afraid until the problem solved"

"They respect us and treat us as family"

"There is no other place that can provide advice and help as DRAC"

"They are so friendly and caring"

"I like their friendly and welcoming atmosphere, especially their weekly events"

"If DRAC stop provide help where we will go and who will help us"

"As I cant speak English I need help from others who know the system and can be trusted. I feel comfortable with the help I get from here."

"I am very happy with wonderful way they treat me"

"They all treat me with respect"

# Supporting people and communities: Case studies

## Ahmed Hasa Al-Abdali - Interpreter

Ahmed first visited DRF in 2016 for help filling out a form. Encouraged by others in the refugee community who called DRF “the place to go if you have any problem,” he quickly found it to be a welcoming and supportive space. He shared that the kindness and care he experienced stayed with him.

After just three visits, Ahmed began volunteering as an Arabic interpreter, using his language skills and cultural insight to support others. His warmth and ability to connect made him a trusted and valued presence from the very beginning.

Since then, Ahmed has remained a vital part of the DRF team, offering compassionate and consistent support to those who need it most.



## Ali Mahmud – Volunteer and Committee Member

Ali first came to DRF in 2005 for an advice session, after missing a reporting appointment during his move from Birmingham to Derby. Impressed by the centre's dedication, Ali began recommending DRF to others in need—often bringing people he knew and supporting them himself also. His natural willingness to support others quickly became evident, and in 2009, he was officially invited to join as a volunteer interpreter and advisor. Ali states that it was the kindness and commitment of the staff that kept him coming back. In 2023, he took on a new role as a committee member, continuing his long-standing dedication to the community and the work of DRF.





# A Thank You To Our Volunteers

At the heart of the Derby Refugee Forum is a dedicated team of volunteers whose generosity, compassion, and commitment make everything we do possible. They are not only the backbone of our organisation, but also the friendly faces that welcome people who arrive at our doors in some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

Each person brings something unique — from interpreting at appointments, helping with CVs and job applications and preparing warm meals in our kitchen, to providing one-to-one guidance, running classes, or quietly keeping our admin systems running smoothly. These contributions, whether highly visible, or carried out behind the scenes, create an environment where our clients feel supported, respected and valued.

Their hard work and willingness to go above and beyond ensures that our clients receive the help they need to rebuild their lives and integrate into society.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to all our volunteers. DRF would not be what it is without you.





## In Memory of Our Volunteers



In 2024, we were deeply saddened by the loss of two longstanding and much-loved volunteers whose contributions shaped the heart of the Derby Refugee Forum. Their dedication, kindness and commitment to serving others made a lasting impact on both the organisation and the individuals they supported.

### Janet Fuller (Volunteer, 2014–2024)

Janet joined DRF in 2014 and quickly became one of our most dedicated volunteers. Over more than a decade of service, she gave countless hours of her time and brought kindness, empathy and unwavering commitment to every aspect of her work. Janet cared deeply for everyone she encountered and always went above and beyond to ensure clients felt supported and valued. Her loss is profoundly felt, and her legacy continues in the warmth and care she brought to our community.



### Anne Wigley (Volunteer, 2010–2024)

Anne began volunteering with DRF in 2010. Known for her strong will, deep compassion and clear sense of purpose, she brought determination and heart to everything she did. Anne was driven by a sincere desire to help others and made a lasting difference in the lives of many. Her strength and dedication left a meaningful mark on our organisation, and we are deeply grateful for her years of service.

We honour Janet and Anne not only for their years of dedication, but for the humanity, spirit and love they brought into our shared mission. They will be dearly missed. In remembrance of them we planted a rose named Dearest Janet and a Hebe called Lady Ann, as a tribute to their spirits.





Receipts and Payments Account for the Year Ended 31 May 2025

Movement of Funds

	2024	2025 Unrestricted	2025 Restricted	2025 Total
Movement of Funds for the Year	£4,377	£935	£-4466	£-3530
Fund Balance at Start of Period	£21,441	£17,083	£8,735	£25,819
Transfer Between Funds	0	0	0	0
Fund Balance at End of Period	£25,819	£18,019	£4,270	£22,289

Income

	2024	2025 Unrestricted	2025 Restricted	2025 Total
Grants	£33,288	0	£11,800	£11,800
Donations	£7,939	£8,566	0	£8,566
Total Income	£41,227	£8,566	£11,800	£20,366

## Expenditure

	2024	2025 Unrestricted	2025 Restricted	2025 Total
Emergency Food – COVID 19	£34	0	0	0
Office Stationery, Publicity	£1,739	£198	£116	£314
Stamps & Postage	£39	£43	0	£43
Rent & Room Hire	£1,216	0	0	0
Equipment	0	£8	0	£8
Telephone & Associated Costs	£524	£574	0	£574
Salaries & Associated Costs	£17,296	£3,000	£10,222	£13,222
Training Cost	£192	0	0	0
Volunteer Travel Costs	£573	£793	0	£793
Volunteer Travel – Interpreter	£324	£654	0	£654
Refreshments	£191	£796	0	£796
Food Costs – Destitute Asylum Seekers	£4,091	0	£4,873	£4,873
Travel Costs – Destitute Asylum Seekers	£377	£267	0	£267
Sundry	£10,255	£1,298	£1,054	£2,353
Total Expenditure	£36,850	£7,631	£16,266	£23,897

# Our Funders & How You Can Support Us



At DRF we are incredibly grateful for the continued support from our community. There are many ways you can get involved and make a meaningful difference in the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in Derby;

## Volunteering

Volunteers are the backbone of our work. We have a friendly and dedicated team who support our day-to-day services, and we're always looking for more people to join us.

Our main volunteering days are Tuesdays and Thursdays each week.

If you're interested in volunteering, please visit: [www.derbyrefugeeforum.org/volunteering](http://www.derbyrefugeeforum.org/volunteering)

## Food Donations

We operate a small food cupboard to support destitute asylum seekers and refugees with weekly food parcels. Much of what we distribute comes from generous donations by individuals, churches and community groups.

We are especially in need of the following items:

- Tinned goods: Tomatoes, tuna, chickpeas, and sweetcorn
- Essentials: Teabags, coffee, sugar, long-life milk, and cooking oil
- Other items: Pasta, dried rice, biscuits, breakfast cereals, and toiletries

## Financial Support

Financial donations allow us to respond flexibly to the most urgent needs.

You can donate:

- In person at our centre (cash or cheque payable to Derby Refugee Forum)
- By bank transfer:
  - HSBC
  - Sort Code: 40-19-15
  - Account Number: 12799650

## Other Donations

We welcome donations of good quality clothing and household items. Please contact us first to confirm what is currently needed, as our storage space is limited.

## Raising Awareness

Spreading the word is just as important as direct support. Whether it's organising a fundraising event, giving a talk at your school or workplace, or hosting an information stall at a local event, your voice helps raise awareness and build a more compassionate community. Our volunteers lead many of these efforts throughout the year, and we're here to support anyone who'd like to get involved in this way.





## Derby Refugee Forum

To all of our supporters whether you've donated your time, resources, money, or voice — thank you. Your compassion and generosity are vital to everything we do, and we couldn't do it without you.



Derby Refugee Forum is a Registered Charity 1121582