

Wycombe Refugee Partnership



Acting together with loving kindness to support
refugee families and asylum-seekers in Wycombe

Who we are and what we do

Wycombe Refugee Partnership (WRP) is a group in High Wycombe who have come together out of a shared concern to help destitute refugees and asylum-seekers in the UK. Our volunteers are multi-faith and multi-cultural and, of our eight trustees, four are Christian and four Muslim.

We now have two strands of work—

Resettlement of refugee families

When asylum is granted, refugees are given just 28 days to find jobs and accommodation. We have so far helped to resettle 22 refugee families, giving them wrap-around support which includes housing and job-hunting advice.



Photo by Andrew Neel on Unsplash

Photo by Maria Lin Kim on Unsplash



Community Response

When the pandemic started, we became aware that there were more refugees and asylum-seekers in High Wycombe who were in dire need. We are providing them with supermarket vouchers, donated goods and the feeling that someone cares.

WRP at a glance

Between April 2016 and October 2021

we resettled 22 refugee families

(39 adults and 58 children)

and gave support to 16 Community Response families and **14** individuals

(36 adults and 31 children)

Ethnicities:

Our beneficiaries include people from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Albania, China, Sudan, Algeria, Morocco, Palestine, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and the Caribbean

The languages spoken include:

Arabic (of various kinds), Farsi, Amharic, Uyghur, Malayalam, Urdu, Pashto, Berber, French, Albanian and a Berber language



Total number of volunteers involved: 82

What do we spend your money on?



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- The utilities, council tax, maintenance and furnishing of the halfway house which is generously made available by Chilterns Area Quaker Meeting
- Welcome groceries for new families

Photo by gemma on Unsplash



Image by Firmbee from Pixabay



- The deposit and first month's rent of each refugee family whom we resettle
- Furnishings for their new homes (though most of the items are donated)

- Laptops, software, tablets, broadband and TV licences, to help children with their schoolwork and the whole family with integration
- Supermarket vouchers to supplement the £39 pw which is all that the Community Response families have to live on otherwise

Photo by Clarissa Watson on Unsplash



Image by Aline Ponce from Pixabay

- School uniforms, text books, sports kit and school equipment
- Clothes, nappies and sanitary items



Image by No-longer-here from Pixabay



Photo by david clarke on Unsplash



- Bus passes and help with transport costs
- Access for asylum-seeking children and young people to sports and leisure activities (1 per child) to facilitate integration
- Repairs to donated bicycles
- The occasional social event, which is much valued by our beneficiaries



Image by StartupStockPhotos from Pixabay

- The salary of a part-time administrator who enables the rest of us to work more efficiently
- Insurance, website, WRP phones and the printing of leaflets

The Afghan Crisis

2021 has seen a significant change in the political landscape of Afghanistan. Many Afghans have fled to the UK, following others who had already emigrated.

One such story is that of Dr Elyas Gheyasi, who left Afghanistan and moved to the UK in 2018.

"I left because the situation was getting worse at the time and because of certain threats I received. This is one of the hardest feelings in the world when you know that you are saying goodbye to your home. When you arrive you know that physically you are safe and secure but there's a lot of mental pressure on you. It is not easy to start from scratch in a new country."

When asked what advice he has to offer to other refugees, he shares:

"My first advice is don't leave your country, your home, unless you really have to. But once you do, be open to the new environment and have some assurance that here we have a lot of good people. We

have some very good charity organisations like WRP who are open to help, who are welcoming you. There are a lot of good things to learn in the UK about life, about education, and about the diversity that exists across the UK. The integration into the new culture is quite a journey for any Afghans who would come here because in Afghanistan we don't have a lot of cultural diversity. I have seen worship places for all religions across the UK and these are accessible for all followers of all faiths. This is an amazing thing, a good learning."

Elyas is finally settling into his new life in the UK:

"My kids are going to school now. I've started work with the NHS as a junior doctor, to rebuild our identity in this new country and that is huge."

Image by Julio César Velásquez Mejía from Pixabay



Photo by Elements Digital on Unsplash

Image by David Mark from Pixabay

A young asylum seeker whom WRP supported to go to university shares her deepest gratitude in this heart-warming letter:

"Thank you so much for your kindness and support towards my studies, to enter university and progress towards my future. Stephanie, Trina and the Wycombe Refugee Partnership has been the most generous source of help and support that we have ever had, and we truly are grateful to have met you."

I cannot put into words how valuable this loan will be for us

I cannot put into words how valuable this loan will be for us and how much of a relief it brought us, as it means that we are able to keep applying to other grants for the remainder of the course, knowing that I am able to continue studying for two further terms definitely.

Thank you so much for everything you have done for us so far, my family and I will be eternally grateful to you and the organisation."



Photo by Windows on Unsplash

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Volunteer Showcase



One of our most active volunteers is Trina Richards, who has been in High Wycombe for 18 years, after being born and raised in London. She is a nursery nurse by profession, and she also runs sensory sessions for adults with special needs and disabilities. She loves walking, gardening, and nature.

When asked what inspired her to join WRP, she shared:

"My passion is trying to communicate with people and I'm always looking at different ways of doing that which aren't always verbal. I've been a volunteer all my adult life, I've always worked part time so volunteering has been a natural part of my life from my 20s. When I came to Wycombe, I got involved in my church and saw a poster one day saying there's a talk by a refugee. I went along to it and after the talk I offered my services, and the rest is history!"

Whatever our journey in life, we should be able to feel like we belong

"I'm just someone who likes to be involved in the community. I think it helps yourself to be a part of something greater. There's nothing nicer than meeting people and showing them that you care. Care is my buzz word. I love the word care. Whatever our journey in life we should be able to feel like we belong, and we should know that someone cares for us. My inspiration is people because people are amazing and it's just about tapping into that. I love connecting with people. Small acts of kindness can go such a long way. If I can be kind to someone then hopefully, they can take that on board and pass it on to somebody else in their life. A smile and a bit of kindness doesn't cost anything—we can all do that!"

"Everyone should be valued, it doesn't matter whether you're high up or down below. Everybody has a purpose in life and community is built upon difference, isn't it? We need to have that difference to appreciate each other. We all have something we can offer. If we can appreciate the differences then the world can certainly be a better place."

As for her most memorable experience at WRP, Trina claims:



"I can't have one, there's so many! There are so many times I feel like we have listened to families and supported them. We've given items like for instance,

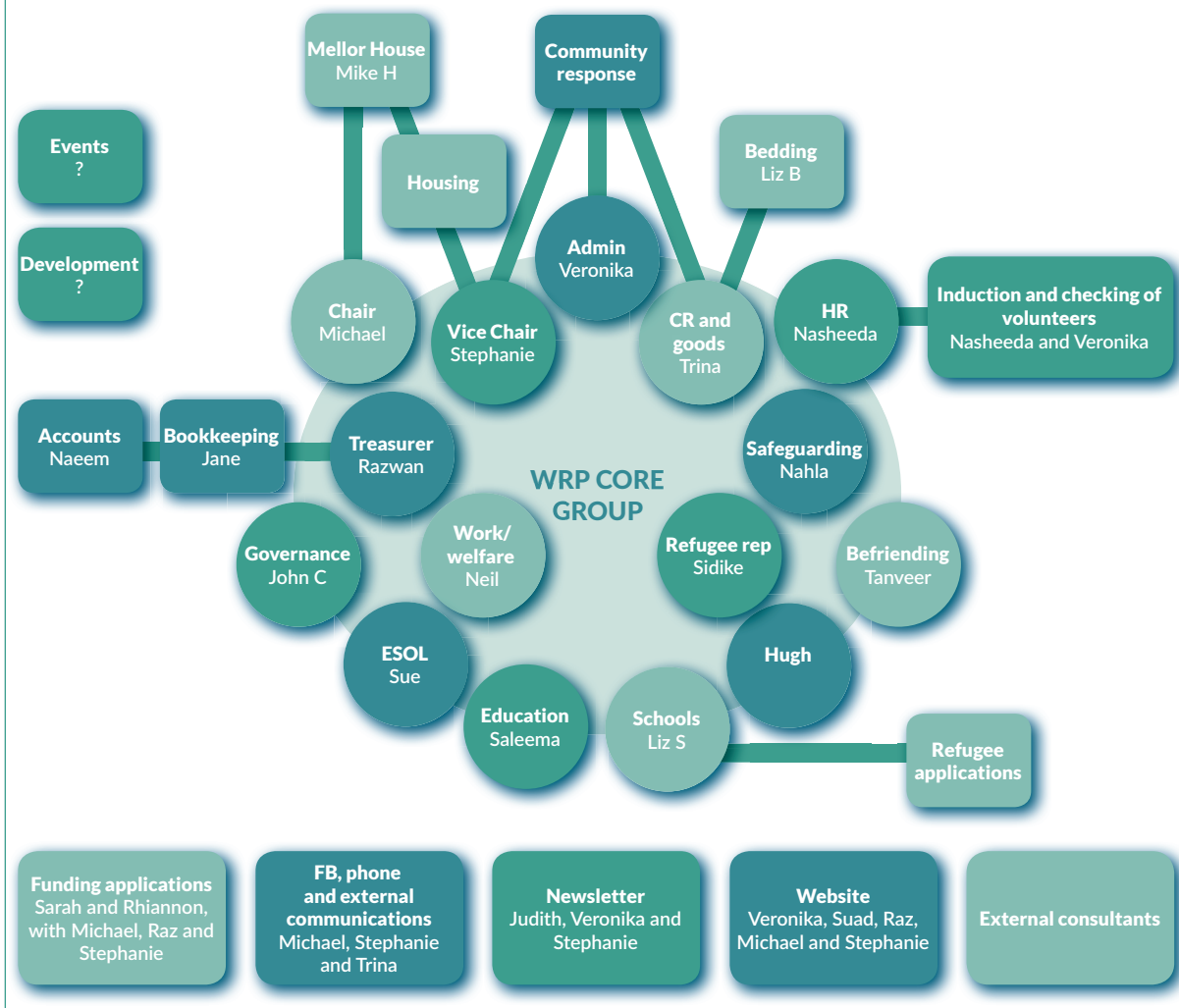
a mattress, that we all take for granted but not everyone has that. But for them it has completely changed the fact that they can sleep much better now. But one thing I'm most pleased about is enabling this one family to create an oasis in their balcony. Basically, this lady [from an asylum-seeking family] loves plants and she wanted some plants and she asked me if I had any more. So, one thing led to another, and I got some pots and compost and asked around for more plants. My mantra is if you don't ask you don't get! So now for the family, it has gone from being a concrete balcony to now having pots and pots of flowers that have shot up and they make them so happy as well as others in this area who look at them. So, every time I think of that it makes me smile actually."



Trina also reflects on the challenges that refugees and asylum seekers face:

"My work at WRP recently has been mainly with the asylum seekers. For them the challenges are that they're living in limbo, they don't know when or whether they're going to be given refugee status. I'm inspired by seeing them and their lives

This is a snapshot of the structure of WRP as it is in October 2021, but it is evolving all the time.
For the volunteer skills we need right now, please see the Volunteers page on:
www.wycombe-refugees.org.



and how they move forward because some people have been waiting years and years and they still don't know what the answer is going to be. Yet they just carry on despite the fact that it's quite a complicated process. And I feel for them, you know. If I can bring a little bit of happiness or light during their journey whilst they're waiting for asylum, then I think that's certainly worth it. There's always challenges in trying to help people, but for me, I reach out into my community and the community responds beautifully."

Image by Clovis Cheminot
from Pixabay

"People have got to know WRP a lot more within Wycombe, so now people will often offer stuff randomly. We usually ask for things on our Facebook page but sometimes people just



say right I've got this or that, like someone offered us four boxes of Lego the other day and that's such a great universal toy to have and I'll be able to share that with the families."

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Her message to the world right now is:

"Remember we are all on a journey. So just be nice to each other. Caring about someone else is a really lovely thing to do and kindness and a smile go a long way. How amazing are different people and different traditions! I think that's so exciting that you can teach me a new word or let me taste a different food and that's what I love about volunteering. I just love to help people."

Letter from a refugee family:

"It was a race against time and challenges faced us from all directions. No money. No house. At high risk of Covid-19 due to exposure. Government services inaccessible. Over-staying at our kind host in the time of pandemic when social distancing was already advised. We were in total despair and had no idea what to do. At such a time of hardship and crisis, the Wycombe Refugee Partnership came to our help and saved us. Having just arrived in the country, we had no registration with the NHS, no proof of address, no bank account, and with the public transports being disrupted, no means of transport and we knew nobody. ... WRP's assistance to us was equal to life saving and this is why no words would be enough to thank each and every one of them for their great work and services they do for humanity."



For more information on the charity, please see our website:
www.wycombe-refugees.org.



For a sense of the day-to-day needs and interactions with supporters,
please see our Facebook page: 'Refugees Welcome in Wycombe'.

This booklet was written and compiled by Dr Sahrish Khan;
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