



# SPRING NEWS

Our volunteer run organisation provides friendship and assistance to Asylum Seekers, Refugees and non EEC migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

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[WTRRP.ORG.UK](http://WTRRP.ORG.UK)

## SPEAKING UP

Britain is one of the worst destinations for people seeking asylum in Western Europe – only Italy fares worse. The stark facts are that Britain...

- Takes fewer refugees
- Offers less generous support
- Provides housing that is often substandard
- Does not allow asylum seekers the right to work
- Has long bureaucratic delays

Furthermore Britain has the lowest rate of asylum approvals amongst the big European countries. The average granted in Europe is 63 - 65% compared with roughly 33% in the UK. Even more glaring is the gradual reduction in approvals occurring at the first attempt, which are then granted at appeal stage, at more cost to the applicant.

Britain provides less in financial support than Spain, France and Germany. In Britain an asylum seeker receives £36.95 a week to cover food, clothing, transport and all other costs. In France, asylum seekers receive almost double this amount at £65.59 per week, as well as accommodation. The French Council of State found this rate was “manifestly insufficient” and ordered the French Government to increase it.

Britain has the strictest restrictions on asylum seekers working. In Spain asylum seekers can work from the time they apply for asylum and submit their documentation. In Italy, they can apply to work after 6 months and in Germany, asylum seekers can apply for work three months after their claim with certain vetting conditions and in France after nine months but in limited occupations.

**When it comes to helping asylum seekers, Britain left Europe a long time ago!**

## OUR 8<sup>TH</sup> PARTY

**Summer Garden Party: Sunday 11th June 2.30 - 4.30pm**

Cheslyn Gardens, Nascot Wood Road, WD17 4WF

Please join us at our 8th Annual party. Come (bring friends) and share a cream tea and just enjoy this oasis of nature, full of variety from formal gardens through to the semi natural woodland. It is an afternoon where you can relax, chat with friends and all have a tea-riffic time! We will be ordering the usual fine weather! All funds and donations from the event to WTRRP





## AGM – BRIEF RESUME!

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So what can we tell you about our AGM in case you missed it. It took place at Nascot Wood Junior School on Monday 20th Feb; a friendly gathering of supporters, volunteers and those interested to learn more about what we do. The Treasurer's report included some key points from the financials, namely:

– Roughly £10,000 is held now 'in reserve' at the bank, not as much as it seems, as it's equivalent to paying just a few 'family' applications and 6 months' cover for volunteering expenses in helping our clients

– Money from our fund raising is becoming increasingly important to boost income

– In 2106, 12 clients were helped with their Home Office fees applications

On the formalities front, all current Committee members were re-elected, bar John Shaw who retired at the AGM. Rev Tony Rindl was appointed as a new Committee member.

Our guest speaker was Dame Helen Hyde who used

events in her life to tell her inspiring story, starting with her early childhood in South Africa during Apartheid through to her role as a Holocaust educator. Helen then discussed her more recent work with the Rwanda Sisterhood and Refugees to Recovery.

Helen has worn different hats during her life, in all of which she felt carried a personal responsibility to do more to improve the lives of others but also to ensure we also 'live and learn' from the past.

Three of our clients also shared their personal stories. Each of their narratives delivered a stark reminder of how they often leave one nightmare situation to enter another with the tough existence they have here in the UK, especially for those who have fled their country and lost everything they know. They help to remind us that our clients are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. They each said how much they want to establish roots here and give something back, but the difficulties and hurdles they face to remain here would be almost overwhelming if it was not for the warm welcome they receive from the WTRRP volunteers and so many other supportive people that they meet here in Watford and Three Rivers.

No AGM is complete without putting our Volunteers firmly in the spotlight; especially as there is clearly nothing amateur about our volunteers as was heard when a number of our newer volunteers; Paul Tucker (Drop In Centre

Coordinator), Sara Barratt (Case Review Officer), John Gray (Food Distribution Co-ordinator), Mel Southin and Shilpa Banerjee (Social Events Co-ordinators) each talked about their individual but shared contributions they were making to improve the anxieties and daily grind for our clients. Volunteering can be a big step to take but as our speakers said, it is nearly always a two way street! It was commented that despite the challenges and demands at times, the experience of volunteering is interwoven with a real sense of having an impact, and never more so than when our clients receive good news. So at the AGM, it was good to reflect on the various ways, WTRRP and its volunteers are making a difference.



## A NEW FACE ON THE COMMITTEE

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Tony Rindl, vicar of St Mary's and well known in the local community, has now joined the WTRRP Committee. Tony – himself a child of a refugee – has a clear passion for helping asylum seekers and migrants and is keen to be 'put to work' to support the organization in different ways from an advisory capacity to being hands-on when the need is there...

# 'I SEEM TO REMEMBER.....!'

## RETIRING COMMITTEE MEMBER JOHN SHAW REFLECTS

I first heard about the Refugee Partnership (then Project) about ten years ago. I was giving a lift home to an elderly lady. She told me that she had heard (a rumour?) about a refugee woman giving birth in Cassiobury Park; and she mentioned `a wonderful man` called Lawrie Coe who was trying to raise awareness locally about the plight of refugees in our midst and the urgent need to help them. I felt challenged by what she described, pursued the matter separately and ended up joining as Membership Secretary. There was only a handful of clients at that time, and despite our best efforts coupled with Lawrie Coe's boundless energy, there were many (albeit often fruitless) attempts at complaining about the shortcomings of Social Services on behalf of our clients.

WTRRP has always been blessed with the timely arrival of committed volunteers who take up the baton of the demanding workload just as their predecessors feel obliged to call it a day often through advancing years or moving on or away. Joy Hobbs who will be known to most of you, 'saved the day' when Lawrie Coe stepped down. Her wide ranging Health Visitor experience and contacts together with her deep faith and compassion for those in need has immeasurably enriched the organisation, whilst attracting additional clients and volunteers. Joy and her husband (and more

recently Mick and Jeanette Hayter) took charge of providing food parcels, until in 2015, when the sheer size of the storage and packing process required the practical operation to move to use the Foodbank resources.

Another significant tipping point occurred with the establishment of our drop-in centre at St. John's, Sutton Road. No special research or piloting was done: we just did it, thanks to the effective guidance of Guy Buckler. When no clients came at all in the first few weeks, we wondered if we had made a foolish mistake. But we stuck at it and gradually the word spread and clients (old and new) began to drop by and the rest is history. Soon after, Andrea Hudson and Marie-Jo Churchill (also our indefatigable Volunteer Coordinator) initiated our ESOL classes to run alongside the drop-in centre and these classes (beginners, literacy and intermediate) are now increasingly popular and well attended.

There is an increasing onus on trustees to ensure a robust system of self-governance and better procedures for recruiting volunteers through to the development of policies around confidentiality and safeguarding. Tim Whittaker and Dorothy Knightley our current Chairman and Secretary respectively with input from myself played a key role in the development and production in 2015 of the Volunteer's Handbook to ensure we had robust



practices in place as well as realising our registration with the Charity Commission.

A more recent impact has come as a result of the terrible conflict in Syria and the Middle East and the plight of desperate families fleeing from warfare, seeking safety and a more settled way of life. These horrors touched a nerve among many people locally and many began to volunteer for the Partnership in extraordinary and highly welcome numbers. The upshot is that we now have an unprecedented number of talented and committed volunteers on our books, which enables us to diversify into other activities (from fund-raising to social media; from training to IT). The Syrian crisis has also brought a number of Syrian refugee families into our orbit and we are very happy to be of service to them.

The increase in the number of our volunteers has been matched by an equally large increase in the number of our clients. This has meant that no one person can `do everything`, as was the way  
*continued overleaf...*

# SUPPORTERS, HOW YOU CAN GIVE & MORE

*continued...*

in our early days and the work and responsibility for it has to be spread much more widely than before.

Many years ago I was a member of staff of Voluntary Service Overseas and must have debriefed dozens of volunteers returning to the UK at the end of their service. Their almost universal concluding remark was, 'I have received so much more than I have been able to give'. It sounds a bit trite and pious perhaps but, oddly, it neatly sums up my own experience with the Partnership. I have wondered at the patience, resilience and warmth of our clients and vastly enjoyed the support and comradeship of fellow Committee members and volunteers. Thank you, everyone.

John Shaw April 2017

● We are greatly indebted to John who has given so much of his time (and considerable wisdom) to WTRRP since its early beginnings. We are delighted that John is remaining a Trustee and will still be keeping a watchful eye on us all!

## SUPPORT WTRRP

You can now make a secure online single or regular donation to support our work via our BT MyDonate page. Visit our website for more info.

[www.wtrrp.org.uk/donations](http://www.wtrrp.org.uk/donations)

## FUND RAISING – AIMING HIGH!

Daniel Hartropp is building up to his first sky dive to raise awareness and funds to be shared between WTRRP and Playskill. Daniel, hundreds of thousands of people have done this including I am sure your instructor! Don't forget to smile, Daniel, for the camera, but please don't look down. If you would like to sponsor Daniel, please contact him on [dmhartropp-mail@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dmhartropp-mail@yahoo.co.uk)

● *Could you organise a fundraising event? Why not change a love for a hobby or sport into a challenge or good deed to raise funds for WTRRP? So if you have any darn good ideas to raise funds please let Chris Persaud know on [persaud.chris88@gmail.com](mailto:persaud.chris88@gmail.com)*

## LOOK OUT FOR REFUGEE WEEK (19TH – 25TH JUNE)

This special week takes place every year with the main event being World Refugee Day on 20th June. This is a period set aside to promote better understanding of why people seek sanctuary in the UK.

Please come to the **Café in the Park, Rickmansworth, Aquadrome on 22nd and 23rd June** to see a collection of treasured keepsakes that our clients hang onto that remind them of bonds with the past, their family and friends and also good experiences of



things that have happened to them.

Why not stay on at the Café for the 'supper' fundraising event on 22nd - all proceeds to Refugee charities in our area:

- WTRRP
- High Wycombe Helping Others
- Third Wave Charity - Solar Lights to Refugees

Many refugees can only hold onto a few such articles but on these two days during Refugee Week, our clients will be sharing their mementos to enable us to visualise the pain and human cost of separation from loved ones, culture and customs to highlight that no one chooses to be in their situation.

## FINALLY SOME INCREDIBLY WELCOME NEWS

A few of our clients have received discretionary leave to remain; and as a result some are now in work. This just gives them a short window (roughly 30 months) to insert more normality into their lives before they have to reapply and start the waiting all over again with the despair and hopelessness that waiting for news of their future brings.

● **Currently we are supporting 70 or so clients – 40 are part of a family, and 30 are single (mostly males).**