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Refugee Action's Annual Report 2011-2012



Our vision is of a society in which refugees are welcome, respected and safe, and in which they can realise their full potential.

In a small village near the Indian border in south-west Bhutan, a 13-year-old boy with a passion for learning and a bright future arrived at school one morning to find it had been closed down. More than three decades later, Prem Giri, who was denied an education at such an early age, holds a postgraduate degree in business studies and accountancy.

"[In Bhutan] People were being treated like animals," remembers Prem. "In 1990 a national demonstration took place to demand human rights and democracy. I was a young student and didn't know what that meant at the time. After the demonstrations, the government closed down the schools. For years afterwards, there was no education in southern Bhutan."

The government was carrying out a policy of ethnic cleansing designed to displace Bhutanese nationals of Nepali origin in the south. Prem clearly remembers the day he had to leave his homeland. "It was 17 December 1992, a national holiday in Bhutan, when we fled from the country. We left at night and crossed the border into India, and then from India into Nepal."

For 18 years, Prem and his family lived in a refugee camp in Bilangi, Nepal. Prem completed his secondary education in the camp, and recalls how he would sit on the muddy floor in the cramped, makeshift bamboo classroom among up to 100 other students, without even the use of books and pens.

Prem began to teach the younger children in the camp, and continued his own education. After being awarded a Bachelor's degree he went on to postgraduate study in business and accountancy, but could not gain employment in Nepal because his status as a refugee had not been recognised.

After almost 20 years in the refugee camp, Prem and his family arrived in the UK in 2010, as part of the UN's Gateway Protection Programme. They were met at the airport by Refugee Action and assigned a caseworker to provide practical advice and support about life in the UK. Prem is now studying for an Association of Chartered Accountants' qualification at Manchester Metropolitan University. With our help, Prem was instrumental in establishing the Bhutanese Welfare Association, which brings together the Bhutanese community in the UK. He is also a volunteer for Refugee Action, helping others who are experiencing the challenges of building new lives in the UK.

"I'm volunteering to help meet new arrivals in Manchester. I take them to their accommodation and help them to use things in the house. Refugee Action has done a fantastic job and I wanted to give something back."

Prem lives with his wife, Sabitra, his mother, Ganga Maya, and his daughters Prasanya and Preshika.

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Names may have been changed to protect identities. Such names may differ across materials due to the wishes of those concerned.

Reference and administrative details for the year ended 31 March 2012

Refugee Action is an independent, national charity working to enable refugees to build new lives. We provide practical emergency support for newly arrived asylum seekers and long-term commitment to their settlement. As one of the country's leading agencies in the field, Refugee Action has more than 30 years' experience in pioneering innovative work in partnership with refugees.

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Message from the Chair for the year ended 31 March 2012

It has been a very difficult year for refugees, asylum seekers and those who serve them in the UK. There have been more funding cuts and considerable changes to our services. Despite this, we have held steadfastly to our vision that asylum seekers and refugees are welcomed, respected and offered a place of safety.

The reduction in core asylum advice funding meant we sadly had to close our Nottingham and Bolton offices during the year. We also suffered a complete cut to the Refugee Integration and Employment Service - funding that provided advice to help refugees settle into life in the UK - in September 2011. But we fought to keep our doors open to clients and a number of innovative projects continued to flourish in areas where there was great need. Our Get Connected project provided vital support for young unaccompanied asylum seekers who arrive in this country on their own. Our Fresh Start project was a lifeline for vulnerable women who are homeless and living in poverty. It's because of the expertise of our project workers and partners that Refugee Action, despite the current financial climate, is able to continue to provide bespoke advice to some of the most vulnerable groups of people in the UK.

Over the first half of the financial year, we established our new Choices Assisted Voluntary Return Service. We opened new offices in Leeds, Birmingham and London, and made new partnerships in six countries around the world. Our commitment to providing the best possible experience for asylum seekers and refugees really came into focus and, for the first time, we were able to provide advice at every stage of an asylum seeker's journey. This gave us the best possible context for our policy work, enabling us to continue to speak out against injustice with integrity and accuracy. Voluntary return is a difficult area in which to work, but it has long been part of our internal dialogue; it is not something that we can ignore and hope will go away. We aim to bring all our integrity and skills to this as to all our other projects.

By the end of the financial year, Refugee Action had as many dedicated volunteers as it did staff. It is a testament to the cause of refugees that so many people are passionate about supporting our movement for a change. Without our supporters, none of what we have been able to achieve would have been possible.

On behalf of the trustees, I would like to thank all our partners, our supporters, our volunteers and our dedicated staff team. In the face of adversity and amidst a backdrop of funding worries, you have continued to sustain our vision - a safer, more welcoming society for refugees and asylum seekers.



Julia Meiklejohn
Chair of Trustees

Trustees' report

The trustees, who are also the directors of the charity for the purposes of company law, submit their annual report and the financial statements of Refugee Action for the year ended 31 March 2012. The trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the Charity comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the Charity's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities (revised 2005)'.

Our purpose and objects

Refugee Action is a leading independent national charity, working across six regions in England to enable refugees and asylum seekers to build new lives. More than 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers are supported by our programmes every year and many others in the wider community also benefit. The objects of the charity are 'the relief of persons who have become displaced persons or refugees from the country of their origin or domicile by reason of hostilities, persecution, oppression, discrimination, natural disaster or other like causes, and their families and dependants who are in conditions of need, hardship and distress'.

Founded in 1981, we developed the first model resettlement programmes in the UK, initially with refugees from Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo. Our vision is of a society in which refugees are welcome, respected and safe, and in which they can realise their full potential. We achieve this through advice and information, developing communities, enhancing opportunities, and being a strong voice for refugee rights.

Most refugees have fled war or persecution and many arrive in the UK without family or friends. They need advice, information and support so they can negotiate the complex asylum system, access services and overcome the considerable challenges of integration.

Advice and support to asylum seekers and those newly granted refugee status is provided through our One Stop Service and its companion service in Liverpool, Initial Accommodation Wraparound. We are the largest voluntary sector partner for the Gateway Protection Programme, which provides intensive support to refugees who have come to the UK under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Resettlement Programme. Our Choices Service delivers the UK's Assisted Voluntary Return Programme, providing advice and information for people considering returning voluntarily to their home countries.

We run many other specialist services and grass-roots projects, meeting a wide range of needs including those of the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers. They include, for example, our Get Connected project for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Liverpool, the Fresh Start project for destitute women refugees in Leicester, and the Wellbeing Project in Manchester for those experiencing isolation.

We belong to and help to establish a wide range of local and national networks, and our stakeholder surveys praise our partnership skills.

Together with our partners, and independently, we work to influence policy-makers to improve the asylum system.

Structure, governance and management

The charity is governed by its memorandum and articles of association. Refugee Action's trustees are responsible for the overall management of the charity. Trustees are elected at the Annual General Meeting or, where vacancies arise, appointed by the Board of Trustees. Trustees are chosen for their commitment to refugees and for expertise (including life experience as refugees) that may be useful in governing the charity. The trustees who served during the year and since are shown on page 4. Biographical details of our trustees can be seen on our website: www.refugee-action.org.uk

The trustees set and oversee Refugee Action's policies and plans, oversee its financial affairs, and supervise the work of the salaried Chief Executive in carrying out these policies and plans. All trustees are unpaid. When first appointed they are offered an induction programme that includes visits to our regional office teams and to head office. Trustees also hold an annual away day with an experienced voluntary sector consultant at which the

Trustees' report

responsibilities, the future programmes, and the risks and challenges facing the charity and its trustees are discussed. Details of trustee expenses and related transactions are disclosed in note 4 of the accounts.

The Chief Executive is appointed by the trustees and is accountable to them for managing the agency as a whole. S/he is in turn advised by a senior management team (SMT), whose members in 2011/12 were:

David Garratt, Chief Executive
Lyn Adams, Assistant to Chief Executive
Lou Calvey, Deputy Director of Operations
Rick Jones, Director of Operations
Nicola Parker, Human Resources Manager
Yemane Tsegai, Finance Director

The SMT is assisted by a staff team that comprised just over 200 staff at the end of March 2012. With the help of volunteers, they delivered services in six regions of England based in ten offices during 2011-2012. These were in London (including headquarters), Portsmouth, Bristol, Leicester, Birmingham, Liverpool (including the Wraparound Service based in Initial Accommodation), Manchester and Leeds. Due to cuts in funding to One Stop Service (OSS) and the loss of all funding for the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES), the Nottingham office closed just before the start of the financial year.

Public benefit statement

When planning Refugee Action's activities for the year, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. Our work is focused on improving the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. By providing advice and support to refugees and asylum seekers, our work is of public benefit by supporting those individuals, relieving their poverty and distress, and by reducing the strain on other community and statutory organisations.

The awareness-raising sessions and training that we provide to community groups, statutory organisations and voluntary organisations also have wider ramifications for the public benefit by improving public understanding of why refugees and asylum seekers come to the UK, their rights while here, and their potential contribution to the UK. This in turn reduces hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees, and improves understanding and cohesion between different communities.

We carry out some of our work through partnership with other refugee agencies, community groups, statutory and non-statutory agencies at a local and national level.

Risk assessment

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the charity, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. Risks are identified under the four headings suggested by the Charity Commission: Governance and Management; Operational; Financial; and Operational/External Environment. There is greater clarity around the level of risk, in terms of likelihood and impact, together with measures that have been taken to mitigate risk, further action required, and the monitoring process.

Strategic plan 2010-2015

Vision

We want a society in which refugees are welcome, respected and safe, and in which they can achieve their full potential.

Purpose

We exist to enable refugees to build new lives, through providing advice and information, developing communities, enhancing opportunity and campaigning for refugee rights.

Values

- a) Refugee focus: we put the interests of refugees above all other considerations.
- b) Empowerment: the best outcomes for refugees come about when they are empowered.
- c) Partnership: we work with honesty and transparency to advance the movement for refugee rights.
- d) Innovation: we will continue to find ways to improve refugees' lives.

Strategic aims 2010-2015

1. The refugee-facing aim

Ensure that refugees know their rights and responsibilities, are aware of the opportunities available to them and are able to take advantage of such opportunities.

2. The organisation-facing aim

Help other organisations, especially those led by refugees, to meet the needs of and enhance opportunities for refugees

3. The public-facing aim

Build a cohesive society that welcomes refugees and works to protect and promote refugee rights.

4. The policy-facing aim

Bring about policy and practice at national and local levels that protects refugees and promotes their rights.

The following report sets out the activity of Refugee Action during the financial year 2011-2012, as it relates to our strategic aims. As part of our work in the next financial year (2012-2013), we are developing our vision, purpose and values and will set objectives, including key performance indicators, against which future performance will be measured

Our aims - refugee facing

Ensure that refugees know their rights and responsibilities, are aware of the opportunities available to them and are able to take advantage of such opportunities.

One Stop Service - Portsmouth, Bristol, East Midlands, Liverpool and Manchester

Throughout the asylum process, financial support, accommodation, understanding Home Office procedures and access to a solicitor are principal concerns for asylum seekers and refugees. Our One Stop Service is a confidential and independent advice service, funded by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) to operate from five Refugee Action offices across England. Advice and information is also given on education, health, employment and complex issues such as domestic violence, racial harassment and trafficking. We refer asylum seekers and refugees to our own or other specialist services and also provide emergency funds and food parcels, either directly or through partner agencies.

In 2011-2012, as the service adjusted to the 62% funding cut detailed in last year's annual review, refugees and asylum seekers contacted our caseworkers almost 20,000 times and came to us for more than 6,000 one-to-one advice sessions. Financial support, including delayed payments, were the most frequent concern, with more than 1,000 sessions taking place with those who were destitute or concerned about destitution.

The top five countries of origin of those visiting the service were Iran, Iraq, Zimbabwe, China and Libya. Around a fifth of clients were parents with children, one-third were women, and almost a quarter were under the age of 25.

Initial Accommodation Wraparound Service - Liverpool

Newly arrived asylum seekers are placed in initial accommodation by the UKBA, but the start of their asylum journey is often a bewildering and difficult time. Our Wraparound Service in Liverpool helps them to understand their rights and responsibilities, aims to ensure they are settled as quickly as possible in more permanent accommodation, and that they are well informed about the asylum process and life in the UK.

At the start of the year, adjusting to a 50% cut in funding, the service was merged with Liverpool's One Stop Service and the Refugee Integration and Employment Service. Each caseworker and volunteer now sees asylum seekers and refugees at all stages of their journey.

During 2011-2012, the Wraparound Service delivered 6,172 face-to-face sessions with asylum seekers. Almost 700 people benefited from our pre-substantive interview briefings, which prepare them for their main interview with the UKBA caseworker who will make a decision on their asylum claim.

Refugee Integration and Employment Service - Portsmouth, Bristol, Liverpool and Manchester

Those granted refugee status have a very short period in which to leave their accommodation and access welfare benefits or find employment. A lack of confidence, knowledge of local services and the English language are all significant barriers to achieving independence. There are also obstacles to re-qualifying in previous occupations, often in professions for which the UK has a special need, such as medicine, teaching and civil engineering. Our Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) was established in 2008 to support refugees once their asylum journey had reached a positive end. Since it began, we have supported more than 3,000 refugees to build new lives.

The removal of funding for the RIES in October 2011 meant that from the second part of the financial year we could no longer offer the service. Instead, the existing One Stop Service (OSS), where possible, began to offer 'move-on' support for people recently granted refugee status. However, with the OSS also catering to the immediate needs of asylum seekers and suffering its own funding cut, casework capacity has been under immense pressure, despite volunteers taking on more appointments. To adapt, resources have been concentrated on advising refugees in the immediate period following their new status, giving advice on housing options, benefits and crisis loans. Sadly, it was no longer possible to contact all new refugees and offer more in-depth, long-term engagement or employment support. Feedback from local organisations confirmed that they were experiencing an increase in refugees accessing their services as a result. Once someone receives their refugee status, the advice and guidance they require is often highly complex, and many organisations feel they do not have the specialist skills to be able to assist.

Choices Assisted Voluntary Return Service - Portsmouth, Bristol, Cardiff, Leicester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow

Towards the end of the previous financial year (2010-2011), Refugee Action was awarded the contract to deliver UKBA's Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programme from April 2011, funded jointly by UKBA and the European Return Fund.

Called Choices, it built on our former service that offered advice and information for people considering returning voluntarily to their home countries. This service was developed after refugee communities approached us, concerned about the lack of impartial and confidential advice available for those considering return. The new contract gives Refugee Action responsibility for delivering all aspects of the voluntary return programme, ensuring that those thinking about return can get the information they need to make their own decisions and that those who decide to return can do so with dignity.

Choices is available to asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and irregular migrants, whether individuals or families with children. Our outreach workers raise awareness of the service in communities, while caseworkers provide advice and information to people considering return. For those who decide to return, our caseworkers help with flight booking and other practicalities, and help with reintegration planning and accessing any financial help that may be available. They keep in touch with returnees after their return, and feed their experiences back into the UK service. This helps those considering voluntary return to make a fully informed decision. For those who decide not to return, our caseworkers can refer clients to other Refugee Action or local services.

At the start of the year, Refugee Action opened new offices in London, Leeds and Birmingham to help deliver the Choices programme, with Choices caseworkers also based in remaining Refugee Action offices and in the offices of the Welsh Refugee Council in Cardiff and the Scottish Refugee Council in Glasgow. In the following months, partner NGOs were sub-contracted in Iraq, Bangladesh, India, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to help returnees build new lives. By the end of the year, Choices staff had completed a round of monitoring visits to partners, which also enabled them to meet with returnees and feed their experiences to the UK team. Additionally, we sub-contracted other respected refugee agencies in the UK (North of England Refugee Service in Newcastle, Northern Refugee Centre in Sheffield, and Refugee and Migrant Centre in Wolverhampton) to help us deliver the Choices service in areas where we don't have an office.

Trustees' report

During 2011-2012, 3,222 people returned to their countries with support from the Choices service.

"The Choices staff were very supportive and helped me understand the process. I was met by Caritas (Refugee Action's partner agency in India) and they arranged my first reintegration appointment and supported me to reunite with my family after 30 years away in the UK. I am very grateful for all the help and support given to me by Refugee Action and Caritas. Thank you, I really couldn't have done it without your support." Choices returnee to Goa, India

Family Keyworker Pilot - Manchester

Having a dedicated keyworker to work with asylum-seeking families throughout their asylum journey allows a relationship of trust to be built. During 2011-2012, 100 families in the North West benefited from engagement with a keyworker as part of our pilot, allowing them to feel more comfortable in disclosing important information relating to their asylum case than they might to a solicitor or UKBA official.

Keyworkers have expertise and understanding of both the asylum process and of families' needs. They act as a link between the family and other agencies, assisting families to understand what will happen next in the asylum process and helping them to make informed decisions. Over the course of the year, the Family Keyworker Pilot has provided Refugee Action with a valuable insight into UKBA processes around working with families and increased our understanding of the double pressure faced by many in the asylum system - negotiating a complex process while trying to parent in the best way they can.

"[Without the keyworker] it would have been a nightmare. The Home Office is a terrifying place but the keyworker calmed my nerves, reduced [my] nerves, and helped me understand the process."
A participant in the Family Keyworker Pilot

"The off-loading, the sharing, the acknowledgement of the challenge they face as a parent actually puts them in a position of having choices again. Somebody believes that they do deserve better and they are telling them that. Nobody else is telling them that." A keyworker from the Family Keyworker Pilot

Gateway Protection Programme - Greater Manchester

Refugees arriving in the UK via the Gateway Protection Programme are some of the most vulnerable that we help. Many have spent years in refugee camps and face considerable barriers and challenges to settling in to life in the UK, including overcoming the effects of violence, torture and rape. Working with local authorities, our goal is to empower and support refugees to have dignified and fulfilled lives through promoting independence and self-help.

Our Gateway team meets families on their arrival at the airport, supporting them every step of the way in their first year adjusting to life in Greater Manchester. Our team helps families access services, learn English, plan for the future, identify skills, and build bridges with local communities.

Trustees' report

At the start of the 2011-2012 financial year, Refugee Action agreed a new partnership with seven local authorities to continue to deliver the programme, ensuring that refugees arriving in Greater Manchester during the next three years would be welcomed, housed and supported to integrate. This year, almost all of the refugees arrived in just five months, between November and March, which meant - combined with funding cuts leading to a new service model and further monitoring requirements - our Gateway team faced the busiest period of arrivals the programme has ever known.

During the year, our development workers helped Gateway refugees to set up two refugee community organisations: the Bhutanese Welfare Association and the Somali Gateway Community Group. An exciting new partnership between the Gateway Women's Group and Manchester Art Gallery resulted in a venue being provided for the women to meet, learn English and create art. A Refugee Week event at the Imperial War Museum North in June brought former Iraqi interpreters for the British Army together to share their experiences with the public and contribute to an exhibition and blog. Gateway was also successful in its bid to run the InterACT project with local young people's organisation Tameside Youth Forum, bringing young refugees together with young people living in the community to get to know each other, break down barriers and work together on social action projects.

Refugee Action resettles 470 refugees each year through the Gateway programme, almost two-thirds of the annual UK total.

"When a small number of Bhutanese refugees first came into the UK, they faced many challenges. To overcome these problems and connect all Bhutanese in the UK, the Bhutanese Welfare Association was established in 2011, supported by Refugee Action. We bring together old and new arrivals, organise activities and support each other. Lots of Bhutanese people in the UK are now members of the BWA!" Khara Pokhrel, refugee on the Gateway Protection Programme and co-founder of the Bhutanese Welfare Association

Get Connected - Liverpool

Almost 1,200 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children seek safety in the UK every year. Taken into local authority care, and having fled countries ravaged by war, ethnic cleansing and violence, they bring with them very different experiences and needs from their peers in the local community. These young people are often very isolated, lacking support networks of family or friends, and are sometimes suffering anxiety and depression following experiences in their home country.

Funded by BBC Children in Need, our Get Connected project in Liverpool works with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people aged 15-18 years old, running activities and information sessions, and providing general emotional support. Activities designed to build confidence, boost well-being and make friends provide real benefits for the young people, as do access to learning and personal development opportunities. Our project workers provide support and advocacy for the young people on issues as diverse as asylum support, age-dispute matters, housing advice, contacting solicitors, opening bank accounts, accessing education, drug and alcohol information, and referrals to counselling. Social media, such as Facebook, keeps the young people in touch, and activities as wide ranging as bowling, zumba, yoga, drama, swimming lessons and cooking were enjoyed by the group.

Summer 2011 saw us build on a partnership with Fairbridge Merseyside, an organisation working with disadvantaged young people local to Liverpool. As part of the Citizenship Foundation's InterACT scheme, Get Connected and Fairbridge brought young people together to mix, better understand each other and work together to tackle issues of importance in their community.

Trustees' report

"The InterACT scheme gave me the chance to meet and make friends with local young people. Since I came to this country, more than a year ago, the only friends I ever had were friends from my own community or those who attend English classes from other countries. I enjoyed talking to them about my country and learning more about the British culture. I also enjoyed cooking the food in my country's style, as my mum used to make it, and they enjoyed it very much, but they said there was too much chilli!" A young person taking part in the Get Connected project

Fresh Start - East Midlands

Destitute female asylum seekers are some of the most vulnerable people in the UK. Our Fresh Start Project accommodates up to six women at a time, providing casework support to progress their asylum claims, as well as the time and space to think about their options. It works intensively with the women to look at where they have got to in the asylum system, why they became destitute, and what their options might be, including the possibility of making a fresh claim or voluntary return to their countries if there are no protection needs. Legal advice is obtained to allow the women to pursue any unresolved asylum issues. Because destitution can often mean both physical and mental health problems, the women are supported to access health services and improve their well-being. Cooking together, growing vegetables in the garden, and taking part in community events, groups and training become part of life for Fresh Start residents.

The project is managed by Refugee Action, with partners the British Red Cross, the Diocese of Leicester and Foundation Housing all playing a role in delivering the service. Fresh Start is funded by Refugee Action, the British Red Cross and by income from fundraising, as well as a generous donation from Jahan Abedi, as featured in Channel 4's *The Secret Millionaire*.

Supported by volunteers and social work students, the project has gone from strength to strength in 2011-2012. Thirteen women were housed during the course of the year: eight from Zimbabwe and one each from Kenya, Eritrea, Mongolia, Malawi and Ethiopia. Three women living in the house were granted refugee status during this time, and were linked in to move-on services locally so they could begin to rebuild their lives without fear of hunger or homelessness.

Maryann came to the attention of the Zanu PF youth (the militant youth wing of President Mugabe's political party) as the leading figure in the local anti-government movement in Zimbabwe. As a result she was subjected to daily threats and intimidation by pro-Mugabe supporters. As the threats became more severe, Maryann knew that her house was no longer safe. She arranged for her teenage children to stay with relatives in another city and she fled to the UK, hoping that her children would be able to join her. Her husband had passed away several years previously. Claiming for asylum was traumatic and confusing. "I was questioned for a whole day at the airport and I thought I must be getting asylum after this, they can see what I've been through. But I was so naive," she says.

Although Maryann's account of being harassed and threatened by militants was believed, her asylum claim was turned down and she lost all financial support. She became homeless within days. For several years, Maryann survived on small amounts of money that people from her local church were collecting for her. They also took it in turns to offer Maryann somewhere to sleep for a few nights.

"I worked all my life and felt a huge amount of shame that other people, some much older than me, had to support me this way. I felt like a burden for people around me every single day. The thought of returning to Zimbabwe terrified me and sometimes I thought that taking my own life would resolve everything.

"I'd been to see Refugee Action advice workers many times and was so relieved when they told me that they had opened a house for people like me without any support, and that I was offered a place to stay. I cannot describe what it meant to me to have a bed, to have somewhere to cook, [and] to be able to see a lawyer again."

Wellbeing Project - Manchester

Isolation, post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and distress are understandably not uncommon in refugees and asylum seekers. Our Wellbeing Project in Manchester has meant that we can offer a holistic package of support to those in need who visit our advice services, or those of other local support agencies. Increasing a sense of belonging to the community, improving self-esteem and encouraging independence, while getting out and about in the community and boosting physical health, are key achievements for those taking part.

One of the most popular activities was the Wheels for Wellbeing cycling project, where up to 70 participants met in Platt Fields Park to enjoy cycling together, learn about bicycle maintenance and road safety and, in some cases, learn to ride a bike from scratch. Three qualified instructors led each session, which are open to men, women and children of all ages. Drama workshops, a laughter workshop and sessions in sport and cooking, as well as the well-being drop-in sessions and one-to-one appointments were all well attended.

As well as activity sessions, the project gave one-to-one support and provides clients with information about local services and health professionals, organisations and support groups. Social work and occupational therapy students, as well as volunteers, have boosted the capacity of the project which, since it began in 2008, has always been heavily oversubscribed. This year more than 200 people took part in activities, and 262 activity and one-to-one sessions took place.

Because 2011-2012 was its final year of Big Lottery funding, the Wellbeing Project has worked hard to leave a sustainable legacy in Manchester. A successful application to extend the funding has enabled our project workers to support refugees and asylum seekers to access activities delivered by the Manchester Active Lifestyles Team and identify local organisations to continue some of the project's successes, such as the bicycle recycling scheme, into the future.

"I had been feeling isolated and alone before I started attending... I was struggling to meet people. Attending this project gave me the opportunities to meet people and make friends. I now have people that I can meet up with during the day and say hello to when I meet them in the street. If it was not for this project I would probably still feel isolated and be spending all day in the house." KC, a 24-year-old woman from the Gambia

"When I started I was ill. I think that anybody who saw me would say I wasn't well. I was very, very traumatised. People around me bothered me. I'd just say 'I'm OK, I'm OK'. But now, because I've joined in with activities and volunteering I've met people and I feel better. I've made friends." Rachel, a 31-year-old woman from Democratic Republic of Congo

Our aims - organisation facing

Help other organisations, especially those led by refugees, to meet the needs of and enhance opportunities for refugees.

Basis Project - Bristol, Portsmouth, Liverpool and Manchester

Refugee community organisations (RCOs) play a critical role in our society. This little-known corner of the community sector provides vital services to some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in the UK. A collaboration between Refugee Action and the Refugee Council, our Basis Project supported RCOs to establish, organise, generate income for and manage projects of benefit to their members and the wider community. Through this encouragement and support, we have been able to empower RCOs to in turn support their own members to build new lives in the UK.

Trustees' report

In January, the Basis Project held its national conference called Refugee Community Organisations: Looking to the Future. Around 250 delegates from RCOs, donors and supporting organisations came together to look at future plans for RCOs, including engaging with the media, diversifying income and starting social enterprises.

At the end of the 2011-2012 financial year, five years of project funding was close to ending. As a result, for much of the year our Basis Project workers focused on winding down the project and preparing useful materials for RCOs to draw on in the future. These covered topics such as how to survive as a refugee community organisation, how to find other options for funding, how to secure new sources of support and how to work well with organisations offering help. These were widely distributed and made available on the Refugee Action, Refugee Council and Basis websites.

Basis 2 Project - Liverpool

Assisting the very smallest RCOs, the Basis 2 Project helped members form committees, write constitutions and reach a level of development ready to access the main Basis project. Funding came to an end in November 2011, with small RCOs still able to access Basis materials via the websites, though one-to-one support can no longer be given.

RCO Network Meetings - Manchester

With capacity-building support, such as the Basis Projects, increasingly limited in the current funding environment, refugee-led groups are finding it more and more difficult to expand and develop their volunteer-led support services for their communities. Bearing this in mind, Refugee Action in Manchester established a bi-monthly network meeting where RCOs could receive training, share experiences with other RCO leaders, and also receive updates on our work. Training included writing funding applications, developing business plans, diversifying funding and setting up evaluation systems.

There were three network meetings in 2011-2012 with an average of 12 participants from 10 community organisations. The sessions are chaired by the area manager while a range of our staff contribute to different parts of the meeting, including those from the TRIO project (see Page 24) and the Choices outreach service.

Volunteering Greater Manchester

Refugee Action, like many other charities, benefits immeasurably from the contributions of volunteers. Our Volunteering Greater Manchester project aims to improve the volunteering infrastructure in Greater Manchester while ensuring that volunteering is attractive to people from diverse backgrounds, including refugees and asylum seekers. It is a partnership of volunteer centres, local volunteering infrastructure organisations and local diversity organisations, and covers Manchester's 10 districts.

In 2011-2012, the project delivered diversity training for a number of arts and cultural organisations, working towards the development of a new *Volunteering in the Arts Toolkit*. Training was also facilitated on disability equality, volunteering for those with a criminal record, and volunteering for refugees with medical qualifications.

The project has fully funded and subsidised places on an Excellence in Volunteer Management training course, on which Refugee Action staff have been among the attendees. The project ran Diversity in Volunteering events in Salford and Bolton, involving more than 80 organisations, including a showcase of the work of the Salford Men's Project. Other organisations have had intensive one-to-one help from the project to boost their capacity to recruit and support a more diverse group of volunteers. The project has also worked with Refugee Action's volunteer coordinators in Manchester to look at how refugees and asylum seekers with limited English skills can be offered opportunities to volunteer and be part of the team.

Our aims - public facing

To build a cohesive society that welcomes refugees and works to protect and promote refugee rights.

Salford Employment Project

Refugees tend to be highly motivated to find work, but experience a range of complex barriers. These include limited knowledge of recruitment processes, a lack of UK-based work references on their CVs, and a limited practical experience of the workplace in this country. Funded by Salford City Council, our Salford Employment Project ran a series of training courses for groups of refugees living in Salford called Welcome to the UK Job Market, which gave vital information about building practical employment skills and also offered opportunities for participants to share experiences and create peer-support networks.

Six 12-week courses were run throughout the year, with participants reporting increased confidence in approaching the UK job market. Some secured sustainable employment; others moved on to relevant volunteering opportunities or training courses with the project's support.

"I felt isolated in Salford because I did not know anyone here. My life was not stable; [it was] full of anxiety and fear. The project worker informed me about possible ways of getting involved with the Salford community. I am now volunteering for Refugee Action and feel confident that I can make changes in my life. With the help of the project worker I have now applied to Manchester and Salford Universities to study Law/Management in the 2012-13 postgraduate programme." A participant in the Salford Employment Project

Shared Awareness Project - Liverpool

Addressing the myths about asylum and raising awareness among the general public is an essential part of Refugee Action's work to build a cohesive society.

With thanks to funding received from Liverpool City Council, our Shared Awareness Project reached out to a range of audiences across the city in 2011-2012. Between nine and 18 volunteers delivered 30 sessions in Croxteth, Walton, Toxteth, Kensington, Broad Green and the city centre. Tailored to each group and as interactive as possible, sessions were provided for elderly groups, company and public services staff, housing associations and residents' associations. More than 400 people were reached and educated about why refugees flee their countries and what they experience in the UK. Many more were engaged at community events across the city, with quizzes on refugee issues, myth-busting booklets and even posters of famous refugees.

A highlight for the project was being invited by the Everyman and Playhouse Theatre to collaborate on drama productions in the city. The project held a session for young people in Croxteth with the dual goals of encouraging interest in the theatre and raising awareness about refugees. After the session, the young people attended a performance of *The Swallowing Dark* - a play about a Zimbabwean man and his son fleeing the Mugabe regime - at the Playhouse Studio. Later in the year, the project partnered with the Everyman Youth Theatre to create *Excuse Me*, a series of sketches that were performed live over two successive days at the Albert Dock. The Shared Awareness Project helped ensure the stories of asylum portrayed accurately reflected the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.

"It got rid of misconceived ideas I had about asylum seekers and refugees"

Trustees' report

"Lots of information, facts and figures made me more sympathetic and understanding of the plight of refugees"

"I was made more aware of the struggles they face."

"I learned stereotypes in the media aren't real."

Participants in the Shared Awareness Project

Training Project - Manchester

Our Training Project in Manchester aims to improve services for refugees and asylum seekers through promoting a better understanding and knowledge of refugees and asylum to local statutory and voluntary organisations. The project is funded by Bolton Community Homes.

This year, the project continued to work in partnership with Bolton Council's social care staff to run a course on Understanding Refugees and Asylum Seekers, and formed a new partnership with Oldham Council to provide the same sessions. With a view towards the end of funding in May 2012, a pool of trainers was also developed to deliver this popular course to ensure that it can be run in the future. Another new partnership, this time with Student Action for Refugees (STAR), saw the project training local students to deliver English lessons to refugees arriving in on the Gateway Protection Programme.

The project delivered 30 training and awareness-raising sessions to 479 people during 2011-2012. Specialist awareness-raising courses included Asylum and Mental Health, Female Genital Mutilation, and Cultural Awareness. Our innovative approach saw training delivered to Northwards Housing, which included a question-and-answer session with asylum-seeking volunteers providing a unique insight into the need for improved awareness of different cultures when working with asylum seekers and refugees.

Migration Impact Fund Project - Bristol

Increasing the involvement of migrants in city life has always been the goal of our Migration Impact Fund (MIF) Project, which recognises that both migrants and the long-term population have a role to play in improving community cohesion. Funded by the Migration Impact Fund through Bristol City Council, the project supported migrant integration in the city community through community events, awareness training and mentoring.

The project ran for the first few months of the financial year, sadly reaching the end of its funding in June 2011. During this time, the Refugee Women of Bristol Information Event took place in April assisted by the MIF Project and, in partnership with the Amana Education Trust, it broadcast a community radio programme about rights and entitlements. In its final month the project was still making an impact, with a successful awareness session delivered for local Jobcentre Plus staff, who developed action plans to make their services more accessible to refugees and migrants.

"The knowledge gained today will help as it enables me to have a better understanding of the barriers/difficulties these customers will have or have had. I will be able to empathise more and offer better support" Jobcentre Plus worker, after attending a MIF Project awareness-raising session

The mentoring work begun by the project was able to be continued through to March 2012, due to Transition Fund monies secured by Refugee Action. This meant that volunteer mentors could continue to be matched with

Trustees' report

clients to provide support and information around employment, English as a second language, and social integration. In the past year, clients have gained work placements at John Lewis and Royal Mail, as well as taking up volunteering opportunities in design, support services, community organisations and teaching.

"My mentor was able to explain many things about English culture. He was a great role model, always very polite, always asked my opinion... He is a very generous person, every time he checked if I was all right. On a couple of occasions he came to our community parties. He danced with us and I feel that he is like a member of the Darfur community. He is very close to my heart." A participant in the MIF Project

Speaking out in the media

Refugee Action has a dedicated communications function that serves to give refugees and asylum seekers a stronger voice in the UK media. We proactively work with journalists across a broad range of print, online and broadcast media to inform the debate around the asylum system and refugee rights nationally, and to raise awareness of our own work in local communities. During 2011-2012, statements made available to the national media included responses to the closure of the Immigration Advisory Service, research by British Future, the UKBA's proposal to introduce dental x-rays for age assessment, the Detained Fast Track system, forcible returns, child detention, and various select committee reports.

We continue to provide a platform for refugees and asylum seekers to become effective spokespeople so that they can share their experiences with a wider audience. Their stories are shared through our own digital channels, including the Refugee Action website and social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook.

Inspiring supporters

Supporters continue to be incredibly generous in giving their time, money and passion to Refugee Action. This year, supporters were placed even more at the heart of our work and members of staff at Refugee Action telephoned every single one to say a personal thank you. Our staff are ideally placed to inspire supporters and, with as many volunteers as staff, our fundraising efforts can be doubled.

Our online community was boosted to talk about issues that affect refugees and asylum seekers. Digital media was used to highlight the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees even more powerfully, using videos, slideshows and podcasts to engage and inspire. In September 2011, Refugee Action celebrated its 30th birthday and shared memories of our early projects. Oral history from our work with Vietnamese refugees in the 1980s and picture galleries of our Bosnian and Kosovan reception project in the 1990s helped to bring our birthday to life.

Supporter generosity spanned four successful appeals across the year, including our destitution campaign at Christmas that raised more than £15,000 to help asylum seekers without financial support to find a bed for the night and get a shower and clean clothes.

Across the country, extraordinary people did incredible things to stand up for refugees and asylum seekers. Three hardy lads from Swindon - George, Felix and Eric - drove a dilapidated Toyota Yaris all the way to Mongolia and raised nearly £1,000. Other dedicated individuals laced up their trainers and ran 10K races, half marathons and even marathons to support refugees. In Manchester, our waiting room had a child-friendly makeover, with funds for toys and books raised by a group of nursery staff from Bright Horizons, who also supported our bid to the Bright Horizons Foundation for further funding. Thanks to their efforts, children and parents can now enjoy the new Bright Space, a vibrant, fun and welcoming place to play while waiting for an appointment.

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In February, hundreds of people across the country held World Food Night dinner parties to raise vital cash and much-needed awareness of refugees and their contribution to the UK's cuisine.

People who give on a regular basis contributed more than £100,000 in 2011-2012.

"Without our supporters, getting on with our jobs and delivering on our vision might feel very lonely indeed." Dave Garratt, Chief Executive

Raising dough on World Food Night

Refugee Action's first-ever World Food Night on 24 February was jam-packed with events up and down the country, and even as far afield as Germany, Dubai and Australia. Hundreds of people joined in and together they raised more than £10,000!

More than two-thirds of people in the UK think immigration has been good for British food¹ so the idea behind World Food Night is to celebrate the culinary contribution that refugees make. Individual supporters held World Food Nights in their homes with friends and family, and in their offices with colleagues and clients. Some World Food Nights took place in churches and schools. Even a few restaurants changed their menu for the night to reflect the amazing diversity of food available across the country.

Celebrity chef Levi Roots endorsed the event by recording a podcast of the story of Mohamed, a Sudanese refugee who fled his country and is now able to rebuild his life in the UK with the support of Refugee Action.

"I feel so fortunate amid so much devastation in the world, I wanted to do something to help and World Food Night was easy, fun and most of all, delicious!" Pam, Manchester

When Adem Aliyi Abubekar was being persecuted because of his political beliefs, he knew that it wasn't just his own life that was in danger

"I moved from one place to another," he explains. "Because of the political problem I was arrested along with my whole family. When you or your family don't have a future, it's time to leave."

¹ Jolley, R & Katwala, S. *Hopes and Fears: The British Future State of the Nation Report 2012*, British Future, 2012.

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In January 2001, Adem fled from his home village in the picturesque Bale Mountain region of Ethiopia. He crossed the border into Kenya and eventually found part-time work as a waiter and shop assistant in Nairobi. For three years he did not know whether his family were still alive, but never gave up hope.

Living in an overcrowded refugee camp, Adem repeatedly visited an Oromo community on the outskirts Nairobi in an attempt to contact his family. After three years of searching, his sister-in-law Kaditcha – who had fled Ethiopia with her four children – responded to his messages and they were reunited

"I was very happy," says Adem. "At the time, Kaditcha was working in a market selling tea and coffee and was able to assist me with my education."

Adem continued to attend school and was awarded a scholarship in automotive engineering, but struggled to find work afterwards.

In 2011, after 10 years in a refugee camp, Adem was offered the opportunity to settle in the UK through the Gateway protection Programme along with Kaditcha and her four children. In March 2012, they arrived in Greater Manchester where they were met by Refugee Action caseworkers. With our support they are adjusting to their new lives. Adem is looking for a job, taking English classes and hopes to enrol on a maths course at Bolton University later this year.

"British people are wonderful," he says. "The big difference that I see in this country is that people like peace, they respect one another. They don't mistreat anyone's culture. People have civil rights in the UK. The change that I found when I came here is that getting a job is much more difficult unless you have UK qualifications. So you must start from scratch again. I know it is hard to find work in the UK but I hope to be a mathematician one day."

Valuing volunteers

Making the UK a fairer society for asylum seekers and refugees is the reason 89% of our volunteers give their time to Refugee Action. An essential part of the organisation, we are fortunate enough to have as many regular volunteers as we do staff. Our volunteers enable us to deliver our services and projects, build links with other organisations and raise awareness in the communities in which they live on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers. Volunteers bring their life experience, skills and enthusiasm and allow us to extend and enhance current projects, as well as run projects that would not exist without them.

In 2011-2012, more than 200 regular volunteers gave over 30,000 hours of their time to Refugee Action.

Our volunteers have mentored, taught English, given asylum advice, provided admin support, raised awareness, painted, gardened, done DIY, cooked, ran events and raised money. They are integral to delivering our vision of a society in which refugees are welcome, respected and safe, and in which they can achieve their full potential.

In September 2011, Refugee Action volunteers came together for the Refugee Action Volunteers' Event (RAVE), sharing skills, attending workshops and taking part in plenary discussions. Every year, RAVE gives Refugee Action's staff and Chief Executive a chance to get together and thank all our volunteers for their invaluable contributions over the past year.

"I have been a Gateway volunteer since October 2011. Up until a year ago I was a senior manager for UK Border Agency enforcement. My role was around drafting policy and management, so I wanted to do something with individuals on the front line that made a tangible difference.

Working with new arrivals from refugee camps is a very humbling experience. As a lead person during arrivals week, I work with one family or couple over four or five days helping them settle in. Sometimes they face a massive culture shock: locking doors, operating heating, or even adjusting to living several floors up in a flat are all challenges that I have helped people face. Money is very tight for these families and volunteering on Gateway has shown me what it's like to live in poverty

Recently I accompanied a Somali man on his first-ever trip to the dentist. He was very nervous, but had a great sense of humour. At the end of the appointment he walked an hour and half home in order to save the £2.50 fare for his family."

Guy, Gateway volunteer, Manchester

Our aims - policy facing

To bring about policy and practice at national and local levels that protects refugees and promotes their rights.

Influencing decision-makers

Once again, we attended all three main political party conferences to further our links with MPs and peers across all parties. In collaboration with the Smith Institute, we held a fringe event at the Labour Party Conference, bringing together Refugee Action's Chief Executive Dave Garratt, Labour's Shadow Immigration Minister Shabana Mahmood MP and refugee Sysay Tedros to discuss asylum policy and how it affects those experiencing the asylum system.

In September 2011, we were invited by the Home Affairs Select Committee to take part in a conference to launch and inform the direction of an inquiry into asylum and migration in the UK.

Consultations to which we contributed included those on the reform of legal aid, access to the NHS for foreign nationals, and introducing fee charges for immigration and asylum appeals.

Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill 2011

In June 2011, the government introduced the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill 2011 to the House of Commons, following a Ministry of Justice consultation on the reform of legal aid earlier in the year. Recognising that the provisions in the Bill could adversely affect asylum seekers and refugees, Refugee Action launched a lobbying campaign to make sure the voices of refugees and asylum seekers would be heard as the Bill progressed through Parliament.

Proposals to withdraw legal aid funding for asylum-support matters, where housing was at risk, had thankfully been dropped in response to opposition from a number of organisations representing vulnerable people, including Refugee Action. However, the Bill still included the withdrawal of legal aid funding for asylum-support matters where accommodation was not an issue, meaning that those asylum seekers claiming subsistence-only support would no longer be able to access legal aid to help with support matters. It also set out the loss of legal aid for immigration cases and the loss of legal aid for refugee family reunion applications.

Refugee Action provided detailed briefing, opposing these proposals and suggesting amendments at each stage of the legislative process. During the latter stages of the Bill in the Commons and during its passage through the House of Lords, we focused on opposing the removal of legal aid for refugee family reunion applications, arguing that they should not be treated as straightforward immigration matters. During the final stages of the Bill in the Commons, a Liberal Democrat amendment on the issue triggered a discussion resulting in a promise from Justice Minister Jonathan Djanogly MP to look again at the matter. However, we were disappointed that, despite a further amendment in the House of Lords, the government refused to reconsider - meaning that the right of refugees to family life is now being undermined.

TRIO Project - Manchester

Many refugee community organisations provide fantastic support services for refugees and asylum seekers, but have limited capacity to change the policies that affect them. The Thematic Regional Infrastructure Organisation (TRIO) addresses this gap, opening dialogues between refugees and policy-makers, creating networks to share information and best practice.

In 2011-2012, TRIO co-funded and co-organised with Student Action for Refugees (STAR) the 2012 Sleep Out event in February, in which more than 100 people camped overnight on the street to protest against destitution. In the same partnership, TRIO also fully funded and helped organise a STAR North West conference for 60 students from

Trustees' report

Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, York and Bradford universities. Among other exciting projects during 2011-2012, TRIO has been working on a School Awareness Campaign with Amnesty International, Revive, the Salford Forum and the Migrant Rights Support Network.

The government's proposals on family migration were the subject of a TRIO-led consultation, with seven organisations contributing to a joint response to the UKBA. A new UKBA Engagement Group, established by TRIO, was set up to work with UKBA and local authorities to positively change harmful policies around unfinished legacy cases, integration and homelessness.

TRIO is funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

Access to Justice - Bristol, London and Manchester

In November 2011, Refugee Action was awarded a generous grant from the Sigrid Rausing Trust which enabled us to launch a new project, Access to Justice. Refugee Action has long recognised that without quality legal advice from the very beginning, asylum seekers often find their application wrongly refused by the UKBA. In many cases, they are then denied vital legal aid to challenge that decision, because their cases are not deemed to have sufficient merit. For some, the double blow will lead to destitution on the streets of the UK, even if they have a genuine fear for their safety and even if their case should have been considered deserving of the help of a legal aid lawyer.

Access to Justice will help asylum seekers challenge their refusal of legal aid, and where successful, to find new representation to appeal the UKBA's decision to refuse them protection. The project expects to support many asylum seekers in this situation, hopefully on the road to full refugee status. Moreover, the project aims to demonstrate the scale of the problem nationwide so as to persuade policy-makers that the current legal aid system requires reform.

By the end of the financial year, recruitment of three caseworkers had almost been completed to deliver the project in Bristol (also covering Gloucester), Manchester (also covering Liverpool) and London for one year from April 2012.

Different pasts, shared futures... Refugee Week 2011

Celebrating the contribution of refugees to the UK is at the heart of Refugee Week. In 2011, the 60th anniversary of the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees sparked a week of celebration

In Leicester, we brought together more than 20 football teams to enjoy the beautiful game.

In Liverpool, we raised the roof at the Caribbean Centre, enjoying drumming, football and world food with local people.

In London, we made the most of a sunny day at the Celebrating Sanctuary festival on the South Bank, challenging more than 100 people to our refugee-awareness quiz

In Bristol, we pitched up at the Family Fun Day where local children made colourful banners to welcome refugees to the UK.

In Manchester, we premiered the *Life Begins* film made by young Gateway refugees and local youngsters from Bury.

Children's voices

At Franciscan Primary School in Tooting, we asked children how they would welcome a refugee child.

"I'd share my toys with them."

"I'd show them round the school "

"I'd let them stay in my house."

"I'd throw a party for them "

"I'd ask them their name and if they wanted to play with me and my friends."

"I'd get my mum to bake one of her delicious cakes."

"I'd translate for them."

"I'd stop them being bullied and stop other children calling them names."

"They would need love and affection "

About Refugee Week

Refugee Week is a UK-wide programme of arts, cultural and educational events that celebrates the contribution of refugees to the UK, and encourages a better understanding between communities. Refugee Action is a partner agency of Refugee Week, along with Amnesty International UK, British Future, British Red Cross, UNHCR, the Children's Society, Freedom from Torture, Oxfam, the Refugee Council, City of Sanctuary, the Scottish Refugee Council, STAR and the Welsh Refugee Council.

Trustees' report

Apart from the partner agencies, elements of Refugee Week are also funded by the Arts Council England, Greater London Authority and by a great number of other funding bodies and individuals that support various activities across the country.

Our year in numbers

19,808 contacts to our One Stop Services

2,417 new Twitter followers

200 volunteers working hard across the UK, giving 30,000 hours of their time

6,172 face-to-face advice sessions at our Wraparound service in Liverpool

3,222 people helped to build new lives in their home countries through our Choices service

More than 200 people supported by our Wellbeing Project

3,072 views of our videos on YouTube

470 refugees from refugee camps resettled in Greater Manchester by our Gateway team

More than half a million views of our web pages at www.refugee-action.org.uk

Thank you

Refugee Action would like to thank our funders for their generous contributions. They include:

BBC Children in Need

Big Lottery Fund

Bristol City Council

Citizenship Foundation

Liverpool City Council

Manchester City Council

The Barrow Cadbury Trust

The Pilkington Charities Fund

The Sigrd Rausing Trust

and thousands of individual donors across the UK who are integral to delivering our vision of a society in which refugees are welcome, respected and safe, and in which they can realise their full potential.

Financial Review

For the year ended 31 March 2012 the charity achieved a net surplus of approximately £223K (2011: £875K) increasing total funds from £4.9m to £5.2m. This resulted from a deficit of £248k on restricted funds and a surplus of £471k on unrestricted funds. Details of the state of the charity's reserves are given in the Reserves Policy section below.

Incoming resources

The charity's incoming resources from continuing activities for the year ended 31 March 2012 increased substantially to £15.6m (2011: £7.1m). Following successful mobilisation in the previous financial year Refugee Action started delivering the Assisted Voluntary Return (Choices) programme in this financial year and the income received for this project amounting £11.1m is the main reason for the increase in incoming resources.

During the financial year we received total grant and contract funding of £14.9m (2011: £8.3m) from the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA)

The balance of the income for the year ended 31 March 2012 included grants and donations £1.6m (2011: £1.2m), and investment income of £16k (2011: £16k).

Resources expended

The charity's total resources expended for the year ended 31 March 2012 increased to £16.2m (2011: £8.6m). Out of this, the direct cost of providing services to our clients was £16.0m (2011: £8.4m).

Staff costs for the year ended 31 March 2012 were £8.4m and accounted for 52 per cent of total costs (2011: £6.1m or 71 per cent).

The cost of generating voluntary income was £177k for the year ended 31 March 2012 (2011: £202k). The cost of providing governance for the charity was £52k for 2012 (£51k in 2011), accounting for 0.3 per cent of total costs (2011: 0.6 per cent)

Investment policy

The Trustees consider the most appropriate investment policy is for surplus funds to be held on bank deposit.

Reserves policy

Having considered the likely expenditure and future levels of income of Refugee Action, the Trustees have agreed the following policy at 2012:

Restricted funds are those subject to specific restrictions imposed by funders

The Trustees, as explained in note 12 to the financial statements, have established designated funds for the following purposes:

- To ensure that the Charity has the resources to meet committed expenditure which is either definite (such as commitments under premises leases), or reasonably foreseeable (such as commitments to meet staff sickness and maternity leave obligations).
- To pay for important work which is otherwise unfunded - including money set aside to combat destitution amongst the Charity's clients.
- To provide matching funds where funders are not prepared to meet the full cost of important projects.

The General Fund is comprised of funds that represent accumulated surpluses and deficits in the Statement of Financial Activities after transfers to and from the Designated Funds. The funds are available for use at the discretion of Trustees to further expand the current activities of Refugee Action, or may be used on one-off projects

Trustees' report

Currently a high level of Refugee Action's funding comes from UKBA, and it is clear that the total loss or a significant reduction of such funding is the biggest threat for the agency. Given this fact, the Trustees consider that funds should be retained in the General Fund to ensure, in the event of the loss of UKBA funding, up to two years of budgeted revenue expenditure on the staff necessary to carry out the following strategic activities of the Charity.

- Advice to the most vulnerable clients.
- Providing models of good practice.
- Research and policy formation.
- Managing, planning and fundraising.

The annual revenue budget of the Charity's staff needed to carry out those roles is estimated to be around £1.1m. The year-end balance in the General Fund, amounting to £2m, is currently somewhat below twice the annual budget of such staff.

The Charity produces quarterly management accounts, thereby allowing the Trustees to monitor the Reserves Policy on a regular basis. The policy will be reviewed annually.

The responsibilities of trustees

The trustees (who are the directors of Refugee Action for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year that give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for the year. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the detection and prevention of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the UK governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Continued overleaf....

Trustees' report

Auditors

MHA MacIntyre Hudson have indicated their willingness to continue in office and offer themselves for re-appointment as such, under Section 485 of the Companies Act 2006.

This report was approved by the trustees on 6th December 2012 and signed on their behalf by:



Julia Meiklejohn

Chair of Trustees

Please help us continue to support refugees

How to donate

www.refugee-action.org.uk

0845 894 2536

REF05 £10 to 70070

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Trustees' report

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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF REFUGEE ACTION (Company reg. no. 01593454)

We have audited the financial statements of Refugee Action for the year ended 31 March 2012 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Cash Flow Statement, the Balance Sheet and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and its members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND AUDITORS

As explained more fully in the responsibilities of trustees statement, the Trustees (who are also the directors of Refugee Action for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view.

Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

SCOPE OF THE AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of: whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the charitable company's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Trustees and the overall presentation of the financial statements.

In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Trustees Report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

OPINION ON FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2012 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

OPINION ON OTHER MATTER PRESCRIBED BY THE COMPANIES ACT 2006

In our opinion the information given in the Trustees' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

/Continued. .

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF REFUGEE ACTION (Company reg. no. 01593454)

(Continued)

MATTERS ON WHICH WE ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT BY EXCEPTION

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion.

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all of the information and explanations we require for our audit.



Simon Erskine (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of MHA MacIntyre Hudson
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor
New Bridge Street House
30-34 New Bridge Street
London EC4V 6BJ

Date: 18.12.12

REFUGEE ACTION

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (Incorporating income and expenditure account) For the year ended 31 March 2012

	Notes	Restricted funds £'000	Unrestricted funds £'000	Total 2012 £'000	Total 2011 £'000
INCOMING RESOURCES					
<i>Incoming resources from generated funds:</i>					
Voluntary income	2	1,289	293	1,582	1,230
Investment income - interest receivable		2	14	16	16
Incoming resources from charitable activities	3	13,992	-	13,992	5,844
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CONTINUING ACTIVITIES		15,283	307	15,590	7,090
<i>Incoming resources from discontinued activities</i>					
Refugee Integration and Employment Service	3	-	865	865	2,417
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		15,283	1,172	16,455	9,507
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
<i>Costs of generating funds:</i>					
Costs of generating voluntary income		83	94	177	202
<i>Charitable expenditure:</i>					
<i>Charitable activities:</i>					
AVR - Choices		11,233	-	11,233	446
Asylum advice and community development services		4,217	18	4,235	6,108
Communications		97	5	102	376
Governance costs		50	2	52	51
RESOURCES EXPENDED ON CONTINUING ACTIVITIES		15,680	119	15,799	7,183
<i>Charitable expenditure on discontinued activities:</i>					
Refugee Integration and Employment Service		-	433	433	1,449
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	5	15,680	552	16,232	8,632
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(397)	620	223	875
Transfers between funds		149	(149)	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS FOR YEAR		(248)	471	223	875
TOTAL FUNDS AT START OF YEAR		981	3,999	4,980	4,105
TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF YEAR		733	4,470	5,203	4,980

NOTE

Details of movements in restricted funds are given in Note 12.

The notes on pages 36 to 48 form part of these financial statements

REFUGEE ACTION

(A company limited by guarantee)

Registered company number 01593454

BALANCE SHEET

As at 31 March 2012

	Note	2012 £'000	2012 £'000	2011 £'000	2011 £'000
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible fixed assets	8		478		524
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	9	4,733		2,174	
Cash at bank and in hand		1,765		3,041	
		<u>6,498</u>		<u>5,215</u>	
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	10	<u>1,773</u>		<u>759</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			<u>4,725</u>		<u>4,456</u>
NET ASSETS/TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	12		<u><u>5,203</u></u>		<u><u>4,980</u></u>
CHARITY FUNDS					
Restricted funds	12		733		981
Unrestricted funds:					
General Fund	12		2,036		1,978
Designated funds	12		2,434		2,021
			<u><u>5,203</u></u>		<u><u>4,980</u></u>

The financial statements were approved, and authorised for issue, by the Trustees on 6 December 2012 and signed on their behalf by:



Julia Meiklejohn
Chair

The notes on pages 36 to 48 form part of these financial statements

REFUGEE ACTION

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

For the year ended 31 March 2012

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Net cash flow from operating activities (see below)	(1,110)	(77)
Returns on investments (interest receivable)	16	16
Capital expenditure (purchase of tangible fixed assets)	(182)	(383)
DECREASE IN CASH IN THE YEAR	(1,276)	(444)

RECONCILIATION OF NET CASH FLOW TO MOVEMENT IN CASH BALANCES

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Decrease in cash for the year	(1,276)	(444)
Net cash balances at the start of the year	3,041	3,485
Net cash balances at the end of the year	1,765	3,041

NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Net (outgoing)/incoming resources	223	875
Return on investment - interest income	(16)	(16)
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	228	219
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	(2,559)	(185)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	1,014	(970)
NET CASH INFLOW/(OUTFLOW) FROM OPERATIONS	(1,110)	(77)

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
For the year ended 31 March 2012

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice, "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (SORP 2005), the Companies Act 2006 and applicable accounting standards.

1.2 Company status

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee. The members of the company are the Trustees named on page 2. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member.

1.3 Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objects of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Designated funds comprise unrestricted funds that have been set aside by the Trustees for particular purposes. The aim and use of each designated fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Incoming resources

All incoming resources are included in the Statement of Financial Activities when the Charity is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income.

- Voluntary income is received by way of grants, donations and gifts and is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. Grants, where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of specific performance by the Charity, are recognised when the Charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.
- Donated services and facilities are included at the value to the Charity where this can be quantified. The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included in the accounts.
- Incoming resources from contracts and grants, where related to performance and specific deliverables, are recognised as the Charity earns the right to consideration by its performance.

Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

1.5 Resources expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expense categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular activities they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of the resources. In particular office costs have been allocated on the basis of the number of staff working in offices on different functions. Support costs have been allocated on the basis described in Note 7.

Fundraising costs are those incurred in seeking voluntary contributions and do not include the costs of disseminating information in support of the charitable activities which are shown under Communications costs. Support costs are those costs incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objects of the Charity and include project management carried out at Headquarters. Governance costs are those associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the Charity and include the audit fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the Charity.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives as follows.

Furniture, fittings and equipment	-	5 years
Computer equipment	-	4 years
Leasehold improvements	-	Over the period of the lease

All fixed assets costing more than £500 are capitalised.

1.7 Operating leases

Rentals applicable to operating leases where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership remain with the lessor are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities as incurred

1.8 Pensions

The Charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme (see Note 15) and the pension charge represents the amount payable by the Charity to the scheme - or to employees' individual pension schemes - in the year. Due to certain guarantees included in the scheme there is an employer's debt which would become payable if the Charity left the scheme and this is explained in Note 15. As a multi-employer scheme within the definition of FRS 17 none of the assets or liabilities of the scheme are included on the Charity's Balance Sheet.

1.9 Foreign currencies

Transactions in foreign currencies are recorded at the rate ruling at the date of the transaction. Monetary assets and liabilities are retranslated at the rate of exchange ruling at the balance sheet date. All differences are taken to the SOFA.

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

2. VOLUNTARY INCOME - GRANTS AND DONATIONS

	Restricted Funds £'000	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Total 2012 £'000	Total 2011 £'000
Grants from government and other public authorities:				
Nottingham PCT	52	-	52	106
Liverpool City Council	30	-	30	-
Manchester City Council	41	-	41	45
The Big Lottery Fund:				
TRIO	44	-	44	45
Transition Fund	450	-	450	-
Merseyside BME Legacy	15	-	15	22
Bristol City Council	22	-	22	87
Salford City Council	20	-	20	56
Other grants and donations:				
Sign'd Rausing Trust	65	-	65	-
Greater Manchester Center for Vol Org	31	-	31	30
Barrow Cadbury Trust	-	-	-	29
Rayne Foundation	-	-	-	5
Refugee Council	451	-	451	452
BBC Children in Need	48	-	48	32
John Ellerman Foundation	-	-	-	15
Vine Community Centre, Nottingham	-	-	-	8
Chilwell Road Methodist Church	-	-	-	5
Citizenship Foundation	6	-	6	-
D Lawrie Armitage	5	-	5	-
L & A Pilkington J Jones	5	-	5	-
Sundry donations	4	293	297	293
	1,289	293	1,582	1,230

Any funders who made grants and donations during the year below £5,000 have not been shown separately above unless they made a contribution exceeding £5,000 in the previous year.

The Charity also received grants from the Home Office as shown in Note 3 below.

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

3. INCOMING RESOURCES FROM ACTIVITIES IN FURTHERANCE OF THE CHARITY'S OBJECTIVES

	Restricted Funds £'000	Unrestricted Funds £'000	Total 2012 £'000	Total 2011 £'000
Home Office grants and contracts:				
Asylum advice and community development services	1,527	-	1,527	3,688
One Stop Move on project	100	-	100	-
Gateway Settlement services	1,121	-	1,121	1,399
Choices (Assisted Voluntary Return)	11,095	-	11,095	500
Keyworker Pilot	149	-	149	257
	<u>13,992</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>13,992</u>	<u>5,844</u>

Until March 2011 the Voluntary return programme grants were channelled through the International Organisation for Migration. From April 2011 grants were funded directly from the Home Office and European Refugee Fund. 2011 income includes £488,000 from the Home Office for mobilisation of the new grant programme from April 2011.

In addition to the above grants £865,000 (2011 - £2,417,000) of contract income was received from the Home Office for the Refugee Reintegration and Employment Service, which is shown separately under 'Incoming resources from discontinued activities' as the funding and project finished in November 2011.

4. NET INCOMING RESOURCES

This is stated after charging:

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	228	219
Audit fees	25	16
Other fees payable to auditors	1	1
	<u>254</u>	<u>236</u>

7 Trustees (2011 - 6) received reimbursements for travel and subsistence expenses amounting to £1,057 (2011 - £3,009). No Trustees received any remuneration (2011 - Nil).

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

5. ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES EXPENDED BY EXPENDITURE TYPE

	Staff costs £'000	Office costs £'000	Other direct costs £'000	Support costs £'000	Total 2012 £'000
Costs of generating funds					
Fundraising & publicity	107	21	44	5	177
Charitable expenditure					
Refugee Integration and Employment Service	343	35	37	18	433
AVR Choices	4,555	561	5,374	743	11,233
Asylum advice & community development services	2,574	576	550	534	4,235
Communications	35	11	51	5	102
Costs of activities in furtherance of Charity's objects	7,507	1,183	6,012	1,301	16,003
Governance	27	1	2	22	52
Support costs	758	192	378	(1,328)	-
Total expenditure	8,399	1,397	6,436	-	16,232

Details of Staff costs and Support costs are given respectively in Notes 6 and 7. Other direct costs for Governance costs include audit fees and trustees' expenses (see Note 4).

Office costs and Support costs have been allocated between activities on the basis of head count of staff (other than interpreters) employed on those activities.

6. STAFF COSTS AND NUMBERS

Staff costs were as follows:

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Salaries	5,503	4,737
Social security costs	551	468
Pension costs	473	437
Redundancy payments	524	60
Agency staff	1,349	447
	<u>8,399</u>	<u>6,149</u>

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

The average monthly numbers of employees during the year was as follows:

	2012 No.	2011 No.
Fundraising and publicity	3	4
Asylum and community development services	193	128
Refugee Integration and Employment Services	10	31
Communications	3	4
Support costs	15	11
Governance costs	1	1
Interpreters (cost included in Asylum advice and AVR Choices)	63	73
	<u>288</u>	<u>252</u>

One member of staff (2011 - two members of staff) received a gross salary in the range of £60,000 to £70,000, and one member of staff (2011 - no members of staff) received a salary in the range £70,000 to £80,000. Pension contributions at 8 per cent of salary were also payable. All other employees earned less than £60,000.

The Charity contributes 8 per cent of salaries to an independently operated, voluntary, non-contributory, money purchase scheme open to those of its permanent employees who wish to participate (see also note 15). The Charity pays contributions for those employees who opt to participate in the scheme but has no liability to provide pensions to former employees. Staff can opt for the 8 per cent contribution to be made to their own personal pension schemes instead of the Charity's scheme. At the year-end there were outstanding contributions amounting to £53,517 (2011 - £35,390), which are included in Creditors.

7. SUPPORT COSTS

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Finance	225	136
Human Resources	229	141
Information Technology	254	113
Chief Executive's office	216	145
Other support costs	403	198
	<u>1,328</u>	<u>733</u>

Support costs are allocated between activities based on head count as explained in Note 5.

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

8. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Furniture, fittings and equipment £'000	Leasehold improve- ments £'000	Total 2012 £'000	Total 2011 £'000
Cost				
At start of the year	704	279	983	878
Additions	126	56	182	383
Disposals	(87)	(28)	(115)	(278)
At end of the year	<u>743</u>	<u>307</u>	<u>1,050</u>	<u>983</u>
Depreciation				
At start of the year	347	112	459	517
Charged for the year	145	83	228	219
Eliminated on disposal	(87)	(28)	(115)	(277)
At end of the year	<u>405</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>572</u>	<u>459</u>
Net book value at start of the year	<u>357</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>524</u>	<u>361</u>
Net book value at end of the year	<u>338</u>	<u>140</u>	<u>478</u>	<u>524</u>

9. DEBTORS - Amounts falling due within one year

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Grants receivable	4,328	2,021
Prepayments	205	5
VAT recoverable	-	60
Other debtors	200	88
	<u>4,733</u>	<u>2,174</u>

10. CREDITORS - Amounts falling due within one year

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Trade creditors	948	522
Taxes and social security	151	120
Grant income repayable	26	-
Accruals	268	117
Deferred income (see overleaf)	380	-
	<u>1,773</u>	<u>759</u>

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

Deferred income is as follows.

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Balance at start of the year	-	957
Add: Deferred in the year:		
Asylum advice grants	380	-
Less: Released in the year:		
Refugee Integration and Employment Service	-	(957)
Balance at end of the year	<u>380</u>	<u>-</u>

11. COMMITMENTS

At 31 March 2012 the Chanty had annual commitments under non-cancellable operating leases on its premises as follows:

	2012 £'000	2011 £'000
Expiry date:		
Within 1 year	7	151
Within 2 to 5 years	362	61
	<u>369</u>	<u>212</u>

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

12. STATEMENT OF FUNDS

	Brought Forward £'000	Incoming Resources £'000	Resources Expended £'000	Transfers In/(out) £'000	Carried Forward £'000
DESIGNATED FUNDS					
Fixed assets	248	-	(121)	81	208
Pension fund	480	-	-	208	688
Premises leases	600	-	-	300	900
Sickness & maternity leave	167	-	(54)	65	178
Dev't managers fund	70	-	-	-	70
Destitution fund	31	-	(26)	35	40
Top Up fund	200	-	-	-	200
IT upgrade	75	-	-	(75)	-
Tendering fund	150	-	-	-	150
TOTAL	2,021	-	(201)	614	2,434
GENERAL FUND	1,978	1,172	(351)	(763)	2,036
UNRESTRICTED	3,999	1,172	(552)	(149)	4,470
RESTRICTED FUNDS					
Asylum advice services	174	1,527	(1,687)	-	14
Community development	66	-	-	-	66
Voluntary return project	129	11,095	(11,233)	149	140
Keyworker Project	6	149	(151)	-	4
OSS move on	-	100	(100)	-	-
Community development projects	341	1,274	(1,326)	-	289
Gateway Settlement	40	1,121	(1,125)	-	36
Refugee awareness	20	-	(15)	-	5
Fresh Start	31	5	(24)	-	12
Other projects	16	10	(19)	-	7
Redundancy fund	158	2	-	-	160
RESTRICTED	981	15,283	(15,680)	149	733
TOTAL FUNDS	4,980	16,455	(16,232)	-	5,203

DESIGNATED FUNDS

The Fixed assets fund reflects the unrestricted resources tied up in fixed assets.

As explained in Note 15, the Charity has been notified by The Pensions Trust that an estimated liability of £688,000 would be payable should it withdraw from the pension scheme. Although the Charity has no intention of withdrawing, a fund has been set aside to provide against this liability should it crystallise in the future.

A designated fund has been established to cover potential liabilities associated with the Charity's rented properties. These include the potential cost of dilapidations as well as the potential rent commitments which it may not be possible to assign should the Charity have to vacate some of its premises.

The Sickness and maternity leave fund was established to provide for exceptional sickness and maternity costs. The year-end balance is calculated as the cost of six staff being on sick leave for six weeks and six staff being on maternity leave for twenty weeks.

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

The Trustees originally established the Development managers fund to meet the Charity's predicted costs up until March 2011 for two posts for which external funding was not secured. It was decided to maintain the fund balance after this date to ring-fence funds for future development work.

The Destitution fund was established to pay for work arising from the Government's implementation of Section 55 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. Costs incurred for supporting clients in the year have been charged against the fund. Trustees expect the need for this fund to continue, since there remains a high level of destitution amongst our service users and the fund has been increased to £40,000.

The Trustees have established the Top Up fund to help fund projects of national importance. A number of grant applications are being made to funders who will only provide matched funding - the Top Up fund enables the Charity to meet the matched funding requirement. The Top Up fund may also be used to provide bridge funding where a given project is ending, but we anticipate the beginning of a new project which will require similar skills to those possessed by the outgoing project staff and volunteers. The Top Up fund may also provide a guarantee enabling us to commence a new project meeting urgent need even if there is a small financial shortfall.

The IT upgrade fund was established to meet the Charity's costs of upgrading its IT infrastructure. No further expenditure will be incurred in 2012/13 so the fund shows a nil balance at the year end.

Changes in central funding have meant that some income formerly received as grants are now moving to contracts. The Tendering fund has been set up to meet the costs of tendering for these contracts in the coming year.

RESTRICTED FUNDS

Asylum advice services grants are received from the Home Office's UK Border Agency (UKBA) to provide a one-stop advice service (including operating a reception service and accommodation advice) to new refugees and to assist in-country asylum seekers. The balance on the Asylum advice services fund and all the other funds except for the Redundancy fund are due to be spent in 2012/13

Community development programme grants are received from the Home Office to enable the Charity to plan and promote better services for asylum seekers, refugees and their communities.

Voluntary return project (Choices) grants are also provided by the Home Office. The programme provides advice, information and counselling to individuals considering returning to their country of origin. The transfer for the year represents expenditure that the Charity considers is likely to be regarded as ineligible by the Home Office and hence needs to be funded from general reserves.

The Keyworker project is funded by the Home Office to provide support services for asylum seekers.

One Stop Service is a UKBA funded project, providing confidential and independent advice to asylum seekers and refugees on a range of issues

Various funders have contributed towards the Charity's community development projects, which aim to support and promote positive integration and long-term settlement of refugees and displaced people in different parts of the UK

The Gateway Project, funded by the Home Office, is run in partnership with Bolton and Bury Councils. The project provides integration support to refugees who arrived in the UK direct from refugee camps as part of the government's Gateway Protection Programme.

The Refugee Awareness Project, which is supported by the Big Lottery Fund and the European Refugee Fund, and aims to combat negative and misinformed attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers

Fresh Start seeks long term and sustainable solutions for female asylum seekers who are destitute. By meeting the immediate needs (for accommodation and support) of those in the project for a maximum of 6 months, the project will create the time for the women to think seriously about their long term futures.

The Charity maintains a Redundancy fund from restricted project grants to ensure that it will always have the resources to meet its contractual and statutory commitments in the event of having to make staff redundant. The fund is sufficient to meet the full cost of possible redundancies of current staff and accordingly no further transfers are being made into the fund from project restricted funds. Interest arising on the fund is, however, credited to it. Redundancy costs during the year were funded from the Voluntary return (Choices) grant.

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

13. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Tangible fixed assets £'000	Net current assets £'000	Total £'000
Restricted funds:			
Asylum advice services	80	(66)	14
Community development	-	66	66
Voluntary return project	141	(1)	140
Keyworker Project	4	-	4
Community development projects	12	277	289
Gateway Settlement	25	11	36
Refugee awareness	-	5	5
Fresh Start	12	0	12
Other projects	-	7	7
Redundancy fund	-	160	160
Total restricted funds	274	459	733
Total unrestricted funds	204	4,266	4,470
Total	478	4,725	5,203

Unrestricted funds include the designated funds shown in Note 12, all of which are represented entirely by net current assets, except for the fixed assets fund, which is represented by fixed assets.

14. CONTINGENT LIABILITY

The income for the Voluntary return (Choices) project accruing to the 2011/2012 financial year will not be finalised until the European Refugee Fund and Home Office complete their audit of expenditure incurred under the project. The timing of this audit had not been confirmed at the date of signing these accounts. Any expenditure determined to be ineligible under the terms of the grant will be deducted from the grant payable. The Trustees are confident that there are sufficient controls in place to ensure that any ineligible expenditure which the Charity has not already identified (which is taken into account when working out the grant receivable included in these financial statements) will not be material.

15. PENSION SCHEME

The Charity participates in The Pensions Trust's Growth Plan (the Plan). The Plan is funded and is not contracted-out of the State scheme. The Plan is a multi-employer pension plan.

Contributions paid into the Plan up to and including September 2001 were converted to defined amounts of pension payable from Normal Retirement Date. From October 2001 contributions were invested in personal funds which have a capital guarantee and which are converted to pension on retirement, either within the Plan or by the purchase of an annuity.

The rules of the Plan allow for the declaration of bonuses and/or investment credits if this is within the financial capacity of the Plan assessed on a prudent basis. Bonuses/investment credits are not guaranteed and are declared at the discretion of the Plan's Trustee.

The Trustee commissions an actuarial valuation of the Plan every three years. The purpose of the actuarial valuation is to determine the funding position of the Plan by comparing the assets with the past service liabilities as at the valuation date. Asset values are calculated by reference to market levels. Accrued past service liabilities are valued by discounting expected future benefit payments using a discount rate calculated by reference to the expected future investment returns.

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

The rules of the Plan give the Trustee the power to require employers to pay additional contributions in order to ensure that the statutory funding objective under the Pensions Act 2004 is met. The statutory funding objective is that a pension scheme should have sufficient assets to meet its past service liabilities, known as Technical Provisions.

If the actuarial valuation reveals a deficit, the Trustee will agree a recovery plan to eliminate the deficit over a specified period of time either by way of additional contributions from employers, investment returns or a combination of these

The rules of the Plan state that the proportion of obligatory contributions to be borne by the member and the member's employer shall be determined by agreement between them. Such agreement shall require the employer to pay part of such contributions and may provide that the employer shall pay the whole of them

Refugee Action paid contributions at the rate of 8% of basic salary plus £600 p.a. during the accounting period. Members did not make any obligatory contributions during the accounting period.

As at the balance sheet date there were 147 active members of the Plan employed by the Charity, which continues to offer membership of the Plan to its employees. Refugee Action continues to offer membership of the Plan to its employees.

It is not possible in the normal course of events to identify on a reasonable and consistent basis the share of underlying assets and liabilities belonging to individual participating employers. The Plan is a multi-employer scheme, where the assets are co-mingled for investment purposes, and benefits are paid out of the Plan's total assets. Accordingly, due to the nature of the Plan, the accounting charge for the period under FRS17 represents the employer contribution payable.

The valuation results at 30 September 2008 (see below for information about 2011 valuation) were completed in 2009 and have been formalised. The valuation of the Plan was performed by a professionally qualified Actuary using the Projected Unit Method. The market value of the Plan's assets at the valuation date was £742 million and the Plan's Technical Provisions (i.e. past service liabilities) were £771 million. The valuation therefore revealed a shortfall of assets compared with the value of liabilities of £29 million, equivalent to a funding level of 96%.

The financial assumptions underlying the valuation as at 30 September 2008 were as follows

	% p a
Rate of return pre retirement	7.6
Rate of return post retirement:	
Active/Deferred	5.1
Pensioners	5.6
Bonuses on accrued benefits	0.0
Rate of price inflation	3.2

In determining the investment return assumptions the Trustee considered advice from the Scheme Actuary relating to the probability of achieving particular levels of investment return. The Trustee has incorporated an element of prudence into the pre and post retirement investment return assumptions; such that there is a 60% expectation that the return will be in excess of that assumed and a 40% chance that the return will be lower than that assumed over the next 10 years.

The preliminary triennial valuation results as at 30 September 2011 were received in March 2012 but, as the valuation will not be finalised until later this year, this disclosure note must still refer to the 2008 valuation results as the last completed valuation. The Scheme Actuary's preliminary results for 30 September 2011 show that the Plan's assets at that date were £780 million and the Plan's Technical Provisions (i.e. past service liabilities) were £928 million. The valuation therefore revealed a shortfall of assets compared with the value of liabilities of £148 million, equivalent to a funding level of 84%.

If an actuarial valuation reveals a shortfall of assets compared to liabilities, the Trustee must prepare a recovery plan setting out the steps to be taken to make up the shortfall.

REFUGEE ACTION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS For the year ended 31 March 2012

The Pensions Regulator has the power under Part 3 of the Pensions Act 2004 to issue scheme funding directions where it believes that the actuarial valuation assumptions and/or recovery plan are inappropriate. For example, the Regulator could require that the Trustee strengthens the actuarial assumptions (which would increase the Plan liabilities and hence impact on the recovery plan) or impose a schedule of contributions on the Plan (which would effectively amend the terms of the recovery plan). A copy of the recovery plan in respect of the September 2008 valuation was forwarded to The Pensions Regulator on 18 December 2009, as is required by legislation.

Following a change in legislation in September 2005 there is a potential debt on the employer that could be levied by the Trustee of the Plan and The Pensions Act 2011 has more recently altered the definition of Series 3 of the Growth Plan so that a liability arises to employers from membership of any Series except Series 4. The debt is due in the event of the employer ceasing to participate in the Plan or the Plan winding up.

The debt for the Plan as a whole is calculated by comparing the liabilities for the Plan (calculated on a buy-out basis i.e. the cost of securing benefits by purchasing annuity policies from an insurer, plus an allowance for expenses) with the assets of the Plan. If the liabilities exceed assets there is a buy-out debt.

The leaving employer's share of the buy-out debt is the proportion of the Plan's liability attributable to employment with the leaving employer compared to the total amount of the Plan's liabilities (relating to employment with all the currently participating employers). The leaving employer's debt therefore includes a share of any 'orphan' liabilities in respect of previously participating employers. The amount of the debt therefore depends on many factors including total Plan liabilities, Plan investment performance, the liabilities in respect of current and former employees of the employer, financial conditions at the time of the cessation event and the insurance buy-out market. The amounts of debt can therefore be volatile over time.

Refugee Action has been notified by The Pensions Trust that the estimated employer debt on withdrawal from the Plan based on the financial position of the Plan as at 30 September 2011 amounted to £631,000. However, the Scheme Actuary has advised that the figure quoted as at 30 September 2011 is likely to have increased by approximately 9% to £688,000 by 31 March 2012. As the Chanty has no plans to withdraw from the scheme there is no likelihood of this debt crystallising.

Refugee Action has also been notified that additional contributions of £3,726 p.a. will be payable for 10 years from 1 April 2013 in order to eliminate the deficit in the Plan. In accordance with Refugee Action's accounting policy, this expenditure will be recognised in the accounts as the contributions become payable.

For the contributions outstanding at 31 March 2012 see Note 6.

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Refugee Action is an independent, national charity working to enable refugees to build new lives in the UK. We provide practical emergency support for newly arrived asylum seekers and long-term commitment to their settlement. As one of the country's leading agencies in the field, Refugee Action has 30 years' experience in pioneering innovative work in partnership with refugees

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