



We welcome asylum seekers, refugees and detainees who have fled persecution and danger in their own countries and seek refuge in Oxford and Oxfordshire



Crisis Appeal October 2015

Dear supporter,

As a result of human rights abuses and conflict in many countries, but most acutely in Syria, civilians are fleeing for their lives on a scale not seen since the Second World War. There has been an outpouring of public sympathy and many people want to know how they can help.

Asylum Welcome has been supporting asylum seekers, refugees and immigration detainees in Oxfordshire for over twenty years: details of all our services are on our website www.asylum-welcome.org. Now we are playing our part in responding to the current crisis. Asylum Welcome is a community-based organisation and relies heavily on donations from local people. Normally we launch an annual appeal for funds in November, but **due to the exceptional circumstances**, I hope you understand the sense of urgency that has guided our decision to write to you in October to ask for your support and to ask you to publicise this appeal.

Thank you very much for supporting us in the past and I hope that you feel able to support us again in the current situation. This is an extraordinarily difficult time for asylum seekers and refugees, not only because of the scale of what is happening in the Mediterranean region, but also because on reaching the U.K. the legitimacy of their claim for asylum is doubted. We know many Oxfordshire people want to see a more humanitarian response and we strive for that.

It means a lot to us when asylum seekers and refugees tell us the difference we have made. One mother said recently:

“Thank you for treating me like a human being and a member of the community of Oxford. I feel safe.”

On top of our normal work, here are the ways in which we are responding to the current crisis, and will continue to do so with your help:

- Numbers of people approaching our services are increasing. In the year April 2013- March 14 we helped 737 people plus dependent families, in 2014-15 it was 847 and in recent months our

www.asylum-welcome.org

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offices have become very busy. Our staff and volunteers work hard to meet the needs of every one and we are preparing for further increases in spontaneous arrivals of asylum seekers, taking account of the movements occurring in other European countries.

- We are working closely with the local authorities and with national organisations to provide expertise in plans being drawn up to accept Syrians resettled into Oxfordshire direct from camps in Jordan and Lebanon. Asylum Welcome is advising on best practice so that the long-term welfare of the resettled Syrians is assured, and we expect a significant role in delivering practical services once the Syrians arrive.
- We are spending additional time in consultation with politicians and civil servants as they respond to unfolding events. We are challenging the tough restrictions on the rights of asylum seekers that are part of the proposals in the Immigration Bill 2015 and the proposed reductions in asylum support.
- We were delighted to be part of Oxford's 'Refugees Welcome' rally in September and are busy responding to many requests from members of the public who want to know more about refugees and want our advice on how to be useful.

There is no doubt that many people like you care about the welfare of refugees. If you were able to attend the amazing rally that attracted about two thousand local people, you'll know what it means to see friends and fellow citizens stand together to show their concern.

Your generous response to this appeal is very much appreciated. With this letter you will find a donation reply slip to send to us and also a slip to send to your bank if you are able to make a standing order. In addition to making a donation, you can help us by circulating this appeal letter to other like-minded people. This appeal will also be circulating by email and social media, so please help us by spreading the word.

Thank you for helping us to keep going!

With all good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob" with a horizontal line underneath.

Bob Wilkes, Chair of Trustees

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