



Tonbridge Welcomes Refugees

www.tonbridgewelcomesrefugees.co.uk

TONBRIDGE WELCOMES REFUGEES

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

December 2020

Reference and administration details

Tonbridge Welcomes Refugees
c/o Burns & Co
2a Bank Street
Tonbridge TN9 1BL

Registered charity number: 1173758

Trustees:

Jane Blessley
Ruth Connelly (Chair)
Jan Lloyd
Nicky McGregor
Lee Mead (Treasurer)
Fiona O'Brien

Term(s) of office:

January 2019 -
July 2017- July 2020, July 2020 -
January 2020 -
December 2018 -
August 2020 -
July 2017 – July 2020, July 2020 -

Structure, governance and management

Tonbridge Welcomes Refugees was registered with the Charity Commission as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) on 11 July 2017. Our governing document is our constitution (foundation model).

Appointment of trustees

The charity's first trustees were Johanna Elderfield, Fiona O'Brien and Ruth Connelly (serving from July 2017 for an initial period of three years). Subsequent trustees are appointed by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity's trustees for a term of three years. Nicky McGregor and Jeanette Haywood (who has since moved away) were formally appointed trustees at the AGM on 11th December 2018. Jane Blessley was appointed trustee at a trustees' meeting on 17th January 2019. This year, we were delighted that Jan Lloyd was appointed as trustee in January 2020 and Lee Mead became trustee and Treasurer in August 2020. Joh Elderfield, co-founder of TWR, stepped down in September 2020 and we are hugely grateful for all she has done for our charity since the very beginning.

Objectives and Activities

Our charity's objects, as set out in our constitution, are as follows:

1. For the relief of those granted refugee status and their dependents, or those seeking asylum living (temporarily or permanently) in Kent.
 - (a) The relief of financial hardship;
 - (b) The preservation and protection of their physical and mental health;
 - (c) The advancement of their education and training so as to advance them in life and assist them to adapt within a new community.
2. To advance the education of the public in general about the rights and needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

Overview:

We work closely with Kent County Council and staff from their appointed social care provider, Clarion, to support refugees resettled under the government's **Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS)** in our area of Kent, specifically in the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) area. We do this by assigning small teams of volunteers to support each family, by welcoming and befriending visits soon after initial arrival, sourcing household and other items, accompanying and/or giving lifts to appointments, advocating for their needs, all while cooperating closely with their designated Clarion support worker. We also support a smaller number of refugee or asylum-seeking families who arrived in the UK independently, not as part of the government resettlement scheme. Perhaps most importantly, we have an experienced and dedicated team of volunteer teachers who teach English to refugees, as a much-needed supplement to the English classes provided by local adult education providers and funded by the SVPRS, for those who come under it. More recently, we have identified as a priority area, the need to help support people in their search for employment.

Refugee resettlement in our area

When the UK government expanded the SVPRS in September 2015 to accept 20,000 refugees, predominantly from Syria, over the course of 5 years (i.e. by 2020) the founding

members of TWR, Fiona O'Brien and Joh Elderfield, successfully lobbied our local council, TMBC, to commit to a target of welcoming ten families under the scheme. So far, there are a total of nine properties let under this scheme in our council area, providing homes for Syrian refugee families. They are all family units of various sizes, although there is one young man who was originally resettled with his uncle and aunt's family who is now in his own property to give him a bit more independence and make it easier for him to continue his studies at college as well as hopefully find a job and prepare for his future. And one lady who was originally resettled in the Sevenoaks area with her extended family was happily reunited with her husband after about three years apart when he finally arrived in this country just before lockdown started, and they have been able to settle into their new home together with their three-year-old daughter. This would not be possible without the wonderful support of local landlords who agreed to take part in this scheme, despite the fact that the funding only covers rent at local LHA rates, rather than the level of rent which would be available on the open market. Thanks to them, families who would otherwise still be living in much worse conditions in countries bordering Syria, are now living safely in our community and able to start rebuilding their lives.

As well as the families resettled in the TMBC council area under the SVPRS, we also support a small number of refugee families who did not arrive here via this scheme in Tonbridge as well as in /around Maidstone. Our Maidstone volunteers also work with some of our SVPRS families in TMBC, as sometimes their location is closer to Maidstone, as well as Maidstone-based SVPRS families. The Maidstone team of volunteers complete their DBS with us as there is no charity or group like TWR operating in this area. We also work very closely with our sister charities, Tunbridge Wells Welcomes Refugees (who look after ten families in their area) and Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees (four families).

Update on refugee resettlement (national and local)

It is impossible to report on this year, of course, without talking about COVID-19. The times we are living through have hugely affected all our lives and things have been tougher for all charities and for the beneficiaries we are here to help.

Before the first lockdown in March, it was looking quite likely that TMBC would meet its target of resettling ten refugee families by spring 2020. As we reported in our last annual report, in June 2019, the then Home Secretary had announced that when the SVPRS officially came to an end in spring 2020, the scheme together with two other resettlement programmes, the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme and the Gateway Protection programme, would be consolidated into a new global refugee resettlement scheme, called the UK Resettlement Scheme. This idea was that this would be simpler to operate and provide greater consistency in the way the UK resettles refugees and broaden the geographical focus beyond the Middle East and North Africa. Sajid Javid confirmed at the

time that the UK intended to resettle around 5000 of the world's most vulnerable refugees in the first year of this new scheme, beginning in March 2020. But no firm longer-term commitment had been given beyond that first year. The government then approached local authorities, as they did when SVPRS was expanded in 2015, asking them if they would take part in the scheme and, if so, how many families or individuals they would pledge to resettle. Earlier this year, we were told that that TMBC would be pledging to resettle a further two refugee families in the first year of this new scheme, bringing their total pledge to twelve families.

At the time the March lockdown happened, two properties had been offered locally for the scheme, and two families had been identified for urgent resettlement. Sadly, with lockdown all refugee resettlement flights were paused, and at the time the UK was just a few hundred short of their initial pledge of 20,000 refugees to be resettled by this point in 2020. To date refugee resettlement flights have still not restarted. Very recently, though, the government indicated that resettlement flights would resume to enable the SVPRS 20,000 target to be met. There has been no further mention of the UK Resettlement Scheme meant to replace it or indeed any further commitments to future refugee resettlement from next year.

Locally, we are hoping that two families who were identified for urgent resettlement back in March will be resettled in January. Unfortunately, because of the long period of inactivity on refugee resettlement, and subsequent shortage of funding, one of the two properties identified for refugee families is now no longer available. Many of you have probably seen our **urgent appeal for a 3-bedroom property** to resettle one of these families. This particular case is a single mother with three children, all 12 and under. Kent County Council has asked four district/borough councils to look for properties in their areas – Tonbridge as well as Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks and Maidstone – and approached TWR as well as our sister charities in Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. As the priority is to get this family here to safety in the UK, a **2 bedroom property would be considered as a short-term let** to allow more time for a suitably sized property to be found.

English teaching programme

For refugees and asylum seekers newly arrived in the UK, learning or improving English is vital to their future job prospects and longer-term settlement. **We support refugees' English language needs by running a volunteer-led ESOL teaching programme**, supplementing the official classes organised via the council. Until lockdown in March, our classes were held twice weekly in rooms kindly provided for free by Tonbridge Parish Church, as well as home visits from our volunteer teachers for those unable to access group classes for childcare or other reasons, and supporting students at school when needed.

All this changed, of course, in March this year when face-to-face classes – both those with adult education providers as well as our volunteer-led classes - had to stop due to the pandemic. But our teachers have been continuing their support with many students remotely, using Zoom. This is not ideal and poses particular challenges as some of the students who need the most help with English are also those who struggle the most with IT and accessing online classes.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Jane Blessley, the coordinator of our English teaching programme, and her fantastic team of teachers who all go above and beyond to support our families, even in these particularly challenging times. Although KCC provision of ESOL doubled from 8 to 16 hours a week, there has certainly been more acknowledgement recently from KCC that the level of ESOL from local adult education providers does not address the needs of many of our cohort who are often illiterate in their own language and have lower levels of education. The teaching team works very effectively to provide a more appropriate and personalised approach, as well as highlighting these gaps in the official provision which need to be addressed.

Befriending / social support

We work with our sister charities in Tunbridge Wells Welcomes Refugees (TWWR) and Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees (SWR) to help support refugees, most of whom have also been resettled under the SVPRS in their respective council areas. One way in which we have worked together is ensuring that the growing Syrian community in our area of West Kent came together for a **monthly social gathering** which is held in a church room in Tunbridge Wells. Especially when families first arrive, social isolation can be a significant problem, and these gatherings have been important in helping to reduce this. These gatherings were organised by Tunbridge Wells Welcomes Refugees, but popular with many Tonbridge families, so we made great efforts every month to coordinate the lifts which many families rely on to attend these gatherings, which was no small task. Many of our volunteers have regularly provided lifts to our families for medical and other important appointments as well as these gatherings and other outings. Before March, we often received request for lifts and we had to balance our eagerness to help with encouraging more independence and use of public transport where available. We have always prioritised requests for lifts for those with particular needs, medical or otherwise, or those living in remote locations, and medical appointments are always given priority.

In March, of course, sadly the monthly gatherings had to stop, as did the women's **Craft and Conversation group** run jointly with Empathy Action every Wednesday in Tonbridge - thank you to Sandy Glanfield from Empathy Action for running this.

Volunteers have kept in regular contact with families remotely as much as possible since March, with doorstep/garden visits or socially distanced coffees when possible, and occasional lifts (with appropriate precautions) to medical or other essential appointments when necessary.

Achievements and performance

- Through lobbying TMBC and working closely with both KCC and TMBC and Clarion, promoting the government's resettlement scheme locally, and persuading private landlords to let their properties to refugee families, TWR has **assisted in facilitating nine Syrian families in being resettled in Tonbridge & Malling under SVPRS**, who would otherwise still be living in much worse conditions in countries bordering Syria. 7 out of the 9 landlords currently letting properties to refugee families in and

around Tonbridge under the government's resettlement scheme heard about it through TWR.

- TWR has supported these families in both financial and material ways by e.g. funding broadband contracts to enable them to keep in touch with loved ones, supplying household goods, bikes, computers, items of furniture and other needed items, many of which have been sourced for free as donations. We have also funded extra-curricular activities which would otherwise be difficult financially for some of our beneficiaries, especially children, to take part in, such as football clubs.
- Our **English language teaching programme**, which started running in February 2017, has provided refugees, many of whom have very little or no English on arrival, with expert, small group and, when appropriate, individual tuition. This has supplemented the official English language provision and also, by providing home visits, solved the problems experienced by some family members of access to other classes. This year until March we offered twice-weekly classes at the parish church, regular home tuition, and support in schools for children. Since March online English support has been provided to those able to access it, and support offered to those who find online learning more difficult. **Six laptops have been funded** so far since the start of pandemic, to help schoolchildren and adults with online learning.
- In terms of **community engagement**, we were recently included in Tonbridge Town Team's voucher donation scheme, alongside Tonbridge Lions and two local food banks. As well as donations from the public funding vouchers which will be available for our families to use in TTT's member businesses in the town, this is a valuable opportunity for raising the profile of our charity's work and refugee issues in general in our community. In a year in which so many community events have had to be cancelled, this is even more important. **Waitrose Tonbridge** also invited us to be one of their local **Community Matters** charities once again for the month of October.
- **Fundraising:** This year has been particularly challenging for all charities, and TWR is no exception, especially with the cancellation of the Tonbridge Dragon Boat Race, usually our main fundraising event of the year. We managed to hold a **fundraising quiz at The Old Fire Station in February**, and we're very grateful for all the support TOFS has provided TWR over the years. This year, due to the COVID effect, our funds have been at historically low levels, but we applied for and were successful in gaining **£5000 funding from Kent Community Foundation's Coronavirus Emergency Fund**. We were also lucky enough to win **£1000 funding from Ecclesiastical** - thanks to all who nominated TWR and helped make this happen. This funding enabled us to provide **six laptops** as well as give our families **hardship payments** just in time for Eid-al-Fitr. Four trustees also formed "Team TWR" with individual walking, cycling and running challenges to raise £2200 (to replace the potential lost fundraising income from the Dragon Boat Race). Thanks to the generosity of so many TWR friends, we were delighted to reach our fundraising target. We have also very recently introduced a small range of greetings cards – thank you very much to **Nicky McGregor, Kirstie Reid and Kerri Sargent** for all their hard work on these and other fundraising initiatives as well as refreshing our website and setting up our all-important online shop. These successes, together with some recent very **generous individual donations** and our small group of very

committed regular givers, mean that our finances are looking healthier. Thank you so much to everyone who has supported us throughout this difficult year.

- We would like to say thank you again to Dominic Burns of **Burns & Co. accountants** for allowing us to use their office as a c/o address.

Financial review

Our financial report provided by our Treasurer, Lee Mead, is attached.

Aims and objectives

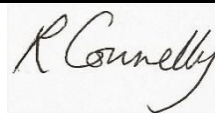
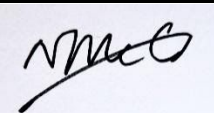
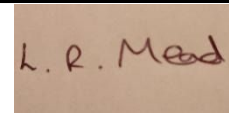
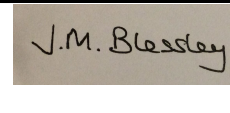
- We will continue to **work closely with TMBC, KCC and Clarion** to enhance the operation of the government resettlement scheme for all concerned. We hope to provide a welcome to two new refugee families in January (subject to a suitable property being found for one of them) as well as help support the end of the process for the first family to be resettled in our area once their five year period comes to an end in 2021.
- We will continue to support the development of **English language skills** for refugees in our community, by arranging volunteer-led ESOL teaching – online for as long as necessary, and in person when possible – ensuring that our volunteer teachers are well supported with a proper budget.
- We will launch a new campaign to **promote regular giving as a dependable income stream**, aiming to significantly increase our number of regular givers and ensure a sustainable future for our charity.
- We will establish a **small team of volunteers with specialist recruitment/coaching experience to work closely with family team volunteers and Clarion support workers to help support members of our refugee families in their search for jobs and work experience, advise on CVs and coach for interviews**. This is a **priority area for 2021**, especially for those families affected by the benefit cap, and in a particularly difficult climate for finding jobs refugees will find it even harder. We are aiming to work closely with our sister charities in Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks on this too.
- We will continue to **keep our running costs as low as possible** and keep reviewing our spending priorities to ensure as much support as possible for our beneficiaries, particularly as those who arrived here earliest reach their fifth year of the scheme and look at options for their future.
- We will encourage the families we work with under SVPRS to become more independent, both in day to day matters e.g. supporting them to manage their own affairs, make appointments for themselves and with longer term challenges e.g. supporting them in accessing training/finding work.
- We will continue to raise awareness of refugee issues by communicating positive messages to the community whenever possible, including projects with Tonbridge School and other schools and local groups when possible.
- Most immediately, we need to **expand our pool of active volunteers and trustees**. **In 2021 a new Chair for TWR will need to be appointed** as Ruth Connelly will be stepping down from the role. Without the commitment of new people, none of the above work will be sustainable long-term. We need more help in all areas, not just

the activities we would like to do more such as outreach and events, but also the vital work of direct family support and behind the scenes work, the admin and running of the charity. Please do have a chat with us if you are interested in doing more or just finding out more about what is involved.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above and the attached financial report and accounts.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:

Signature(s)					
Full name(s)	Ruth Connelly	Nicky McGregor	Lee Mead	Jane Mary Blessley	
Position (e.g. Chair)	Chair	Trustee	Treasurer	Trustee	
Date	8.12.2020	08.12.2020	08.12.2020	08.12.2020	



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
TONBRIDGE WELCOMES REFUGEES

No (if any)
1173758

CC16a

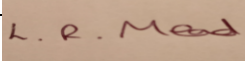
Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date 01/04/2019	To	Period end date 31/03/2020
------------------------	---------------------------------	----	-------------------------------

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
One off donations	3,579	-	-	3,579	4,130
Regular giving	581	-	-	581	10
Donation to fund driving lessons	-	2,000	-	2,000	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	4,160	2,000	-	6,160	4,140
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
n/a	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	4,160	2,000	-	6,160	4,140
A3 Payments					
Running costs	789	-	-	789	1,292
Refugee support	3,487	-	-	3,487	2,022
Driving lessons	-	930	-	930	-
Activity fund	474	-	-	474	122
Teaching resources	263	-	-	263	146
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	5,013	930	-	5,943	3,582
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	5,013	930	-	5,943	3,582
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 853	1,070	-	217	558
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	7,110	-	-	7,110	6,552
Cash funds this year end	6,257	1,070	-	7,327	7,110

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash at Bank	6,257	1,070	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	6,257	1,070	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	n/a	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	n/a			
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	n/a			
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	n/a			
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Lee Mead	06/01/2020	