

# NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE REFUGEE FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT  
2017-18





**Registered Charity No: 1121560. Company No: 05352679**

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## WELCOME FROM OUR CO-CHAIRS

Welcome to the 2018 Annual Report.

We hope that as you read you will see that the Forum continues to provide many different services to asylum seekers and refugees in our city and beyond and as acting joint chairs, we are incredibly grateful to the staff and volunteers for all their hard work and commitment. Our organisation literally changes people's lives and we must all continue to work together to support those who need us in these difficult times. We hope that in reading this report you will get a sense of the different ways that this happens.

This year has been a year of change for the Forum with our Director, Fiona Cameron, moving on in April after 4 years as the Director of the Forum. Under Fiona's leadership the Forum has grown and the range of services we offer now is much wider than in the past. Fiona gave fully to her role, going the extra mile regularly, and is a big loss to the organisation – we are currently recruiting for her replacement.

We have also said goodbye to Leo Keely who has been the Chair of the Forum for 3 years. Leo threw himself fully into all aspects of the work of NNRF, and steered the organisation through considerable change. We are very thankful to Leo for all that he brought to the Forum. His resignation together with that of Lesley Phair, who was our Vice Chair for a short time, have brought a time of change for the governance of the Forum. We also want to say thanks to Board Secretary, Maggie Jones who left the Board during the year. We have taken on the role of joint chairs since August and are grateful to those who have helped us to fulfil this role, in particular to Jill Jefferies, our acting Director.

The money that we have received from grants has reduced so we are all the more grateful to those of you who give so regularly to the Forum to further its work. Less money has meant hard decisions having to be made about what services we are able to sustain and those which we must close. Difficult decisions but necessary ones if the Forum is to continue to do the vital work that it does. Bidding for further resources is certainly a priority for the future.

So thank you for taking the time to read about our work and thanks to all of you who contribute to the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum in however large or small a way.

**Patsy Brand & David Mellen**  
***Co-Chairs (Acting)***

## WELCOME FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Welcome to another annual report with a new author.

Another year of change and growth characterized by more complex and in-depth cases as the effects of the 'refugee crisis' were subsiding and the need to support integration has grown. NNRF has expanded to provide a wider range of services for those people who have arrived, in particular support for refugees, with new projects around children, employment, complex needs and financial literacy. We have continued to work on organisational sustainability introducing new

communication structures, processes and organisational training whilst preparing for the challenges of GDPR and delegated budgets. We continue to represent the views of clients and the sector at a range of local, regional and national strategic groups.

Going forward there are several challenges that NNRF and asylum seekers and refugees will be facing. The hostile environment, Brexit and austerity measures mean that clients are being more marginalised and face greater poverty with episodes of homelessness. In some cases, this means that NNRF can do no more than offer a hot meal, clean clothes and a friendly ear. Organisationally, funding will be finishing, budgets in the wider world are being cut and everyone is expected to be offering more for less. This will present challenges in service delivery and an emphasis on fiscal restraint.

The bright spot on the horizon is the development of Early Action through a partnership with Refugee Action. This will enable us to look at ways we can develop our work to inform and educate clients so that they know why the system is the way it is. This will give them an opportunity to be better prepared in navigating the transition points within the system with regards to positive and negative decisions.

In summary, thank you to everyone; - donors, supporters, workers and board, who has been involved in this year's work and will be contributing to next year. We have a highly skilled workforce, both paid and unpaid, who go above and beyond to ensure that we are meeting the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. On a personal note, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Fiona Cameron for her hard work as Director and wish her well in her new role.

**Jill Jefferies**  
***Director (Acting)***

## ABOUT US

### Our Vision

A society where Asylum Seekers and Refugees are welcomed, receive just and compassionate treatment and support in rebuilding their lives.

### Our Mission

NNRF is a forward-thinking organisation that is passionate about empowering refugees and asylum seekers, aiding their integration into the local community and UK society as a whole.

We do this by:

- Providing a safe and welcoming space where everyone is treated with respect, compassion and dignity
- Offering free and impartial specialist advice
- Empowering service users to rebuild their own lives
- Positively embracing and celebrating differences
- Offering practical support to those who have no means to support themselves
- Building effective partnerships with community groups and relevant organisations

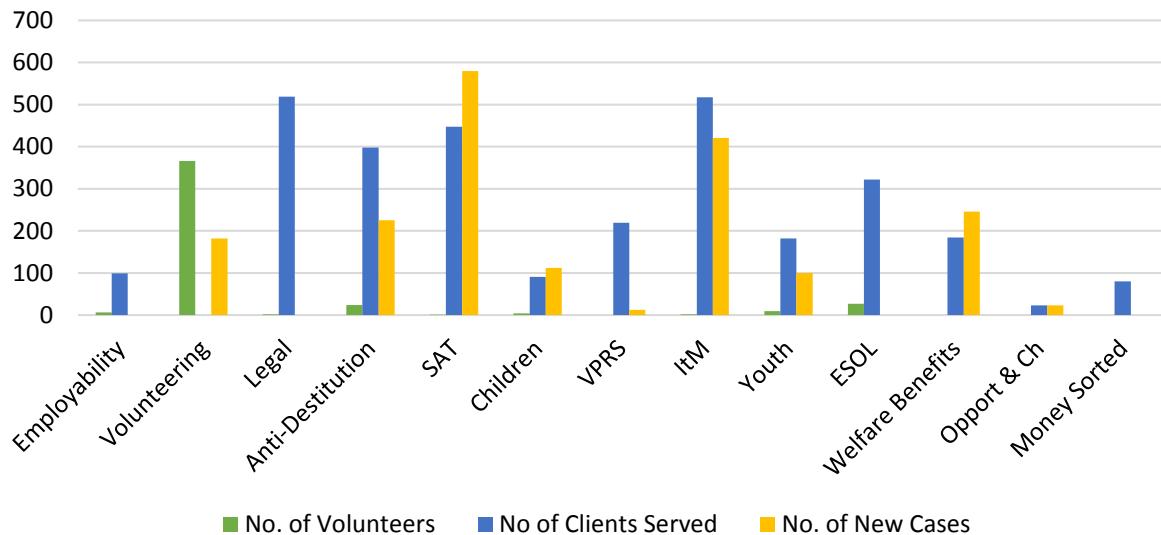
### Board of Trustees

<b>Patsy Brand – Co-Chair</b> (from August 2018)	<b>Richard Chamberlain</b>
<b>David Mellen – Co-Chair</b> (from August 2018)	<b>Amdani Juma</b>
<b>Lucy Judd – Secretary</b> (appointed 11 September 2018)	<b>Steff Webber</b>
<b>Cheryl Hemmings – Treasurer</b> (appointed 11 September 2018)	<b>John Henson</b>
<b>Jean-Didier Mualaba</b> (co-opted 12 July 2018)	<b>Rebecca Langton</b>
<b>Leo Keely – Chair</b> (resigned August 2018)	<b>Cherry Underwood</b>
<b>Lesley Phair</b> (resigned July 2018)	<b>Shahid Sharif</b>
<b>Clive Lamb – Treasurer</b> (resigned November 2017)	<b>Christopher Galvin</b>
<b>Maggie Jones – Secretary</b> (resigned April 2018)	<b>Frank McKenzie</b>

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

**2,153** clients supported across all of our services over  
**10,961** cases in the year

### New Clients and Total Clients Served 2017-18



**100+** individuals gained access to UK Section 4 asylum support and ceased to be destitute or homeless.

**6,000** meals served in our community café

**182** new refugees helped to resettle by Specialist Advice Team

**£30,644.70** worth of small grants and **521** bus tickets issued to support our clients. (£13,860 of small grants and all bus tickets through British Red Cross. £16,784.70 through the NNRF destitution fund)

**40+** Employability workshops

*We have worked hard to ensure the figures in this report are accurate. However, there is likely to be some overlap between activities as some individuals are supported by more than one service.*





# ANTI-DESTITUTION

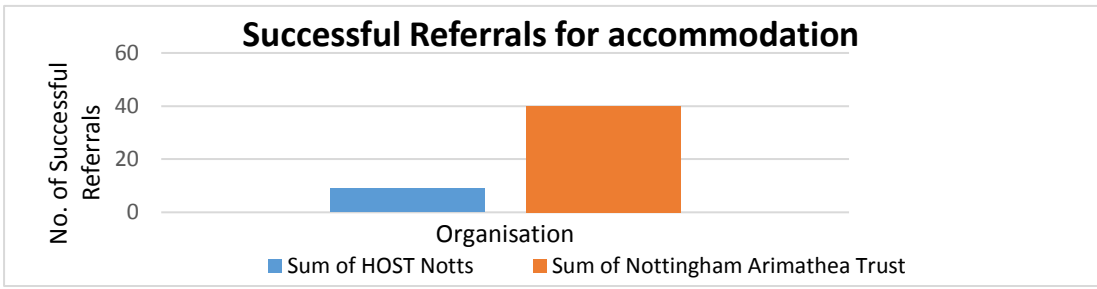
The Anti-destitution project focuses on helping refused asylum seekers with their immediate needs such as food and disposable cash, but also provides help and support around their immigration cases via referrals. As well as this, it also works with the [“Into the Mainstream” project](#) in helping with any health issues that they may have. The idea is to take a holistic approach as there is very rarely only one area of concern when dealing with this vulnerable group.



*“The destitution project has created a small but essential community that not only helps the destitute refugees with essential living basics but has created a safe space to connect with each other socially. I’m proud to be part of a service that I’ve been told is the part of the week they look forward to.*

*Frustratingly, budgets are only getting smaller but the core team has kept the project delivering. Services as essential as this make a huge impact to individual lives and the communities connected to them. I can only hope that we grow this project and help people as we do.” – Adam, volunteer*

*“This project was our lifeline for more than 8 months. My sister and I regularly go every Saturday not just to volunteer but get our weekly food. The food would typically include: canned food, sugar, coffee, tea, juice, yoghurt and toiletries. Due to lack of funding for this project our monthly cash which we used to receive every month was cut from £20 to £10. I am sure I don’t have to explain the struggles faced by people like us to survive on £10 a month. This project also helps with cooking us nice food as most of us don’t get to eat food like that every day.” – Shahrin, volunteer and former service user*





*“When I found myself homeless and destitute, it was as if I had fallen into a “bottomless pit”...and everything was spiralling out of control and that I was very rapidly losing control over my entire life. It was having a very negative impact on my mental health, as well as my spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing. Then a “hand” reached out to me... and helped pull me out of this bottomless pit called homelessness and destitution.*

*That “hand” was no other than the Refugee Forum Anti Destitution Group.*

*It’s a “hand” that has offered me hope, support and compassion through their very humane programme and I am very grateful.*

*Over the last 5 years that I have been a service user of this programme, my dignity and respect have gradually been restored.*

*This “hand” cared enough and reached out to me in my darkest moment and reminded me that I was after all a human being and not just a statistic.” – Mirriam, service user*



*“The Saturday group is an integral part of NNRF’s valuable support of refused destitute refugees and asylum seekers. Every week in our kitchen a diverse team of talented volunteer cooks create a taste of home, providing a much appreciated hot meal for our service users. Our relaxed and welcoming cafe gives clients a much needed opportunity to share experiences and develop friendships in a safe environment.*

*I’d personally like to express my thanks for enabling this project to continue this vital support.” – Lu, volunteer*

## CHILDREN & FAMILIES

This project aims to reduce social isolation and build stronger social networks among refugee children, young people and families. We encourage the involvement of parents, and strive to strengthen internal community links, as well as those with the wider community. This project also promotes better access and integration to wider mainstream services and provisions. Through our work we have successfully helped destitute families into social care, and improved their orientation and engagement within Nottingham. We also support vulnerable families regarding children's health, education and safety.



### Case Study

There are two brothers in a family who both have a real ambition and goal to integrate into their wider communities and to improve their language skills whilst, also having fun along the way. They expressed a passion for martial arts and a real wish and desire to be able to access lessons in this subject. Unfortunately, however, such classes cost a lot of money and are only available with a fee. Through our advocacy role and objective to build up local partnerships, we were able to make a real and positive change in these children's lives. After researching into martial art providers, we got in touch with Dantiyaal's Martial Arts Academy and explained the dilemma of these 2 young boys with a pledge for help. Dantiyaal MAA put out a call on social media and together, we managed to raise enough money to support both brothers to pursue their dreams for a year. The academy provided them with uniforms and with places in the class.

It later transpired that there was also a sister who wanted to join her brothers on the martial arts course but, as before, finance became an issue. Once again, we worked in partnership with Daniyaal who shared our desire to be able to help the girl and this led to a second call out to the community which raised enough money for the sister to also join the course for a year. Now all 3 siblings are studying at a martial arts school; something that simply was not an option for this family before this project got involved. The academy now supports 6 asylum seeking children, enabling them to integrate into the hosting community and to form friendships and connections beyond the refugee circle.

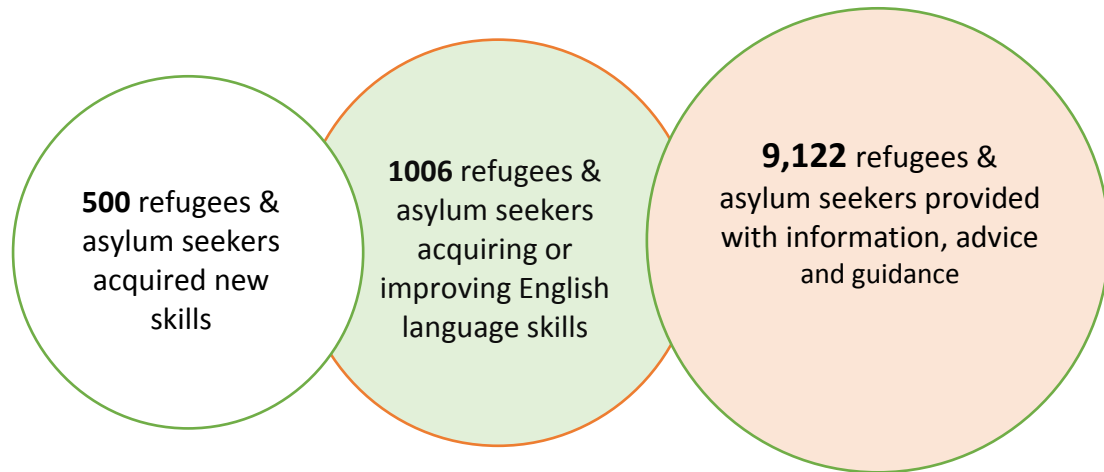
## COMMUNITIES OF IDENTITY (COI)

NNRF and our partner organisations deliver activities and services that help people from refugee and asylum seeker communities through:

- Information, advice & guidance
- Building Skills & Confidence
- ESOL & Conversational English
- Support for Basic Needs
- Support for Specialist VCS Organisations
- Volunteering Projects

We support the development of strong and vibrant community groups and organisations so that they are more able to represent and provide appropriate activities for their members.

We also administer a grants scheme for small grass roots groups outside of the consortium.



### Case Study

The Partnership Development Coordinator has contacted over 100 groups and organisations to assess what support or needs they might have, that the consortium could respond to. This work is ongoing



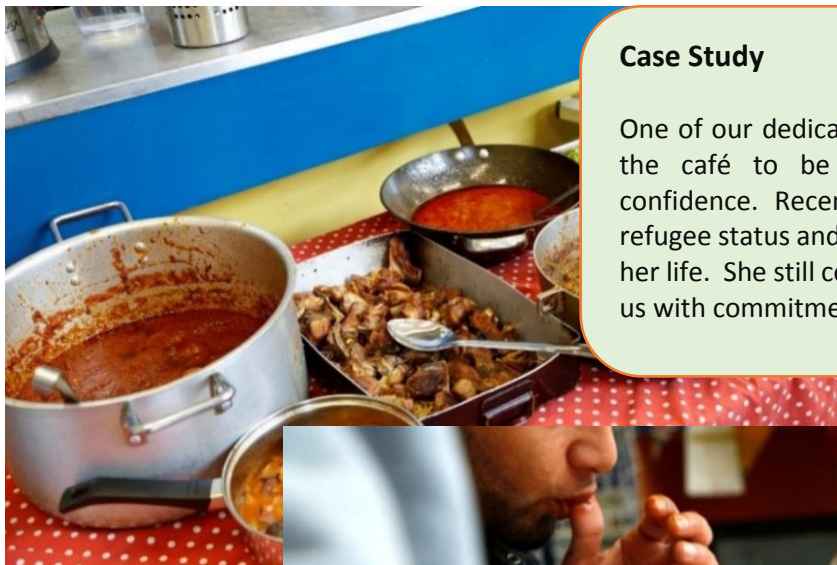
and will help identify training needs and the workshops at the next networking event.

In addition, when the Women's cultural exchange disbanded, the consortia was able to support two new groups to fill the void including NNRF who offered staffing and resource to get the service back to a stage where it could be independent.

## COMMUNITY CAFÉ

The Community Café provides lunch and tea and coffee to service users, volunteers and staff members. This is done on Mondays – Thursdays every week of the year thanks to the support of our hardworking volunteers. The diverse ranges of meals are prepared using food donations received from the public.

Some of our Café volunteers have been cooking their regional foods, feeding dozens of clients, staff and volunteers each week. It was their way of coping with a difficult situation, living as an asylum seeker, by sharing their talent for cooking and making people happy.



### Case Study

One of our dedicated café volunteers finds the café to be a place of calm and confidence. Recently she was awarded her refugee status and starting a new chapter in her life. She still continues cooking for all of us with commitment, passion and love.



**6,000** individual meals served in the year

*"It is brilliant to have a Café at the centre! Our Café Volunteers have been cooking delicious food, allowing us to taste the flavours from all over the world. For some of our clients this may be the only hot meal they have in a day. For volunteers and staff, it is a nice break and an energy booster, especially for those who are dealing with difficult situations. Thank you, Café Team, for spicing up our lives and spoiling us with tea, coffee, biscuits and comfort food!" – NNRF staff*

## EMPLOYABILITY

The NNRF Employability Programme aims to support refugees to navigate UK systems in order to gain access to opportunities. It helps them overcome the many barriers they face in their journey towards work. In this way we hope to enable people to reach their work and education goals more quickly.



### Case Study

Merie is originally from Malawi and came to the UK with her husband more than 10 years ago. She has two young children who are 2 and 5 and her family have just been granted Refugee status. Merie is amazingly positive but sometimes the toll that such a long-term asylum claim-process and the continued struggle for a stable home is clear and has impacted on her confidence.

Merie initially indicated a desire to get into care work but through regular 1:1 meetings with her Case Worker it emerged she really wanted to become a Nurse. They attended the NCN open day together to find out more about the Access to Nursing course after which she was given an interview. Despite having multiple qualifications, she needed to take her Functional Skills in Maths before they would accept her. After attending CTP college for an assessment, she is now taking the course through a mixture of online and classroom-based teaching.

In the mean-time an opportunity presented itself for a part-time Personal Assistant job supporting a lady with cerebral palsy 8 hours per week to keep active.



After an initial meeting to discuss the realities of the position they agreed to work together on a voluntary basis initially. Through the YE12 hardship fund Merie was able to buy clothing suitable for the activities they do together and a bus pass through the Sus Trans 'Nottingham Gets to Work' scheme. This has since become a paid role.



After making an application for a Health Care Assistant role she was successful in getting through the lengthy NHS recruitment process and is due to start her new role. Merie's Career path has taken shape over time with her aspirations and dreams for the future becoming clearer. She is taking some real steps towards securing a long-term future for herself and her family in the UK.

## ESOL

The ESOL Project aims to provide a structured approach towards providing English classes, particularly during our clients' first 6 months in the UK.

To date we have provided over 3000 hours of ESOL at NNRF, which includes 600 hours of 1 to 1 language support.

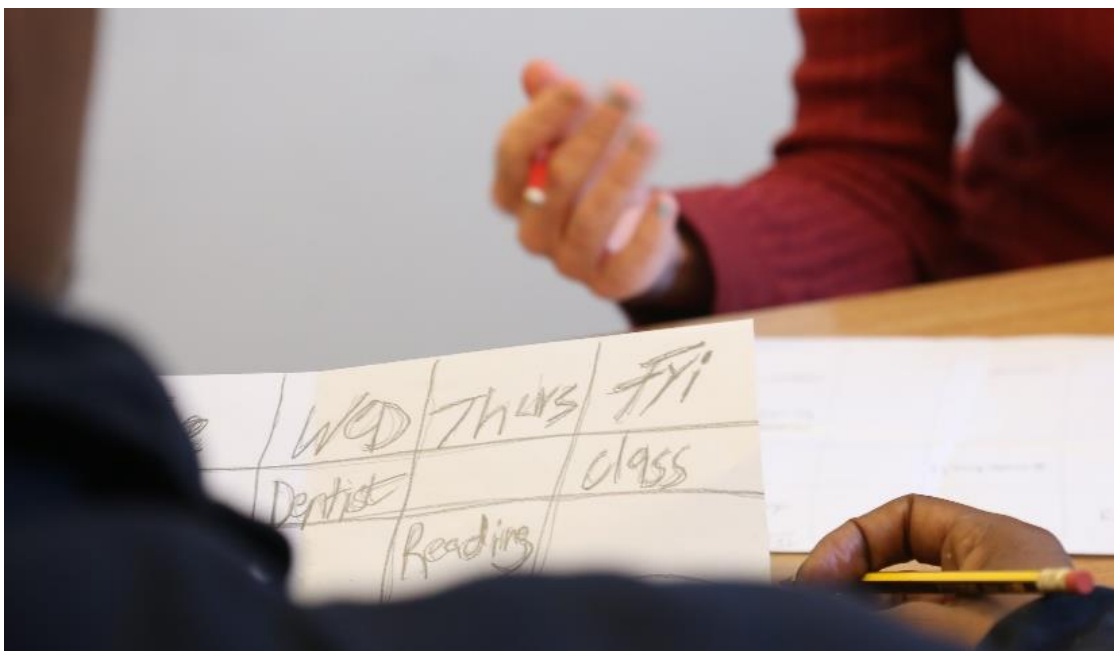
We have developed a unique assessment system, which identifies a learner's language level. Assessment appointments are offered daily as part of our General Advice system. There is a new intake of students every 12 weeks.

**37%** of tutors are fully qualified to teach ESOL/EFL

**26%** of tutors are currently completing TESOL qualifications

We offer a range of classes from Pre- Entry Level, to Level 1. These run daily from Monday to Saturday. Classes are varied and the timetables are reviewed each quarter. Our ESOL sessions have included General English, Basic Literacy, Women's groups, Conversation & Discussion, Reading & Writing Booster, Youth ESOL, Anti-Destitution sessions, Nottingham Orientation, Summer Short Course and Summer Short Course booster sessions.

We also deliver ESOL as part of the [Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Project Scheme](#) which follows a course that has been approved by the Home Office. We also support [Opportunity & Change](#), [Employability](#) and [Children & Family](#) projects by providing embedded ESOL workshops. We are fortunate to have a pool of diverse, experienced and committed ESOL Tutors and Classroom Support Assistants. Training for tutors includes an Introduction to TEFL, Working with Asylum Seekers and Refugees and Assessing ESOL Learners. We also support tutors to attend a bi-annual ESOL conference.



Extract From **“To Learn and Love English”** by AN – IELTS Level Student

*“One of the interesting parts of the Refugee Forum is the Department of English, which I have been attending since November 2016. They are lovely and welcoming people. When I asked for English courses, they guided me to a desk to meet one of the volunteer teachers to assess my level to put me through the right course. It was very interesting that they considered all my circumstances. For example, when I finished the assessment Jean, the assessor, referred me to the head of the English Department, Teresa. She is a great person and very helpful for people with their special circumstances. NNRF arranged a short term individual tutor to improve my English skills which was very helpful. Teresa then arranged another individual course with Paddy to focus on my writing skills and to prepare myself for the final writing exams. Paddy is one of the greatest and experienced teachers I have seen ever. She uses different ways to teach a subject and it is very interesting for me that she can find some weaknesses in my English skills, which I hadn’t realised before. Like many of students at the IELTS class, studying at university is my passion. So, I am trying hard to develop my English skills and I hope one day I will pass the IELTS exam”.*



*“My experience in the Refugee Forum is I have been here since September 2016. I have some English because I studied in my country as an engineer but my studying was in Arabic. My caseworker told me there are lessons in the Forum to support English. I was enthusiastic to learn English especially my pronunciation. I have learned a lot of skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. I feel more confidence to start college. I have started course with lovely teacher. She is amazing tutor and her explain is clearly and she can enter any idea to your mind easily. Thank you for give us this opportunity. It opens a new way to enter university. I hope I can arrive to my dream”.* – RA, an Entry 3 Level student



## GENERAL ADVICE

We offer advice, practical assistance and friendship to all refugees and asylum seekers regardless of race, religion or political opinion. The drop-in advice sessions take place on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Tickets are given out from 8.30 in the morning, and clients are seen from 9.30 onwards. This occurs on a first come, first served basis.

The General Advice service provides advice, information and assistance on a wide range of issues. These include; destitution, housing, debt, welfare benefits, health, legal and asylum support.

The objective is to provide basic support and assistance to service users, resolve queries, signpost to external services, refer to specialist in-house projects and partner agencies, as well as liaise with various agencies and organisations on behalf of the service users.

The advice sessions act as the main point of contact for new and existing service users, and also offer a way of screening those who are eligible to access the Forum's services.

### Case study

On Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March we saw 35 clients, of whom 40% were asylum seekers. Our volunteers helped them with a wide range of issues, including: referring to ItM for help with registering with a GP and dentist; cancelling an NHS penalty charge; resolving a problem with an ASPEN card; making an enquiry about an asylum support application; contacting a client's solicitor for an update on their case; enabling access to NNRF ESOL courses and college classes; arranging travel to a Home Office interview; providing food bank vouchers; contacting Migrant Help about a lost ARC card; and referring to the Legal Project for advice about voluntary return. The remaining 60% of clients were refugees, and our help included: resolving queries relating to JSA, ESA, Income Support and Housing Benefit; providing housing advice for a client with an eviction notice; referring to the Arches and the NNRF Grants team



for items for a new house; referring to the Legal project for help with applying for Travel Documents; providing advice in relation to water and electricity bills; and referring to a client's solicitor for help with a missing BRP. Overall, a very typical day in general advice!

**1,864** service users seen in the year, an average of 31 every drop-in advice day

## INTERPRETING

Good, professional interpreting services are at the heart of all we do at the NNRF. For this reason, we have trained up our own excellent team of interpreters who work with our asylum seekers and refugees in their appointments as necessary.



### Case Study

Farzan came to the UK in December 2016 after it became too difficult to live as an atheist in Iran. After gaining status in September 2017 he immediately started to volunteer on reception at NNRF before taking part in our introduction to community interpreting course. After volunteering for 6 months, Farzan began to take on paid appointments for us. After gaining a place at Nottingham Trent University, he now interprets for us in his spare time.

Farzan said *“NNRF gives Refugees the feeling that someone has their back. Someone that gives them their voice. Interpreting for Voices in Refuge gives me confidence to know that I’m useful. I like being able to do something important and to help others. The clients need to be heard and professional interpreters are the only way for them to speak as they want to.”*

The NNRF Interpreting Project is now a separate organisation called “Voices in Refuge”. They still offer the same service as they used to when they operated under the banner of NNRF.

Their website address is: [www.voicesinrefuge.com](http://www.voicesinrefuge.com)

## INTO THE MAINSTREAM (ItM)

Asylum seekers can face a number of difficulties in accessing mainstream healthcare services. Our project 'Into the Mainstream' supports refugees, and asylum seekers to access NHS health services. We also refer people to other services offered by both us and other relevant organisations including advice on housing, benefits, legal assistance and anti-destitution.

- We ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are able to exercise their rights to NHS services, and are shown respect for their privacy, dignity, and religious and cultural beliefs
- We document the health needs of asylum seekers and refugees
- We identify and address barriers to health services
- We use data collected to find solutions and improve the health situation of asylum seekers and refugees.

### Case Study

For several years I have been gaining insight into the difficulties that asylum seekers and refugees face in accessing mainstream health services in the UK. Through volunteering for ITM and whilst caring for patients on an Infectious Diseases ward in Nottingham, I have seen first-hand the trauma these difficulties can inflict on the sick and vulnerable.



Despite being fully entitled to healthcare, many refugees and asylum seekers find it almost impossible to access health services without significant support from projects like ITM. Fear, discrimination, lack of understanding, paying charges and being wrongly turned away by healthcare staff are just a few examples of barriers that this group face in accessing our health care system. I have seen people struggling to overcome these barriers and it is not an easy thing to observe. ITM breaks down these barriers and helps people to navigate their way through our complex health services in order to get the treatment they need.

ITM works tirelessly to ensure asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham are able to access vital healthcare services. From helping an individual to register with a GP to challenging the recent changes to migrant health policy, ITM supports people in countless different ways. Such a vital project must continue to offer the help and support that people so sorely need, and it must continue to grow, particularly as the number of refugees and asylum seekers continues to rise.

ITM has taught me a lot, the project manager has a wealth of knowledge and expertise some of which she has shared with me. I have now moved to Bristol but I will use this knowledge I have gained over the last few years to further promote awareness and educate healthcare professionals in the issues surrounding healthcare for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.

The ItM project contributed to research looking into access to healthcare for asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers. This was led by Imperial College London and Doctors of the World UK, for the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

## LEGAL

Our legal project aims to do work that is not covered by legal aid for asylum seekers, refugees and failed asylum seekers.

We help with application for travel documents and Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)/ settlement applications for refugees who have completed 5 years in the UK. In addition to this, we also support users with their application for British citizenship; Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR); and Refugee family reunions. We charge for some of our services.



**100+** destitute asylum seekers helped accessing external legal representation

**243** individuals were successful in their application for residency

**55** applications were made for family reunion, with **30** applications being successful to date

### Case study:

A client's appeal had been rejected and several solicitors had refused to assist or the ones that were willing to assist were asking for a hefty fee. We assisted the client who eventually achieved a positive outcome.

*"Caroline, I am writing this to say thank you, I really appreciate all you have done for me. You helped me at a time when I didn't have anyone to help me, when I was turned away, when all the doors were shut. I know you might say you were doing your job, but I believe you acted on the will of God. I pray that whatever you desire in life, God grant it to you and your family abundantly..."*

*"To Jonathan... Thanks for your effort. I appreciate for everything you did for us may God bless you with happiness..." – Service user*



**N.B.** The Legal Project will be closing at the end of December 2018. We would like to thank the staff, volunteers, donors and funders who have been involved in this project over the years.

## MONEY SORTED in D2N2

Money Sorted in D2N2 – a financial inclusion project helping people with money management and improving people’s financial well-being. It is delivered by several partner organisations and this project is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery, through the “Big Lottery Fund”.



### Case Study

YS joined the project when he was encountering issues with debt and understanding bills. As he had never been to school in Sudan he had significant Adult Literacy and Numeracy Issues. With assistance from Money Sorted in D2N2, we were able to pay for Arabic literacy lessons and we also found a Sudanese bilingual accountant volunteer to teach him basic numeracy.

In addition to this, as he is applying for family reunion we referred him to WEA Financial Capability Sessions. Here he learned about UK financial systems and how to navigate them. Topics included: Savings, Universal Credit, Banking, understanding debt, Credit score, etc. YS also attended the employability sessions at NNRF where he covered such topics as: Professional Image, UK Recruiting Processes, Job Search and Exploring Careers.

YS has now successfully gone on to find employment, is managing his finances well and is in the process of bringing his family here via family reunion.

*"Not knowing what I need to know in the new country has been difficult. This project has given the important knowledge on financials such as Banking, Bills and saving money which has help me"* - YAGOOB

*"These visits create opportunities to meet new people, socialise, improve confidence"* - SAMIA

*"This course enabled me access to the school building and see facilities and activities in school."* - SAMI

*"These visits have helped me to build my confidence and what we learnt in the classroom to put into practice"* - YAGOOB

**80 service users** have been supported with Personal Financial Resilience Action Plans

*"From these visits I feel more confidence now to work with my family, particularly children and how best to help them"* - YAHYA

*"Real opportunity to work with other people from different cultures and how we can work together to best use the services available in our neighbourhood"* - ASMA

We delivered training workshops which focused on raising awareness of the needs and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers amongst the Money Sorted D2N2 partner organisations from across the region. These were well received, and we will continue working with the project partners to help increase financial inclusivity amongst the refugee communities.

One of the plans from last year (2016-17) was to create a volunteer-led grants application team. This was successfully implemented and the team has raised funds for a range of needs including family reunion applications, household items, and education courses.

## OPPORTUNITY & CHANGE

Opportunity and Change is a support programme for people with multiple and complex needs. It is delivered by several partner organisations and this project is funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery, through the “Big Lottery Fund”. It aims to support people to overcome their complex needs and for a proportion of these people to find employment.



**18** of them have access to ESOL classes

**23** service users have been supported through this project

**7** service users who were in precarious accommodation have now been housed

### Case Studies

**Case Study 1:** A participant who had been suffering from poor mental health and wellbeing has been completely transformed by this process. They have attended sessions at Loudspeaker at Nottingham Contemporary and it has helped their confidence grow. They are now looking to start work and are undertaking activity to get into work, where before they were reliant upon welfare benefits.

**Case Study 2:** A participant who moved from a different city into unsuitable and expensive accommodation was at risk of eviction with their family. After intervention through Opportunity and Change this was prevented and the participant was able to claim the benefits they were entitled to.

## SPECIALIST ADVICE TEAM (SAT)

The Specialist Advice Team provides advice and assistance in accessing mainstream services. These include housing & accommodation; social care support; racial harassment support; domestic violence support; asylum accommodation; new refugee resettlement; support for families with no recourse to public funds & welfare rights and benefits amongst others.



**182** new refugees helped into resettlement

**226** service users with housing issues helped

**36** service users with education issues supported

### Case Study

Thanks to intervention by the SAT a service user with kidney failure was referred for assistance from adult social care and a care plan was put in place and she was given a carer to help with her every day needs. This took a lot of pressure off their children, who had been young carers for them whilst they were an asylum seeker. After further intervention the service user was also moved into the Support Group for Employment and Support Allowance, ensuring they did not need to attend the Job Centre as they were not well enough to do so.

A service user who had been granted Leave to Remain with the condition of No Recourse to Public Funds was assisted by the SAT to access social services support whilst they were waiting for a change of conditions, which prevented them from becoming destitute.

The SAT intervened in a case where a service user had been a victim of Domestic Violence to ensure them access to asylum support after they made a claim for asylum, as they were no longer able to stay in a refuge due to having No Recourse to Public Funds. When they were granted refugee status we liaised with WAIS and Housing Aid to ensure she was able to live in an area where she felt safe.

*“Thank you, you did everything, this letter came because of your hard work” – Service user*



## VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering at NNRF is a challenging and exciting opportunity. We are only able to deliver such a wide range and scope of services because of the invaluable contribution of our volunteers.



Up to a third of our volunteers come from a refugee or asylum seeking background themselves. Volunteering at NNRF enables them to maintain their existing skills and develop new ones. It increases their confidence, improves their communication skills and motivates them to keep active and engaged.

**Our volunteers embody diversity, enthusiasm, resourcefulness, professionalism and compassion.**

*"It's rewarding to be given an opportunity to show compassion and care to our clients, and be able to practically respond to what we've seen in the news over the last few years (all too easy to feel helpless). I've also enjoyed volunteering with a diverse group of people and feel part of the big team at NNRF. I feel more confident in speaking about the UK Asylum System to my own friends and therefore in a better position to help educate and influence opinions." - Volunteer (extract from Impact of Volunteering at NNRF Report, March 2018)*

### Case Study

Volunteering at NNRF is a challenging but rewarding journey: Volunteer #1 has been volunteering in Reception for a number of months during which time he developed confidence and communication skills. He has been praised by staff and clients alike, and identified as an ideal candidate for the Interpreting course – he speaks one of the most used languages and has shown a commitment to the organisation. He has now successfully completed his training as an interpreter and is starting to volunteer in both roles simultaneously.



*"I hugely benefit from working with volunteers who have been through the asylum process because their experience helps me to see and understand the impact of the whole system on the individual as a human being, and thus encourages my practice." – NNRF Staff (extract from Impact of Volunteering at NNRF Report, March 2018)*

## VULNERABLE PERSONS' RESETTLEMENT

Our Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme supports newly arrived refugee families into accommodation. To support our new arrivals in integrating effectively into the community, we provide in-house ESOL classes conducted by a qualified tutor Martin Biddle for our Nottingham & Newark service users. We also ensure that all service users are registered with the GP within the first two weeks of arriving in Nottingham. We apply for all the benefits they require in the first week of arriving, and an appointment with Jobcentre Plus is booked to help them secure a job. In addition to that, we also arrange a bank account appointment in the first week of arrival.

### Case Study



Ruba arrived in the UK in 2016 from Syria as refugee with her family.

*“Back home I was Arabic and maths teacher, I studied as an engineering assistant, when I came to the UK I had a little bit of English. I was so happy to come to the UK, however I felt so scared and could not integrate with the local community. I have started Entry 2 ESOL in college, I have a passed to Entry 3, I am now in level 1.*

*I have done theory test and passed it, I am now doing practicals. I am proud to be the first Syrian woman under the VPR scheme to do this in Nottingham and have been a role model for others. I have started IELTS course with refugee forum, I want to study at university business*

*or social care. I am hoping to find work in administration. I am part of the Syrian Society, responsible for event. I was volunteering with Vine Community as admin worker. I am also taking care of my disabled husband and four children by looking after them. I love Nottingham because of the rules and laws, streets, roads, organised, people, lifestyles. I have friends from different nationalities form neighbours/ community, college.*

*My hobbies are reading, playing tennis, walking, picnic, rowing. My dreams are my children’s future, university, I want to have a big nice house and to look for a good job.*

*NNRF has been a big support to our inclusion in society and helped us settle in well to restart our lives again, they helped me to arrive and support us to settle in the UK and integrate with the local communities.*

*I want to thank NNRF for their ongoing support and care for all refugees and asylum seekers, and being a lifeline for us”.*

## WELFARE BENEFITS & DEBT

The Welfare Benefits project supports refugees who may be entitled to mainstream benefits. Many of these service users are very keen to become independent and come off benefits as soon as possible. Despite this, a variety of barriers limit them. This includes language barriers, de-skilling as a result of years in the asylum process and a lack of specialist advice and support services which could enable them to prepare for employment.

The project offers advice and support regarding:

- Information and advice about benefits
- Assessing eligibility for accessing benefits
- Assistance to apply for benefits e.g. Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Child Benefits, Working Tax Credits, Disability Living Allowance and Housing Benefit
- Applying for Crisis Loans
- Transition into work
- Benefits problems and appeals
- Debt problems

### Case Studies

**Case Study 1:** A service user who was facing eviction due to an issue with housing benefit was permitted an out of time appeal by the Tribunal after intervention from the project worker. As a result of the appeal being allowed by the Tribunal, their housing benefit was back paid directly to their landlord and they were able to remain in their tenancy.

**Case Study 2:** A service user who had been placed in the 'Work Related Activity Group' for Employment and Support Allowance was subsequently moved into the 'Support Group' after intervention by the project worker, which meant that they received back payments of their benefits and will not have to be reassessed for 3 years.

**Case Study 3:** A service user who had a large overpayment to HMRC engaged with the project and the worker was able to reduce this overpayment by 75%.

**184 clients  
served, 246  
new cases**

Unfortunately, the funding for this project ended in June 2018.

With the support of and in partnership with St Ann's Advice Centre, we have been able to continue this strand of work for our service users on a limited scale.

## YOUTH

Our work with young people includes those living with families seeking asylum, separated young people in the care of the local authority (UASCs), and refugee young people.

Navigating a complex asylum system and adapting to life in the UK creates specific challenges for young people seeking refuge. Much research has documented the anxiety felt by children and young people during the asylum process. In particular, the feelings of being in limbo and unable to plan for



their future. While children and young people are often remarkably courageous and resilient in the face of adversity, the treatment they receive once in the UK often has a negative effect on their emotional well-being.

Young people worked on creating illuminated birds with positive messages of migration. These were displayed in Nottingham during night light celebrations.

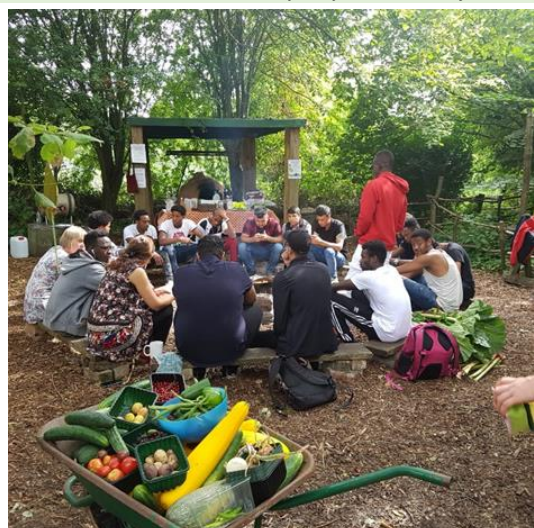
A young person.....

*"When I first came to Nottingham I did not have any friends or community. The youth project has helped me to make friends. I feel happy when at the youth project. If I am feeling sad I can talk to people and they give me advice and help me. I feel less stressed when I talk to people at the youth project"* - **Ali, aged 16, from Sudan**

*"Working with the young refugees is a joy. I find their resilience in the face of adversity inspirational. They are welcoming, funny, kind and appreciative. I hope the service can continue and the young people achieve their dreams in this country"* - **Helen, Youth Project Volunteer**

**11** age disputed cases, **7** with a successful outcome

**20** young people have participated in our outreach programme with Nottingham Trent University's widening participation team, and visited all 3 campuses.



NNRF youth enjoying an afternoon at St Anns' allotments, harvesting fruit, making pizza and enjoying the natural environment.

**An NHS CAMHS worker...**



*"I would just like to thank you and all your team for all your hard work with this vulnerable group of traumatised young people... What I have found is that the symptoms this group of young people present with are chronically stressed and alert, they trust no one and are attached to no*

*one. They are lonely and afraid to seek comfort, unable to sooth themselves and on top of all of this is the language and cultural barriers. The Refugee forums youth project has provided stability, given a place where this group of young people voice can be heard and enabled them to start to learn to live and feel safe again and develop relationships in a safe and therapeutic environment.*

*Your team provides what is missing in their lives which enables them to start to access treatment for their traumatic experiences. Without your help and continued support I know that treatment would not be as successful and my fear from professional experience is that this group of young people*

*would never have the opportunity to access treatment and become the hidden vulnerable population who go on to develop significant mental health problems in later years". (Sandy Redgate, Clinical Nurse Specialist, CAMHS)*



Youth Sports Day at Forest Field.

**30** young people have experienced the theatre for the first time, watching a range of shows from 'Black Beauty', 'Jungle Book', 'Cinderella' and 'Dear Home Office'.

**8** young people attended a 6 week course on 'Understanding emotional health and wellbeing' run jointly by the NNRF project worker and CAMHS worker.

**70** young people attend the youth club and access trips and activities. **35** young people engaging each week at youth club

*"Volunteering with these young people has been so inspirational. The way they welcome you, the way they appreciate everything you do for them and the constant smile on their faces makes it all worth it. As a teacher, I don't have the time I wished I have to join them more often but I make sure I tell my students about what we do in the group and this also has an impact on them" - Nazareth, Youth Project Volunteer*



## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Our membership is made up of our staff, volunteers, and regular donors. They are also our supporters and people who have contributed significantly whether monetary or otherwise to the work that we do.

One of the key advantages of being a member of NNRF is that you get to vote for the board members and invited to our Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Although following the change of bank accounts in August 2017, we lost some of our long-standing donors, we are grateful for each and every one of our members for their support and efforts.



**100+**  
Paying  
Members

**47**  
Staff  
members

**200**  
Volunteer  
members

*\* The above figures are not exclusive as some people fall into more than one category.*

## PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS



The British Red Cross and NNRF continue to work in partnership to offer support and community to vulnerable migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham. We are able to collaborate effectively as we have a shared vision to ensure that those who have experienced trauma and face destitution are not alone. As NNRF focuses on asylum seekers and refugees and the British Red Cross focuses on vulnerable migrants, we are both able to offer specific and holistic support to a greater number of people.

NNRF offers an impressive range of services and community groups to their service users. This is possible due to the dedication and compassion of their staff and volunteers who are committed to helping asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham.

As we continue to work together and face the significant challenges within this sector, our hope is to sustain and build on the important work we are doing. As the need for the services we offer increases, so too does the resilience and dedication of our staff and volunteers. - **Meg Willis, Service Manager**



Host Nottingham was set up in 2011 to coordinate and support those wishing to host destitute asylum seekers in Nottingham in their own homes for periods of a few days to three months. We provide all hosts with a Handbook to give support and guidance about hosting and ensure that new hosts have the opportunity to meet present hosts to discuss how the scheme works and share any questions or queries. We provide Host and Guest agreements and a framework of support for hosts so that they have a clear structure within which to host. Our Project Coordinator works in the office at least one day a week and is available to answer queries, take referrals and provide support for Hosts at other times. We work very closely with the Forum's Anti-Destitution Coordinator and General Advisers.

We have been able to host in excess of a hundred guests and have had more than fifty amazing hosts. Our hosts offer a room in their home for a period of a few days to three months and sometimes more. Over the last couple of years, we have also hosted newly recognised Refugees who have been granted Leave to Remain, but have had to wait many weeks for their National Insurance Number and/or Biometric Residence Permit, without which they are not able to apply for housing or benefits. There is an increasing need for accommodation for both asylum seekers and newly recognised refugees. Often the referral may come at very short notice, but we are deeply grateful to have hosts who offer a welcome, friendship, support and so much more to their guests. We have also hosted some young men who have come through Calais to join their families, but for whom inadequate or inappropriate accommodation has been made available. We need some hosts who are just able to host in an emergency or for a week while other hosts go on holiday.

In addition we have a Clothes Bank which enables our guests as well as any asylum seekers or refugees attending advice sessions at the Refugee Forum and also on Saturdays, to access clothing, shoes and



some bedding. We are very grateful to our volunteers who staff this and provide a welcome for the clients.

We would welcome anyone who would be interested in considering being a Host or volunteering with the Clothes Bank or supporting our guests in different ways. Please contact: [hostnottingham@gmail.com](mailto:hostnottingham@gmail.com) or phone 07963 740 175. We are grateful to NNRF, one of the original Steering Group for Host, for allowing us to have office space in the Sycamore Centre. – **Jane Henson, Chair**

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### **Cycle training at the Refugee Forum**

Refugee Forum clients took part in cycle training sessions delivered by Nottingham-based organisation

RideWise, which is part of the charity, The Sustainable Travel Collective, over the last year. The training helped clients in a number of ways: teaching those clients – often women - who had never had the chance to learn to ride for the first time; teaching basic cycle skills in an off-road environment; and on-road skills and knowledge of the Highway Code.

Once clients had completed on-road training they had the opportunity to loan a bicycle from RideWise for a period of three months. Having a bike can provide a very important and free form of transport for clients, allowing them to travel from home to appointments and social events around the city. Fourteen clients were able to borrow bikes over the year. RideWise was also pleased to be able to give three clients bikes to keep. These had been donated by a private individual for use by refugees and asylum seekers.

A small number of clients were referred by RideWise to the Nottingham Gets 2 Work project, an EU-funded project which helped unemployed young people with transport to new work and training opportunities. Through the project a further three clients received one-to-one training and bicycles which they were able to keep permanently.

Connections to the wider Nottingham community were also developed: a small number of members of the wider community came to the sessions, which provided integration opportunities both for them and for asylum seekers and refugees. Several clients from the Rainbow Refugee Project based in Bobber's Mill also attended.

Over the year a total of 59 asylum seekers and refugees received training. Of these 4 learnt to ride for the first time, 36 learnt off-road cycling skills (passing national 'Bikeability Level 1' standard), and 16 learnt key skills for cycling on quiet roads (passing national 'Bikeability Level 2' standard). – **Michael Howard**

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The NNRF/BEGIN partnership is long-standing, reciprocal and ‘real’ at many levels – from collaborative work to help individual people, through to joint funding bids and challenges of policy that may exclude people from ESOL.

In 2017-18 NNRF referred up to 368 asylum seekers and refugees to BEGIN’s centralised ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) advice and placement service, 271 of them recently arrived in Nottingham. A total of 663 interactions between BEGIN & NNRF staff– phone calls, emails, visits, letters – evidence the daily work to address people’s complex barriers to ESOL – whether eligibility and/or fee remission requirements, and/or language levels, and/or childcare, and/or travel support needs. BEGIN may start people off in informal & more accessible conversation or community groups, but support is ongoing until they access formal ESOL with long-term accreditation and progression routes.

Additionally, NNRF contributes to BEGIN’s impartial referral services from its City Council Communities of Interest (Col) funding. Following last year’s “ESOL Potential Nottingham” research, this funding has also helped BEGIN to start an “ESOL Network” for teachers, managers and referrers. We are already seeing better connectivity and co-ordination, eg, 2 new informal conversation groups; earlier college enrolment for school leavers and young people; a consultation visit from 2 central government departments to conversation groups; circulation of free teaching materials; awareness-raising of language requirements for each level of College ESOL courses...

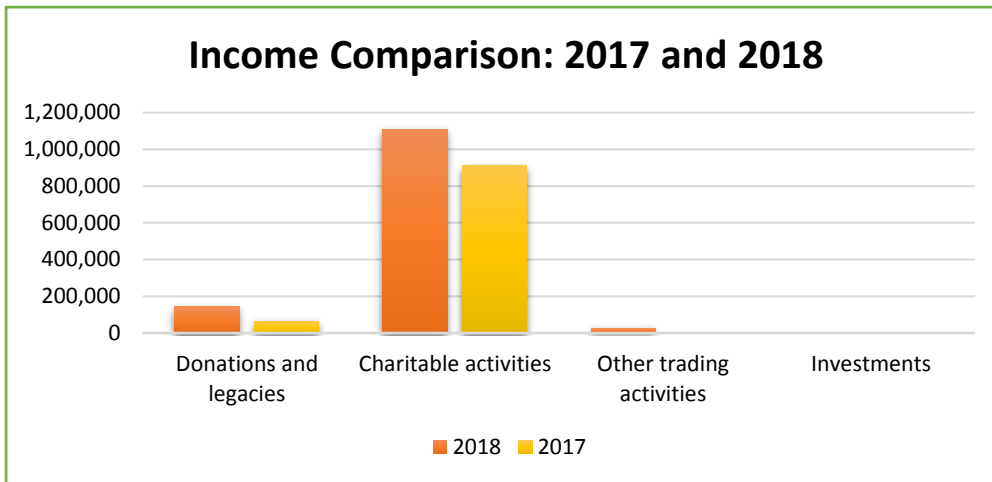
NNRF is pivotal to BEGIN reaching many people with language needs. We would like to thank all its staff and volunteers for their help and look forward to much more joint work in the future. – **Fiona Vale, Service Manager**

## FINANCIAL REVIEW 2017-18

Our financial year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March. For the first time, we have exceeded the £1m turnover mark in 2017-18 period due to growth of current projects and introduction of new ones e.g. Employability project.

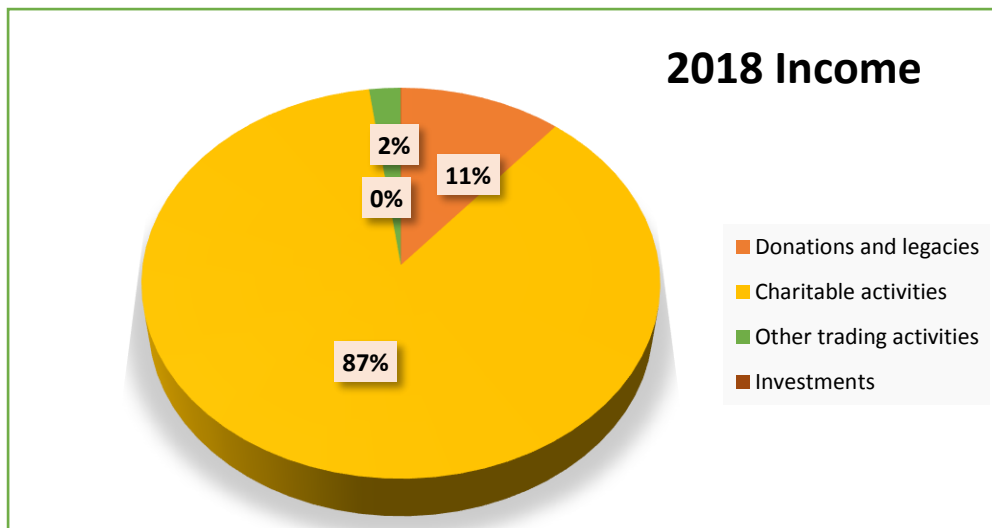
The charity ended the year with a surplus of £12,776 (2017: £48,588 deficit) and total funds carried forward of £128,192 (2017: £115,416). Group year-end surplus amounted to £20,454 (2017: £48,588 deficit) with total group funds carried forward of £135,870 (2017: £115,416).

We were able to increase donation & legacy income by 45% for this year (£142,017) in comparison to the previous year (£63,302). This was due to lump sum donations received from a number of donors (including organisations such as AB Charitable Trust) and gift aid claim repayments.



Trading activities income has also seen a significant increase due to the provision of our interpreting services to external organisations. Voices in Refuge CIC is set up as an associated company of NNRF that provides interpreting services to external organisations beyond the scope of the NNRF constitution. Profits from Voices in Refuge will go towards the charitable work of NNRF.

We are grateful to all of our donors, supporters, staff and volunteers who have all been fantastic in getting us where we are. Moving forward, the organisation is also continuously improving the financial management to provide more clarity and ensure better mid-long term strategic planning.



## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES 2017-18

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
	funds	funds	2018	2017
	£	£	£	£
<u>Income from:</u>				
Donations and legacies	142,017	-	142,017	63,302
Charitable activities	177,437	930,564	1,108,001	911,429
Other trading activities	27,235	-	27,235	684
Investments	283	-	283	131
<b>Total income</b>	<b>346,972</b>	<b>930,564</b>	<b>1,277,536</b>	<b>975,546</b>
<u>Expenditure on:</u>				
Charitable activities	267,905	984,249	1,252,154	1,024,134
Other trading activities	3,127	-	3,127	
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>271,032</b>	<b>984,249</b>	<b>1,255,281</b>	<b>(48,588)</b>
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers	75,940	(53,685)	22,255	(48,588)
Gross transfers between funds	(16,666)	16,666	-	-
Tax on activities	(1,801)	-	(1,801)	
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>57,473</b>	<b>(37,019)</b>	<b>20,454</b>	<b>(48,588)</b>
Fund balances at 1 April 2017	74,164	41,252	115,416	164,004
<b>Fund balances at 31 March 2018</b>	<b>131,637</b>	<b>4,233</b>	<b>135,870</b>	<b>115,416</b>

**CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET 2017-18**

		<b>2018</b>		<b>2017</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Fixed assets</b>				
Tangible assets		8,871		6,741
<b>Current assets</b>				
Debtors	68,826		10,785	
Cash at bank and in hand	195,284		220,594	
	264,110		231,379	
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<b>(137,111)</b>		<b>(122,704)</b>	
Net current assets		126,999		108,675
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		<b>135,870</b>		<b>115,416</b>
<b>Income funds</b>				
Restricted funds		4,233		41,252
<u>Unrestricted funds</u>	-			
Designated funds	50,577		-	
General unrestricted funds	81,060		74,164	
		131,637		74,164
		<b>135,870</b>		<b>115,416</b>

## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW 2017-18

		2018		2017
	£	£	£	£
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>				
Cash (absorbed by)/generated from operations		(17,919)		61,469
Income taxes paid		(1,801)		
<b>Net cash (outflow)/inflow from operating activities</b>		<b>(19,720)</b>		<b>61,469</b>
<b>Investing activities</b>				
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(5,873)		(4,284)	
Interest received	283		131	
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>		<b>(5,590)</b>		<b>(4,153)</b>
<b>Net cash used in financing activities</b>		<b>-</b>		<b>-</b>
<b>Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents</b>		<b>(25,310)</b>		<b>57,316</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year</b>		<b>220,594</b>		<b>163,278</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of year</b>		<b>195,284</b>		<b>220,594</b>

## **VOLUNTEERING**

NNRF relies heavily on our volunteers in all areas. You may have specialist skills you are willing to help us with, from legal qualifications through to teaching, gardening and cooking. You may speak one of the languages of our asylum seekers as well as English and be able to train as one of our interpreters. There are many ways in which you can support the work of NNRF and build your own skill set while you do so.

We appreciate any time you have, whether it's a couple of hours to help at an event, or a regular commitment to working with one of our projects.

If this is something that interests you, please send an email to [volunteer@nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk)

## **DONATIONS**

Donations are one of our most crucial income sources which allow us to continue delivering the services we offer, specifically our destitution work. If you'd like to make a one-off or regular donation, please visit our website (donation page) for details. We also take food donations for our community café and anti-destitution projects.

[www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk](http://www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk)

## **STAY IN TOUCH**

Thank you for your interest in the work of NNRF. We would love to stay in touch with you by sending you our monthly newsletter. Please visit our website to sign up:

[www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk](http://www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk)

**NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE REFUGEE FORUM**  
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**Telephone:** 0115 960 1230  
**Email:** [info@nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk](mailto:info@nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk)  
**Website:** [www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk](http://www.nottsrefugeeforum.org.uk)  
**Twitter:** NNRF1  
**Facebook:** nottsrefugeeforum

**Registered Charity No: 1121560. Company No: 05352679**

**This annual report has been produced with contributions from our staff, volunteers, trustees and partners.**

