



North of England
REFUGEE SERVICE

North of England Refugee Service Impact Report: 2016 – 2017



An independent charity supporting refugees to survive and thrive

Helping people seeking refuge to survive and thrive

For the last 27 years, the North of England Refugee Service has been the leading charity working for and supporting refugees in the North East of England.

What continues to mark us out is the extent to which refugees form a part of NERS. Service users are involved at all levels of the organisation; 40% of our board, 55% of our staff and over 60% of our volunteers have experience of being a refugee. The result is a vivid, multi-cultural, secular organisation, informed by the experiences of the communities we serve.

Our work is focussed on four main areas; providing asylum advice, facilitating integration, housing and interpreting and translation. We deliver these across the North East from our three offices in Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough and via outreach and occasional projects.

Our aim is to accompany and support refugees on their journey, from arrival to establishment in their new community.

Most of our work is ultimately aimed at preventing destitution. We provide essential face-to-face advice and support to asylum seeking families and individuals as they try to navigate the complex asylum system.

Our holistic integration service supports people granted leave to remain in the UK. We provide guidance on housing, access to benefits, training, education, employment and language. For some clients, the option of returning to their home country may be appropriate in which case we assist people to return to their country of origin with dignity.



Offering long-term support

Our supported housing service provides safe and secure homes for refugees who are vulnerable and in need of further assistance. The service provides short-term housing and appropriate individualised support for up to two years and until clients can move on from supported housing to independent living.

If they want to, we train and employ refugees and other migrants as sessional interpreters to provide interpreting and translation services. We provide these services for NERS clients as well as other organisations such as local authorities, the NHS and local solicitors. We employ over 100 sessional interpreters covering more than 60 different languages and dialects. To use our interpreting services please contact 0191 245 7303.

Through our Health Access Refugee Project (HARP) we train volunteers to support newly arriving asylum

seekers and refugees to be able to make better use of health services and to work with health service staff to help them to understand the specific needs of new arrivals.

We use the evidence gathered from our client to also work regionally and nationally to influence and advocate on matters of policy. We usually do this in partnership with other organisations; nationally with our key partner, the Refugee Council, but also with other agencies such as Refugee Action, Welsh and Scottish Refugee Councils.

We are also members of the National Asylum Stakeholders Forum and the Asylum Support Forum. Locally we work with partner agencies such as the Red Cross and the Regional Refugee Forum and work through structures and processes such as the Regional Migration Partnership, hosted by Middlesbrough Council.



Accompanying refugees through their journey: Emilie's story

Having arrived in a strange country and unable to speak English, many refugees arriving in the UK are hidden in society – not willingly, but because they have no one to show them the most basic things.

Just two days before Christmas, we received a call from a local policeman who was concerned about an asylum seeker living nearby. Her name was Emilie*, and she only spoke French.

We found the family in dire straits: they had no food, and no winter clothing. Emilie was feeling frightened and disorientated. She had no idea where the shops were, or how to get there.

We took Emilie to the nearest supermarket and charity shop. We gave her a map and explained to her where important services are. Then, we registered Emilie with a GP and her children in school.

“ We found the family in dire straits: they had no food, and no winter clothing ”

A few months later Emilie came to volunteer with us, giving her the chance to meet new friends, gain valuable work experience and more importantly, to restore a sense of self-worth.

Emilie and her children were granted asylum. We helped them to find a safe place to live, and assisted Emilie in applying for benefits. Like many refugees, Emilie had a successful career before her flight to the UK. She had been a business manager, and wanted to gain further qualifications. With our help, Emilie studied English, Computing and Accountancy. She then went on to complete a business degree course at Northumbria University.

“ Like many refugees, Emilie had a successful career before her flight to the UK ”

Currently, Emilie is in fulltime employment and her children are doing well in school. Emilie has established the first African Women's support group in North Tyneside, which provides social and emotional encouragement to asylum seeking women.

In what can be the most challenging and confusing time of people's lives, NERS helps to give people like Emilie a hand in to a better and stronger future.

*Emilie's name has been changed to protect her identity.



Our work in numbers

NERS has 12 paid staff. Over the course of the year,

4,682 people

were assisted through our Asylum Support work. **50 volunteers and over 100 interpreters** worked with us throughout the year to provide that support, which included writing letters to the Home Office on behalf of refugees, to helping with benefits application or finding access to educational courses.



344 people

took part in our **Health Access Refugee Project (HARP)**, supported by volunteers all of whom were asylum seekers themselves.



We have supported **44 migrants** who are health professionals into health-related jobs here in the UK.

Our **integration service**, which is run by **1 member of staff and 3 volunteers**, has helped

1,407 clients



NERS has **20 units**

which provide short term accommodation for homeless refugees. Over the year, **15 clients** were successfully supported to move onto their own independent housing, **7** of whom have gained employment.

Adam's story

Adam fled his native country of Somalia when the fighting put him in danger. His father had already been killed, and after a long journey, he decided to try to secure refuge in England.

"I was put in a one bedroom flat. I knew no one. I knew nothing – not where the shops were, the library was, how you're supposed to get around town, where to get food... nothing. I was very distressed. I had no one to talk to.

In that time, NERS helped me with anything. Anything I had a question about, I could ask. They found me a solicitor, they found me a doctor.

I waited three years to get a final answer on my asylum application. It was so unsettling, I was very depressed. I was so impressed with NERS that I wanted to do



what they do, and help people like me. So, in 2014, I asked if I could volunteer with NERS, and it's great. After being granted asylum I still volunteer here.

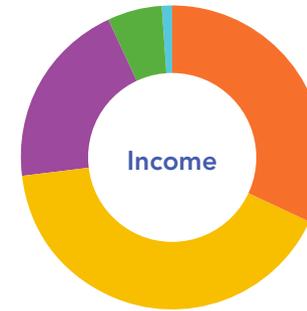
When people come in here, they are all unhappy, distressed, depressed. By the time they leave, when you've helped them, they are happier.

We help clients with everything. We know who to contact when they have a problem. It's a big problem for them, but often it's straightforward for us to solve with a phone call, or by reading a letter for them. Or they need food, and we help them to get it. Most people can't speak English, but we can help them. I can't imagine what it would be like for asylum seekers if NERS wasn't here. It would be very difficult. As it is, I'm proud when people walk out of here happier.

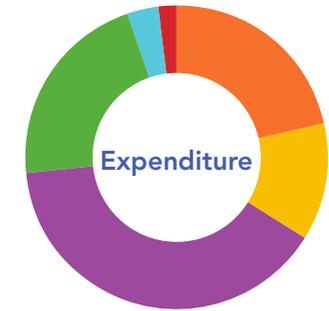
I missed out on a lot, because of the war. I want to make a living, to try to catch up with the things I lost out on. To just go home at the end of the day. To have a peaceful life."



Financials



	£'000
Grants	174
Contracts	225
Trading	109
Donations	32
Other	5
Total	544



	£'000
Asylum Support Services	113
Integration Service	64
Supported Housing	205
Interpreting Service	111
Advocacy	17
Governance	10
Total	520

Thank you for supporting refugees through NERS

Our work would not be possible without the loyal and ongoing support of our volunteers. On behalf of the staff at NERS, we would like to extend sincere thanks to the 50 volunteers who served with us throughout the year.

In addition to our service volunteers, we would also like to thank our Board of Trustees for their time and guidance.

NERS is proud to have the support of Comic Relief, The Henry Smith Charity, The Tudor Trust, Lloyds Bank Foundation, A B Charitable Trust and the various small trusts and individual donors all of whom have provided financial support throughout the year.



The North of England Refugee Service is a charity working to support people seeking refuge in the UK.

We make sure people who need help are equipped with the skills and knowledge to go through our asylum process and settle into life here successfully. Whether it's contacting the Home Office on their behalf, finding them a doctor, a solicitor, or simply showing them where the nearest shops are, we support people on every step of their journey. We speak out on their behalf, defending their rights and making sure they are treated fairly.

Our clients are people seeking a safe place to live, usually because they are fleeing violence or being punished because of their race, religion, or political viewpoints.

Donations

A gift from you today will help to save people seeking refuge from destitution, equipping them to survive and thrive.

You can support our work by donating your money or time.

To donate, log on to www.refugee.org.uk and click on Donate.

You can also sign up to our e-newsletter there.

Volunteer

NERS only exists because of our volunteers – if you would like to join the team, please email info@refugee.org.uk

Contact

Follow us on Twitter: twitter.com/NERSRefugee

Facebook: www.facebook.com/NERRefugeeService

2 Friars Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4XA

Tel: 0191 245 7301 **Fax:** 0191 222 0985

Interpreting services: 0191 245 7303

External Accreditation across our whole advice provision

During 2016 we were able to maintain our AQS quality standard for a further 2 years, we are the only Refugee Charity in the region to hold this external Advice Quality Standard (AQS), which is a nationally recognised quality mark for organisations providing free, independent advice to members of the public. We now hold this in the following categories: Housing, Asylum seekers and Refugees, Immigration and Welfare Benefits.

The North of England Refugee Service is a Registered Charity No.1091200, Company Limited by Guarantee No.3643622



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