



Restore

a project of Birmingham Churches Together
supporting refugees and
people seeking sanctuary from persecution

Annual Report 2015



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Charity Number 243931

Report of the Chair of the Management Committee

A lot has happened in the past 12 months. Autumn saw the beginning of the largest movement of asylum seekers within Europe since the end of the Second World War. The reaction of different governments could not be starker: in 2015 Germany registered 1,100,000 asylum seekers (428,500 from Syria); the UK registered 32,000 (2,609 from Syria).

Last September the plight of millions of ordinary people driven from their homes and families by the terrors of evil war crystallised in the haunting, horrifying pictures of the Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi washed up on a Turkish beach like a rag doll. Events triggered an outpouring of grief and outrage, an upsurge in compassion for asylum seekers across Europe, not least in the UK.

Yet as I write, solidarity with asylum seekers and refugees is again being drowned out by prejudice and misinformation, with strident calls for our country to reduce even further its begrudging, minimalist policies. The referendum on EU membership now seems to have become a proxy for many of these arguments, polarising public opinion in an alarming manner. Once again we see asylum seekers and refugees being portrayed as unwelcome economic migrants, with the ever-bolder rhetoric of thinly disguised xenophobia and racism being given the widest exposure by the mainstream media.

Restore has responded magnificently to this ever-changing, complex and controversial crisis. We have seen a very welcome rise in volunteers (itself increasing the need for training courses); at the same time the number of referrals to Restore has grown; and the tensions generated by the political situation have aggravated the vulnerability felt by asylum seekers and refugees, making the work of welcoming, reassuring and helping the strangers in our midst that much more difficult. That is why Restore has taken on two new support workers this year – made possible by generous, one-off grants that will only finance increased staff for one year. The challenge now is to try and raise more money so that we retain enough staff for the continuing task. Our finances, as always, are under pressure, but through generous individuals, charitable grants and careful stewardship we are managing to weather the storm. Yet the need for more funding is ever-present.

On behalf of all our clients and our volunteers I once again want to publicly thank our stalwart team of staff for their selfless hard work, the Management Committee for their unseen but vital efforts, and the Trustees of Birmingham Churches Together for their continuing support. Recent events have confirmed Restore's motivation – a Christian mission of mercy and compassion. On reaching safety in our country, asylum seekers and refugees find themselves in an ever more fragile and vulnerable position, and that is why Restore is needed more than ever.

Philip Rogerson,
June 2016

Report of the Project Coordinator

Restore, a project of Birmingham Churches Together, seeks to welcome, include and assist the integration of refugees and those seeking sanctuary from persecution. Restore works to achieve these aims through befriending, social activities, equipping refugees for work, advocacy and awareness-raising.

The second half of 2015 was a momentous time in Restore's 16 year history. Sadly it was occasioned by the tragedy of the refugee crisis unfolding in the region around Syria and in North Africa, with its impact on Turkey and Europe. The photo of young Syrian boy, Aylan Kurdi, washed up on a Turkish beach in early September captured media attention and stirred public sympathy. For a time negative rhetoric on 'migration' ceased and compassion was brought to the forefront of the 'asylum' debate.

People fleeing conflict and persecution moved in huge numbers across borders and European governments announced numbers they would offer sanctuary. Our own UK Government committed to take 20,000 Syrian refugees over 5 years. 'Refugees are Welcome' became a popular cry from ordinary citizens. Locally the Birmingham Mail ran supportive stories and the Council resolved to endorse City of Sanctuary status and settle 50 Syrian refugees.

The outpouring of goodwill from the community was both heartening and overwhelming. Restore was inundated with calls from the media, enquiries from individuals and groups, and offers of help. Our autumn training courses attracted more participants than ever before - 37 attended the daytime course, 41 the evening course and 40 had applied to befriend by the end of the year. Church and community leaders called on their respective constituencies to respond to the humanitarian need and people of faith and no faith acted with generosity.

Restore staff and management committee members greatly appreciated the varied responses: unprecedented numbers of volunteers offering to befriend; donations supporting our social activities for asylum seekers; offers of hospitality, which we could direct to BIRCH (Birmingham Community Hosting); and additional funding. We particularly acknowledge with gratitude exceptional grants from the Birmingham Methodist District, Caritas Archdiocese and Barrow Cadbury Trust, which have enabled us to recruit two new part-time workers in 2016.

The refugee crisis and mass movement of people are not a passing phenomenon. Yet borders have closed and hearts are hardening. Every crisis offers both challenge and opportunity. We ask that you continue to join us in taking the opportunity to welcome, include and assist integration of those seeking sanctuary in our midst.

Shari Brown
June 2016

welcome - include - integrate

Befriending

188 new referrals in 2015 (145 new referrals in 2014)
55 new befriending matches were made in 2015 (41 new matches in 2014)
91 ongoing matches at end of 2015 (84 ongoing matches at end of 2014)

It is far better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. How do we bring light into the darkness of the refugee crisis where peace and justice seem so elusive? The macro situation may be beyond our ability to solve. But one person can make a difference in the life of another; lighting a candle in the darkness of loneliness, isolation, depression and the challenges of starting afresh in a new country.

Befriending is primarily about building relationships that offer support to refugees and asylum seekers. It is Restore's core work. Much of that service is provided by our amazing team of committed volunteers who each meet a refugee or asylum seeker approximately every two weeks. Some of those relationships develop into enduring friendships, which last for years, and other befriending matches offer support for a short period of time while there is a specific need or before the befriended has developed their own support network. All support offered is valuable.

One befriender describes how her befriending relationship developed during 2015: **"Since we began the befriending my befriended has made great leaps forward in her life here in the UK and I have seen a noticeable improvement in her happiness and wellbeing. She has been given Leave to Remain, a more comfortable place to live and has begun to make friends and integrate more - she is beginning to build a life here in Birmingham. As a befriender the process really gives you perspective and helps you to understand how lucky you are but also opens you up to new information and experiences. I have learned a lot from my befriended in terms of culture and also politics as she is very intelligent! Befrienders can take satisfaction in knowing that just a small amount of their time can make a big difference to those who do not have anyone else to talk to."**



2015 saw the largest number of referrals of new refugees and asylum seekers to Restore. However, the increased media coverage of the flow of refugees, particularly from Syria, led to significant increase in the numbers of new people wanting to befriend. This has resulted in the highest number of new befriending matches in a year: 55 people have received additional support from a befriender.

What is the impact on those who have been befriended? Every befriending relationship has its own unique story. We have a few snapshots of the impact of those relationships. One person wrote: **“Meeting with my befriender helped me to have a better understanding of life in Birmingham. He made me feel welcomed and consoled me at times of despair.”** Another wrote: **“Meeting new people from different cultures gives us the opportunities to make new friends and share our problems and solutions. It also helped me to improve my language skills and have fun too, meeting up with my befriender and learning more brings me hope and keeps me active and positive.”**

A befriended spouse whose spouse has been seriously ill for months wrote: **“Restore helped me to find a volunteer befriender who is a very dear friend to me. The volunteer’s presence was and is helping me, because it is very good to have someone to meet and talk about what is hard for you at this time.”**

During befriending relationships a befriended sometimes identifies key moments of help: **“My befriender has been a good source of reliable information and advice to me. At one point, my befriender was a lifeline for me.”** This befriended went on to write about a visit that he made with his befriender showing that befriending can involve bringing fun and new opportunities: **“I was able to visit an iconic British landmark - the Malvern Hills at Worcester, the hometown of the famous British composer Sir Edward Elgar. Befriending has indeed helped reduce my isolation and I got to know more about British culture.”**

A befriended refugee wrote of the cumulative effect of ongoing support: **“When I was new to Birmingham I had no clue who to turn to and I was really confused but I was lucky enough to meet Restore. Having a friend whom I can talk to, practise my English with and walk around with. I’m making really good progress; I got my own property, I got a part time job and I’m going to college. Without the support I have been receiving from Restore, I wouldn’t have been able to progress as good as I have.”**

Martin Luther King Jr said: **“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable ... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”** Restore stands alongside those who have suffered great injustices. We say a huge "thank you" to our growing team of dedicated volunteer befrienders who are concerned about justice and take action to support refugees and asylum seekers by offering welcome, hope and friendship.

Social Activities for Women and Men

Women's Activities

27 events in 2015 (26 events in 2014)

67 women attended at least one event in 2015 (93 in 2014)

Men's Activities

34 events in 2015 (31 events in 2014)

95 men attended at least one event in 2015 (85 in 2014)

We provide opportunities for new friendships through a range of recreational and educational group activities. The majority of people attending both Men's Activities and Women's Activities are asylum seekers as they are newer to the city, have more time on their hands and are keen to be linked into new friendship groups. Volunteers also attend activities, which gives participants more opportunities to practise their conversational English skills. Activities run approximately every two weeks.

In 2015 Men's Activities included visits to Stratford-upon-Avon, the Think Tank (Science Museum), swimming, bowling, music concerts and walks in the countryside. These trips provide opportunities to learn and share: **"We have visited many places including the Lickey Hills Park, Sutton Park, Stratford-upon-Avon and Walsall Art Gallery. Men's trips have enabled me to share stories and problems with other asylum seekers. I have also learned some cultures from a variety of countries."**

Relationships built through activities have an impact on well-being: **"Men's events have been very beneficial to me in the sense that it helped me get over my stresses, improved my mental health and also make new friends to whom I could laugh and chat with."**



Women's Activities included a cinema trip to watch the film 'Paddington', which caused much laughter and became a fond memory that is still talked about by the women. A walk in the woods at Moseley Bog led to some interesting conversations about people's home countries as well as some impromptu Iranian dancing. An afternoon of crafts and nail painting hosted by the Cotteridge Quakers was characterised by both quiet concentration and joyful chatting as the women enjoyed being pampered and getting creative. During a visit to Winterbourne House and Garden the women's faces lit up as they walked into the walled garden with its vibrant array of colourful flowers. A creative workshop was facilitated by Leaveners, which included a thoughtful discussion on 'Hope' and the production of work that was later exhibited at the P Café in Stirchley and the Quaker Peace Hub in the city centre.

These events are so important in providing asylum seekers, whose days are often filled with isolation, depression, anxiety and limited resources, with an opportunity to meet other people, practise their English, and have some brief respite from their problems. Often, women who are going through challenging circumstances visibly relax and enjoy themselves. One woman said: **"I enjoyed it because you meet people, you relax from anxiety disorders and learn about culture, places and history of England."** Another commented: **"Restore women's activities have been very educative, rewarding, encouraging and relaxing. The women activities have helped me a great deal. I met and socialised with different people from other nationalities, I learnt new skills. Restore has been very helpful in supporting refugee women who are in despair, lives have been turned around for good. I am a living testimony to this. Word will fail me if I don't mention the kindness, love, moral support and otherwise that Restore have rendered in the past years."**

We are very grateful for the generosity of different organisations and our committed volunteers who help to make these moments happen.



Holiday Activities for Families

74 adults and 112 children attended at least one of the activities

Restore continues to provide activities for children during school holidays aware that families are often isolated and unable to afford recreational pursuits. As our network of families has increased, we have focused on inviting newly arrived families in Birmingham. Activities in 2015 included our annual popular winter party at St John's Church in Harborne, May outing to Beaudesert Park camp-site, and summer Fun Day at Olton Friary. These activities are made possible through the generosity of St John's Church, Iona Community West Midlands Family Group, Lichfield Hope Support Group, Solihull Welcome, Olton Friary and the St Vincent de Paul Society.



Other outings were made to Coventry, Lichfield, Conkers, Sandwell Valley Farm and Cadbury World. We were appreciative of the support of Coventry Cathedral, Lichfield Methodist Church and Bournville Quaker Meeting that provided free venues for refreshments and activities.

Twenty-three different nationalities were represented among the families who participated in Restore's eight activities during the year.



Parent and Toddler Group

To improve Restore's provision for families with young children, and in recognition of the barriers to asylum seekers and refugees accessing local groups, April saw the pilot of a Restore group for parents with babies and toddlers. Taking place once a month over the summer term, the aim of the group was to provide a welcoming environment, which gives the opportunity for asylum seekers and refugees who are otherwise quite isolated to meet together, make friends and practise English whilst their children have the opportunity to play with a variety of toys, enjoy craft activities, story time and singing together.

The group proved to be a success and continued in the autumn term once a fortnight. A total of 23 families attended the group in 2015, i.e. 29 adults and 28 children. Families travelled across the city because they were so keen to attend. One father said: **"I like the craft activities because the children can learn"** and a mother commented: **"You bring happiness to people."** The venture has been made possible by the generosity of the Unitarian New Meeting Church who have provided volunteers, refreshments and free use of their hall, and the dedication of several Restore volunteers who regularly give their time and energy.



Equipping Refugees for Work

92 attended at least one session in 2015 (82 attended at least one session in 2014)
There was a core group of 24 who attended 4 or more of the 8 sessions

Equipping Refugees for Work seeks to build confidence and enable participants to become more job-ready. In the time-frame of each interactive monthly session we begin to explain and explore topics like CVs, application forms, job search and interviews. Much of the learning is reinforced and developed more practically in the small group activities. We are grateful to the volunteers who join us to facilitate those groups. To gain the most from the training, participants are encouraged to complete (optional) homework, e.g. write their own CV and then send it in for comments or to write down specific answers to interview questions. We also encourage participants to start volunteering as this has a wide range of benefits: using their existing skills, gaining new skills, practising their English, gaining UK work experience and potential UK referees, and better health and well-being. We are very grateful to the British Red Cross for their partnership in 2015 using funding from the Big Lottery Fund.

As with all our services it is the individual impact on each refugee or asylum seeker that is important. One participant who was attending a plumbing course at college wrote about Equipping Refugees for Work: **“It has been very helpful to me because I now appreciate the importance of doing voluntary work (in particular increase in skills, education and experience). I am now able to prepare a good CV and also know how to prepare myself for a job interview. I now fully understand some employment-related terms such as job description, person specification and zero hour contracts.”**



Whilst we cannot guarantee that participants will get a job, we are delighted when participants move on to employment knowing that we have played a part in that process. One person who started work wrote: **“Today I am proud I have a job because I have been attending Equipping Refugees for Work monthly meeting. I passed my job interview because of the training I gained from Restore. I will never cease to praise them for what they have done in my life.”**

Accounts

BIRMINGHAM CHURCHES TOGETHER - RESTORE

DETAILED STATEMENT FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2015

	General Fund £	Restricted Funding £	2015 Total £	2014 Total £
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Grants other	17,250	35,000	52,250	30,386
Grants – Barrow Cadbury	-	25,500	25,500	19,500
Grants – Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	-	-	14,500
Grants – Joseph Rank Trust	-	15,000	15,000	15,000
BBC Children in Need	-	3,000	3,000	-
Donations - Individuals	20,246	-	20,246	15,563
Donations - Churches	14,643	6,246	20,889	18,562
Fundraising	3,029	-	3,029	573
Bank Interest	193	-	193	136
Other	2,757	-	2,757	4,951
	<hr/> 58,118	<hr/> 84,746	<hr/> 142,864	<hr/> 119,171
EXPENDITURE				
Befriending Scheme	25,992	30,627	56,619	57,026
Co-ordinator	-	32,597	32,597	32,139
Administration	5,555	-	5,555	5,526
Office Expenses	10,989	-	10,989	11,115
Information and Publicity	-	468	468	5,903
Accountancy Charges	400	-	400	400
Programme Activities	10,402	-	10,402	11,555
Training- Staff and Volunteer	-	320	320	509
	<hr/> 53,338	<hr/> 64,011	<hr/> 117,349	<hr/> 124,172
Net Incoming Resources	4,780	20,735	25,515	(5,001)
Transfers between funds	(6,599)	6,599	-	-
Fund Balance at 1 January 2015	71,963	20,083	92,046	97,047
Fund Balance at 31 December 2015	<hr/> <hr/> 70,144	<hr/> <hr/> 47,417	<hr/> <hr/> 117,561	<hr/> <hr/> 92,046

This statement is for information only and does not form part of the Statutory Financial Statements.

Funding in 2015

Grants were greatly appreciated from the following charitable trusts:

Barrow Cadbury Trust
BBC Children in Need
Birmingham Methodist Church District
Big Lottery Fund c/o the British Red Cross
CB + HH Taylor 1984 Trust
Cole Charitable Trust
George Henry Collins Charity
Grantham Yorke Trust
Harry Payne Trust
Joseph Hopkins Trust
Joseph Rank Trust
Richard Kilcuppe's Charity
Roughley Trust, and
SC & ME Morland's Trust.

Management Committee, Staff and Trustees

Chair of Management Committee
Secretary
Treasurer
Other Management Committee Members

Philip Rogerson
Sarah Dixon
Natalie Chong
Anne Holding, Andy Jolly, Boaz Atwine,
Charles Worth, Sue Morgan, Mauricio
Silva, Mohinder Kaur and Josephine
Houghton.

Project Coordinator
Befriending Coordinator
Befriending Women's Worker
Administrative Assistant

Shari Brown
Jeremy Thompson
Rachel Dale
Geraldine Hunt

Trustees of Birmingham Churches Together
Roman Catholic Archbishop
Anglican Bishop
Free Churches Moderator
Chair of BCT Coordinating Group
Chair of BCT Coordinating Group
Trustee/Chair of Restore
Trustee/BCT Training
Trustee
Treasurer

Most Revd Bernard Longley
Rt Revd David Urquhart
Rev Barrie Smith
Rev Roy Lowes (until June 2015)
Rev Ian Howarth (from June 2015)
Rev Philip Rogerson
Mrs Sheila Huckfield-Powell
Sister Margaret Walsh
Mr Michael Hastilow