



# 2020 Annual Report

Restore is a project of Birmingham Churches Together.

Welcoming, valuing and integrating refugees and people seeking sanctuary from persecution.



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# Restore's Vision and Strategic Plans

2020 began with strategic aims to appoint a new part-time post of Befriending Women's Worker to add capacity to the women's work; to strengthen funding and look for longer term funding; to continue to develop an intentional but informal English language element in our men's and women's group social activities; and to make 50 new befriending matches during the year. This all followed on from our renewed vision launched in autumn 2019.

**Restore's vision is for a society into which all refugees and asylum seekers are welcomed, valued and integrated**

Restore will work towards that vision by:

## **Building relationships and equipping for integration**

- through befriending, group social activities and employability training.

## **Motivating for action**

- through raising awareness of refugee issues and opportunities to make a difference.

## **Working for change**

- through partnering and campaigning with others to improve systems and services that affect refugees and asylum seekers.

So, from the beginning of 2020 we continued the development of men's and women's activities, matched more befrienders, ran a training course for new volunteers and started to see new income coming in from funding applications.

However, no-one had envisaged that we would need to respond to a pandemic or the challenges of lockdown and social distancing from 23 March.

## **Befriending**

How could an organisation focused on face-to-face befriending adapt to lockdown and social distancing?

At a Connection Coalition webinar on loneliness, at the beginning of the pandemic, we heard a really stark statement: **“the health impact of loneliness has been found to be comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, equal to a 26 per cent increase in the likelihood of mortality”**. That underlined the importance of maintaining and building supportive relationships at this time of increased isolation for many.

Restore asked our volunteers to move from face-to-face to remote befriending, contacting their befriended using WhatsApp video calls. We also knew other refugees and asylum seekers who were on their own, without any other family members. As they would benefit from a befriender, we started a temporary remote befriending scheme on 1 April where we invited existing volunteers to take on additional befriended during lockdown and video call them once a week. We also matched new volunteers from our February training course.

Remote befriending enabled volunteers to maintain contact and thereby combat isolation and loneliness. One beneficiary, who was finding lockdown challenging due to health issues said, **“I'm waiting for Tuesday every week! It's good when I speak with my befriender.”** An asylum seeker with low level mental health issues said after a call **“Even now I feel a lot better because you talked to me, thank you so much!”**

Remote befriending also provided valuable opportunities to practise conversational English when colleges were closed or offering a remote service. There was an impact whatever the level of English and one refugee with a good level of English commented, **“Talking to you helps maintain my fluency, when everywhere is closed.”** Another befriended refugee was awarded ‘Student of the Year’ by her college. Her teacher said that **“having a Restore befriender with whom she could practise English had helped her make progress.”**

Volunteers have been creative in their use of technology. One befriender started to teach the asylum seeker he supports to play chess. They went on to play mancala as they found it simpler. Another befriender who discovered that video calls were difficult due to the limited English of the refugee, tried cooking via WhatsApp. The refugee is teaching the volunteer to cook food from her country. In the process, the refugee is also learning words for ingredients and cooking processes in English and growing in confidence. The refugee commented, **“She is a very nice lady. We cooked food together (online). I taught her Persian food, I really enjoyed.”**

During 2020, we received **107 new referrals** which is lower than usual. The resettlement scheme for Syrian refugees was halted in March so we lost a major source of referrals. However, we gained referrals of new asylum seekers, particularly men, being housed in initial accommodation for several months rather than the usual 28 days.

By the end of 2020, Restore had made a total of **67 new matches in 2020**: 13 were started before the pandemic and 54 after lockdown. That is the second highest total ever and we are proud of all that our staff and volunteers have accomplished to support refugees and asylum seekers through this challenging time. Many of those temporary matches have continued and become longer term matches. At the end of 2020, **we had 117 ongoing befriending matches** from 2020 and earlier years.



**What is the impact of befriending?** A befriended asylum seeker highlights the isolation he was experiencing and his desire for friendship: **“Restore has helped me with socialising a lot. When I got here, in Birmingham, I had no-one to talk to or share my feelings. Restore introduced me to a friendly and understanding befriender.”**

An asylum seeker who gained refugee status in 2020 wrote, **“I’m very thankful for all the support and kindnesses during this time of wait. I always gonna remember.”** Another refugee, who is now settled and working but was supported by a befriender through the asylum process, wrote, **“I thought that protection can be provided on legal and physical grounds. However, I realised that Restore provides another valuable form of protection which is the spiritual one. Restore embraced me and made my isolated lonely life, viable and sociable. I felt that Restore saved me from trauma and (I) found my befriender was more than a friend but an angel and brother.”**

Befriending builds mutually enriching relationships which impact the volunteer as well as the refugee. Each relationship is unique. One befriender shares elements of his befriending experience, writing about a befriending relationship which started before

lockdown and another that started since then. **"As a befriender, I have been able to get to know, spend time with and encourage asylum seekers and refugees in Birmingham. I currently befriend a young man, Rahim\* and have been doing so for the last 3 years. I've had the privilege of walking alongside him, who fled persecution in his home country, on his journey to becoming a refugee and obtaining his refugee status! I simply spend time with Rahim\*, showing him the city, helping him settle into British life and understand its culture. Some things we have discussed include British politics and history, aspects of the English language, strange customs and social etiquette. We've been walking in the Malvern Hills. Additionally, I've been able to provide informal advice where necessary and 'signpost' him to support services. I'm ably supported by the Restore staff team, who provided me with initial befriending training and I can turn to them for advice when needed. Despite not being able to meet up with Rahim during lockdown, through regular phone contact I was able to maintain our relationship, inform him of the changing regulations and lessen his feeling of isolation at home.**

**During the pandemic I was put in contact with a recently arrived asylum seeker, Matthieu\* and started a remote befriending relationship. We speak regularly on the phone and use WhatsApp Video calling. I've been able to provide encouragement, support and guidance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, I have explained about the GP and hospital services as well as helping him get support from a local pharmacy, when he had a health issue. We have also met in a local park to play football.**

**I've learned over the years of befriending, that although it requires a time-sacrifice, it is hugely rewarding. It has given me greater insight into and appreciation for other cultures. For example, when visiting my befriendees, I have received great hospitality and enjoyed delicious food, often at a personal cost to them.**

**Despite at first glance, being very different to the guys that I befriend, I've learnt that these differences are often superficial and in fact we are more similar than at first thought. We always have many things in common and have mutual interests – such as discussing football – the universal language! I have found that being a befriender is like trying a meal from another culture's cuisine! It is a varied and interesting experience that enables you to learn new things whilst not always knowing what is coming next! Yet, it is not as daunting as it first might seem!**

**Birmingham is a 'City of Sanctuary' which actively welcomes refugees and asylum seekers to the city and thus I want to play a (small) part in this. Being a befriender with Restore, enables me to welcome refugees and asylum seekers to the city and aid their integration into society." *\*Names have been changed***

**Those involved in long-term befriending relationships over a period of years can often see development and growth. Another befriender who had journeyed alongside his befriendees through an arduous asylum process and continued to offer support after the granting of refugee status wrote, "It has been a delight to see this family move from extremely difficult circumstances into what looks like being a settled, secure and happy future in which I hope to share."**

**We say a humungous thank you to our fantastic team of over 110 volunteer benders for the consistent compassionate care and relational support they offer and for the significant difference they make in the lives of their befriendees. And we are extremely proud of how they have adapted and continued to befriend through the challenges of the pandemic.**

**Thank you, thank you, thank you!**

## Group Social Activities

In the first 3 months of 2020, we were able to run some group social activities in the community: 6 men's events and **3 women's events with 35 women** attending at least one event. Men's events had a strong cultural and educational theme with visits to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, the Thinktank and the New Art Gallery in Walsall. One refugee man commented, **"I would like to thank Restore for men's events that have helped me to know about the history of my new city and met new friends from different culture and this event have helped me to practice English with volunteers. The volunteers were very helpful. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."**



A highlight for the Women's Group was a singing workshop facilitated by Birmingham Opera Company, which was adapted to enable those with limited English to participate. After 17 women visited the Think Tank there were several appreciative comments including, **"Thank you Restore. I learn a lot of things about Birmingham. I am excited. Thank you."** A support worker from another agency who referred a refugee to Restore wrote, **"I saw him last Thursday and he was buzzing about the trip!"**

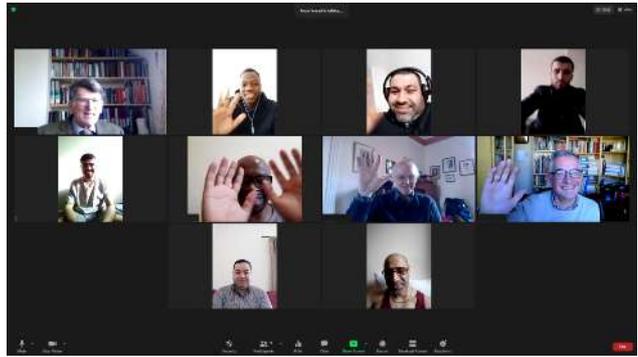
We held a **family party in February half-term attended by 54 adults and children** that was hosted by Christ Church, Selly Park. The team of volunteers from Christ Church provided a wonderful welcome, delicious hospitality and lots of help with craft and games. Wolly the Clown was, once again, a great hit with both children and adults. 54 guests attended and thoroughly enjoyed the event.



Unfortunately, lockdown and social distancing curtailed face-to-face group social activities for the rest of the year. This was a huge disappointment.

However, we were aware of the ongoing challenge of having fewer male volunteers than female volunteers which meant that fewer male clients are befriended than female clients. So in June, we restarted men's group activities via Zoom and since then there have been 14 Zoom events. Those sessions have developed with games, brief input on a topic like capital cities, Middle Eastern music or preparing for Christmas and then sharing of the men's own experiences here or in their home countries. Sometimes there's been a musical element and even a sing-a-long. The emphasis has been on fun and informal English practise which has enabled men to meet others and make friends. An asylum seeker who has attended several Zoom events wrote, **"The men's event hosted by Restore lifted me up and I felt less lonely; they have a variety of activities which are informative and entertaining, especially music from around the world. The activities have a calming effect."**

Over the whole year there were **20 men's events with 66 men** attending at least one session.



We look forward to a time when we can run a full programme of activities in the community for men, for women and for families and we can enjoy museums, concerts and the countryside together again.

## Motivating for Action

Restore ran 2 awareness raising and training courses with 90 people attending. In October, we ran our first training course via Zoom. 60 participants attended beating our previous course record of 41 attendees. This also opened the course up to a few people from other parts of the country, at least one of whom was interested in becoming a remote befriender. **97% rated the sessions as “very good” or excellent**. It was a steep learning curve for staff and very time consuming to prepare. However, feedback included words such as “inspiring”, “professional” and “informative”. **100% of respondents said they would recommend the course to others.**

Restore raised awareness of refugee and asylum issues through speaking engagements, social media posts and mailings to supporters. The Restore Annual Celebration in June or July is an opportunity to gather the Restore family and showcase our work but, unable to meet together face-to-face, we created a video featuring refugees and volunteers instead: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpnDXpsVTQc>

## Working for Change for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Restore engaged in working for change work through active participation in meetings of the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership's Voluntary Sector Working Group, Birmingham City Council's City of Sanctuary Partnership Board, the Steering committee for Migration Policy and Practice - Birmingham and the Black Country, Birmingham City Council's Migration Forum, Birmingham City of Sanctuary (voluntary) Committee and the refugee support sector's Destitution Steering Group. Restore was a partner in Birmingham's response to destitution through the Hope Projects.

Restore is a partner in the Lift the Ban campaign that is lobbying the Government to give asylum seekers the right to work after 6-months in the asylum system. Restore encouraged supporters to campaign for an increase in Asylum Support payments during the pandemic in-line with the increase to Universal Credit.

We signpost to the services of many other organisations including St Chad's Sanctuary, the Hope Projects, the British Red Cross, Refugee and Migrant Centre and the Central England Community Law Centre – Birmingham.

## Funding

We are extremely grateful for the generous commitment of befrienders, support of groups, offers in-kind and donations from churches. We are also very grateful for the commitment to Restore's work through monthly standing orders and one-off donations from supporters. Run4Refugees, a key source of community fundraising, was unable to proceed in 2020. However, several people took up the 2.6 Challenge (an initiative of the London Marathon to help charities lost due to the cancellation of large public events) and raised funds for Restore. All these strands of financial commitment provide a diverse funding base which is often looked on favourably by grant making trusts.

We were delighted to receive grants specifically to help us through the coronavirus crisis from the National Lottery Community Fund (via a Coronavirus Community Support Fund grant) and from the Heart of England Community Foundation Coronavirus Resilience Fund. The Barrow Cadbury Trust generously renewed their funding of our networking, advocacy, communications and co-ordination work, which includes the working for change elements of our vision, for a further 2 years.

During the year we were hugely grateful to receive financial support from the following grant-making trusts: South Birmingham Friends Institute Trust, Roughley Trust, William A Cadbury Trust, Allen Lane Foundation, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1961 Charitable Trust, W F Southall Trust, Ashworth Trust, Cole Trust, George Henry Collins Charity, Richard Kilcuppe's Charity, Grimmitt Trust, Archer Trust, Leigh Trust, Alfred Haines Trust, G J W Turner Trust, Bernard Piggott Trust, Edward and Dorothy Cadbury Trust, John Avins Trust, Movement for Good (Ecclesiastical Insurance), Bite Sized Pieces Trust and Garrod Family Trust.

## Management Committee, Staff and Trustees

Chair of Management Committee	Mauricio Silva
Treasurer	Judy Coulson
Other Management Committee Members	Sarah Dixon, Josephine Houghton, Frank Cole, James Ashley, Elizabeth Baker and Nahla Ibrahim (from November 2019)
Restore Manager	Jeremy Thompson
Befriending Co-ordinator	Rachel Dale
Befriending Men's Worker	Andy Ferrari
Administrative Assistant	Geraldine Hunt
BCT Ecumenical Development Officer	Colin Marsh (to 31 March 2020)
Interim Ecumenical Enabler	Robert Mountford (from 1 April 2020)
Trustees of Birmingham Churches Together:	
Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham	The Most Revd Bernard Longley
Anglican Bishop of Birmingham	The Right Revd David Urquhart
Free Churches Moderator	Revd Ian Howarth
Trustee and Chair of Restore	Mauricio Silva

Trustee and Treasurer  
Trustee  
Trustee  
Trustee

Katarzyna Kolodziejczyk  
Revd Steve Faber  
Revd David Ellis (from June 2020)  
Sister Margaret Walsh

The year ended with some staffing changes. Geraldine Hunt retired as part-time Admin Assistant at the end of December after 10.5 years of service. Rachel Dale, Befriending Co-ordinator, gave notice that she would move to a new job with an anti-trafficking project on 10 January 2021, after 6 years with Restore. We are grateful to both Geraldine and Rachel for all they have contributed to the service of Restore, refugees and asylum seekers.

## Looking Ahead

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we have progressed with most of our strategic plans:

- Restore adapted creatively to provide relational support to refugees and asylum seekers, and the number of befriending relationships was 34% higher than the annual target.
- Funding was strengthened.
- The intentional but informal English language element of men's and women's group activities was increased.

In 2021, we hope that as the vaccination programme rolls out there will be a reduction of social distancing restrictions and we can return to face-to-face work. We will maintain remote befriending as an option, particularly for refugees and asylum seekers who are unable to travel and we recognise it may be a preferred option for some volunteers.

We hope to return to strategic plans that have been delayed. There will be recruitment to vacant posts and to the new post of Befriending Women's Worker. There will undoubtedly be new campaigns to embrace and support.

We look forward to partnering with volunteers, supporters, churches, other agencies and funders, to meeting more refugees and asylum seekers and to working together towards fulfilling our vision of a society into which all refugees and asylum seekers are welcomed, values and integrated.

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RestoreBefriend> Charity number: 243931



**BIRMINGHAM CHURCHES TOGETHER**

**RESTORE**

**DETAILED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

	General Fund £	Restricted Fund £	2020 Total £	2019 Total £
<b>INCOME</b>				
Grants other	10,200	42,250	52,450	21,000
Grants - Barrow Cadbury Trust	-	21,000	21,000	19,000
Grants - The National Lottery Community Fund	-	20,836	20,836	-
Grants - Heart of England Covid Resilience Fund	-	3,000	3,000	-
Donations - Individuals	25,017	4,000	29,017	19,876
Donations - Churches	12,076	8,348	20,424	13,721
Gift aid on donations	5,616	1,000	6,616	6,388
Legacies	-	10,400	10,400	-
Befreinding services	-	1,360	1,360	-
Fundraising	6,925	-	6,925	5,168
Bank Interest	68	-	68	126
Other	0	-	0	369
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	59,902	112,194	172,096	85,648
 <b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
<b>Salaries &amp; wages</b>				
Befrienders	15,875	46,840	62,715	59,504
Co-ordinator	10,682	26,196	36,878	34,875
Administration	7,186	1,200	8,386	7,626
Employment allowance	(3,869)	-	(3,869)	(2,578)
Office Expenses	5,055	5,206	10,261	10,609
Information and Publicity	936	-	936	528
Accountancy Charges	584	-	584	400
Programme Activities	1,104	159	1,263	5,389
Training - Staff and Volunteer	251	-	251	320
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	37,804	79,601	117,405	116,673
 Net expenditure	 22,098	 32,593	 54,691	 (31,025)
 Transfer between funds	 -	 -	 -	 -
 Fund Balance at 1 January 2020	 68,694	 7,474	 76,168	 107,193
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Fund Balance at 31 December 2020	90,792	40,067	130,859	76,168
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