



ForthValleyWelcome

SANCTUARY FOR REFUGEES
IN THE HEART OF SCOTLAND

Scottish Charity SC046404 (SCIO)

SBC Family Life Centre, 67 Murray Place, Stirling FK8 1AU

Web: <http://www.forthvalleywelcome.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ForthValleyWelcome>

Patrons: Mr Ayman Jarjour MMus: Sir George Reid PC FRSE

Supported by Robertson Trust, Impact Funding Partners,

Big Lottery Community Fund, Bank of Scotland Foundation

ANNUAL REPORT, April 2019 – March 2020¹

Forth Valley Welcome (FVW) was established in September 2015, to support refugees being resettled in Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire, and help them integrate into the local community. We became a charity in March 2016. Originally called Stirling Citizens for Sanctuary, we changed our name in March 2018 to Forth Valley Welcome to better reflect our geographic coverage.

Our initial focus was on Syrian refugees arriving through the UK government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (SVPR) scheme. We now also support refugees arriving from Sudan & South Sudan under a similar UK government scheme. The refugees are mainly families who have fled violence and destruction in their country. Many have friends and family members who are still in Syria, Sudan or South Sudan, or in refugee camps, or relocated to other countries.

By the end of the year we were supporting 36 households, comprising 62 adults, 7 young adults, and 69 children. Of these, 24 households are in Clackmannanshire and 12 are in Stirling (148 individuals in total, up from 123 at the end of March 2019). The two Councils are gradually bringing more families to the area so these numbers will continue to increase gradually.

Support is provided through our two part-time staff, 75 volunteers and supported by a Board of 8 trustees.

Our Vision

We are welcoming to people seeking sanctuary and support them towards a settled future within communities

Our Mission

To enable families to be welcomed and build their own networks and to become integrated within our communities

To work in partnership with stakeholders to provide support towards education, language learning and employment

To advocate on behalf of people seeking sanctuary for provision of comprehensive local and national services that meet their needs

¹ The impact of the Covid pandemic became clear only at the end of this financial year. In mid March 2020 we took a decision to stop all gatherings such as Snack & Chat (see p. 2) and all Home Visiting. We set up a system of regular remote checks on families using Whatsapp and telephone. We arranged deliveries of food and craft sets to families, especially during lockdown. Details will be in the next annual report. We are very grateful to funders for additional financial support provided to help us adjust to the impact of Covid on our activities.

WHAT WE DO

Home set-up and materials service

When a family first arrives, they come with few personal goods, usually only clothes. We run a *home set-up project*, whereby we visit the family's house to help make it feel homely, with the addition of extra items for the house, toys for the children, nice curtains, rugs, throws, cushions etc. In the case of Stirling Council we receive advance notice of a family's arrival and can visit the house before the family arrives. In Clackmannanshire, we are able to do this soon after the family arrives. When one family arrived the Refugee and Integration Officer sent us a text saying "I wish you could have seen the faces of the kids when they saw their room!" So we know this effort is worthwhile and appreciated by the families.

Materials service: Soon after the family arrives, we give them a material needs request form to request clothing, household items, and other needs. We take them to our store to choose items for themselves, especially clothing, small electrical goods, toys. We see from their expressions that this is also a valued service - not surprising considering that they arrive with only the suitcases they can carry.

This service is run by an enthusiastic team of volunteers led by one of the trustees. Through the generosity of a local benefactor we have the use of a storage facility in Dunblane.



Computers and software: We provide a refurbished laptop to each new family. We also provided several families with dual-language software for preparing for the driving theory test.

Home visiting and befriending

This is an important part of our support in the first few months after a family arrives. We link families with volunteer *home visitors*, who visit their assigned families regularly, introduce them to local services, help with transport to appointments, and go on social outings.

As at 31 March 2020, 14 households had at least 2 home visitors, which is our minimum desired number. Due to a shortage of local volunteers, 6 Clackmannanshire families had no home visitor, and a further 10 families there had only one home visitor.

Transport and support for hospital appointments: Home visitors and other volunteers regularly transport families to medical appointments at hospitals, dentist and GP surgeries, and the Job Centre

Life and Language Skills

We run a number of activities that encourage English practice and skills that are useful to become independent and increase their understanding about living in Scotland. These include:

'Snack and Chat'

In 2018-19 we ran seven *Snack and Chat* events, two in partnership with TCV (see below), which were well attended by refugee families and volunteers. We put on fun games that help them practice English and sometimes invite other people in to advertise other services they might be

interested in, e.g. Stirling School of English Summer School. The aim is to allow refugee families to get together with each other and with volunteers and other members of the community.



During the December event, we had a Christmas party and this year we were delighted to have our first Syrian Santa. One of the local Syrian men agreed to dress up and give out presents to the children. The event also had games, dancing and some food prepared by the volunteers and the families.

'Walk and Talk' & Conversation Cafes

We have run our 'Walk and Talk' events for some time. These are informal gatherings where local English speakers and refugees go out walking together and practice English. We ran three of these this year. In September 2019, we also introduced Conversation Cafes, where volunteers and refugees met for coffee and chat – we split these between Alloa and Stirling, so that family members could access them. We were donated a room at St Mungo's Church in Alloa to use and a local café in Stirling gave us a very good deal on the price of coffee and tea and provided space to hold the cafe.

For both the above events, two local organisations Scottish National Heritage (SNH) and Scottish Environmental Protecting Agency (SEPA) release their staff under their Corporate Social Responsibility Policy so they can volunteer to help the refugees with English practice.

Social Outings

During the summer, we provided £50 grants for volunteers to go on outings with families to local attractions, such as Stirling Castle and the Safari Park. In November we organised a trip to the Macrobert pantomime for 20 people (refugees and volunteers) with tickets kindly donated by the Macrobert Arts Centre.

Providing financial support to refugees

Through our *Positive Activities fund* we provided help with activities that promote language learning, employability, and social integration. Examples include subscriptions for football clubs, Girl Guides and Cub Scout troops, and contributions towards the cost of driving lessons. Some of the men have now gained full driving licenses, and some of the women have passed the theory test and are preparing for the practical test, with our support.

Through our *Crisis and Care fund* we provided help with one-off payments for unexpected costs, e.g. short-term help to newly arriving refugees in cases where there was a delay in start-up of their benefits package.

Awareness raising sessions for local schools and community organisations

Through the year we gave presentations to many groups. These are an important part of the work, informing people in the community about the refugees' situation and the support provided. These sessions have also been useful in attracting donations, volunteers and offers of services.

STAFFING AND VOLUNTEERS

Forth Valley welcome has two part-time staff: our Volunteer and Project Coordinator, Rebecca Dadge, and our Clackmannanshire Support Worker, Avril Hunter. Rebecca and Avril coordinate the services provided by our 75 volunteers. With some volunteers stepping down during the year

and new volunteers joining, our number of active volunteers has stayed fairly constant at around 75. Shortage of volunteers in Clackmannanshire remains a problem, and we continue our focus on volunteer recruitment there.

We ran three Volunteer Networking Meetings during the year. These provide an opportunity for volunteers to meet each other and staff and trustees; for sharing experience on what works well and any problems encountered; and for continual development of the services provided. When training opportunities arise, we make these known to our volunteers.

This year staff, volunteers and trustees attended training provided by the Institute of Migration on refugee transition issues and good practice, with sessions focussing on the Sudan and Syria.

We continued developing Integration Plans for each family, a system we had piloted at the end of 2019. The plans are put together with the assistance of the family in question, their home visitors and sometimes a council support worker. The plans outline what the family would like help with e.g. getting to know the local area, English practice, joining a library, sourcing familiar food etc. Progress will be reviewed at intervals, with the family and home visitor and assisted by an interpreter, and the plans updated appropriately.



PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

In Forth Valley region, we worked in liaison with many other organisations including Stirling Council; Clackmannanshire Council; Scottish National Heritage (SNH); Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA); The Conservation Volunteers (TCV); Stirling Baptist Church Family Life Centre; Allanpark South Church in Stirling; Alloa Ludgate Church; Stirling University Islamic Society; Macrobert Arts Centre; Central Scotland Regional Equality Centre; Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise; Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface; and the Scottish Refugee Council.

Our partnership with TCV has been particularly welcome. We are part of their 'Building Roots' project which is to encourage refugees to learn about Scottish cultural heritage and share some of the culture from their own countries of origin. We targeted three groups: families, women and young people and TCV have introduced them to various heritage sites and activities.

At national level, we are organisational members of the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) and The Befriending Network. We participate in one of the national working groups on implementation of the New Scots Strategy – the group on "New Scots Communities, Culture & Social Connections", which is coordinated by the SRC. Our trustees maintain contact with Citizens-UK Refugee Welcome groups across Scotland and the UK through email mailing lists and social media. We also maintain links with City of Sanctuary groups across the UK. We meet regularly with other charities in workshops and training run by Impact Funding Partners, one of our key funders.

FUNDING

Details of income, donations and grants are provided in the Annual Accounts. In summary:

- Continuing grants were received from Robertson Trust, Impact Funding Partners, and the Big Lottery Community Fund towards staff costs and some running costs. The Bank of Scotland Foundation provided a one year grant for partial funding of staff costs.

- Donations were received from individuals throughout the year directly or via our webpage and Facebook site, and from individuals and organisations who donated funds from events or talks run by them.
- Fund-raising activities undertaken included an online Christmas Appeal set up through BT MyDonate.

Our policy is to meet staffing and running costs from grants from trusts, and to use funds received from donations and fund-raising events for services that directly benefit the refugees.

GOVERNANCE

Responsibility for governance rests with our Board of 8 trustees. The Board meets 8 times a year. The names of trustees are given in the appendix.

We maintain a set of policies to guide our work and maintain consistent standards across all our operations. All our policies are available to view on our website and are reviewed on a bi-annual basis, or as and when necessary.

Monitoring and evaluation of activities and impact is carried out through regular review by the Board of the records maintained by staff of activities, materials provided, on-going feedback received from home visitors and other volunteers, and any issues that arise. Information is circulated to Board members from any meetings with the Councils and from publicity about refugees or refugee issues in the local press.

THANKS!

The trustees are delighted to record here our appreciation of the work carried out by our two staff, for their unstinting efforts to provide the best possible services to our service users through their own work and through their recruitment and training and coordination of the work of volunteers.

Huge thanks are due to our 75 volunteers for the time and energy they devote to all of our activities, and for the immense contribution they make to meeting the needs of service users.

We are extremely grateful to our four funders, whose grants meet the cost of employing our two staff and contribute to other running costs. This enables us to use the income received from events and from individuals and organisations for services that directly benefit our service users.

We also wish here to say thank you to the two Councils and their staffs for the immense amount of work they do in receiving and resettling refugees and providing continuous support to them.

Many thanks also to our two patrons, Sir George Reid and Mr Ayman Jarjour, who support us in many different ways; and to all of our partner organisations at local and national level.

And finally, we pay tribute to all of our refugees, for the work they put in to their own resettlement, for their participation in activities run by Forth Valley Welcome, for their involvement in their communities, and for the diversity they bring to our communities.

DECLARATION

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above. Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:



Full Name: Savitri Maharaj

Position: Chair

Date: 1 Dec 2020

STATUTORY INFORMATION

Charity trustees

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted (if not for full year)	Person/body entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
Donald Black	Secretary		OSCR
Sang Cha			FVW Trustees
Jean Evans			FVW Trustees
Hugh Grant	Treasurer		OSCR
Alan Howes			FVW Trustees
Savitri Maharaj	Chair		OSCR
Abigail Moriarty			FVW Trustees
Claudia Marques Martin		Joined Board 22 Nov 2019	FVW Trustees

Type of governing document: Constitution

Trustee recruitment and appointment

The board may at any time appoint any person to be a charity trustee - by way of a resolution passed by majority vote at a board meeting (Constitution, article 18).

Charitable Purposes (Constitution, article 4)

The purposes of Forth Valley Welcome are:

1. The relief of unemployment among refugees through (a) support towards employment, such as with job seeking, sourcing training, work placements etc., (b) support such as with language (Arabic speakers are among our volunteers), social and emotional support, mentoring and coaching within a Social Enterprise context.
2. The advancement of citizenship or community development through (a) social inclusion and awareness raising events & sponsored events within the communities where the refugees settle, (b) seeking opportunities for the refugees to contribute to their communities, and (c) through successfully integrating into the local economy.
3. The relief of those in need by/through providing a befriending service and activities promoting inclusion and raising awareness.

Summary of the charity's policy on reserves: To maintain a minimum cash balance of 4 months' average expenditure.

Details of any deficit: None.

Donated facilities and services (if any): None