



Refugee Women of Bristol Annual Report 2013-2014

2013-2014 has been a successful year for Refugee Women of Bristol. We were pleased to be able to sustain the high level of services we offer to refugee women despite the difficult financial climate. One of the highlights of the year was being shortlisted for the Guardian Charity of the Year Award 2013 in recognition of our important work. We were also pleased to be able to reach more women; supporting a total of 449 women from a refugee or asylum-seeking background with 240 of these being new users of our services.

Drop in services: There have been many new developments in our drop in service including the provision of a Careers Advisor and Immigration Advisor and a Parent Support Project. Refugee Women of Bristol were also delighted that a PhD student at the University of Bristol undertook an analysis of women attending the drop in; her report highlights successes of our project as well as offering ways to improve service and reach under-represented groups. We partnered with Bristol University's Humanities department providing a taster course on 'History of Women' and provided a popular and successful daytrip to Clevedon for our members.

ESOL classes: 79 women attended our ESOL (English as a second language) classes. Our monitoring data on progress shows how effective our courses are: 88% of women monitored had an increased ability to access services and 60% increased their confidence in accessing services as a result of attending our ESOL classes.

"Since coming to Refugee Women of Bristol I was lonely stay at home, but now I feel happy, learn as well." (Feedback from a member in annual membership survey 2013-2014)

Advocacy service: 73 women accessed our advocacy service, seeking advice on a wide range of topics. Support was given where needed in English, Arabic, Somali and Kurdish. This year help was sought on issues such as benefits, immigration, housing, health (e.g. GP/hospital appointment, medical forms), the British school system, employment, volunteering opportunities, training, utility bills, financial matters and other form filling.

Community crèche: 54 women used the community crèche facility which Refugee Women of Bristol provided to enable women to attend ESOL classes or receive other support.

"When I come here I was isolated, with my children at home. I learn, get crèche, socialise, I feel good" (feedback from a member in annual membership survey 2013-2014)

FGM advice: Refugee Women of Bristol regularly provided FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) information and advice sessions. This service was accessed 98 times in the year.

Additional activities:

Refugee Week: As part of refugee week Refugee Women of Bristol organised a very successful and well attended dance event. This brought refugee and asylum-seeking women from different cultures together to celebrate their diversity and cultural backgrounds. The event provided the opportunity for women to showcase and teach their culture's dance and was both an empowering and educational experience. 149 women participated from 24 different countries of origin with Somali, Mali, Kurdish and Egyptian dancing demonstrated. A fundraising refreshment stall was also provided by Refugee Women of Bristol.

African Women's Group: Refugee Women of Bristol secured a contract in partnership with FORWARD for an African Women's Health project in Bristol. We established an African Women's Group to consult on African women's health needs. The first event was in partnership with Safer Bristol consulting African women on their needs around domestic and sexual abuse; reviewing current services and identifying gaps. Feedback from this consultation led to the securing of funding to work with refugee women to produce culturally sensitive, easy-to-read Domestic Abuse information leaflets. Links were also made with Bristol Women's Voice to ensure that BME voices are represented when women's health services are being commissioned.

Workshops: This year as part of our Parenting Support Group RWoB was able to offer refugee women information and advice on a range of issues. A series of workshops were delivered: a 'Nursery information' workshop to facilitate BME access to nursery provision; a 'Warming Communities' workshop; a 'TB Awareness workshop' in partnership with Lawrence Hill Health Centre; a 'Domestic Violence Workshop' with Safer Bristol; a 'Drugs and Parenting' workshop in partnership with SPAN; a 'Schools workshop' with St Werburghs Primary School; a 'Healthy eating workshop' with Public Health; an 'Early years workshop' with the St Pauls Learning Centre and a 'Keeping safe' workshop with the Police Community Safety team. We also offered a 'measles information' workshop open to all our members.

FGM: RWoB partnered with FORWARD in delivering a 'Zero Tolerance' FGM Community Conference.

Training opportunities: Refugee Women of Bristol recognise the importance of supporting refugee women to increase their skills to increase their life chances. We were able to assist 46 women this year to do so in fields such as food hygiene, computing courses, childcare courses, leadership training, SPAN courses as well as providing access to careers advice.

"The help I got from Refugee Women of Bristol shows me the road of my ambitions."

(Feedback from a member in annual membership survey 2013-2014)

Personnel 2013-2014

Salma Abdolgader	Community Worker (Arabic)
Sana Elgoraish	Finance Worker
Rosie Franklin	Project Assistant (Internship ended August 2013)
Sahra Hassan	Community Worker (Somali)
Jacky Humphreys	Development Manager (Maternity Cover from June 2013)
Saado Hussein	Assistant Crèche Worker (TUPE - Bristol Refugee Rights June 2013)
Layla Ismail	Advocacy worker
Linda Joynes	Drop-in Co-ordinator
Tamador Saliem	Administrator
Claire Stern	Development Manager (maternity leave from June 2013)
Kurda Yar	Community Worker (Kurdish)
Aisha Yusuf	Senior Crèche Worker (TUPE - Bristol Refugee Rights June 2013)

We would like to offer many thank to our supporters, volunteers, staff and funders without whom we could not achieve our ambitions to assist refugee women and asylum-seekers to raise their educational status to give them improved economic prospects and to ensure they have access to information relating to welfare rights, health and education.

Structure, Governance and Management

Objectives and activities

The objects of the charity are:

To advance education, relieve poverty and promote and protect the health of refugee women and those seeking asylum in Bristol and the surrounding area by the provision of advice, information and support.

Organisation

Refugee Women of Bristol is governed by a Constitution which was last updated in 2009 and operates as an Association. The Trustees are appointed or reappointed annually at AGM and can be co-opted in between. Trustees are provided with a 4 session induction introducing them to their role and responsibilities. This includes an introduction to the organisation's policies including:

- Confidentiality
- Equal Opportunities
- Vulnerable Adults
- Child Protection
- Grievance Procedures
- Health and Safety
- Complaints Procedures.

They are then supported to undertake training appropriate to any specialist role they undertake on the management committee.

Refugee Women of Bristol's (RWOB) organisational structure and the wider network it works with.

RWOB is a registered charity with financial support from the local council and local and national trust funds. Bristol City Council has funded the organisation since its inception in 2003. RWOB has an excellent track record of engaging hard-to-reach women from the refugee and asylum seeking community.

Refugee women have been at the heart of the organisation since its beginning, involved at all levels as volunteers, staff and trustees. The management committee is entirely led by women from refugee backgrounds who understand the needs and issues faced by refugee and asylum seeking women from their own experience; they are therefore best placed to direct the development of service for the community and ensure that they are culturally appropriate.

The organisation is made up of a management committee, paid staff and a team of volunteers which averages 20. We actively support our members to develop their skills so they can participate in the management committee, volunteer and apply for paid positions. RWOB has an excellent track record of working in partnership with service providers to deliver services at the drop-in and in the wider community. RWOB has formed successful partnerships with a range of voluntary and statutory organisations. Key partnerships include Refugee Action, Bristol Refugee Rights, NHS Health Promotion team, FORWARD charity, Red Cross and Bristol City Council. RWOB is a member of VOSCUR (Bristol's VCS), Bristol Community Accounting Project, Bristol Association for Neighbourhood Day-care and Volunteering Bristol.

The trustees closely monitor risks associated with running services for the organisation by carrying out risk assessments and implementing appropriate measures to mitigate risk. RWOB has a Child Protection Policy, Vulnerable Adults Policy and CRB checks are carried out on all staff and crèche volunteers.

Public Benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty under Section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission. We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aim and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aim and objectives they have set.

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Chair of Management Committee