

Issue 31 October 2007



**Welcome to the October edition of the WERS newsletter!**



### **WERS Befriending Scheme awarded the Approved Provider Standard**

The Befriending Scheme was recently awarded the Approved Provider Standard – A National Standard for Mentoring – by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.

The Befriending Scheme, the first of its kind for refugees and asylum seekers in Newcastle upon Tyne, has been operational since 2000. Research into similar schemes elsewhere demonstrated the importance of befriending schemes to help asylum seekers and refugees feel more welcome, supported and integrated into the local community. The on-going evaluation of the scheme has revealed how highly clients value the service.

When the scheme was initially established, WERS operated with 6 volunteers who were co-ordinated by the WERS support workers.

Our client group at that time was around 70. WERS currently has over 800 clients and over the past 7 years our number of volunteer befrienders has reached 32.

The number of clients we have been able to support has increased from 10 to over 200.

The specific objectives which the Befriending Scheme aims to achieve are:

- to reduce feelings of isolation and anxiety among asylum seekers and refugees by developing supportive relationships on a one-to-one basis;
- to help rebuild confidence and self-esteem;
- to offer practical help when possible;
- to help the clients to improve their spoken and written English, and
- to acquaint the clients with the local area, history and culture.

Referrals to the scheme are received from many health professionals within Newcastle Primary Care Trust, Community Mental Health teams, and other refugee support agencies. A leaflet describing the scheme to potential clients is available in 8 languages: Arabic, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Portuguese, Serbo-Croat, Turkish and English. The translated leaflets are also available on the website [www.wers.org.uk](http://www.wers.org.uk)

If you are interested in becoming a befriender, check out our website or give Carol, the Volunteer Co-ordinator, a call.



### **Festive Week 2007 17-21 December**

Once again we are hoping to give every visitor to the project seasonal refreshments and a small gift during Festive Week. Donations of chocolates and sweets (no nuts, please) and toiletries will be most gratefully received, and we would ask to have them by 10 December at the latest.

We would also welcome offers of help to sort the donations during the week beginning 10 December, particularly on the Monday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons from 1-4pm. Please contact Carol or Helen at the office if you can help.

### **The great support from across the Pennines continues!**

#### **Cycling for WERS!**



(Picture: Cumbrian Newspapers)

On Sunday 2 September, the intrepid Peter Sharp, minister of Penrith and Penruddock United Reformed Church, took up the second Cumberland Challenge. The 105 mile cycling event started in Brampton. The route traced a figure of eight around the North Pennines, taking in the climb of Hartside before heading back to Brampton. Then the route followed Hadrian's Wall, and made a brief incursion into Scotland before returning to Brampton.

The sponsorship money raised by Peter was shared equally between WERS and Health Help International. WERS was delighted to receive a cheque for £717.

WERS has had close links with the church for a number of years.

Dorothy Spence, one of the WERS counsellors, travels to WERS all the way from Long Marton near Appleby every other week to give counselling to some of WERS' most vulnerable clients.

For a number of years the church has also arranged a day out for asylum seekers and refugees who attend Hubbub, a partnership between WERS and The Hub at Westgate Baptist Church, run by Joan Forrest. These days have proved to be a great success – come rain or shine (and they have certainly had both over the years!) - and a wonderful opportunity for men, women and children who rarely are given the chance to travel out of Newcastle to sample the delights of the beautiful Lake District.

THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH!

**Lindsay Cross**

#### **Office Details**

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#### **Office & Clothing Store Opening times:**

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri: 9.30am – 1pm

Wednesday: 11am – 1pm