



Welcome to the July edition of the WERS newsletter!

Welcome Jo!



Jo Cottrell has begun work as the new Volunteer Co-ordinator, working alongside Carol to support WERS volunteers and develop the service.

Jo has previously worked as a project worker for MIND and as a lecturer at both Newcastle and Gateshead colleges, where she worked with ESOL students and learners with specific learning difficulties.

Her volunteering experience includes helping out on trips and away-days at the Comfrey Project, the allotment-based charity which promotes the health and well-being of asylum seekers.

Funding success

A three year grant of £45,000 has been awarded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to part-fund the two WERS management posts. WERS is most grateful to the Foundation for this generous support of its work.



Refugee Week 2010

Refugee Week 2010 was a success, with many events being held across the city. On 16 June we were invited to take part in the morning show on BBC Radio Newcastle. Two of our clients, Dominique Essomba and Yunis Hasaballa, agreed to go with me and both did a great job responding to questions about their experiences as refugees. The producer is now exploring the possibility of a further piece with the two clients as time was quite limited and there was much more to be said! Later in the week there was a stall in the City Library and the film *Moving to Mars*, which follows the journeys of two families from Burma in their resettlement from a Thai refugee camp to Sheffield, was shown, followed by a question and answer session where Ali responded to questions from the general public.

Food Collection



A big 'Thank you' to all Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) and Newcastle City Council staff who donated food and toiletries during Refugee Week. The collection was organised by the Asylum Seekers Unit at YHN. Thirteen large boxes of food and toiletries with an estimated value of £700 were shared between WERS and Common Ground for distribution to destitute asylum seekers. The photo shows Evelyne, WERS' clothing store supervisor, and Sauda, a clothing store volunteer, receiving the delivery of goods.

Donations such as these play a vital role in the support of men and women living without any statutory support.

During the last 12 months at WERS:

- 241 destitute men and women have been supported at WERS with £10 emergency cash payments and food parcels.
- £57,598 was given out in £10 weekly payments
- 4736 food parcels have been given out – an average of 99 per week
- £18,372 has been spent from the hardship fund on food purchase

Alnmouth Friary – a weekend of peace and tranquillity



A small group of WERS male clients, accompanied by David Goodacre, the WERS counsellor and one of WERS' volunteer befrienders, Alan Myers, recently spent an enjoyable weekend at Alnmouth Friary where they received a warm welcome from the Franciscan brothers.

The weekend gave time to talk, relax, walk on the beach and, of course, watch the World Cup!



The format worked well and feedback has been positive, with the unanimous view that the weekend should be repeated.

The brothers' simple way of life was of great interest to the clients, although one client was uneasy about not sharing in the chores

of the house and said that next time they should have the opportunity to help! The weekend provided a welcome break from routine for everyone in the beautiful surroundings of the Friary and, for one client, 'the weekend was relief and regain of hope for the future.'

Working with Tyne and Wear Fire Service

Tyne and Wear Fire Service approached WERS with the desire to make fire safety checks more widely available to asylum seeker and refugee households. Fire officers were sometimes experiencing a reluctance on the part of the asylum seekers and refugees to let them into their homes to hear this important advice.

WERS staff and a number of the volunteer befrienders attended two training sessions and are now carrying out fire safety checks in clients' flats and houses, showing clients how to check their smoke alarms and fitting smoke alarms where necessary. The smoke alarms are free and have 10-year batteries. Advice is also given if there are smokers in the property or if clients are using chip pans or other pans for deep fat frying. Any problems are then referred back to the Fire Service along with the safety check sheet.

A date for the diary.....

WERS AGM 2010

This will be held on Thursday 14 October at 7pm at Westgate Baptist Church.

Lindsay Cross

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Office & Clothing Store Opening times:

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri: 9.30am – 1pm

Wednesday: 11am – 1pm