



Welcome to the April edition of the WERS newsletter – a tad late but we were waiting for some important funding news....

A second award from the Henry Smith Charity

WERS has just heard that the funding application to the Henry Smith Charity has been successful! This secures the volunteer project for the next 3 years. The WERS staff team is delighted at the news – particularly the two volunteer co-ordinators, Carol and Jo!

WERS greatly values the input of its volunteers who undertake an impressive variety of work for the organisation. We couldn't manage without them!

We are currently working hard to achieve re-accreditation of the Befriending Scheme for the Approved Provider Standard of the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation and the funding news has given everyone one a terrific boost.

Over the last six months the volunteer co-ordinators have been recruiting and training new volunteers whilst also putting their energies into improving and developing all the processes needed to run a professional and efficient volunteer project.

There are currently 59 volunteers at WERS of whom 21% are current clients or ex-clients.

Befriending Scheme

Working towards APS re-accreditation has meant that we have looked into and made positive changes to areas in the befriending scheme such as recruitment and support.

More support is now being offered to befrienders in the form of quarterly support group meetings. In the meeting new and experienced befrienders are all welcome to join in and talk about general issues in a relaxed and informal setting. We have

had two support group meetings to date and both have received great feedback! Our next support group meeting will be on the 12th May.

Support Work

Our support workers have continued to offer valuable support and advice at our daily drop-in sessions, building good relationships with clients who visit weekly and ensuring that the support needs of each individual are closely monitored.

Outreach

We have introduced a new outreach support worker role, as some of our female clients have difficulty accessing WERS' services during office hours. We have recruited three female outreach support workers and home visits are already underway.

Clothing Store

Our reliable clothing store team continue to provide a warm welcome for all. Under the direction of supervisor Evelyne they ensure that the clothing store runs smoothly and also offer tea, coffee and biscuits in the kitchen.



Administrative Support

We have two administrative support volunteers who offer their help as and when we need it. One of the volunteers performs general administrative duties to enable the smooth running of the office. Our other volunteer supports the volunteer co-ordinators with the Befriending Scheme by making monthly monitoring phone calls to befrienders, collating

evaluation data and helping to keep records up to date.

Gardening

Spring is here and our volunteer gardeners have made sure the garden is a lovely place to be, ready for the summer! One volunteer, a rice farmer in his own country, is starting to grow vegetables and this spring has planted potatoes and sown lettuce, radish and onion seeds. Everyone is looking forward to tasting the results!

ESOL



A volunteer ESOL tutor meets with a student on a weekly basis and some of our befrienders have an ESOL focus, depending on the needs of the person they befriend.

It's great being a volunteer!

Volunteering has lots of benefits too! Many of our volunteers learn new skills, meet new people and see first hand the positive effects of the time they offer.

As asylum seekers are not allowed to undertake paid work, volunteering provides valuable opportunities to use and develop their skills in preparation for entering the labour market should they be granted leave to remain in the UK. Many of our client volunteers have been offered additional training such as manual handling and food hygiene. Volunteering experience and attending training courses significantly enhances their CVs when the time comes to apply for jobs.

Other clients are signposted to wider volunteering opportunities through a number of agencies including the Volunteer Centre in Newcastle. WERS displays local job vacancies, promotes local events e.g. job fairs, and is also planning to run workshops for refugees on improving job applications and interview techniques in conjunction with a volunteer who is a careers adviser.

**Interested in joining the WERS volunteer team?
Contact Jo or Carol at the WERS office.**

Campaign to save Your Homes Newcastle Asylum Seeker Unit

Thank you to everyone who sent letters of support for the ASU to the Immigration Minister, MPs and local politicians. Sadly the ASU closed just before Easter. The Angel Group contract ends in June and from then on Jomast will be the sole accommodation provider in the region.

WERS would like to record a huge debt of thanks to all the staff at the ASU who have provided such an excellent service for the men, women and children who have been housed in their accommodation over the years. WERS will miss everyone at the ASU very much.

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