



West End Refugee Service

strength through support



Issue 66: July 2016

Welcome to the July edition of the WERS newsletter.

Regional award for inspirational WERS client!



Newcastle Falcons' Hamim Ally is one of eight inspiring individuals who has been crowned a Regional winner for Volunteer of the Year ahead of the Premiership Rugby Parliamentary Community Awards.

Hamim attended Premiership Rugby's HITS programme from September 2015 – May 2016 where he showed a great attitude, determination and set a great example to all fellow HITS students. HITS uses rugby to increase young people's resilience, self-reliance and confidence. It gives them the skills to get back into education, vocational training, apprenticeships and employment.

Since leaving the HITS programme, Hamim has shown his desire and passion in coming back to Newcastle Falcons to help out the new HITS students and give them support and guidance. Hamim has shown great commitment to community work in the North East and specifically the HITS project.

Many congratulations, Hamim!

Brexit: a personal reflection

On the morning of the referendum result I was, somewhat ironically, in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, one of several cities twinned with Newcastle upon Tyne. Newcastle Bach Choir, of which I am a member, was joining forces with two German choirs, one from Gelsenkirchen, the other from Cologne, for a joint performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. Watching the news on the internet as the extraordinary events unfolded that day, it was hard to believe that it was all actually happening. I was absolutely devastated.

During the referendum campaign, the increasing prominence of anti-immigration and asylum seeker rhetoric was sickening. Since the Brexit win there have been reports across the country of a disturbing rise in hate incidents and abuse directed at people from minority communities: an Eastern European food shop was damaged in an arson attack in Norwich, "No more Polish vermin" cards were posted through letter boxes of the Polish community in Huntingdon, for example. Channel 4's Dispatches revealed that the National Police Chiefs Council recorded a 400% rise in reported hate crimes and there was reportedly a huge rise in racist tweets with more than 13,000 sent in just one week after the vote.

It is hard to imagine how asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants living and working in the UK must be feeling right now. It is vital that the hysteria and fear whipped up in recent weeks are allayed, and swiftly. A joint letter sent to The Times by the Refugee Council and other leading human rights organisations called for a national discussion on immigration that is 'humane and honest, not based on fear or misinformation.' The letter finishes with the words: 'Even 'out', Britain must work with European states to share responsibilities in hosting refugees and guaranteeing their humane treatment. Previous British leaders helped establish the international laws protecting people fleeing violence and persecution. Unravelling those protections for the world's most vulnerable would be a travesty. Britain is better than that.' Indeed, I would hope so.

Lindsay Cross

Action Hosting

Do you have a spare room? Would you like to help someone who is homeless? Hosting may suit you.

Newcastle based organisation, Action Foundation, has been developing its hosting scheme and are now recruiting their first volunteer hosts. The scheme will be helping destitute refused asylum seekers in the Tyne and Wear area. Hosts will provide a safe place to sleep in their homes for people who have nowhere else to go, for an agreed and defined amount of time.

Full induction training will be provided for all hosts who are who are eligible to become part of the scheme.

For more information about becoming a host look at our website

www.actionfoundation.org.uk/projects_hosting.html or email Vicki Harris at hosting@actionfoundation.org.uk or tel 0191 231 3113

Vicki Harris
Hosting Co-ordinator
Action Foundation

Thank you to ESPA

WERS was delighted to welcome students and staff from ESPA College recently. They brought with them a wonderful collection of donations for the Clothing Store and were keen to hear about our work. It would be great to keep in touch and work together in the future!

WERS Autumn Raffle

To raise funds for the WERS hardship fund, a small group of volunteers has been working hard behind the scenes to organise a licensed raffle. We have many prizes including £200 of Thomas Cook vouchers, a photographic voucher worth £250, a Barbour jacket, a personalised terracotta pot (Potting Shed at Hexham), a selection of prizes for activities and outings and also food related items. A full list of prizes will be available on our website (www.wers.org.uk). If anyone is able to sell tickets on our behalf via their own networks, that would be very much appreciated. Tickets will be £1 each (in books of five) and will be drawn on **Friday 14 October 2016**. Please contact Melissa, the Office Manager at WERS for tickets.

SAVE THE DATE!

WERS AGM 2016

Tuesday 4 October

**6pm at Westgate Baptist Church,
NE4 6NX**

**Guest speaker: Jonathan Ellis,
Head of Policy, Research and
Advocacy, British Red Cross**

Jonathan is a campaigner who has built a strong and successful track record of leading successful advocacy campaigns over the past 15 years. He led one of OXFAM GB's global campaigns, has led successful UK campaigns on refugee and housing issues and now leads policy, research and advocacy for the British Red Cross.

Jonathan is also Vice-Chair of City of Sanctuary (building a national movement in defence of asylum seekers and refugees).

Jo Cox MP

WERS was deeply saddened by the senseless murder of Jo Cox MP. She campaigned tirelessly for refugees and will be much missed.

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