



West End Refugee Service

strength through support



## Issue 73: April 2018

### WERS' Awareness-raising Programme



WERS continues to reach hundreds of young people through its education and awareness-raising talks. Ali, WERS' Support Worker, recently gave his annual talk to students at Newcastle High School for Girls. Every single student in Year 9 answered 'Yes' to the question about being more willing to promote positive messages about asylum seekers and refugees after hearing his talk. Brilliant! Here is a selection of their answers when they were asked 'why?'

*'It has been very inspirational and has motivated me to learn more and promote it as well'*

*'More awareness of these events needs to happen and Ali's story helps people to help others'*

*'Because they all have vital reasons for moving into the UK and we should be embracing and welcoming refugees into the community'*

*'Because my parents were asylum seekers'*

*'Yes, because what with everything that is happening in the world today it is more vital than ever'*

*'People should be able to live wherever they want as the world is everybody's home'*

### IMPORTANT NEWS!

#### General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which comes into force on 25 May 2018, everyone who receives communications from WERS has now actively to opt in to continue receiving them. If you would like to continue to receive WERS mailings, please complete the slip and return it to the office in the stamped addressed envelope by 25 May at the latest. If you do not opt in, WERS will no longer be able, by law, to send you any communications and you will be removed from our mailing list. WERS certainly does not want that to happen! We very much hope that you will take a few minutes to complete the form and send us your written consent if you receive communications in hard copy through the post. Those receiving electronic communications, are asked to respond to the message in the accompanying email.

WERS will continue to encrypt your data and store it securely on our server unless you advise us otherwise. WERS has never and will never share your data with any other organisation. WERS apologises for any inconvenience that this new requirement may cause you and thanks you for your understanding.

Sarah Smart, one of our Volunteer Co-ordinators, has left WERS for pastures new. We thank her for all that she did for our clients and volunteers during her 5 years at WERS. We all wish her well for the future!



Northumberland Club in Jesmond has chosen WERS to be its charity of the year. Two of our wonderful volunteers, Bill and Chris, are members of the club and WERS would like to thank them for promoting our work. There will be a number of fundraising events through the year. Maybe the club you belong to might want to follow suit! There is some useful information on fundraising on the 'How to Help' page of our website.



### A mosque for Stornoway



I have been following with great interest the news story about the first mosque to be built in the Western Isles of Scotland. A disused building in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis is being converted into the place of worship. During the last couple of years, Lewis has received a number of Syrian families through the Syrian Resettlement Programme and this has swelled the number of Muslims living on the island to around 50. Up until now they have not had a place of worship and have had to pray in their homes and when someone dies, they have had to wait several days for an imam to get to the island to say the funeral prayers.

A crowdfunding campaign was launched and has exceeded the £50,000 target needed for the building work. Mr Ghaffar, a local businessman, said the Muslim and Christian communities on the islands "run in a parallel course" due to both having strong traditional values. Free Church of Scotland minister, the Reverend James Maciver, said: "I think that whatever religion one belongs to it is right a facility is given to them as a civil liberties issue, a building in which they can meet."

The builders are working flat out to have the mosque ready for Ramadan which begins in May. "It's a big challenge to get it done in time for Ramadan, but we'll do our best. Some things are out of our control, but now we have millions of people praying for us. It's

got a lot of momentum," says Rashid from Leeds, whose construction firm is undertaking the work.

"Christianity and Islam have very similar values, the same values in fact," says Rashid. "Once we have finished building, we will have an open-door policy. Everyone is welcome."

**Creative  
FUSE  
Innovation Pilot**

This Creative Fuse North East Innovation Pilot is supported by:

Arts & Humanities Research Council

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www.creativefusene.org.uk

This exciting new project to develop a website which will match asylum seekers' and refugees' skills with community volunteering opportunities is progressing well. We have held two workshops with our clients to explore how best to develop the website. We have found out about their skills and interests, the sort of volunteering opportunities they are interested in and consulted them about the content and functionality of the website.



Last week we invited organisations from various sectors to bring volunteer opportunities to a workshop. Attendees included representatives from Centre for Life, Great North Exhibition, Seven Stories, Newcastle Hospitals and St. Nicholas' Cathedral. By early May Roots and Wings will have a working prototype of the website and everyone can start creating their profiles.

Lindsay Cross

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