



**West End Refugee Service**

*strength through support*



Dear WERS supporters and friends,

I am writing with some important updates.

After a short time with WERS, our Director, Steve Cowen, has decided that for personal reasons his future lies elsewhere. We wish him all the best. The Trustees are working closely with WERS staff to ensure that our services continue with as little disruption as possible. WERS will continue to serve our clients to the best of our ability, and the Trustees are hugely grateful to the staff team at WERS for their dedication and commitment. We aim to re-advertise for the post of Director as soon as possible, and would be grateful if you could bring the vacancy to the attention of anyone who might be interested and suitably qualified.

We are mindful that BTMyDonate, which a number of people use on the WERS website to make financial donations, will cease operation in June, and we are looking for a suitable replacement for this mechanism.

As many of you will know, WERS reaches its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, and we look forward very much to marking the occasion with a celebration to be combined with our AGM in the autumn – the date will be advised in the next couple of months.

We remain grateful for all that you give as supporters and friends of WERS and for the ways in which you make an invaluable contribution to our work.

**Ian Flintoft**

**On behalf of the WERS Trustees**

**Issue 76: New Year 2019**

**Welcome to the first edition of the 2019 WERS newsletter. We would like to wish all of our supporters a very Happy New Year!**

### **Festive Week**

**We were overwhelmed by the huge amount of toiletries and gifts that we received this year so thank you to everyone that donated. All of our 144 destitute clients received a bag of gifts, as well as an extra cash bonus payment. This was only possible due to our supporters who gave so generously to the Hardship fund over the festive period.**

**We are always very grateful to receive donations of basic toiletries for our destitute clients throughout the whole year, as well as the usual clothing and smaller household items for our clothing store.**

**Many thanks also to everyone that attended our AGM back in November.**



*Our support workers and clothing store volunteers during festive week*

## WERS volunteer project receives Big Lottery Funding

We are excited to announce that the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund have awarded WERS a three-year grant towards the development of our Volunteer Project – Support, Empowerment, Community.

The funding, which begins in April 2019, allows us to further establish our work with volunteers as befrienders, support workers and clothing store assistants – all of whom provide invaluable services to our clients. We will also be able to develop our new initiative *Skillsmatch*, a project supporting asylum seekers and refugees into volunteering roles.

From April, WERS will host weekly *Skillsmatch* sessions for clients, organise supported group volunteering opportunities and help find interesting voluntary roles for individual clients. *Skillsmatch* allows individuals to apply and develop their skills and make a positive contribution to the local community, which so many are eager to do.

We are very grateful to the National Lottery for this award and are really much looking forward to developing this exciting project. We would also like to thank all at Creative Fuse North East and our partners Roots and Wings, Newcastle University and Teesside University who helped create the original *Skillsmatch* pilot.

We'll share more news of our newly shaped volunteer project with you in the future.



*Clients at an introductory Skillsmatch session for volunteering at Scotswood Garden. Several individuals are now volunteering at the garden on a weekly basis.*

### **Team WERS**

### **Office details:**

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