

2013 - 2014

ANNUAL REPORT

Refugee Therapy Centre



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*Message from Jeremy
Corbyn MP - RTC Patron*

It hardly seems possible that the Refugee Therapy Centre is approaching its fifteenth anniversary! I well remember the early days at Manor Gardens and the struggles with funders to develop the organisation and move to the wonderful building in Leeds Place. Congratulations to Aida for your vision and determination, and also to your team of fantastic supporters who worked selflessly over the years to make the vision a reality!

You have helped people come out of the most difficult and perilous times of their lives and helped their families get back together. Above all you have provided that continuing sense of reassurance and support to victims of vile abuse and oppression.

I am very proud to have served as a Patron and I look forward to the next fifteen years of dedication and service to some of the most vulnerable members of our community in north London.



Report from the Chair

I am deeply honoured and proud to write my first annual report as the new Chair of the Trustees this year, having been elected in 2013. My first thoughts are to my predecessor, Dr John Denford, who has stepped down as the Chair of the Trustees after so many years of involvement with the Refugee Therapy Centre. Do rest assured that John is still very involved with the Centre and I would like to thank him for everything he has taught me and for his hard work for the Centre over the years.

It has been another year of financial challenges for the Centre, in the current climate where resources are limited for all healthcare organisations, however - as Aida's report will detail - we have managed to keep our usual high standards in teaching, training, clinical work and research and to establish the centre as a leading organisation in the provision of therapy, advocacy, practical support and mentorship to a wide variety of humanity affected by persecution, human rights violation, trauma, losses and hardship.

From an academic point of view, a lot has been achieved by the Centre, under Aida Alayarian's leadership and expertise, in the field of trauma work, especially on the theoretical underpinnings of resilience.

In my mind, the Refugee Therapy centre has now established itself as a truly resilient organisation in the face of financial, political and social hardship.

Our times are not at all conducive to bring to the fore the human rights' agenda, and the clinical and humanitarian needs of traumatised refugees. In times of financial constraints and limited resources foreigners, immigrants and refugees are mostly looked at with suspicion and antipathy, they are perceived as competing for jobs and welfare and threatening the cultural uniformity and identity of the host country. Whilst sensationalistic news continue to be published, about refugee families occupying millionaire properties all over the country, costing the taxpayers thousands of pounds per month in housing benefits, it becomes increasingly difficult to establish a different public image of immigrants and refugees, and to convince the public opinion of the immense human, cultural, academic and economic potential of this diverse, resilient population. To continue to ensure funding in this cultural and political climate is in itself a great achievement, entirely due to the ethics and the motivation of Aida and all those who work and volunteer for the Centre. The establishment of a realistic portrait of the refugee is, in my view, one of the main political, cultural and social roles of the Refugee Therapy Centre within the British Society. A role that is certainly challenging, but, we all believe, achievable.

From an academic perspective, the unstoppable advance of evidence based medicine makes life very hard for those of us who are still deeply convinced of the therapeutic and theoretical validity of the Psychoanalytic theory. Again, the Centre has defended its position very effectively, by its leading role within the Council of Psychoanalysis and Jungian Analysis of the UK Council for Psychotherapy, and by establishing an MA in Intercultural Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, making links with leading academic institutions.

Referrals have continued to increase this year, and besides facing the clinical complexities of an ethnically and culturally diverse patients' population who have endured unmentionable hardship and trauma, the trustees, therapists, volunteers, workers and students of the Refugee Therapy Centre continue to face the complexity of the policy, organisational, institutional, bureaucratic, academic, workforce and legal requirements in their day to day lives.

Words fail me to express my gratitude to all of them and my deep admiration for their continued motivation to carry out their work. Our staff and students, under Aida's leadership, have made the Centre what it is today: much more than a place of hope and care for refugee, the Centre is by now a leading organisation in the fight against trauma, injustice, and human rights violations,

with a very well established political, social and humanitarian mandate and a just as well established reputation for integrity.

I would not want my words to sound too pessimistic and to be misunderstood as excessively oppositional. On the contrary, we are not at all alone and over the years we have managed to create and maintain links and cooperation with a number of like minded people, organisations, charities and academic institutions who share our same values and hopes.

Our work for the Centre gives us much joy, in the consolidated conviction that the world can be a better place and we all can contribute to change.





Report from the Clinical Director & CEO

Aida Alayarian

I am both proud and encouraged to report that despite the unstable economic climate, we press on with our work, reaching growing numbers of those in needs. This is due to our increased ability to use our resources effectively and strong relations we have within the team and with the communities we serve.

This year increasing referrals coming from the community, represented in 270 self-referrals, showing a growing engagement. This of course decreases the need to rely on social workers and social services resources, GPs or other statutory agencies. This year in particular, many young people, amongst them unaccompanied minors have come to us for help, raising our concern with service provision available to young people and children in vulnerable positions within Greater London. 435 people we served this year were under 27 years of age, which is 37% of the Centre total referrals. We reaffirm our commitment prioritising children and their families, and those that have been in the UK less than ten years, particularly working to increase the accessibility of our services as we are made aware that other services are often not meeting the needs.

We have been able to offer services in 12 languages: Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Dari, English, Farsi, French, Italian, Spanish, Somali and Turkish. Individual, group and family sessions continue to be offered mainly based on client linguistic and cultural needs. Working to provide appropriate psychological intervention to refugees and asylum seekers means we need to stay vigilant of community needs and ensure we have a robust mechanism for feedback to improve our services. The regular feedbacks we are receiving from clients have given us the opportunity to reflect on provision of our services to meet the needs of people we are serving.

Support Outreach Community Development Workers (CDW)

One of the main aims of the CDWs is to break the stigma attached to mental health amongst the hardest to reach refugee, asylum seeking, destitute and other black and ethnic minority communities. CDWs offer a safe and confidential listening ear in their own languages if desired to those who are dealing with feelings of depression, frustration, stress, anxiety and isolation which can be overwhelming and particularly when language is a barrier to communication.

The team members coordinate with each other to offer drop-in hours every Wednesday evening between 5.00pm and 7.00pm, and Thursday between 10.30am and 12.30pm. This is important as this offers the space for people to telephone or turn up at the Centre without knowing what they want – sometimes, feeling overwhelmed by their own needs, it can be a relief to find somewhere welcoming and homely which offers the space to think alongside someone about what their most immediate needs are, what can be addressed and how they can feel empowered and capable of managing their lives.

CDWs aim to help ease the process of integration by offering assistance to clients who may have mental, physical or social problems resulting from being a refugee or in the process of seeking asylum. CDWs sensitively work to address clients' particular needs through the process of assessment and discussing the best ways to help people how to adapt or improve their situation. They also aim to help clients to feel empowered and improve their resilience by thinking positively and working towards agreed goals. Progress is closely observed and discussed with the team in regular supervision groups.



Our SOCDW project is in its 13th year. Sadly, due to lack of funding we have bid farewell to a number of valued, senior CDWs, and also the project coordinator. They are already dearly missed by staff and clients alike, and we are extremely grateful for their important contribution and commitment to the work of RTC over the years. We are also pleased that they have moved onto new opportunities in education or employment and continue providing their valuable services in the communities in need. This of course has been a difficult change for us to adjust to, as a community and for the project. Natalie Yeong also stepped down from managing the CDW and Mentoring projects and is focussing on her training in Intercultural Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy and her clinical placement at the Centre. This has also been a great loss and sudden change, but despite our difficulties, I am pleased to report that we together as a team have managed to make another successful year and are looking forward to making another year of serving people who come to us for help.

Despite these challenges, the hard work of the CDWs has further developed the Centre's connections with communities at large, with 462 clients referred and supported by the CDW team. Between them, the team offered Support Work in ten languages: Arabic, English, Farsi, French, Italian, Spanish and Turkish, serving people from 48 different countries. Clients were provided support and encouragement in looking for work, voluntary or paid, and finding services that would be able to support their practical needs. Clients are also signposted to a wide range of services depending on the individual needs, including GPs, housing agencies, Job Centres, ESOL classes, Colleges, Refugee Community and IAPT Services, Community Low Centres, Citizens Advice Bureaus, Mind and other Community Organisations.

Mentoring project

We continue to provide weekly one-to-one mentoring sessions in a safe and containing environment. Developed in 2003 in response to feedback from clients, the Mentoring project remains a popular and highly effective way of helping people to develop their English skills and to ease the process of integration and resettlement. Clients can receive help to improve their spelling, speaking, learning to use a computer or practise to get ready for their citizenship exam.

For children and young people, a mentoring session focuses on learning as well as building self-esteem and confidence. Mentors provide help and support to children who might be in a vulnerable situation and not able to catch up with their education, their homework and revision. Mentors offer a space where children can think about other situations; specifically, where there are issues related to a child being bullied due to difficulty with language, level of achievement at school or being a Refugee or Asylum Seeker pupil.



The majority of our mentors are UCL medical students, some of whom have returned to mentor with us for consecutive years. This project is providing double benefits both for clients and mentors. Medical students gain experience in working with refugees and asylum seekers which will inform their future practice, understanding of and sensitivity to refugees' health needs. I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to all Mentors, amongst them specifically Parisa Torabi, Kanika Sharma, Ranjana Raj, Oliver Page, Lara Whitmore, Tomasz Smith and Ahmed El-Sayed for their commitment and hard work.

Development of resilience approach:

We continue to evaluate our work by carrying out ongoing monitoring and evaluation. We have developed a resilience approach research project that will provide data to adequately analyse the effectiveness of intercultural resilience focused therapeutic assessment and intervention. This project will bring together strands of my research into dissociation spanning three decades of clinical practice. Working to deepen insights into how and in what ways healthy dissociation occurs, I have worked with several colleagues over the years to develop a resilience based approach to intercultural psychotherapy. Resilience focused therapy has been both the guiding approach used at RTC as well as the premise for continued research and development.

Currently we are in the second year of a 3-year- research called Refugee Therapy Centre Resilience Study (RTC-RS). The main focus is evaluating the role of intercultural psychoanalytic psychotherapy in the treatment of primary care patients who have endured trauma with treatment resistant depression, anxiety and people who are diagnosed with PTSD. For this research project we are particularly looking at a cohort of 200 patients.. Our data show that 91% of our referrals at the RTC are diagnosed with depression, anxiety and PTSD. Most of these episodes, in the general population, are 'self-limiting' and are managed with the support of family, friends and the individuals' own inner resources. However, in the case of refugees and asylum seekers, socio-economic factors, not speaking the language of the host country, chronic unemployment, isolation and in many cases a total loss of social status may exacerbate psychological deterioration. Unattenuated psychological conditions if unattended can lead to serious and chronic mental health problems from which some patients will never fully recover and will suffer continuously for many years, sometimes requiring hospitalisation. This lack of psychological functioning significantly reduces the quality of life, with higher incidence of suicide as well as increased mortality rates from other illnesses. There are also damaging consequences for the sufferer's family.

Many research studies have been undertaken examining the effectiveness of antidepressants, tranquilisers and other medication. Studies have also shown benefits from cognitive behaviour treatments for no severe and non-chronic depression and anxiety. However, in more severe and chronic conditions, both research and treatments available are very limited. Our research programme examines the role of intercultural psychoanalytic psychotherapy in the treatment of these patients. The psychological intervention sets out to address the personal and psychological

issues which we think underlie patient's chronic mental health problems, mainly depression, anxiety and PTSD. As evidence-based guidelines and commissioning have assumed greater importance, there is a need for controlled trials of psychodynamic and psychoanalytic treatments in depression. The current lack of randomised, controlled trials in psychotherapy generally and lack of intercultural therapy stand as a barrier to the development of improved services to benefit refugees, asylum seekers and other people who develop chronic vulnerabilities as the result of trauma they have endured. Narratives derived from therapy sessions will be incorporated into the study, both in relation to the experiences of the patients and the professionals working with them.

We at the RTC are well positioned to carry out this trial as we have a pool of trained therapists and a body of clinical and research expertise between Staff and Trustees. On a practical level, we are accessible to a relatively large number of patients.

Group work:

Several new groups have been developed this year. Following feedback received from clients and based upon a growing number of referrals that indicated the potential need for such service, we began a Refugee and Asylum Seeker Lesbian Group. This group is led by one of our Senior Therapists, Nerma Biscevic, and has been thriving since its inauguration. Nerma also continues to run our English-speaking Women's Group and Young Men's groups as in years past, which continue to have strong attendance and act as a vital part of the service provision of RTC. During the last year a Turkish-speaking Women's Group has been developed by Nerma Biscevic and Zubeyde Arabaci. Our Senior Consultant and Therapist, Lennox Thomas, continues to lead the English-speaking Men's Group which receives much positive feedback. Since last year, our Senior Community Development Worker, Zubeyde Arabaci, has offered a Story-telling Group supported by one of our mentors Parisa Torabi for women who are learning English, many of whom feel unconfident to attend college or other publicly held courses. All group work at RTC holds a central aim of creating a safe, containing space where individuals can share their stories and experiences without fear of judgement or disrespect, and in effect, break social and cultural isolation that is often experienced by many refugees and asylum seekers. With the addition of a new team of Support Outreach Community Development Workers, we anticipate that several new groups will be launched within the coming weeks.



Training:



This year, after thirteen years of offering our Foundation Course in Counselling Refugees, we did not run this one year course as a foundation in intercultural psychodynamic and psychoanalytic theories as they apply to working with refugees and other people who have endured extreme trauma, giving students the opportunity to explore how psychoanalytic techniques may be useful in this context. The training we provided seeks to increase educational and occupational accessibility for those from refugee, asylum seeker and other black and minority ethnic communities in an effort to build capacity and provide a platform for

recognising the skills of these communities that are too often marginalised or discounted. We are now running MA in Intercultural Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in collaborative partnership with the University of East London. In an effort to join fully accredited training with an academic component, this programme has been designed to build competency of its trainees in both the theoretical and clinical aptitude for professional and effective practice in an intercultural setting. Following from decades of experience, enabled through strong networks of committed experts in the field of trauma recovery and psychoanalysis, this programme is considered the first of its kind in Europe, providing students with an opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge from clinicians and researchers in this growing field as well as having an active role in the continuing evaluation and re-formulation of psychoanalytic thinking from intercultural perspectives. The collaborative partnership with UEL however will end with this cohort of students and we are negotiating for alternative academic partners.

I am grateful and feel indebted to each of our lecturers and teaching staff who give their time and expertise so generously, often without any remuneration. I especially want to express my deep gratitude to Bob Hinshelwood, Micol Ascoli, Dilys Daws, Lennox Thomas, Nerma Biscevic, Jo-Anne Carlyle, Geoff Ferguson, Tirril Harris, Roland Littlewood, Lionel Bailly, Mary Lynne Ellis, Paul Atkinson, Zahari Ngah, Pamela Stewart, Noreen O' Connor, Karl Figlio, Isobel Urquhart and many others who have helped the trainees' development and learning to expand.

My appreciation goes to all of my dedicated colleagues, paid and volunteer, both Clinical and the Administrative Team, who ensure the day-to-day operation of the Centre continues smoothly as well as help to innovate and develop new strategies to carry out our duties. The hard work and commitment of our young volunteers Eleanor Nairne, Hanna El-Sayed, Anna-Zeri Julian-Temir, Narin Alimohammadi in administration and interpreting is an ongoing inspiration to me. I continue to learn from their enthusiasm and energy to serve clients with care, integrity and genuine human contact; I am grateful for the countless hours they so generously gifted to the Centre's activity; without their commitment, it would not be possible for us to be as sustainable and forward looking an organisation as we are.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who make this work possible to a high standard throughout the year. My very special gratitude goes first to our charitable funders and commissionaires, who recognise and share our assessment of needs enabling RTC to grow and fulfil its aims.

Our dedicated Patrons continue to provide unfailing encouragement and support and I send my heart-felt appreciation to them all: Jeremy Corbyn MP, Eva Hoffman, Roland Littlewood, Claude Moraes MEP and Eric Rayner.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Board of Trustees for their commitment to guiding the policy and practice at the RTC, ensuring the objectives of the charity are met and supporting us during challenges we have been facing.

I would like to express my unwavering esteem and gratitude to all the Therapists, Counsellors, Psychologists, Community Development Workers and Mentors who continue to provide the highest quality services to all those who walk through our door. By putting the needs of people we are serving first, as a team, we continue to strengthen our ability ensuring not to deviate from our objectives. I am so grateful and proud of working with so many of my colleagues who take the extra effort to reflect on our work and continue for the RTC to be a place of hope for the many who have lost their homes.

Finally, I wish to record my sincere and heartfelt thanks that I think we all owe to our outgoing Chairman John Denford for his extremely sympathetic eloquent approach and for his kindness in governing. It encourages us immensely to know that a man of his education and culture, and his commitment to the work of RTC since its inception, 15 years ago, and his general commitment to human rights, remains with us in the progress of our work. I am glad to continue having his support and wisdom as a member of the Trustees. I remember very well, there were times when I and others sorely grieved at the destruction which has gone on; RTC, John have been able to prevent it in the teeth of the general crudeness upon us. I give my heartiest thanks to John for his guidance, advice and his excellent chairmanship during the last few years. I also wish to give my special thanks to his successor, our new Chair, Micol Ascoli, for her invaluable contribution during the past 7 years as an ordinary Trustees member. I am looking forward to working with her new ideas and insights which she so skilfully injects into the mental health service as a Consultant Psychiatrist and intercultural clinician from whom we at the RTC have benefited, amongst many. Her noble disposition to serve the community has been with us for many years and, building on her predecessors, will continue the pursuit of excellence.



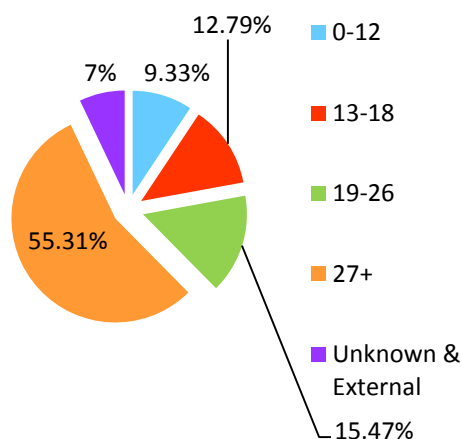
Below is the summary of the services that we provided during the period of 2013-2014

Summary of activities undertaken from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, we have offered 10,413 sessions to 1157 clients from 48 countries. Of these 32% were male and 68% female.

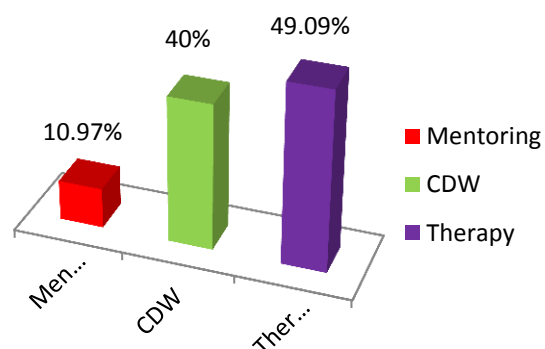
Total referrals	1157
Of these, number of clients offered psychotherapy & counselling	568
No. offered Support Outreach Community Development	462
No. offered Mentoring	127
No. Individual offered therapy	496
No. Group offered group Therapy	72

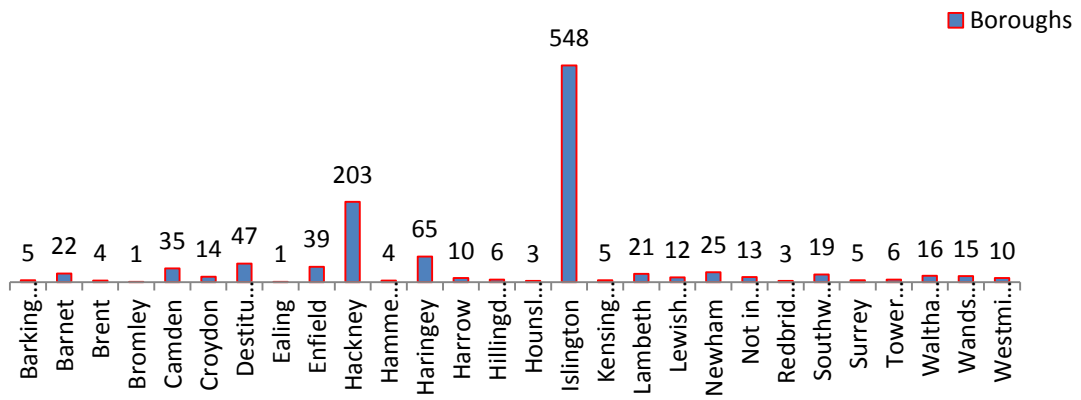


Ages



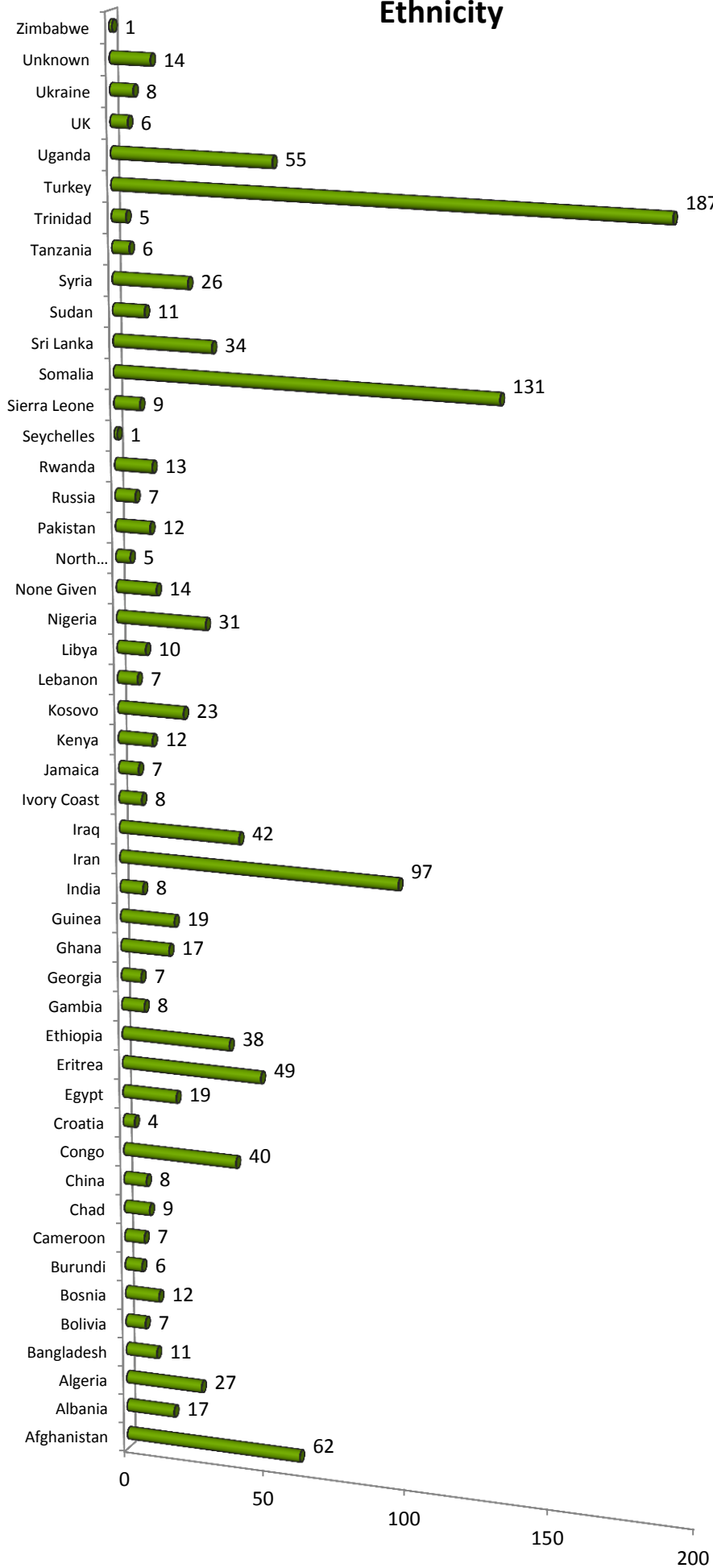
Services Provided





Ethnicity

■ Ethnicity



**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(Including Income and Expenditure Account)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2014**

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Capital Funds	Total Funds	Total Funds
		2014	2014	2014	2014	2013
	Notes	£	£	£	£	£
Incoming Resources						
Incoming resources from generated funds						
Voluntary income						
Grants, donations and legacies	2	109,773	75,917	-	185,690	233,697
Volunteer time		193,150	-	-	193,150	193,150
Activities for generating funds		35	-	-	35	395
Bank interest receivable		151	-	-	151	2,685
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities	3	189,283	-	-	189,283	232,640
Other incoming resources		-	-	-	-	-
Total Incoming resources		492,392	75,917	-	568,309	662,567
Resources Expended						
Cost of generating funds						
<i>Costs of generating voluntary income</i>		25,557	-	-	25,557	23,619
Charitable Activities						
<i>Therapy</i>		322,630	87,943	-	410,573	437,980
Governance costs		36,862	-	-	36,862	32,114
Total resources expended	4	385,049	87,943	-	472,992	493,713
Net incoming / outgoing resources before transfers		107,343	(12,026)	-	95,317	168,854
Gross transfers between funds		(2,354)	-	2,354	-	-
Net movement in funds		104,989	(12,026)	2,354	95,317	168,854
Reconciliation of Funds						
Total Funds brought forward		255,878	12,026	1,710,699	1,978,603	1,809,749
Total Funds carried forward		360,867	-	1,713,053	2,073,920	1,978,603

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year. All incoming resources expended derive from continuing activities.



Words from Staffs

Zubeyde Arabaci



Community Development Worker & Mentoring Project Coordinator

This has been another exciting year at the RTC. I have been working at the Centre for eight years now and it just seems as if I started yesterday!

Every year, thousands of people are travelling all around the world to find a safe haven. Most of them have witnessed and experienced loss, humiliation, persecution, imprisonment, torture and displacement. These sorts of difficulties leave many refugees and asylum seekers in a vulnerable position and may create psychological difficulties making the process of adaptation and integration into a new society much harder. This is why the existence of RTC is important. I remember so vividly, when I joined the Centre as a bi-lingual support outreach worker many years ago, Aida said: "When you work with your client focus on their resilience rather than their vulnerability". This is the ethos of our work at the Centre. It is wonderful to see how our clients regain their self-esteem, rediscover strength in themselves, take control of their life and become active members of the society.

I am privileged to be part of the Centre and would like to thank all our clients and my colleagues for sharing their experience with me.

Ranjana Raj



Mentor

I joined the RTC this year as a volunteer mentor. I have had the pleasure of meeting and working

with many wonderful people, and have been made to feel extremely welcome at the centre by all of the staff. I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to work with clients from different backgrounds and witness the positive impact that mentoring sessions can have on these individuals. The majority of clients I have worked with have been children. This has allowed me to develop a completely new set of communication skills and is something I value greatly, as I am considering a future career in paediatrics. It has been hugely rewarding to see them develop knowledge and confidence in subjects such as English and mathematics, and thrive in a relaxed learning environment.

Working at the RTC has been a true privilege. I highly recommend the mentoring project to anyone wanting to meet incredible individuals, volunteer in an extremely supportive environment and have an invaluable experience of self-development.

Parisa Torabi



Mentor

My third year at the RTC has been both enjoyable and rewarding. On top of mentoring many young people during transformative and challenging years of their lives, I have also been visiting a variety of organisations and NHS services to inform them of all the services we provide here. In a time of continued government cuts, I have seen how this has impacted service provision to many refugee and asylum seeking groups. This has made me greater appreciate the work of all on the RTC team in providing this valued and important service in such a caring and welcoming environment. I would like to say thank you to Aida and all of the RTC team for all of their support and hard work this year; it has been a great pleasure working with them.

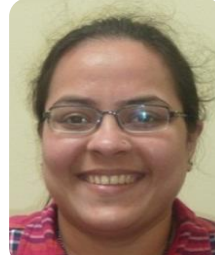
Lennox Thomas



Consultant Psychotherapist

My work continues with individuals, families and the Men's Group. From that there are interesting contrasts of people who have been in the UK for many years and continue to have had great difficulty with the trauma of leaving their homelands for asylum. Some appear to have settled well, having employment and accommodation but are unable to sleep at nights. The familiar nightmares keep them awake and they feel that they have only physically escaped. The most difficult thing appears to be erasing the memories of torture. I am told examples of people being in a safe place now but occasionally fearful and panicked. A man from the Middle East said that he collected his two children from school in a London suburb and as they skipped down the road ahead of him he was gripped by fear that he had to get off the street and take them home before a car bomb explodes killing them all. We need to invest in better mental health care for those who experience trauma which takes a long time to recede in the patient's mind. I fear that neglecting to do this will result in inexplicable behaviours triggered by toxic memories which restrict the ability of refugees to recover and live satisfying productive lives. The Men's Group continues to work with men who have had similar problems, behaving with inappropriate rage or fear in social situations. The asylum seeker who lashes out at the neighbour who complains about the noise of his radio which plays all night to drown out nightmares will not understand his rage. The noise keeps him connected to the present time and being told to stop playing his radio seems like a struggle for his life. The work in the groups helps people to understand and change their behaviours in the context of others who have, or have had similar difficulties.

Shweta Sayed



Administrative Assistant

This has been an exciting and transformative year at RTC. The arrival of 2013 brought several new developments. Along with being the Centre administrator, I took over the responsibility of the Course Administrator. Our students have successfully finished their second year and are approaching the final year towards completion of MA in Intercultural Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. I send my warm congratulations to all the students for their hard work!

I am grateful to have the opportunity to work with such respectful, hardworking and compassionate people serving the community and look forward to seeing the ways in which RTC is further able to achieve its worthwhile aims.

Tomasz Smith



Mentor

This will be my third year at the refugee therapy centre. I normally spend a few hours here each week as part of the student mentor project. It can be frustrating at times, and I have spent a good part of my time here waiting and wondering whether clients will actually turn up. However when the meetings do work out it can be very rewarding; being able to see people learn and gain confidence over weeks and months makes the hours of waiting worthwhile.

I think I have probably gained some valuable skills myself. Working with clients of different ages and from different backgrounds has probably made me

a better communicator, and has helped me to think about effective teaching strategies and the limits of my own knowledge.

Oliver Page



Mentor

When I first started volunteering at the Refugee Therapy Centre back in October, I was struck by how helpful everyone is here. Both the staff and the current mentors strived to make me and the other new mentors feel at home and comfortable in our new roles. This was much appreciated, as I had little idea of what to expect. I have found that whilst mentoring refugees can be challenging and frustrating, it is equally rewarding when you put in the time and begin to see positive changes happening in people's lives. The best thing about mentoring is that it is all about helping an underprivileged, often overlooked sector of our society. I am grateful to be part of a scheme that continually provides opportunities to make a tangible difference in the wider community.

Kiymet Omur Biyolaku



Counsellor

I am a Person-Centred Albanian speaking Counsellor being involved with the Refugee Therapy Centre since 2003. I can boast a rich and dynamic experience during the time of being part of the Centre, which has helped me learn and grow not only on a professional level but on a personal one as well. And I still continue to do so.

I never cease to be amazed and inspired by the dedicated work of my colleagues, former and present; who are committed and passionate in their roles in providing a confidential and containing environment for the clients who seek our help. Working with clients who have survived most adverse life experiences can be quite challenging. As a counsellor I feel deep respect and am left in awe at the strength and resilience clients often possess. I feel privileged to be part of a journey they share with me.

I would like to thank each and everyone at the Refugee Therapy Centre for making this unique place possible. I would also like to thank my Supervisor for all her support and input in my work, as well as my supervision colleagues for the rich and varied perspectives that we share in our meetings.

Lara Whitmore



Mentor

The Refugee Therapy Centre gives fabulous help to many people on a weekly basis. Mentoring is available to suit people's varied need, from language skills to help with school work to personalised advice and guidance. By seeing clients every week, mentors are able to establish great personal relationships and understand their needs fully. I would fully recommend anyone to volunteer their time to the mentoring programme as you will be rewarded by helping clients achieve their goals and supported by the other fantastic staff.

Eleanor Nairne



Volunteer Librarian

I have been volunteering as the librarian here at the Centre for around 18 months now. I maintain the small collection of books, articles and journals that we have here on site, sorting donations onto the relevant databases and preparing (and in some cases, repairing) them for borrowing, before filing them onto the shelves in order to minimise the effort required by my customers. It is a job that I greatly enjoy, within a group that I always find to be very cordial, apart from when the time comes to collect fines!

Alessandra Mongardi



Student

After working last year at RTC as CDW, this year I applied for my MA's work placement. At the Centre I see patients on a weekly basis and I receive supervision: this, together with my colleagues, helps to reflect on the therapy and I am very fortunate to have the possibility to work interculturally, experiencing in practice what I have been studying. It shows that working psychodynamically within an intercultural framework is not only possible but has a positive impact on people's lives.

Mohammad Jameer



Finance Administrator

I have now been involved with the centre for almost nine years as Finance Administrator and it seems like only yesterday since I joined, with every day presenting a fresh challenge. The diversity of cultures and views which prevail make the experience an enlightening one, both strengthening and creating bonds between those who meet at the Centre.

The success of the Centre is due to the staff, volunteers and management committee who provide a continued atmosphere of warmth, support and dedication, opening the doors to a brighter future for those who have suffered. Lastly I would like to thank Aida for giving me the opportunity to work here.

Ahmed El-Sayed



Mentor

I have now been at the Refugee Therapy Centre for 3 years. The main reason I continue to come back is because of the excellent work done at the Centre. From the administrators to the therapists to the mentors, everybody at the Centre works incredibly hard to ensure that the help and support offered to refugees from all around the world is of the highest standard.

I have personally enjoyed mentoring at the RTC because I have felt consistently that I was making a real difference in the refugees' lives. Being with them over a period of months means you get to know them and their lives and observe their progress in both academics and their self-

confidence. I've also particularly liked the family feel of the staff at the centre.

I would therefore highly urge anybody looking to help or work at the RTC to enquire further, as it is an amazing place to learn and make a real and discernible difference to other people.

Paul Atkinson



Psychotherapist

It has been a privilege to work as a member of the Refugee Therapy Centre's staff over the last eight months. The Centre is working with one of the most important communities in the UK - people whose welfare directly reflects the health of our society's humanitarian values. The staff team bring an inspiring wealth of experience, skill and commitment to the work with clients, across a wide range of services of administrative support, advice, education, and psychotherapy. They have greeted my arrival at the Centre with warmth and good humour. I am very grateful to them all. As well as seeing clients for therapy, I have been teaching on the training course. This has been a delight. The students come to the training in psychotherapy with a background of community work and a refreshing enthusiasm for the value of psychoanalytic understanding to the work with their clients.

Isobel Urquhart



Psychotherapist

I began work with the Refugee Therapy Centre in 2013, having first met Aida Alayarian at Occupy St Paul's. I was honoured to be invited to become part of the fantastic team of workers at RTC, who have been the most generous and supportive of colleagues. From the supervisions to the unfailing kindness of the front office staff, going to RTC to work is a weekly pleasure. It is such a privilege to work with our clients who have been through so much and who sometimes receive so little back from society - my encounters with my clients have been transformational, and I hope that this has been of benefit to the people I have worked with. I certainly owe them a debt of thanks for all that they have helped me to understand about their lives, their courage, endurance and humour as well as the deep trauma and loss they have endured.

Anna-Zeri Julian-Temir



Volunteer

I spent several months volunteering at the Refugee Therapy Centre; the experience was thoroughly positive and enjoyable. While my position did not extend beyond work in the office I was welcomed by everyone and felt completely included. One of the most notable aspects of the Refugee Therapy Centre is the warm, friendly and open atmosphere and I feel very fortunate to have been involved with such a fantastic organisation.

Nerma Biscevic



Psychotherapist, Clinical Co-ordinator

I am a Bosnian speaking psychotherapist. Over the past year I have been co-ordinating clinical activities at the Centre making sure that clients referred to our service were offered the support they need; respecting, as much as possible, their cultural and linguistic needs.

As a practitioner I have been working with clients in one-to-one and group settings. In addition to the existing English Speaking Women's Group, Lesbian Group and Young Men's Group, and with the help of Zubeyde Arabaci, I have set up a Turkish Speaking Women's Group, which is now working steadily.

Apart from direct work with clients, receiving and offering clinical supervision has been a valuable source of learning and inspiration as we are continually challenged to reflect on what we do, bearing in mind human vulnerability as well as resourcefulness and strength.

My work with students has included giving lectures, co-ordinating work placements and offering supervision to those students who are on work placement at the Centre. Students' interest, hard work and progress are evident, and have been a real pleasure to watch.

Part of my responsibility has been to provide supervision for our CDWs whose multifaceted work includes offering emotional support to clients.

And last but not least, I have had the opportunity to supervise the work of our volunteer mentors, whose enthusiasm and skills are amazing and with whom it has been a great pleasure to work.

Being part of the RTC team since 2002, when I first joined the Centre, has, in many ways, been enriching and valuable.

Shahrzad Khamoush



Counsellor

My small contribution, one day a week at Refugee Therapy Centre, means a lot to me; personally and professionally. As ever, I appreciate and enjoy working with a professional and caring team.

Edlira Shehaj



Research Assistant

I have had the opportunity to be a mentor at the Refugee Therapy Centre since 2012 and it was a great learning curve on a personal and professional level. I continue to volunteer and currently I am involved with the Story Telling Women's Group which I have been running since February 2014. The commitment to those attending the weekly sessions is an enjoyable and rewarding experience. The group is small but the sessions offered are very helpful to the women in need of improving their English. The sessions are used to encourage sharing of experiences and stories about themselves in English. While this is not an easy task for them to do the group setting accommodates participation for attendees to support each other learn. The comfortable and secure setting provided is also essential for their confidence building through the sessions. The main challenge for the group has been teaching basic skills at different levels while being respectful and keeping in consideration individual cultures. There is great support available however, for myself and other mentors via supervisions to help with any such challenges. I have also engaged

in other projects with the Centre such as the Resilience Research which is aiming to redevelop an assessment tool for refugees, asylum seekers and the destitute who have suffered trauma. This research is an on-going project that I am excited about and look forward to its successful completion.

Natalie Yeong



Ex Project Coordinator/Student

Having been a member of staff at RTC for many years, I finally moved on to concentrate on my studies. I remain in contact with the Centre as a student on the Refugee Therapy Centre MA training. I was grateful to be offered a clinical placement at the Centre; it has been an honour to learn at the heart of this intercultural organisation. I look forward to the rest of my placement which

has so far, been a great learning experience with wonderful supervision.

Kanika Sharma



Mentor

I have spent the last year volunteering at the RTC, an experience that has been truly enjoyable. Working with my mentees has consistently been a highlight to my week, and I have gained much from it. It has been rewarding to see the progress they have made in improving their English and mathematics, but mostly it has been rewarding getting to know them as individuals. I am grateful to have been given this opportunity to work with them, and I would encourage others to do so too.



Grundtvig Learning Partnership Program

The Centre participated with WI-CaN project which was funded by EU Lifelong Learning - Grundtvig Learning Partnership Program, ended July 2013. We worked in partnership with five different countries (Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Spain and Turkey). The project enabled the RTC to work creatively with refugee women by offering a combination of support and learning, while working in close partnership with community organisations. We were also able to exchange knowledge, network and learn from our partner organisations in Europe.

Women, Integration, Crafts and Networking (WI-CaN) seeks to integrate socially isolated migrant and refugee women through cooking and nutrition, crafts (e.g. sewing and needlework) and cultural exchange. As we agreed with other partners, we produced Story Telling Book and Somali Cook Book instead of the international quilt. In order to meet the needs of the women we work with at RTC, we felt it would be more beneficial to use the opportunity provided by the Grundtvig project to offer language learning and educational tools combined with the Centre's specialist knowledge of psychotherapy and counselling.



47 women participated in the groups and several women participants joined the transnational partner meetings. The groups helped them to develop their English to break isolation and build new contacts with British Society. The aim of both groups was: to encourage and support individuals to feel empowered, reduce levels of isolation and become enabled to take control of their own lives, and to help them to develop their English. The women targeted for the groups are refugee women who tend to socialize among themselves and may suffer from different types of difficulties such as language barriers, lack of social contact with British society, domestic violence, and mental health problems. Refugee women may not know how to access other available services such as education, health, training for themselves or their family and children. In most cases lack of language may create difficulties like losing self-esteem, anxiety, stress, anger and some physical pains. Therefore two different groups (Somali Women's Group - Cookery Book and Story Telling Women's Group - Story Book) were set up. The Story Telling Women's Group met for two hours, with the aim of helping women improve their English language, and to support women to feel empowered to take control of their lives. Within the therapeutic setting of the Centre, group members are encouraged to share their stories and feelings in English. The safety of the containing group environment enabled women to verbalise and explore their feelings, helping to build self-confidence. The aim of the Somali Women's group, whose members are from different backgrounds and range in age from 26 to 47, was to help the women develop their grasp of conversational English in order to break social isolation. The group was set up in 2012 and members wrote Somalian recipes together during the weekly two hour meetings and create a Somali Cook Book.

At the end of the project each group created a book and the books are published by The Centre. Our Story Telling Women's Group and Somali Women's Group were very successful. After evaluating positive feedback received from the group members indicating that they would like to continue as group members, RTC is continuing to run a weekly Story Telling Women's Group.



RTC Annual Open Day 21st June 2013

Our Annual Open Day at RTC consists of two important elements. One is the opportunity to speak about the work and learning taking place within the Centre throughout the past year in a spirit of acknowledgement and reflection. A second part of this focus is a conscious effort to connect the issues motivating the work of the Centre into larger national and international contexts. In other words, the principles we strive to work by and the injustices we hope to effectively struggle against in all our work at RTC relate to, and take root in, global struggles to further the cause of Human Rights.

Another equally important aspect of the day is coming together as community through sharing food and music, dialogue and experience. While connecting in solidarity to events that are marked internationally during this part of the year—such as International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression and the Day of the African Child and Youth Day, and the 61st Anniversary of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees—we also emphasise the good work, expertise and political struggle that is taking place locally. Esra Özdenrol PhD offered the key note address presenting her research on Strengthening Communities with Maps. We were pleased to welcome an audience that included professionals from the NHS, students, community workers, and local GPs, and others from within our sector. A discussion ensued following the presentation where members of the audience brought questions of how to promote best practice and the responsibility of supporting those suffering psychologically.

Following this discussion, our Patron Jeremy Corbyn MP addressed those present emphasizing the significance of the specialist service offered by the RTC and our sister organisations throughout the region standing up to support Human Rights, indeed the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. He also spoke of the tremendous contribution refugees have brought, and continue to bring, to our greater London community. He raised the importance of human rights campaigning; particularly as such struggles are being undermined by changes in domestic and international policy. As MP, Mr Corbyn has continually been a strong political advocate for refugee rights and leader in promoting just policy within the UK.

Students, staff, mentors and trustees gave brief reports on their work within, and relationship to, RTC. Hearing from one another brings alive the work at the Centre, demonstrating that the services we offer have a beneficial impact on many of those involved—not only the clients and mentees themselves. Our Clinical Director, Dr Aida Alayarian, put it succinctly, 'year after year on this day we remind ourselves of the change we want to see in the world and continue to do what we can do now to make things better rather than hoping to do it in the future'.

Recognising that to create change encompassing the practice of that make space to hear one another as members of a greater and necessary road ahead.

requires action—undeniably building trusting relationships another—we recommit ourselves community to the challenging





After the Southern day of heavy toil,
 How good to lie, with limbs relaxed, brows bare
 To evening's fan, and watch the smoke-wreaths coil
 Up from one's pipe-stem through the rayless air.
 So deem these unused tillers of the soil,
 Who stretched beneath the shadowing oak tree, stare
 Peacefully on the star-unfolding skies,
 And name their life unbroken paradise.



On the Term of Exile
 BY BERTOLT BRECHT

No need to drive a nail into the wall
 To hang your hat on;
 When you come in, just drop it on the chair
 No guest has sat on.

Don't worry about watering the flowers—
 In fact, don't plant them.
 You will have gone back home before they bloom,
 And who will want them?

If mastering the language is too hard,
 Only be patient;
 The telegram imploring your return
 Won't need translation.

Remember, when the ceiling sheds itself
 In flakes of plaster,
 The wall that keeps you out is crumbling too,
 As fast or faster.

Translated from the German by Adam Kirsch

The hounded stag that has escaped the pack,
 And pants at ease within a thick-leaved dell;
 The unimprisoned bird that finds the track
 Through sun-bathed space, to where his fellows dwell;
 The martyr, granted respite from the rack,
 The death-doomed victim pardoned from his cell,—
 Such only know the joy these exiles gain,—
 Life's sharpest rapture is surcease of pain.

Strange faces theirs, wherethrough the Orient sun
 Gleams from the eyes and glows athwart the skin.
 Grave lines of studious thought and purpose run
 From curl-crowned forehead to dark-bearded chin.
 And over all the seal is stamped thereon
 Of anguish branded by a world of sin,
 In fire and blood through ages on their name,
 Their seal of glory and the Gentiles' shame.



The Puppet

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Final Farewell

If for a moment God would forget that I am a rag doll and give me a scrap of life, possibly I would not say everything that I think, but I would definitely think everything that I say.

I would value things not for how much they are worth but rather for what they mean.

I would sleep little, dream more. I know that for each minute that we close our eyes we lose sixty seconds of light.

I would walk when the others loiter; I would awaken when the others sleep.

I would listen when the others speak, and how I would enjoy a good chocolate ice cream.

If God would bestow on me a scrap of life, I would dress simply, I would throw myself flat under the sun, exposing not only my body but also my soul.

My God, if I had a heart, I would write my hatred on ice and wait for the sun to come out. With a dream of Van Gogh I would paint on the stars a poem by Benedetti, and a song by Serrat would be my serenade to the moon.

With my tears I would water the roses, to feel the pain of their thorns and the incarnated kiss of their petals...My God, if I only had a scrap of life...

I wouldn't let a single day go by without saying to people I love, that I love them.

I would convince each woman or man that they are my favourites and I would live in love with love.

I would prove to the men how mistaken they are in thinking that they no longer fall in love when they grow old--not knowing that they grow old when they stop falling in love. To a child I would give wings, but I would let him learn how to fly by himself. To the old I would teach that death comes not with old age but with forgetting. I have learned so much from you men...

I have learned that everybody wants to live at the top of the mountain without realizing that true happiness lies in the way we climb the slope.

I have learned that when a newborn first squeezes his father's finger in his tiny fist, he has caught him forever.

I have learned that a man only has the right to look down on another man when it is to help him to stand up. I have learned so many things from you, but in the end most of it will be no use because when they put me inside that suitcase, unfortunately I will be dying.

Translated by Matthew Taylor and Rosa Arelis Taylor

